

OVERVIEW OF STUDENT ENROLLMENT POLICY

A student enrolled in Buncombe County Schools must live with a parent or legal guardian. Buncombe County Schools will consider enrollment for students whose parents retain custody but place their child with another person, relative, foster home, or group home only in these specific circumstances:

- The death, serious illness, or incarceration of the parent or legal guardian; or
- The abandonment by a parent or legal guardian of the complete control of the student evidenced by the failure to provide substantial financial support and parental guidance; or
- Abuse or neglect by a parent or legal guardian (requires adjudication or court order); or
- The physical or mental condition of the parent or guardian is such that he/she cannot provide adequate care and supervision of the student. Documentation of this condition should be obtained when possible; or
- The relinquishment of physical custody and control of the student by the student's parent or legal guardian upon the recommendation of the Department of Social Services or the Division of Mental Health or an agency licensed by the Division of Mental Health. A written recommendation for placement in foster care, group home, kinship or other placement must be provided by the referring agency when completing the Affidavit; or
- The loss or uninhabitability of the student's home as the result of a natural disaster; or
- The parent or legal guardian is on active military duty for longer than a 30 day period and is deployed out of the local school administrative unit in which the student resides. Requires documentation of deployment.

This policy is prescribed by 1) North Carolina law, 2) the Buncombe County School Board, and by 3) internal policy.

1. According to NC General Statute 115C, unless a student situation qualifies for one of the above exceptions, the student must be domiciled with the parent or legal custodian. Section h (6) also notes that a legal custodian is the person or agency that has been awarded legal custody of the student by a court.
2. In the United States, school board policy holds the same force of law equal to statutes or ordinances. Buncombe County Schools' Board Policy is very specific about student enrollment. Policy 410 states that students must attend school in the district in which their parent or legal guardians are domiciled except in the case of the listed exceptions.
3. The internal Student Enrollment Policy for Buncombe County Schools instructs staff on the proper procedure to enroll students, according to state law and Board Policy.

Excerpts from each of these 3 documents are attached.

1) Excerpt of NC General Statute § 115C-366:

Assignment of student to a particular school.

(a) All students under the age of 21 years who are domiciled in a school administrative unit who have not been removed from school for cause, or who have not obtained a high school diploma, are entitled to all the privileges and advantages of the public schools to which they are assigned by the local boards of education. The assignment of students living in one local school administrative unit or district to a school located in another local school administrative unit or district, shall have no effect upon the right of the local school administrative unit or district to which the students are assigned to levy and collect any supplemental tax heretofore or hereafter voted in that local school administrative unit or district.

(a1) Children living in and cared for and supported by an institution established, operated, or incorporated for the purpose of rearing and caring for children who do not live with their parents are considered legal residents of the local school administrative unit in which the institution is located. These children are eligible for admission to the public schools of the local school administrative unit as provided in this section.

(a2) It is the policy of the State that every child of a homeless individual and every homeless child and youth has access to a free, appropriate public education. The State Board of Education and every local board of education shall ensure compliance with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001. A local board of education shall not charge a homeless child or youth tuition for enrollment. An unaccompanied youth or a homeless child's or youth's parent, guardian, or legal custodian may apply to the State Board of Education for a determination of whether a particular local board of education shall enroll the homeless child or youth, and this determination shall be binding on the local board of education, subject to judicial review.

(a3) A student who is not a domiciliary of a local school administrative unit may attend, without the payment of tuition, the public schools of that unit if all of the following apply:

(1) The student resides with an adult, who is a domiciliary of that unit, as a result of any one of the following:

- a. The death, serious illness, or incarceration of a parent or legal guardian,
- b. The abandonment by a parent or legal guardian of the complete control of the student as evidenced by the failure to provide substantial financial support and parental guidance,
- c. Abuse or neglect by the parent or legal guardian,
- d. The physical or mental condition of the parent or legal guardian is such that he or she cannot provide adequate care and supervision of the student,
- e. The relinquishment of physical custody and control of the student by the student's parent or legal guardian upon the recommendation of the department of social services or the Division of Mental Health,
- f. The loss or uninhabitability of the student's home as the result of a natural disaster, or
- g. The parent or legal guardian is one of the following:
 - (1) On active military duty and is deployed out of the local school administrative unit in which the student resides;
 - (2) A member or veteran of the uniformed services who is severely injured and medically discharged or retired, but only for a period of one year after the medical discharge or retirement of the parent or guardian; or
 - (3) A member of the uniformed services who dies on active duty or as a result of injuries sustained on active duty, but only for a period of one year after death.

For purposes of this sub-subdivision, the term "active duty" does not include periods of active duty for training for less than 30 days. Assignment under this sub-subdivision is only available if some evidence of the deployment is tendered with the affidavits required under subdivision (3) of this subsection.

(2) The student is:

- a. Not currently under a term of suspension or expulsion from a school for conduct that could have led to a suspension or an expulsion from the local school administrative unit, or
- b. Currently under a term of suspension or expulsion from a school for conduct that could have led to a suspension or an expulsion from the local school administrative unit and is identified as eligible for special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400, et seq., (2004). Assignment under this sub-subdivision is available only if evidence of current eligibility is tendered with the affidavit required under subdivision (3) of this subsection.

(3) The caregiver adult and the student's parent, guardian, or legal custodian have each completed and signed separate affidavits that:

- a. Confirm the qualifications set out in this subsection establishing the student's residency,

- b. Attest that the student's claim of residency in the unit is not primarily related to attendance at a particular school within the unit, and
- c. Attest that the caregiver adult has been given and accepts responsibility for educational decisions for the student.

If the student's parent, guardian, or legal custodian is unable, refuses, or is otherwise unavailable to sign the affidavit, then the caregiver adult shall attest to that fact in the affidavit. If the student is a minor, the caregiver adult must make educational decisions concerning the student and has the same legal authority and responsibility regarding the student as a parent or legal custodian would have even if the parent, guardian, or legal custodian does not sign the affidavit. The minor student's parent, legal guardian, or legal custodian retains liability for the student's acts.

Upon receipt of both affidavits or an affidavit from the caregiver adult that includes an attestation that the student's parent, guardian, or legal custodian is unable, refuses, or is otherwise unavailable to sign an affidavit, the local board shall admit and assign as soon as practicable the student to an appropriate school, as determined under the local board's school assignment policy, pending the results of any further procedures for verifying eligibility for attendance and assignment within the local school administrative unit.

If it is found that the information contained in either or both affidavits is false, then the local board may, unless the student is otherwise eligible for school attendance under other laws or local board policy, remove the student from school. If a student is removed from school, the board shall provide an opportunity to appeal the removal under the appropriate policy of the local board and shall notify any person who signed the affidavit of this opportunity. If it is found that a person willfully and knowingly provided false information in the affidavit, the maker of the affidavit shall be guilty of a Class 1 misdemeanor and shall pay to the local board an amount equal to the cost of educating the student during the period of enrollment. Repayment shall not include State funds.

Affidavits shall include, in large print, the penalty, including repayment of the cost of educating the student, for providing false information in an affidavit.

(a4) When a student transfers into the public schools of a local school administrative unit, that local board shall require the student's parent, guardian, or legal custodian to provide a statement made under oath or affirmation before a qualified official indicating whether the student is, at the time, under suspension or expulsion from attendance at a private or public school in this or any other state or has been convicted of a felony in this or any other state. This subsection does not apply to the enrollment of a student who has never been enrolled in or attended a private or public school in this or any other state.

(a5) Notwithstanding any other law, a local board may deny admission to or place reasonable conditions on the admission of a student who has been suspended from a school under G.S. 115C-391 or who has been suspended from a school for conduct that could have led to a suspension from a school within the local school administrative unit where the student is seeking admission until the period of suspension has expired. Also, a local board may deny admission to or place reasonable conditions on the admission of a student who has been expelled from a school under G.S. 115C-391 or who has been expelled from a school for behavior that indicated the student's continued presence in school constituted a clear threat to the safety of other students or employees or who has been convicted of a felony in this or any other state. If the local board denies admission to a student who has been expelled or convicted of a felony, the student may request the local board to reconsider that decision in accordance with G.S. 115C-391(d). When a student who has been identified as eligible to receive special education and related services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act, 20 U.S.C. § 1400, et seq., (2004), is denied admission under this subsection, the local board shall provide educational services to the student to the same extent it would if the student were enrolled in the local school administrative unit at the time of the suspension or expulsion, as required by G.S. 115C-107.1(a)(3).

(a6) A child who is placed in or assigned to a licensed facility is eligible for admission, without the payment of tuition, to the public schools of the local school administrative unit in which the licensed facility is located. If an agency or person, other than the student's parent or guardian, is the student's legal custodian and if that person or agency placed or assigned the student to a licensed facility under this subsection, then that agency or person must provide in writing to the school the name, address, and phone number of the individual who has authority and the responsibility to make educational decisions for the student. This individual shall reside or be employed within the local school administrative unit and shall provide in writing to the school a signed statement that the individual understands and accepts this authority and responsibility to make educational decisions for the student. If the student's parent or legal guardian retains legal custody of a child who is placed in or assigned to a licensed facility under this subsection, then the requirements of subsection (a3) of this section must be met.

(a7) A student who is a resident of a local school administrative unit because the student resides with a parent, guardian, or legal custodian who is a (i) student, employee, or faculty member of a college or university or (ii) visiting scholar at the National Humanities Center is considered domiciled in that unit for purposes of this section.

(a8) A student is considered domiciled in a local school administrative unit for purposes of this section if the student resides (i) with a legal custodian who is not the student's parent or guardian and the legal custodian is domiciled in the local school administrative unit, or (ii) in a preadoptive home following placement by a county department of social services or a licensed child-placing agency.

(b) Each local board of education shall assign to a public school each student qualified for assignment under this section. Except as otherwise provided by law, the authority of each board of education in the matter of assignment of children to the public schools shall be full and complete, and its decision as to the assignment of any child to any school shall be final.

(c) Any child who is qualified under the laws of this State for admission to a public school and who has a place of residence in a local school administrative unit incident to the child's parent's or guardian's service in the General Assembly, other than the local school administrative unit in which the child is domiciled, is entitled to attend school in the local school administrative unit of that residence as if the child were domiciled there, subject to the payment of applicable out-of-county fees in effect at the time.

(d) A student domiciled in one local school administrative unit may be assigned either with or without the payment of tuition to a public school in another local school administrative unit upon the terms and conditions agreed to in writing between the local boards of education involved and entered in the official records of the boards. The assignment shall be effective only for the current school year, but may be renewed annually in the discretion of the boards involved.

(e) The boards of education of adjacent local school administrative units may operate schools in adjacent units upon written agreements between the respective boards of education and approval by the county commissioners and the State Board of Education.

(f) This section shall not be construed to allow students to transfer from one local school administrative unit to another for athletic participation purposes in violation of eligibility requirements established by the State Board of Education and the North Carolina High School Athletic Association.

(g) Any local school administrative unit may use the actual address of a program participant for any purpose related to admission or assignment under this Article as long as the address is kept confidential from the public under Chapter 15C of the General Statutes. The substitute address designated by the Attorney General under the Address Confidentiality Program shall not be used as an address for admission or assignment purposes.

(h) The following definitions apply in this section:

- (1) Abused or neglected. – A student is considered abused or neglected if there has been an adjudication of that issue. The State Board may adopt an additional definition of abuse and neglect, and that definition also shall apply to this section.
- (2) Caregiver adult. – The adult with whom the child resides. For children placed or assigned in a licensed facility, a caregiver adult also may be the child's caretaker, foster parent, or other clearly identifiable adult who resides in the county where the licensed facility is located.
- (3) Educational decisions. – Decisions or actions recommended or required by the school concerning the student's academic course of study, extracurricular activities, and conduct. These decisions or actions include enrolling the student, receiving and responding to notices of discipline under G.S. 115C-391, attending conferences with school personnel, granting permission for school-related activities, granting permission for emergency medical care, receiving and taking appropriate action in connection with student records, and any other decisions or actions recommended or required by the school in connection to that student.
- (4) Facility. – A group home, a family foster home as defined in G.S. 131D-10.2(8), or a therapeutic foster home as defined in G.S. 131D-10.2(14).
- (5) Homeless. – Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or are included in the definition of homeless children and youths in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001. The term does not include persons who are imprisoned or otherwise detained pursuant to federal or State law.
- (6) Legal custodian. – The person or agency that has been awarded legal custody of the student by a court.
- (7) Licensed facility. – A facility licensed under Article 2 of Chapter 122C of the General Statutes or under Article 1A of Chapter 131D of the General Statutes.
- (8) McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001. – 20 U.S.C. § 11431, et seq., as amended, and federal regulations adopted under this act.
- (9) Program participant. – An individual accepted into the Address Confidentiality Program under Chapter 15C of the General Statutes.
- (10) Unaccompanied youth. – Youths who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian as defined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001. (1955, c. 366, s. 1; c. 1372, art. 19, s. 3; 1956, Ex. Sess., c. 7, s. 1; 1971, c. 153; 1981, c. 423, s. 1; c. 567, s. 1; 1991, c. 407, s. 1; c. 719, s. 2; 1997-271, s. 1; 1997-443, s. 8.29(d); 2002-171, s. 5; 2006-65, s. 1; 2007-283, s. 1; 2008-185, s. 2; 2008-187, s. 19; 2009-331, ss. 1, 2.)

2) Excerpt from Buncombe County Board of Education Policy 410:

ASSIGNMENT, REASSIGNMENT, AND TRANSFER OF STUDENTS TO SCHOOLS

I. Assignments

All students in the Buncombe County Schools' Administrative Unit shall attend school in the school attendance zone or district in which the student's parent(s) or legal guardian(s) are domiciled, unless otherwise assigned by the Buncombe County Board of Education.

Under no circumstances can a student have more than one domicile for the purposes of attendance. The domicile of any student shall be deemed to be that of his parents or the sole supervising parent. In the event the parents are separated or divorced, the domicile of the student shall be that of the parent to whom custody has been awarded by a court of competent jurisdiction. If no custody order has been entered, the domicile shall be deemed to be that of the parent who had actual custody immediately upon the separation.

A. Exceptions. The following are statutorily created exceptions to the domicile requirement:

1. G. S. 115C-366.2 provides that a child whose parent or guardian is a student, employee, or faculty member of a college or university or a visiting scholar at the National Humanities Center need only be a resident of the school district in order to attend its schools. 2. G.S. 115C-366.2 also provides that a child who is placed in or assigned to a group home, foster home, or similar facility need only be a resident of the school district in order to attend its schools. 3. Federal and State law provides that state educational agencies are required to provide education to children of homeless individuals and to homeless youths regardless of their domicile. This exception is limited to "homeless individuals" as they are defined by the *Homeless Assistance Act*, 42 U.S.C. Section 11431 (also known as the *McKinney Act*). [Ref. GS 115c-366(a2)]

Adopted – August 6, 1992 Ref. – G.S. 115C-366.2 Page 1 of 6 Pages

Revised – August 5, 1993 G.S. 115C-366.2

Revised – June 2, 1994 42 U.S.C. Section 11431

Revised – Nov. 2, 2000 G.S. 115C-366(a2)

Revised - February 7, 2008 G.S. 115c-369

3) Excerpt from Buncombe County Schools' Internal Enrollment Procedures Guide:

CUSTODY/DOMICILE

Any child who enrolls in a Buncombe County School must be domiciled with his/her natural parent(s), custodial parent, or designated legal guardian and attend the school in that parent's attendance area unless otherwise assigned by the Buncombe County Board of Education. **Board of Education Policy 410** defines the domicile of any student as that of the parents or sole supervising parent. No student may have more than one domicile for the purpose of attendance. Policy 410 also states that in the event that parents are separated or divorced, the domicile of the student shall be that of the parent to whom custody has been awarded by a court of competent jurisdiction. If no custody order has been entered, the domicile shall be deemed that of the parent who had actual custody immediately upon separation.

In the case of joint custody awarded by the court to both parents, the child will attend school in the attendance area of the parent/person designated as the primary custodian. If no one is designated as the primary custodian, then there must be an agreement between the two parties as to the school placement of the child. Whenever there is a question concerning custody of a minor child that cannot be determined by the school, refer the family to the Student Services office for assistance.

Notarized statements of transfer of parental responsibility or power of attorney statements will not be accepted as proof of legal guardianship. These documents are only agreements between a parent and a designated caregiver. Anyone other than parents who are enrolling a student must either have legal custody or guardianship assigned by the court (with the signature of a District judge) or meet one or more of the criteria in Affidavits B or C (see appendix B).

The parent(s) may petition the court to give custody or legal guardianship to a friend or relative. Upon receipt of a letter from an attorney's office indicating that a petition for custody change is being filed, the student may be enrolled and parent(s) have 90 days for this custody change to be completed. If this is not completed within 90 days, the parent(s)/caregiver should be notified that the student must return to the school where the custodial parent resides.