

Darnall Charter School
Board Policy
#5003
Homeless Education Policy

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Act (hereinafter MVHA) was passed by Congress to ensure that each homeless student has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as other students. While many federal laws are tied to a specific local education agency's (LEA) receipt of federal funds, the MVHA requires the state to ensure that all LEAs in California have certain policies in place in accordance with the MVHA, without regard to whether the LEA receives these funds. The Governing Board of Darnall Charter School wants to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided equal access to the same free, appropriate public education provided to other children and youth and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness. 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 program based on the student's status as homeless.

Definitions

- Homeless children and youth means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youth:
 - 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.
 - 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.
 - Who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
 - Who are migratory children and unaccompanied youth who qualify as homeless for purposes of this part because the children are living in circumstances described above.
- Unaccompanied youth includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. A child or youth or unaccompanied youth shall be considered homeless for as long as he/she is in a living situation described above. Homeless status is

determined in cooperation with the parent or guardian. In the case of unaccompanied youth, status is determined by the liaison.

- School of Origin means the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled. 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.

Homeless Liaison

Darnall Charter School's homeless liaison is:

Anne Mathews, Executive Director

(619) 582-1822

amathews@darnallcharter.org

Homeless liaisons are required to ensure the following:

- Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies, including the annual housing questionnaire administered by the school.
 - Records for each homeless youth will be maintained and updated yearly.
 - Information about a homeless youth's living situation shall not be deemed directory information.
 - Information will not be released without requisite consent.
- Homeless children and youths enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in the school.
- Homeless children, youths, and their families have access to and receive educational services for which such families, children, and youth are eligible, including:
 - services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act.
 - Early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
- Homeless children, youths, and their families receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, transportation services, nutrition services, expanded learning and /or tutoring, and other appropriate services.
- 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. The homeless liaison shall also ensure the parents or guardians of homeless children or youths and any unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, as may be applicable.
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth that includes rights, protections, and the information for the Darnall Charter School homeless liaison is

disseminated at Darnall Charter School and in locations frequented by parents or guardians of such youths, and unaccompanied youths, in an understandable manner and form.

- Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the law and with the dispute resolution process outlined below.
- School personnel providing services, including the homeless liaison, participate in professional development at least annually to heighten awareness of Darnall Charter School's homeless education program policies, recognition of signs that pupils are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing homelessness, and the specific needs of homeless youth, as well as other technical support as determined appropriate by the homeless liaison. The homeless liaison is responsible for verifying that Darnall Charter School is providing the required training to support personnel as required by the California Department of Education.
- Ensure that unaccompanied youth:
 - Are enrolled in school.
 - 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.
 - Are informed of their status as independent students and that the youths may obtain assistance from the homeless liaison to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.
- Administer a housing questionnaire annually for purposes of identifying homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths, and report to the California Department of Education the number of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths enrolled.
- Offer training to certificated and classified employees at least annually relating to: 1) the homeless education program policies established by law; 2) recognition of the signs that students are experiencing, or are at risk of experiencing homelessness.
- Inform employees of the availability of training and the services the liaison provides to aid in the identification and provision of services to students who are experiencing or are at risk of experiencing homelessness.
- Coordinate and collaborate with State coordinators and community personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths, including collecting and providing reliable, valid, comprehensive data regarding homeless education.

As part of their duties, the homeless liaison shall coordinate and collaborate with State coordinators, community organizations, and Darnall Charter School personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youths. Such coordination

shall include collecting and providing to the State coordinator reliable, valid, comprehensive data regarding homeless education.

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

- Presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the best interest of the child or youth, unless 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, the School determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the School, 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.

Enrollment

Darnall Charter School shall immediately enroll a homeless youth who seeks to enroll in the school, if the youth would otherwise be eligible to attend, subject to Darnall Charter School's capacity. The youth shall be immediately enrolled even if the youth lacks records normally required for enrollment (such as previous academic records, records of immunizations, other required health records, proof of residency), has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness, has outstanding fees, fines, textbooks, or other items or moneys due to the school last attended, or does not have clothing normally required for school, as applicable. Records will be requested immediately from the previous school. If the youth needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other medical records, the Executive Director or designee shall immediately refer the parent/guardian to the homeless liaison. The homeless liaison shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunizations or records.

If a student at Darnall Charter School is homeless or becomes homeless during the school year or between academic years, and Darnall Charter School is the student's school of origin, Darnall Charter School shall allow the student to continue their education at the school through the duration of their homelessness. If a homeless student attending Darnall Charter School obtains permanent housing during an academic year such that they are no longer homeless, the student will be permitted to remain at the school through the end of the academic year.

If Darnall Charter School is the student's school of origin and Darnall Charter School determines that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school, then Darnall Charter School must provide written notice to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth of the reasons for its determination and provide information as to how to appeal the decision. The school will 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.

In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Darnall Charter School homeless liaison will assist in placement or enrollment decisions, give priority to the views of such unaccompanied youth and provide notice to such youth of the right to appeal. Darnall Charter School shall maintain student records for each homeless youth so that the records are available when the youth enters a new school or school district. Darnall Charter School shall treat information about a homeless youth's living situation as an education record, which shall not be deemed directory information and shall not be released absent requisite consent.

Enrollment Disputes and the Dispute Resolution Process

If a dispute arises over enrollment of a homeless student, the student will be immediately enrolled to Darnall Charter School, if that is where enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. "Enrolled" means attending classes and participating fully in school activities. Darnall Charter School will refer the student and 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 is responsible for ensuring that the unaccompanied youth is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.

Parents or guardians of homeless students, and unaccompanied youth, may provide written or oral documentation to support their positions about enrollment and may seek assistance of social services, advocates, and/or service providers in the dispute process. Darnall Charter School will provide the parent or guardian of the homeless student, or will provide the unaccompanied youth directly, with a written explanation of its decision regarding enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth to 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 or is appealed, then the homeless liaison will forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the county office of education ("COE") homeless liaison. The COE's homeless liaison will review these materials and determine the school selection or enrollment decision within five (5) working days of receipt of the materials.

The COE homeless liaison will notify Darnall Charter School and the parent/guardian and unaccompanied youth of the decision. If the dispute remains unresolved at the COE level or is appealed to the state by either OCR or the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth, then the COE homeless liaison will forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the CDE Homeless Education Program. Upon review, the CDE will notify all parties of the final decision related to enrollment at Darnall Charter School within ten (10) working days of receipt of the materials. The CDE Homeless Education Program Team can be reached by phone at 866-856-8214 or by email at HomelessEd@cde.ca.gov.

Transportation

In the event Darnall Charter School provides transportation services to all students, Darnall Charter School shall provide comparable transportation services to each homeless child or youth attending the school. If Darnall Charter School is the student's school of origin, and upon the request of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth, Darnall Charter School shall ensure that transportation is provided for homeless students to and from school facilities as required for any in-person activities. If Darnall Charter School is the student's school of origin, but the student begins living in an area served by another local educational agency, Darnall Charter School and the local educational agency in which the student is living must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for providing the child transportation to and from school facilities, as applicable.

Comparable Education Services

Each homeless student will be provided access to services comparable to services offered to other students attending Darnall Charter School, including but not limited to the following:

- Transportation services, as applicable.
- Educational services for which the homeless student meets federal, state and local program eligibility criteria.
- Programs in career and technical education, as applicable.
- Programs for gifted and talented students, as applicable.
- School nutrition programs.
- Special education and English learner services, early education services, and expanded learning programs.

Eligibility for Extracurricular Activities

A homeless child or youth shall be immediately deemed to meet all residency requirements for participation in interscholastic sports or other extracurricular activities, as applicable.

Acceptance of Coursework

Darnall Charter School will accept any coursework satisfactorily completed at any public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic,

nonsectarian school or agency by a homeless student, and will provide full or partial credit for the full or partial completion of such courses. If the student completed the entire course, Darnall Charter School shall not require the student to retake the course. If the student did not complete the entire course, Darnall Charter School shall not require the student to retake the portion of the course the student completed unless Darnall Charter 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 be considered for promotion to the next grade level.

If Darnall Charter School is the transferring school, it shall issue full and partial credits on an official transcript that includes: 1) All full and partial credits and grades earned based on any measure of coursework being satisfactorily completed; 2) Credits and grades for each school listed separately; 3) A complete record of the student's seat time, including both period attendance and days of enrollment

If a homeless student enrolls and the School has knowledge that the transcript from the transferring agency may not include certain credits, the School shall contact the prior agency within two business days to request appropriate credits. The prior agency shall provide all academic and other records within two business days of the request. When partial credit is awarded, the homeless student shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course so the student may continue and complete the entire course.

Updates, Compliance, and Posting

The School shall update these policies at intervals not to exceed three years using resources developed by the CDE and homeless education technical assistance centers. A complaint for noncompliance with this policy may be filed with the School under the School's Uniform Complaint Procedures. Darnall Charter School shall ensure that the following information is posted, and updated as necessary, on its internet website:

- The name and contact information of the Darnall Charter School homeless liaison.
- The contact information of any employee or contractor that assists the liaison in completing the liaison's duties.
- Specific information regarding the educational rights and resources available to persons experiencing homelessness.

Board Approval Date: August 25, 2025