

COMMONWEALTH CHARTER ACADEMY

BOARD OF TRUSTEES POLICY SECTION 200 PUPILS

251 HOMELESS STUDENTS

§ 1. Purpose and Authority

The Board of Trustees (Board) recognizes the need to promptly identify homeless children and youths enrolled in or applying for enrollment at Commonwealth Charter Academy Charter School (Commonwealth Charter Academy or CCA) and eliminate existing barriers to their enrollment, attendance, and education, in compliance with federal and state laws and regulations, and Board policies.

Homeless children and youths have equal access to the same educational programs and services provided to other CCA students.

The Board directs the Chief Executive Officer (CEO)/President or designee to develop the administrative guidelines or regulations required to implement this policy.

§ 2. Definitions

Unless the context clearly indicates otherwise, the following terms used in this policy shall have the following meanings:

Enroll or Enrollment – Attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

Homeless children and youths - Individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, and includes:

1. Children and youths who are:
 - a. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
 - b. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - c. Living in emergency, transitional, or domestic violence shelters; or
 - d. Abandoned in hospitals.

2. Children and youths 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;
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 qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above; and
5. School-aged parents living in houses for school-aged parents if they have no other available living accommodations.

School of origin – The school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled, including preschool. When the child or youth completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the school of origin shall include the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.

Unaccompanied youth – A homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth who have run away from home; been abandoned or forced out of home by a parent, guardian or other caretaker; or separated from a parent or guardian for any other reason.

§ 3. Guidelines

No student shall be discriminated against, segregated, or stigmatized based on his/her homeless status. The CEO/President may waive CCA policies and procedures that create barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, transportation, school stability and success in school of homeless children and youths.

Liaison for Homeless Children and Youths

The CEO/President shall designate a CCA employee to serve as CCA's liaison for homeless children and youths. The liaison's contact information shall be available on CCA's publicly accessible website and in CCA's Learner Handbook.

The liaison shall ensure outreach and coordination with:

1. Local service agencies and other entities that provide services to homeless children and youths and families.
2. Other school entities on issues of prompt identification, transfer of records, transportation, and other interschool activities.
3. CCA staff responsible for the provision of services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

The liaison shall coordinate with appropriate persons to ensure that public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents/guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and meal center. Such notice shall be provided in a manner and form understandable to the parents/guardians of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths.

The liaison shall provide reliable, valid, and comprehensive data to the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program in accordance with federal and state laws and regulations.

Enrollment and Placement

The parent/guardian of a homeless student may request enrollment in CCA.

In accordance with the child's or youth's best interest, CCA shall continue to serve an enrolled homeless student while s/he remains homeless and through the end of the academic year in which s/he obtains permanent housing.

CCA's liaison, in coordination with the liaison of the child's or youth's school district of residence, shall assist an unaccompanied youth in enrollment decisions, giving priority to the views of the student in determining where s/he will be enrolled.

The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth shall be provided with a written explanation of any decision related to enrollment, including the right to appeal.

Enrollment

CCA shall immediately enroll identified homeless students who have been admitted in accordance with Board policy, and begin programs and services, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, in accordance with state and federal laws and regulations.

CCA's liaison shall immediately contact the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academic or other records.

CCA may require a parent/guardian to submit contact information.

Placement

If CCA is unable to determine the student's grade or level due to missing or incomplete records, CCA shall administer tests or utilize appropriate means to determine the student's assignment in CCA.

Dispute Resolution

If a dispute arises:

1. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to the CCA's liaison, who shall assist in the dispute resolution process.
2. The student shall be enrolled pending final resolution of the dispute.
3. CCA's liaison, in coordination with the liaison of the child's or youth's school district of residence, shall issue a written decision of the dispute within twenty (20) business days of being notified of the dispute.

A parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth may appeal the written decision or file a complaint with the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program. Education Records Information about a homeless child's or youth's living situation shall be treated as a student education record subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), and shall not be deemed to be directory information.

Comparable Services

Homeless students shall be provided services comparable to those offered to other CCA students including, but not limited to:

1. Transportation services, where applicable.
2. Educational programs for which the homeless student meets the eligibility criteria, such as:
 - a. Services provided under Title I or similar state or local programs.
 - b. Programs for English Learners.
 - c. Programs for students with disabilities.
 - d. Programs for gifted and talented students, as applicable.

Training

CCA's liaison shall participate in professional development programs and other technical assistance activities offered by the Coordinator of Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program.

CCA's liaison shall arrange professional development programs for CCA staff, including office staff.

CCA personnel providing services to homeless children and youths, including enrollment staff, shall receive professional development and support to:

1. Improve identification of homeless children and youths and unaccompanied youths;
2. Understand the rights of such children, including requirements for immediate enrollment and transportation; and
3. Heighten the awareness of, and capacity to respond to, the educational needs of such children.

Distribution of Policy

This policy is hereby incorporated by reference into CCA's Learner Handbook and shall be posted on CCA's publicly accessible website.

History:	Adopted 9-21-2019
Previous Policy No.:	None
Legal Ref.:	42 U.S.C. § 11431 <i>et seq.</i> 42 U.S.C. § 11434a 34 CFR § 299.13 20 U.S.C. 1232g 20 U.S.C. 6301 <i>et seq</i> 22 Pa. Code § 11.18 PA Education for Homeless Children and Youth State Plan
Cross Ref.:	None