



## Education for Homeless Children and Youth Policy

### 1. Purpose

The Alpha Public Schools (“Alpha” or “APS” or the “Charter School”) Governing Board which operates Alpha Cornerstone Academy; Alpha: Blanca Alvarado School; Alpha: Jose Hernandez School; and Alpha: Cindy Avitia High 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.

### 2. 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:

- 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;
- Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;
- Have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; and/or
- 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 Homeless Liaison.

### 3. Homeless Liaison

The APS Homeless Liaison serves students at all four (4) APS schools: Alpha Cornerstone Academy; Alpha: Blanca Alvarado School; Alpha: Jose Hernandez School; and Alpha: Cindy Avitia High School.

The Alpha Board designates the following staff persons as the Liaisons for homeless students (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)):

School	School Liaison
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Alpha: Blanca Alvarado School	Cole Carothers School Operations Manager (408) 316-3287 <a href="mailto:ccarothers@alphaps.org">ccarothers@alphaps.org</a>
Alpha: Cindy Avitia High School	Claudia Flores School Operations Manager (408) 758-1195 <a href="mailto:cflores@alphaps.org">cflores@alphaps.org</a>
Alpha: Cornerstone Academy	Lana Nguyen School Operations Manager (408) 401-9563 <a href="mailto:lnguyen@alphaps.org">lnguyen@alphaps.org</a>
Alpha: José Hernández School	Cecilia Mendoza School Operations Manager (408) 318-1469 <a href="mailto:cmendoza@alphaps.org">cmendoza@alphaps.org</a>

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

- Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
- Homeless students enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed at APS.
- Homeless families, children, and youth 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 APS, if any, and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
- 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.
- 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.
- Enrollment/admissions disputes are mediated in accordance with law, the APS Charter, Board policy, and the dispute resolution provisions.
- Parents/guardians of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, are fully informed of all transportation services, as applicable.
- Assist unaccompanied youth in placement/enrollment decisions.

- Charter School personnel providing services receive professional development and other support.
- Unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that might arise over school enrollment or placement.
- Assist homeless children and youth who do not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records to obtain necessary immunizations, or immunization or medical records.
- The Homeless Liaison collaborates with State coordinators and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youth.
- 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 Homeless 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/>

#### **4. General Assurances**

APS provides the following general assurances:

- Homeless children and youth shall not be segregated into a separate school or program based on their status as homeless and shall not be stigmatized in any way.
- Homeless children and youth shall be provided services comparable to those received by other students in the school, including transportation services, and education programs for which students meet eligibility criteria, such as services provided under Title 1 or similar state and local programs; programs for students with disabilities; programs for students with limited English proficiency; vocational or technical programs; gifted and talented programs; and school nutrition programs.
- APS shall provide homeless students with access to education and other services necessary for these students to meet the same challenging academic standards as other students.
- APS shall provide and post notices of the educational rights of homeless children and youth.

#### **5. Identification and Reporting**

Homeless children and youth will be identified through:



1. The application process for enrollment (self-identification)
2. Charter School personnel recommendations
3. Coordinated activities with other entities and agencies

APS will comply with all federal, state, county (Santa Clara County), and other data collections and reporting requirements regarding homeless children and youth.

## **6. Enrollment**

APS shall immediately admit/enroll the student for which the Charter 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.

APS shall also immediately enroll a homeless youth who seeks to enroll in the Charter School, if the youth would otherwise be eligible to attend and subject to the Charter School's capacity and pursuant to the procedures stated in the APS 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 Principal or designee shall refer the parent/guardian to the Homeless Liaison. The Homeless 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.

## **7. Nutrition Programs**

Homeless students automatically qualify for free breakfast and lunch at APS schools. Families do not have to fill out an application or provide proof of income. Homeless students will be added to the free meals program as soon as they have been identified.

## **8. Transportation**

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

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

## **9. Enrollment Disputes**

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

The APS' Homeless Liaison shall carry out the Board-adopted dispute resolution process and complaint process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).) The Homeless liaison must ensure the dispute resolution process is also followed for unaccompanied youth.

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. He/she shall also be referred to the Homeless Liaison. 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E).) The written explanation shall be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in a language that the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth can understand.

## **10. Professional Development**

All administrators, teachers, and employees of APS 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 Homeless Liaison. Recommended Training is located at : <https://nche.ed.gov/self-paced-online-training/>

## **11. Comparable Services**



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

- Transportation Services applicable
- 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
- Charter School nutrition programs

## **12. High School Graduation Requirements**

Homeless students who transfer to the Charter School any time after the completion of their second year of high school shall be exempt from any of the Charter School's graduation requirements that are in excess of the California minimum graduation requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 ("additional graduation requirements") unless the Charter School makes a finding that the student is reasonably able to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements by the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

To determine whether a homeless student is in their third or fourth year of high school, either the number of credits the student has earned to the date of transfer or the length of the student's school enrollment may be used, whichever will qualify the student for the exemption.

Within thirty (30) calendar days of the date that a student who may qualify for exemption under the above requirements transfers into the Charter School, the Charter School shall notify the student, the student's educational rights holder, and the Homeless Liaison of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies for an exemption.

The Charter School shall notify students who are exempted from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements and the student's educational rights holder of how any of the requirements that are waived will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution and provide information about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.

The Charter School shall not require any student who would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the Charter School to accept the exemption from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements or deny the student enrollment in, or the ability to complete, courses for which the student is otherwise eligible. The Charter School shall not revoke an exemption and shall grant an eligible student's request for the exemption at any time if the student qualifies, regardless of whether the student previously declined the exemption. An eligible student's exemption from the Charter



School's additional graduation requirements will continue to apply while the student is enrolled in the Charter School or if the student transfers to another school even after the student no longer meets the definition of a homeless child.

The Charter School shall not require or request that a student transfer schools in order to qualify the student for the exemption. Nor shall a student, a student's parent/guardian or educational rights holder, or a student's social worker or probation officer request a transfer solely to qualify for an exemption from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements.

If a student who is exempted from the Charter School's additional graduation requirements completes the California minimum coursework requirements specified in Education Code section 51225.3 before the end of the student's fourth year of high school and would otherwise be entitled to remain in attendance at the Charter School, the Charter School shall not require or request that the student graduate before the end of the student's fourth year of high school.

If the Charter School determines the student is reasonably able to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements by the end of the student's fifth year of high school, the Charter School shall do the following:

1. Inform the student of the student's option to remain at the Charter School for a fifth year to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements.
2. Inform the student, and the educational rights holder for the student, about how remaining in school for a fifth year to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution.
3. Provide information to the student about transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges.
4. Permit the student to stay at the Charter School for a fifth year to complete the Charter School's graduation requirements upon agreement with the student, if the student is 18 years of age or older, or, if the student is under 18 years of age, upon agreement with the educational rights holder for the student.

### **13. Acceptance of Course Work**

The 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.

The Charter 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 Charter School shall not require the student to retake the portion of the course the student completed unless the 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 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.

#### **14. Notice**

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

#### **15. Annual Policy Review**

The Charter 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 Charter 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.

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