



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: January 24, 2020
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads
Route To: District Registrars, District Homeless Liaisons, Building Principals, Business Administrators,
Directors of Special Education Services
From: Peggy McDonald Ed.D, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student Services

Enrollment of Students Displaced by Recent Natural Disasters

The following information is being provided to facilitate a smooth enrollment process for students displaced by the recent earthquake in Puerto Rico and to enable those students to resume their education as efficiently as possible.

Natural disasters throughout the nation often lead to an increase in the number of displaced families seeking shelter in New Jersey. Students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence are considered homeless and are eligible for services, pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento). Section 725 of McKinney-Vento defines homeless children as “children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing,” (often referred to as “doubled-up”), or “are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations or are living in emergency or transitional shelters.”

Enrollment/School Records

Districts cannot delay the enrollment of displaced students and must enroll these students immediately even if they do not have any school records. Districts are also responsible for translating the school records if the records are in another language.

If the school records cannot be readily obtained from the prior school district, the district in which the student enrolls must seek input from the parent/guardian and, based on those discussions and any evaluative information the district can obtain quickly, place the student in classes in the grade that is consistent with the student’s biological age. While the lack of documentation may make the transfer process difficult, the district must make every effort to obtain necessary information from the parent/guardian and student when developing a class schedule.

For students with disabilities transferring from out-of-state, the child study team of the district into which the student has transferred must conduct an immediate review of the student’s evaluation information and the student’s out-of-state Individualized Education Program (IEP), and in consultation with the student’s parents and without delay, provide a program comparable to the out-of-state IEP until a new IEP is developed and implemented. Additionally, the child study team shall conduct any assessments determined necessary, and then develop and implement a new IEP for the student within 30 days of the date the student enrolled in the district.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) also reminds districts that, under McKinney-Vento and [N.J.A.C. 6A:17-1.1](#), *et seq.*, students experiencing homelessness are not required to present residency affidavits to enroll in school. Therefore, the typical documents normally needed for school enrollment are waived for homeless students. Although districts are not precluded from verifying a student’s homelessness status and residence in the district, the student shall remain enrolled pending resolution of any dispute pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.7(c)*.

Immunization Records

Under New Jersey regulations regarding vaccinations, *N.J.A.C. 8:57-4.5(e)*, children transferring into a New Jersey school, preschool, or child-care center from out-of-state or out-of-country shall be allowed a 30-day grace period in order to obtain past immunization documentation before the child is placed on provisional status.

If the student's past immunization documentation is not provided before the expiration of the 30-day grace period, the student shall be granted provisional admission in compliance with the specific requirements set forth in *N.J.A.C. 8:57-4.5*. Additional information about the requirements during a student's provisional status is available on the [New Jersey Department of Health website](#).

Additionally, according to [N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.2\(l\)](#), students entering a New Jersey school for the first time are required to have an entry medical exam, screenings of vision, hearing, blood pressure, height, weight, and, if age 10 to 18, a scoliosis screening. Also, in accordance with *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-2.2(g)*, the entry medical examination must include a review of the immunizations pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 8:57-4.1* through 4.24 and the medical history, including allergies, past serious illnesses, injuries, operations, medications and current health problems. If a student does not have a medical home, as defined at *N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.3*, the school district shall provide the entry medical examination at the school physician's office or other comparably equipped facility, pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:40-4*.

English Language Learners

Students from out-of-state who meet the definition of an English language learner (ELL) are eligible for ELL program services. Districts must use their standard ELL screening process, initiated by a home-language survey, to determine which (if any) students, must be tested to determine English language proficiency (ELP).

For more information regarding ELL identification, please see the NJDOE's guidance document, [Implementing English Language Learner Program Services in New Jersey](#), and the Frequently Asked Questions document regarding [ELL School Enrollment Guidance](#).

Tuition and Transportation

Since the recent earthquakes occurred outside of New Jersey, the displaced students' districts of origin/residence are not located in New Jersey. Pursuant to *N.J.A.C. 17-2.8(c)2*, when a student's district of origin/residence is outside of New Jersey, the state assumes fiscal responsibility for the student, and pays the school district in which the child is currently enrolled until the parent establishes a permanent residence or is deemed domiciled in another jurisdiction pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1.d*. Under these circumstances, the district where the homeless child is enrolled is responsible for providing transportation services, if applicable, pursuant to *N.J.S.A. 18A:39-1, et seq.* and *N.J.A.C. 6A:27-6.2, et seq.*

For information regarding the process for tuition reimbursement for state responsible homeless students, please see the [Tuition Reimbursement for State Responsible Homeless Children and Youth Report](#).

District Homeless Liaisons

Your district homeless liaisons are central to this process and should work in collaboration with district enrollment personnel, school counselors and other student support services personnel. Your district homeless liaisons should be known and accessible to individuals who have been displaced, in addition to all district personnel.

NJDOE Support

It is our goal to ensure that all children are enrolled and provided educational continuity. If you have questions, please contact your respective NJDOE [Executive County Superintendent](#) or Pheobie Thomas, state coordinator, Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program, at (609) 984-4974 or pheobie.thomas@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
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