

Hope Academy of NWA

McKinney Vento Policy

2023-2024

Hope Academy is an open-enrollment charter school whose mission is to provide students with a safe, positive, trauma-centered academic environment that will nurture their love for learning and confidence in life. At Hope Academy, trauma is defined as “detrimental events that have occurred in a child’s life that significantly impact the child’s ability to cognitively and behaviorally function in a classroom setting.” Hope Academy charter school is the expansion of the mission of the Northwest Arkansas Children's Shelter and fills the educational gap that currently exists in Northwest Arkansas for children who have experienced trauma, many of whom have the same profile as the Shelter's current residents. Hope Academy provides specialized, small classes taught by trauma-trained teachers who strive to create a safe environment for the children to learn, cope, manage and thrive. The teachers and staff are specially trained to provide an educational space for learners with unique needs. The team-based approach fosters student success by understanding and meeting physiological, social and emotional needs of students. Hope Academy offers students on-site services including occupational therapy, speech therapy and physical therapy, as well as counseling and behavioral services. Hope Academy currently implements McKinney Vento policy and procedures through enrollment, in the classroom, through family engagement and with support services at the school and off-site. Hope Academy has parents fill out the residency form in the enrollment packet but the McKinney Vento policies and procedures are not specifically in the Handbook at this time.

The Family Engagement Coordinator/McKinney Vento Liaison as well as the teachers and staff at Hope Academy maintain consistent contact with families for communication of academic, behavioral and social emotional progress. Communication fluctuates depending on the needs of the family and the student. The classrooms have 10 students to 2 classroom staff which allows for more attention to students when they need it and this is relayed to the parents. The Family Engagement Coordinator maintains contact with the families regularly to ensure things are going well with the family and with goals that are set at the beginning of the year. Parent training is developed whenever possible throughout the year to all families. The Family Engagement Coordinator/McKinney Vento Liaison is the designated recorder of logging the McKinney Vento families that are helped with hygiene packs, food, clothing and parent training. A detailed narrative log will be kept of what each family and student has received and the status of their progress in finding a home. The Financial Officer will keep track of the expenses in a log with the receipts. Through the data collection in the logs kept by the Family Engagement Coordinator/McKinney Vento Liaison, this information along with collaboration of the multi-disciplinary team (which will be logged by the Family Engagement Coordinator as well) will be used at bi-annual meetings of the team to discuss the progress of the McKinney Vento student and their families and the progress of the plan as well. These meetings will determine what needs improvement and what is working and plan for more activities, training and programs that are appropriate.

The McKinney Vento students at Hope Academy go through the same process as all other students at Hope Academy to determine education and related needs. Standardized testing, records from previous schools, communication from previous teachers and staff and other professionals that worked with the students and parent input, determines the best grade placement. Social/emotional development is also a factor due to Hope Academy being a trauma informed school and trauma can cause behavioral concerns and social/emotional and academic/developmental delays that are all considered in grade placement. All of these factors also help determine what the family's needs are in all areas and the Family Engagement Coordinator maintains contact with the family to help them with resources and the classroom staff and school staff maintains contact with the family to determine

academic needs. The entire team maintains contact to develop a comprehensive plan to address all the needs of the student and the family.

Hope Academy is able to provide support to students and their families that are experiencing homelessness through donations from the community in order to help the families with food, clothing and hygiene products in order for the family and the student that is experiencing homelessness to reduce stress and be prepared for the school day. Academically and social/emotionally, the staff is trauma informed and trained to identify the anxiety and stress that arises from being homeless. The multi-disciplinary team collaborates to develop a plan to support the student and the family and specific staff help to implement it along with the family. Training for parents and the Hope Academy staff, access to hygiene kits, school food pantry and clothes for the families as well as salary support for the McKinney Vento Liaison have been identified as the priority of needs.

The objective is to provide support to families that are in need without having to rely on the donations from the community which is unpredictable and hard to rely on for families that are experiencing homelessness and need staple items while they are homeless as well as when they first find a more permanent home. This helps with the sense of security for the student and in feeling more safe and stable at school as well. Parent training in different topics from parenting through stressful times to behavioral training, can also help build more confidence with parents and reduce stress, anxiety and conflict between parent and the student. Staff training helps build the awareness of homelessness in the student population at the school and how to approach this with students and their parents. It also helps the staff to work better as a team in developing a plan to help the family and the student academically, social/emotionally and behaviorally.