

# Desert Heights Charter School

## Homeless Children and Youth Plan

### General Information

#### INTRODUCTION:

Desert Heights Charter School is committed to creating equal educational opportunities for all children. The school strives to ensure that homeless children and youth have access to a free, appropriate public education that is comparable to that provided to the children of any Arizona resident and consistent with Arizona's mandatory school attendance laws.

#### GOAL:

All children and youth experiencing homelessness will be immediately enrolled in school based on availability and will have educational opportunities equal to those of their non-homeless peers. Homeless students will not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless.

#### LEGAL BACKGROUND:

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) which is included in No Child Left Behind as Title X-C.

#### CONTACT:

The Homeless Children and Youth Liaison is Cindy Jordan and she can be contacted at (602) 896-2900 or [cjordan@dhcs-az.com](mailto:cjordan@dhcs-az.com).

### Homeless Children and Youth Plan

#### DEFINITIONS:

The term "homeless students" means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes:

- students who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative, adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- students who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- students who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and migratory students who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described above.

The term 'school of origin' means the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in

which the student was last enrolled.

The term ‘unaccompanied youth’ includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

#### LIAISON FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS:

The Homeless Liaison will coordinate activities and programs in the best interest of homeless students that will include but not be limited to establishment procedures to:

- continue the student’s education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness;
  - in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or
  - for the remainder of the academic year, if the student becomes permanently housed during an academic year
- enroll the student in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend;
- coordinate and inform parents of transportation to and from the school, if feasible, using the school transportation system.
- ensure that all staff are trained regarding homelessness.
- ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the law.
  
- inform parents and guardians of educational and related opportunities available to their children.

#### BEST INTEREST OF THE HOMELESS STUDENT

In determining the best interest of the homeless student, the school shall:

- to the extent feasible, keep a homeless student in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the student’s parent or guardian
- provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal any decision at the state level, to the homeless student’s parent or guardian, if the homeless student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent or guardian; and
- in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison for homeless students shall assist in placement or enrollment decisions, considering the views of such unaccompanied youth, and providing notice to such student of the right to appeal.
- supply transportation for the student to the school and from the school of origin.
- ensure students are not segregated or stigmatized based on their status as homeless.

#### ADMISSION:

The school selected by the homeless student shall immediately admit the homeless student based on availability, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation.

The enrolling school shall immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain relevant academic

and other records.

If the student needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the enrolling school shall immediately refer the parent or guardian of the student to the liaison for homeless students, who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunization, or immunization or medical records.

#### SERVICES AVAILABLE:

Homeless students are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. Homeless children and youth will be provided with:

- Title I services regardless of location of enrollment;
- referrals to local preschool programs for siblings
- referrals to medical, dental, and mental health providers
- transportation to/from school of origin if feasible and in the “best interest of the student”

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school:

- the student shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought based on availability, pending resolution of the dispute;
- the parent or guardian of the student shall be provided with a written explanation of the school’s decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or student to appeal the decision at the state level;
- the student, parent, or guardian shall be referred to the liaison for homeless students, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute in accord with the procedure found in the Arizona State Plan including the right to appeal to the State level and/or the State Coordinator of Homelessness; and
- in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison for the homeless students shall ensure that the student is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.

#### PARENTS’ RIGHT TO KNOW:

Parents of our students have the right to know:

- Whether the State of Arizona has licensed or qualified the teacher for the grades and subject he or she teaches.
- Whether the teacher is teaching under an emergency permit or other provisional status by which state licensing criteria have been waived.
- The teacher’s college major; whether the teacher has any advanced degrees and, if so, the subject of the degrees.
- Whether any instructional aides or similar paraprofessionals provide services to your child and, if they do, their qualifications.