



Educational Rights of Homeless Youth

In accordance with federal and state law and regulations, Maine Arts Academy (MeAA) will provide homeless students with the education and services for which they are eligible. If you have any questions, please contact our homeless liaison, Heather King, Head of School.

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DEFINITIONS

A. "Homeless" students are those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and include the following:

- 1. Children and youths 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.**
- 2. Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.**
- 3. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.**
- 4. Migratory children who meet one of the above-described circumstances.**

B. “School of Origin”¹

Means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

C. “Unaccompanied youth” refers to a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian (e.g., runaway and “throw away” children and youth).

MeAA will determine, according to the best interest of the child or youth, whether the child or youth will be enrolled in the school of origin or in any public school in the attendance area in which the child is actually living. In determining the best interest of the child or youth, MeAA will, to the extent feasible, keep the child or youth in the school of origin, unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the parent. If the youth is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, the homeless liaison will assist in placement and enrollment decisions, with the views of the youth taken into consideration. The school selected shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization records, evidence of residency, or other documentation. MeAA may require a parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth to provide contact information.

MeAA must provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, to the parent or guardian of the homeless child or youth if MeAA sends the child or youth to a school other than the school of origin or other than a school requested by the parent or guardian. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the homeless liaison will provide notice of the right to appeal. The enrolling school shall contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academic and other records.

If the child or youth needs to obtain immunizations or immunization or medical records, the parent or guardian of the homeless child or youth will be referred to the homeless liaison for assistance.

ENROLLMENT DISPUTES If there is a dispute concerning enrollment, the child or youth shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent or guardian will be provided, in writing, with a written explanation of MeAA's decision and the right to appeal the decision. The homeless liaison shall ensure that an unaccompanied youth is enrolled in school, pending resolution of a dispute.

SERVICES Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to services available to other students in the school system including, but not limited to, transportation services; educational services for which the student meets the eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, gifted and talented students, and students with limited English proficiency; vocational and technical programs; preschool programs; before and after school-care programs; and school meals/nutrition programs.

TRANSPORTATION Homeless students are entitled to transportation to their school of origin or the school where they are to be enrolled.

RECORDS Any records ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization records, medical records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs, regarding each homeless student, shall be maintained so that records may be transferred when a student enters a new school system. Access to records will be available to parents and students in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).