

THE ACADEMIES CHARTER MANAGEMENT ORGANIZATION

EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH POLICY

The Academies Charter Management Organization (“TACMO”) Board of Directors and its schools, Sycamore Valley Academy and Blue Oak Academy (“School”) desires to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational program, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic standards, are provided a free and appropriate public education, are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless, and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness.

Information regarding this policy, including the educational rights of children and youth identified as homeless will be distributed to all students upon enrollment and once during the school year, provided to students who seek to withdraw from Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy, as well as other places where children, youth, and families who are homeless receive services, including family and youth shelters, motels, campgrounds, welfare departments, health departments, and other social service agencies. This policy is also available at the school's website.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youth

The term “*homeless children and youth*” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence and includes children and youth who (42 U.S.C. § 11434a):

1. 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; or are abandoned in hospitals;
2. Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
3. Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and/or
4. Migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition of “homeless.”

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

School Liaison

The TACMO Superintendent designates the following staff persons as the School Liaison for homeless students (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)):

The Sycamore Valley Academy Principal, Allan Benton, may be reached at abenton@sycamorevalleyacademy.org or 559-622-3236

The Blue Oak Academy Principal, Dana Stinson, may be reached at dstinson@blueoakacademy.org or 559-730-7422.

The School Liaison shall ensure that the following requirements are fulfilled by the School (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)):

1. Homeless students are identified by school personnel and through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
2. Homeless students enroll in and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy.
3. Homeless students and families receive educational services for which they 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 (“IDEA”); any other preschool programs administered by Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy, if any; and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
4. Parents/guardians 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.
5. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children is disseminated at places frequented by parents or guardians of such youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, and in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of homeless youth and unaccompanied youth.
6. Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with law, Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy charter, and Board policy.

7. Parents/guardians and any unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
8. School personnel providing services receive professional development and other support.

The School liaison will coordinate with and seek support from the local district and county coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, public and private service providers in the community, housing and placement agencies, local liaisons in neighboring districts, and other organizations and agencies. Coordination may include conducting outreach and training through those agencies. Both public and private agencies will be encouraged to support the local liaison and Sycamore Valley Academy and Blue Oak Academy in implementing this policy.

9. 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; and are informed of their status as independent students and that the youths may obtain assistance from the School Liaison to receive verification of such status for the purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid.

The California Department of Education publishes a list of the contact information for the Homeless Education Liaisons in the state, which is available at: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>

Enrollment

Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy shall immediately admit/enroll the student for which the School is a School of Origin. "School of Origin" means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy shall also immediately enroll a homeless youth who seeks to enroll in the School, if the youth would otherwise be eligible to attend and subject to the School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy charter and Board policy. A homeless youth who is enrolled will have the right to attend classes and participate fully in school activities, including extracurricular activities.

The youth shall be immediately enrolled even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment (such as previous academic records, records of immunizations, other required health records, proof of residency) or has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C); Education Code Section 48850(a)(3)(A).)

If the student needs to obtain immunizations or does not possess immunization or other medical records, the Superintendent or designee shall refer the parent/guardian to the School Liaison.

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The School Liaison shall assist the parent/guardian in obtaining the necessary immunizations or records for the student. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C).)

A homeless youth may remain in the student's school of origin for the entire period for which the youth is homeless. If a youth obtains permanent housing during an academic year, the youth will be permitted to remain in the school of origin through the end of the academic year.

Enrollment Disputes

If a dispute arises over admissions/enrollment, the student shall be immediately admitted (subject to the School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the School's charter and Board policy), pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

The parent/guardian shall be provided with a written explanation of the admission/enrollment decision, including an explanation of the parent/guardian's right to appeal the decision. The parent/guardian shall also be referred to the School Liaison. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

The School Liaison shall carry out the Board-adopted dispute resolution and complaint process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).)

Comparable Services

Each homeless child or youth shall promptly be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy such as (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)):

- Transportation services
- Title I, Part A services - Children and youth identified as homeless are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services
- Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria, such as educational programs for students with disabilities and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency
- Programs in vocational and technical education
- Programs for gifted and talented students
- Before- and after-school programs
- Free meals - On the day a child or youth identified as homeless enrolls in school, Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy must submit the student's name to its food service program coordinator for immediate eligibility.

Transportation

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In the event that Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy provides transportation services to all Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy students, Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy shall provide comparable transportation services to each homeless child or youth attending Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy, as noted above. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4).)

If the Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy does not otherwise provide transportation services to all Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy students, Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy shall ensure that transportation is provided for homeless students to and from Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy, at the request of the parent or guardian (or School Liaison), if Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy is the student's school of origin. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J).) Transportation provided by Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy will be adequate and appropriate for the Student's situation, but Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy does not commit to any one method of transportation for all youth.

Professional Development

All administrators, teachers and employees of Sycamore Valley Academy or Blue Oak Academy will be provided professional development on the identification, services, and sensitivity necessary when dealing with homeless children and youth. (42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(3).) All identified or suspected homeless children and youth will be referred to the School Liaison.

Acceptance of Course Work

The 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.

The School will provide homeless students credit for the partial completion of courses taken while attending a public school, a juvenile court school, a school in a country other than the United States, and/or a nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency. If the student did not complete the entire course, the School shall not require the student 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 enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, so that the student may continue and complete the entire course. These students shall not be prevented from taking or retaking a course to meet California State University or the University of California admission eligibility requirements.

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Notice

For any homeless student who seeks enrollment at the School, written notice will be provided to the parent/guardian at the time of enrollment and while the student is enrolled at the School in alignment with the law. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(e)(3)(C).)

Annual Policy Review

The School shall annually review and revise any policies that may act as barriers to the identification of homeless children and youths or the enrollment of homeless children and youths at the School. In reviewing and revising such policies, consideration shall be given to issues concerning transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records and other documentation, and guardianship. Special attention shall be given to ensuring the identification, enrollment, and attendance of homeless children and youths who are not currently attending school.

This policy revision was formally adopted at a meeting of The Academies Charter Management Organization Board of Directors on April 15, 2021.



Alex Tietjen, Board Secretary