

Considerations for Determining Best Interest

Homeless liaisons can use this checklist and questions to determine the school that is in the student's best interest to attend. For more strategies and tips on school selection, review the NCHS [School Selection and Best Interest Determination](#) brief.

School of Origin Considerations

Continuity of instruction

- The student would be served best at the school of origin due to circumstances in their past.

Age and grade placement of the student

- Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has been in this environment for an extended period of time.

Academic strength

- The student is facing significant challenges with their academic performance, and the student would fall further behind if they transferred to another school.

Social and emotional state

- The student is suffering mentally and emotionally from the effects of mobility, has developed strong ties to the current school, and does not want to leave.

Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education

- The advantages of continuing to attend the school of origin outweigh any potential disadvantages presented by the length of the commute.

Local School Considerations

Continuity of instruction

- The student would be served best at the local school due to circumstances in their past.

Age and grade placement of the student

- Maintaining friends and contacts with peers in the school of origin is not particularly critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has attended the school of origin for only a brief time.

Academic strength

- The student's academic performance is strong and at grade level; the student likely would recover academically from a school transfer.

Social and emotional state

- The student seems to be coping adequately with mobility, does not feel strong ties to the current school, and does not mind transferring.

Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education

- A shorter commute may help the student's concentration, attitude, or readiness for school. The local school can meet all of the necessary educational and special needs of the student.

School of Origin Considerations

Personal safety of the student

- The school of origin has advantages for the safety of the student.

Parent and guardian preference

- Parents and guardians experiencing homelessness have the right to have their voices heard on what they believe is in the best interest of their children, and their preference is for their child to attend their school of origin.

Student's need for special instruction

- The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the school of origin.

Local School Considerations

Personal safety of the student

- The local school has advantages for the safety of the student.

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- Parents and guardians experiencing homelessness have the right to have their voices heard on what they believe is in the best interest of their children, and their preference is for their child to attend their local school.

Student's need for special instruction

- The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the local attendance area school.

Questions to Ask When Determining Best Interest

- How permanent does the family's current living arrangement appear to be?
- How deep are the child's or youth's ties to his or her current school?
- How anxious is the child or youth about an upcoming or recent move?
- How has the student been set up for success in their academic learning? Are they facing any academic challenges?
- How do the programs and activities at the local school compare to those at the school of origin?
- Does one school have programs and activities that address the unique needs or interests of the student that the other school does not have?
- Would the timing of the school transfer coincide with a logical juncture, such as after testing, after an event significant to the child or youth, or at the end of the school year?
- What are the parents' or guardians' preferences for schools?
- How would the length of the commute to and from the school of origin impact the child's or youth's education?
- Are there any safety issues to consider?