Minnesota Department of Education

TRANSPORTATION OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (federal law) requires school districts to provide students experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth, with transportation to and from their school of origin if requested by the parent, guardian, or homeless education liaison. School of origin is defined as the school the student attended before they lost their housing.

Transportation Responsibility

The district that enrolls the homeless student will be responsible for the transportation. For charter schools, the district or charter school currently providing transportation for all other students must provide transportation for the student experiencing homelessness. For cooperative and intermediate school districts, the resident district is responsible for providing transportation. These statements are true even when the student is living at a location outside the district where the school of origin is located. Transportation responsibility for students experiencing homelessness can be found in Minnesota Statutes, section 120A.20, subdivision 2 (c).

Transportation could be provided by:

- Rerouting regular school bus routes past shelters, motels and other places where students live.
- Using existing routes such as those set up to serve special education programs, desegregation programs or nonpublic schools.
- Contracting with the parent or guardian of the child.
- Issuing public transit passes.
- Using a taxi service.
- Contracting with other districts.
- Collaborating with other public agencies.

Transportation Funding

The cost of transporting students experiencing homelessness will be recorded in Finance Dimension 728, Special Transportation of Selected Students, on the year-end Uniform Financial Accounting and Reporting Standards (UFARS) report. This includes students with Individual Education Programs (IEP) that do not require special transportation and students without an IEP. For students that have IEPs that require special transportation accommodations, record the transportation expenditures in UFARS Finance Dimension 723, as Finance Dimension 723 prevails over 728. Costs reported in both finance dimensions are funded through the special education

transportation formula which is funded in the current year. When a student is transported on a regular bus route and the regular bus route does not have any special accommodations, the cost of the service should be recorded in Finance Dimension 720, Regular, on the year-end UFARS. (Minn. Stat. § 123B.92, subd. 1 (b) (1) and (4)).

Formerly Homeless Students

School districts that elect to transport a formerly homeless student from his or her permanent home in another district to the school of origin can claim this transportation cost under Finance Dimension 728 on the year-end UFARS report. It is implied in federal law that when the student has a permanent residence the student should be transported through the end of the school year. This prevents problems of forcing the student to change schools during a school year. The average homeless student attends three to four schools in one year. Statistics show that students who change schools often have lower test scores and lower overall academic performance than students who do not change schools.

Other Important Points about Transportation

- Students have the right to enroll in a school immediately so transportation services may have to be arranged quickly. It is important that there is regular communication with the district's transportation office and/or the other district's Homeless Education Liaison and transportation office.

- Students can stay in their school of origin the entire time they are homeless. This may be longer than one academic school year.

- Students must receive transportation services comparable to those provided other students. For example, districts providing late activity bus service for resident (housed) students must also provide this level of service for students experiencing homelessness.

Other Important Information about Student Transportation in Minnesota

- It is illegal to use a vehicle with a seating capacity of more than 10 persons to transport students unless the vehicle meets school bus construction requirements (yellow in color, stop arm, flashing lights, etc.). In other words, large vans (greater than 10 persons) cannot be used to transport students to and from school or on school-related trips in Minnesota because they do not meet school bus construction requirements.

The State Patrol must inspect most vehicles before they are used to transport students. The exceptions are parents transporting their own children, taxis if used occasionally, public transit buses, and any vehicle used to transport a student in an emergency situation (sick child home from school).

Questions

If you have questions about transportation requirements, contact Roberto Reyes, Federal Programs and Services, at 651-582-8302 or roberto.reyes@state.mn.us . You may also contact Kelly Wosika, School Finance at 651-582-8855 or kelly.wosika@state.mn.us.