



Monarch River Academy

Instruction | Alternative/Specialized Programs HOMELESS EDUCATION POLICY

Monarch River Academy is committed to ensuring that homeless students are provided equal access to the same free, appropriate public education provided to other children and youth. Homeless students will be given access to the education and other services that such students need to ensure that they have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students are held. Homeless students will not be stigmatized or segregated in a separate school or program based on the student's status as homeless.

The purpose of the Monarch River Academy Governing Board approving this Homeless Education Policy is to accomplish the following:

1. Define Homeless Children and Youth
2. Identify the Homeless Liaison's Responsibilities
3. Explain the Requirements for Enrollment of Homeless Children and Youth
4. Identify Enrollment Disputes and the Dispute Resolution Process
5. Outline Transportation Options
6. Define Comparable Education Services for Homeless Children and Youth
7. Describe Coursework and Graduation Requirements

1. Definitions:

- ***Homeless children and youths*** means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and includes 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 (not including mobile home parks), or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
 - Who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
 - Who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;

- Who are migratory children who qualify as homeless for purposes of this part because the children are living in circumstances described above.
- ***Unaccompanied youth*** includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- ***The Charter School is the school of origin*** when the student attended the Charter School when permanently housed or was last admitted when the student became homeless. The Charter School will not be considered the school of origin when it is contrary to the wishes of a student's parent(s) or guardian(s), or is not in the best interest of the student.

In determining the best interest of the child or youth, the School shall:

- Presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the best interest of the child or youth, less it is contrary to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian, or unaccompanied youth;
- Consider student-centered factors related to the child's or youth's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless children and youth, giving priority to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth;
- If, after conducting the best interest determination based on consideration of the presumption identified above and the student-centered factors identified above, the School determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the School, the School shall provide the child's or youth's parent or guardian or the unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination, in a manner and form understandable to such parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, including information regarding the right to appeal; and
- In the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the School liaison assists in placement or admission decisions, gives priority to the views of such unaccompanied youth and provides notice to such youth of the right to appeal.

A child or youth or unaccompanied youth shall be considered homeless for as long as he/she is in a living situation described above.

2. Homeless Liaison Contact Information and Responsibilities: The Charter School's Homeless Liaison is: Yolanda Vazquez, yolanda.vazquez@centralvcs.org. The Charter School's Homeless Liaison is required to do all of the following:

- Ensure that homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies;

- Ensure that homeless children and youth are admitted in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the School;
- Ensure that homeless children and youths have access to and receive educational services for which such families, children, and youth are eligible, including referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services and other appropriate services;
- Ensure that the parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- Ensure that admission disputes are mediated in accordance with the dispute resolution process outlined below;
- Ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians, including schools, shelters, public libraries and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths;
- As applicable, ensure that the parent or guardian of a homeless student, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school.
- Ensure that school personnel providing services participate in professional development and other technical support as determined appropriate by the State Coordinator;
- Ensure that unaccompanied youths 1) are admitted to school; 2) have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youth, including implementation of procedures to identify and remove barriers that prevent youths from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school; and 3) are informed of their status as independent students and that the youths may obtain assistance from the liaison to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
- Ensure that homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies and that they receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.

- Offer training to the school's certificated and classified employees providing services to pupils experiencing homelessness, including, but not limited to, teachers, support staff, and other school staff who work with pupils, at least annually relating to both of the following: 1) The homeless education program policies adopted by the school; and 2) Recognition of signs that pupils are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing, homelessness.
- The Charter School shall administer a housing questionnaire for purposes of identifying homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths. The questionnaire shall comply with legal requirements. The questionnaire shall be administered annually, and reported to the California Department of Education the number of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled.

- 3. Admission:** All homeless students are required to follow the school's process for admitting students, including filling out and submitting the school's enrollment documents and Master Agreement on time. As with all students, admission depends upon availability. In the event of an oversubscription in a grade, homeless students will participate in the lottery as with any other student. As used in this policy, admission means attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

If the homeless student seeking admission is unable to produce records normally required for admission, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency or other documentation, this will not serve as a basis for non-admission. Provided that the admission process has been followed in all other respects, a homeless student will be admitted in the School despite the missing paperwork. Upon admission, the School will contact the school last attended by the students to obtain relevant academic and other records.

If the student needs to obtain immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the School will immediately refer the parent or guardian of the student, or the unaccompanied youth, to the Homeless Liaison, who shall assist in obtaining necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.

- 4. Admission Disputes and the Dispute Resolution Process:** If a dispute arises over admission in the Charter School of a homeless student, the student will be immediately enrolled to the Charter School in which admission is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. "Admission" means attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

The Charter School will refer the student and/or his/her parents or guardians to the Homeless Liaison, who will carry out the dispute resolution in accordance with the process set forth below, as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. In the case of an

unaccompanied youth, the Homeless Liaison will ensure that the youth is immediately admitted in school pending resolution of the dispute.

Parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth may provide written or oral documentation to support their positions about admission and may seek assistance of social services, advocates, and/or service providers in the dispute process.

The Charter School will provide the parent or guardian of the student with a written explanation of the Charter School's decision regarding admission, including the rights of the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth's appeal the decision. The written explanation will be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated and provided in a language that the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth can understand.

If the dispute remains unresolved at the Charter School level or is appealed, then the Charter School Homeless Liaison will forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the homeless liaison at the county office of education (COE). The COE's homeless liaison will review these materials and determine the school selection or admission decision within five (5) working days of receipt of the materials. The COE homeless liaison will notify the Charter School and parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth of the decision.

If the dispute remains unresolved at the COE level or is appealed to the State, then the COE homeless liaison will forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the State Homeless Coordinator. Upon review, the CDE will notify the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth of the decision relating to admission in the Charter School within ten working days of receipt of the materials.

- 5. Transportation:** The Charter School will provide or arrange for transportation of a homeless student, at the request of the parent, guardian or Homeless Liaison, to the Charter School when the Charter School is the school of origin. If the student begins living in an area served by another local educational agency while continuing his/her education at the Charter School, the Charter School will contact that local educational agency to agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the student with transportation to and from the Charter School.
- 6. Comparable Education Services:** Each homeless student will be provided access to services comparable to services offered to other students in the Charter School, including but not limited to the following:
 - Educational services for which the homeless student meets federal, state, and local program eligibility criteria
 - Programs in career and technical education
 - Access to honors and AP courses
 - Access to field trips
 - Access to technology, including hotspots

- Access to a full range of support and intervention programs

7. Coursework and Graduation Requirements: The School shall accept coursework satisfactorily completed by a homeless student while attending another public school, a juvenile courts school, a charter school, a school in a country other than the United States, or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school even if the pupil did not complete the entire course and shall issue that homeless student full or partial credit for the coursework completed while attending the School.

If the School is the transferring school, it shall issue the full and partial credits on an official transcript for the student and shall ensure the transcript includes all of the following: 1) All full and partial credits and grades earned based on any measure of full or partial coursework being satisfactorily completed, including a determination of the days of enrollment or seat time, or both, if applicable, at the School or any other local educational agency, other public school, juvenile court school, charter school, school in a country other than the United States, or nonpublic, nonsectarian school; 2) The credits and grades for each school and local agency listed separately so it is clear where they were earned; 3) A complete record of the student's seat time, including both period attendance and days of enrollment.

If a homeless student enrolls in the School, and the School has knowledge that the transcript from the transferring local educational agency may not include certain credits or grades for the student, the School shall contact the prior local educational agency within two business days to request that the prior local educational agency issue full or partial credits. The prior local educational agency shall issue appropriate credits and provide all academic and other records to the School within two business days of the request.

The credits accepted shall be applied to the same or equivalent course, if applicable, as the coursework completed in the prior school.

The School shall not require a homeless student to retake a course if the student has satisfactorily completed the entire course in a prior school. If the student did not complete the entire course, the School shall not require the pupil to retake the portion of the course the student completed unless the School, in consultation with the holder of educational rights for the student, finds that the student is reasonably able to complete the requirements in time to graduate from high school. When partial credit is awarded in a particular course, the homeless student shall be admitted in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so the student may continue and complete the entire course.

A homeless student shall not be prevented from retaking or taking a course to meet the eligibility requirements for admission to the California State University or the University of California.

A homeless student who transfers between schools any time after the completion of the pupil's second year of high school and is in the student's third or fourth year of high school, the School shall exempt from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the School that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3, unless the School makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the

School's graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If the School determines that the homeless student is reasonably able to complete the School's graduation requirements within the student's fifth year of high school, the School shall do all of the following: 1) Consult with the student and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student of the student's option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the School's graduation requirements; 2) Consult with the student, and the student's educational rights holder, about how remaining in the School for a fifth year to complete the School's graduation requirements will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution; 3) Consult with and provide information to the student about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; 4) Permit the student to stay in school for a fifth year to complete the School's graduation requirements upon agreement with the student, if the student is 18 years of age or older, or if under 18 years of age, with the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student; 5) Consult with the student and the student's educational rights holder regarding the student's option to remain in the School of origin.

To determine whether a homeless student is in the third or fourth year of high school, either the number of credits the pupil has earned to the date of transfer, the length of the student's enrollment, or for students with significant gaps in school attendance, the pupils age as compared to the average of pupils in the third or fourth year of high school, may be used, whichever will qualify the student for the exemption.

Within 30 calendar days of the date that a homeless student may qualify for the exemption from local graduation requirements transfers into a school, the School shall notify the student, the educational rights holder, and the School's liaison for homeless children and youth of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for an exemption. If the School fails to provide timely notice, the student shall be eligible for the exemption from local graduation requirements once notified, even if that notification occurs after the student is no longer homeless, if the student otherwise qualifies for the exemption.

In addition to providing said notice, the School shall consult with the student and student's educational rights holder about the following: 1) Discussion regarding how any of the requirements that are waived may affect the student's postsecondary education or vacation plans, including the ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution; 2) Discussion and information about other options available to the student, including, but not limited to, a fifth year of high school, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; 3) Consideration of the student's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to accept the exemption.

A homeless student that has been exempted from local graduation requirements in accordance with Education Code section 51225.1 and completes the statewide coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 before the end of the student's fourth year of high school and that student would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the school, the

School shall not require or request that the pupil graduate before the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If a homeless student is exempted from local graduation requirements pursuant to Education Code section 51225.1, the School shall notify the student and the person holding the right to make educational decisions for the student how any of the requirements that are waived will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution and shall provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.

If a homeless student who is eligible for the exemption from local graduation requirements and would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the School shall not be required to accept the exemption or be denied admission in, or the ability to complete, courses for which the student is otherwise eligible, including courses necessary to attend an institution of higher education, regardless of whether those courses are required for statewide graduation requirements.

If a homeless student is not exempted from local graduation requirements or has previously declined the exemption, the School shall exempt the student at any time if an exemption is required by the student and the student qualifies for the exemption.

If a homeless student is not eligible for an exemption because the School makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the School's graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the student's fourth year of high school, the School nonetheless shall reevaluate eligibility and provide written notice to the student, the student's education rights holder whether the student qualifies for an exemption within the first 30 calendar days of the following academic year, based on the course completion status of the student at the time of reevaluation to determine if the student continues to be reasonably able to complete the School's graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the student's fourth year.

If it is determined within the first 30 calendar days of the following academic year, that given their course completion status at that time the reevaluation conducted pursuant to the previous paragraph that the student is not reasonably able to complete the School's graduation requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the student's fourth year of high school, the School shall provide the student with the option to receive an exemption from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the School's governing board that are in addition to the statewide coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 or to stay in school for a fifth year to complete the School's graduation requirements upon agreement with the student (if over 18 years old), or upon agreement with the student's education rights holder.

If a homeless student is exempted from local graduation requirements, the School shall not revoke the exemption.

If a homeless student is exempted from local graduation requirements, the exemption shall continue to apply after the pupil is no longer a homeless student while the student is admitted in the School or if a homeless student who is exempt from local graduation requirements transfers to the School from another school.

If a homeless student transfers between schools any time after the completion of the student's second year of high school is not reasonably able to complete the School's graduation requirements within the student's fifth year of high school, but is reasonably able to complete the statewide coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 within the student's fifth year of high school, the School shall exempt a student from the School's graduation requirements and provide the student the option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide coursework requirements. The School shall consult with the student and the student's education rights holder of the following: 1) The student's option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide coursework requirements; 2) How waiving the local educational requirements and remaining in school for a fifth year may affect the student's postsecondary education or vocation plans, including the ability to gain admission to an institution of higher education; 3) Whether any other options are available to the student, including, but not limited to, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; 4) The student's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to accept the exemption and option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete the statewide coursework requirements.

The School shall not require or request a homeless student to transfer schools in order to qualify the pupil for an exemption.

A complaint for noncompliance with this section may be filed with the School under the School's Uniform Complaint Procedures.

A homeless student shall be allowed to continue his or her education in the school of origin through the duration of homelessness. If the homeless student's status changes before the end of the academic year so that the student is no longer homeless, either of the following apply: 1) If the homeless student is in high school, the School (if it is the school of origin) shall allow the formerly homeless student to continue that student's education in the School through graduation; 2) If the homeless student is in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 8, inclusive the School (if it is the school of origin) shall allow the formerly homeless student to continue that student's education in the School through the duration of the academic school year.

Adopted: February 13, 2020
Revised: December 13, 2022