



State Laws on High School Graduation for Students Experiencing Homelessness

The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) places great emphasis on high school graduation for students experiencing homelessness. In addition to strengthening proven practices such as preschool, identification, school stability, and access to extracurricular activities, ESSA's amendments require that:

- States report disaggregated high school graduation and achievement data for students experiencing homelessness;
- States identify and remove barriers that prevent students experiencing homelessness from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with State, local, and school policies;
- McKinney-Vento liaisons implement the state's credit award procedures; and
- State plans describe how youth experiencing homelessness will receive assistance from school counselors to advise, prepare, and improve their readiness for college.

Below is a summary of existing state laws that complement these federal requirements for high school students experiencing homelessness.¹

California [AB 1806](#) (2014) (Ca. Educ. Code §§51225.1 and 51225.2)

- A student experiencing homelessness who transfers school any time after completing the second year of high school is exempted from coursework and other school district of that school district that exceed state requirements, unless the district determines the student is reasonably able to complete the district requirements in time to graduate by the end of the student's fourth year in high school.
- School districts and county offices of education must issue full or partial credit for coursework satisfactorily completed at a previous school for a student experiencing homelessness.
- When partial credit is awarded in a particular course, the student shall be enrolled in the same or equivalent course, if applicable, to complete the entire course.

¹ Please contact Patricia Julianelle at patricia@schoolhouseconnection.org to share information about other state laws that promote high school graduation for students experiencing homelessness.

New Mexico [HB 301](#) (2017)

- A student who changes schools at least once during a single school year as a result of homelessness is entitled to priority placement in classes that meet state graduation requirements, and timely placement in electives comparable to those in which the student was enrolled at the previous school(s).
- For students who change schools at least once during a single year of high school as a result of homelessness, school districts must ensure equal access to participation in sports and other extracurricular activities, career and technical programs or other special programs for which the student qualifies.
- Students who change schools at least once during a single year of high school as a result of homelessness must receive timely assistance and advice from counselors to improve their college and career readiness.

Oregon [HB 3267](#) (2017) (Or. Rev. Stat. §329.451)

- A school district or charter school must waive graduation requirements that exceed state requirements for students who experienced homelessness at any time from grade 9 to 12.
- A school district or charter school must accept any credits earned in another school by a student who experienced homelessness at any time from grade 9 to 12, and apply those credits toward graduation requirements if the credits satisfied graduation requirements in that other school.

Texas [SB 1494](#) (2015) (Tex. Ed. Code §§25.007 and 28.015(i))

- If a junior or senior experiencing homelessness changes schools and is ineligible to graduate from the new district, the prior district shall award a diploma if the student meets the graduation requirements of that district.
- School districts must develop procedures for awarding partial credit for coursework completed at a prior school.
- School districts must develop procedures to allow students experiencing homelessness who was previously enrolled in a course required for graduation the opportunity to complete the course at no cost before the beginning of the next school year, to the extent practicable.
- School districts must ensure that a student experiencing homelessness who is not likely to receive a high school diploma before the fifth year in high school has the student's credit accrual and personal graduation plan reviewed.

- School districts must promote practices that facilitate access to extracurricular and summer programs, credit transfer and electronic course services, and after-school tutoring at nominal or no cost.
- School districts must establish procedures to lessen the impact of school transfers.
- Schools must develop systems to ease the transition of students experiencing homelessness during the first two weeks at a new school.

Washington [SB 5241](#) (2017) (Rev. Code Wa. §28A.320.192)

- School districts must waive courses required for graduation if similar coursework has been satisfactorily completed in another school district, or provide an alternative means for the student to graduate on time.
- School districts must consolidate partial credit and other incomplete coursework and provide opportunities for credit accrual in a manner that eliminates academic and nonacademic barriers for the student.
- School districts must grant and accept partial credits for coursework completed prior to withdrawal or transfer.
- Students must be able to earn credits regardless of the date of enrollment in a school.
- If a student who transfers at the beginning of junior year of high school or later is ineligible to graduate from the new school district, the former district must award a diploma if the student meets the graduation requirements of the former district.
- The state educational agency must adopt rules to implement these provisions.