

Hopewell Area School District

Homeless Determination Process and Best Interest Procedures

1. If you suspect a student is experiencing homelessness, immediately report any information that you know to your building principal or school counselor.
2. The building principal or school counselor will then contact the district's homeless liaison to provide the information available.
3. The homeless liaison reaches out to family for additional information, talks to other teachers, staff, or administrators. The transportation director is also contacted to see if any irregularities have been observed by the student's bus driver during pick-up and drop-off times.
4. The homeless liaison makes determination of homelessness.
5. Consults with ECYEH regional coordinator, Nicole Anderson, as needed.

Ways district works to identify students experiencing homelessness:

- Maintains frequent communication with the transportation department, building secretaries, school counselors, and principals
- Families are interviewed upon enrollment to the district
- Families or community members report concerns to district personnel
- Teachers report irregularities in student behavior, including tardies or absences that have a pattern to building principal and school counselor. Parents are contacted to discuss and trouble-shoot.

In the case of homelessness, the homeless liaison:

- a. Identifies and links families with support services
 - BVASD has clothing closets in most buildings where students can go to pick out clothes if needed
 - The homeless liaison has backpacks with school supplies in them
 - BVASD Title 1 funds are used when needed to provide students with needed school supplies
 - Elementary or junior high school students experiencing homelessness are signed up for district's "Bag Brigade" program. This is a partnership with the local community outreach helping the children in the Belle Vernon area with food on the weekends. Every Friday (or last day of school each week during the school year) students are delivered bags filled with food donated by local churches and community members.
 - Parents/guardians are linked to local/community resources based on need.
- b. Arranges for transportation to and from school for students
- c. If student is in need of additional supplies, the homeless liaison works to procure them.
 - a. The district has clothing and supplies closets in all buildings

- b. Staff and community members regularly donate clothing, shoes, coats, brand new socks and under garments, and school supplies
- d. Students are immediately enrolled in Title 1, free or reduced lunch, and are monitored by the district's SAP team. The teachers and school counselors work with students based on need.
- e. Adds student's demographics to the monthly homeless report providing all required information.
- f. Checks in with families regarding homeless status and needs (once in the fall, once in the spring, and once in August prior to start of school; in addition contact is made as needed).
 - a. The building principals and school counselors are also involved in this process.
- g. Shares updates with appropriate staff.
- h. Removes/updates student's demographics from monthly homeless report when the family is no longer homeless.
- i. Best interest determinations occur with collaboration with parents/students as well as other school districts when homelessness prompts school choice. For example, if a Belle Vernon Area School District student becomes homeless and is staying in Charleroi, then the family can choose between attending school at Belle Vernon Area or Charleroi.
- j. Unaccompanied Youth: The Belle Vernon Area School District will immediately enroll unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. The homeless liaison will work with that student to connect with local agencies to assist with housing, food, and to remove any barriers that are student-specific. All homeless procedures will be followed.

If it is determined that student/family is NOT homeless, the homeless liaison:

- a. Calls the parents/guardians to inform them that they are not homeless and are provided with an explanation of the reasoning behind the finding. They are also provided with a letter explaining the determination and reasoning.
- b. Sends parents/guardians the Dispute Resolution Form and have the opportunity to have their case further investigated by the Regional Homeless Coordinator/AIU Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY).
 - a. Dispute Resolution process is followed. Student allowed to continue to attend HASD until dispute process is finished.
- c. If families indicate they are struggling, but NOT homeless, resources are offered to them based on their needs.
 - a. The district has clothing and supplies closets in all buildings
 - b. Staff and community members regularly donate clothing, shoes, coats, brand new socks and under garments, and school supplies

Supports Offered Regardless of Homeless Status/Best Interest Procedures:

- Screened for Title 1 if in grades K-6, provided support if meets criteria
- Work with district specialists (physician, ophthalmologist, etc.) based on student need.

- All students have access to the clothing closets located in all buildings for clothing, shoes, coats, backpacks, school supplies).
- Bag Brigade: Every Friday, bags filled with food are delivered to families within the Belle Vernon Area School District. The bags are stocked with food and snacks for the weekend.
- Annual Toy and Food Drives: district personnel can identify any family in need of support around Thanksgiving and Christmas. Identified families receive bags of food and toys collected by staff prior to holidays.

Plan for students experiencing homelessness who are of state-testing age:

- District personnel communicates with families to determine needs prior to assessment time.
- District provides students with breakfast and lunch (all students are eligible for free meals) if family chooses.
- District provides students with #2 pencils and any other assessment materials needed.
- If special transportation arrangements are needed in order for student to get to school on time, these are made in coordination with the transportation department.