



Boston Public Schools

## Boston Public Schools Residency Policy

### ANSWERS TO FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

#### **What is the BPS residency policy?**

In 2004, the Boston School Committee approved a new residency policy for all Boston Public Schools (BPS). The new policy, recommended by Superintendent Thomas W. Payzant, is designed to help ensure that only families who live in Boston have full access to educational opportunities offered by the Boston Public Schools. The policy includes a more specific definition of "residency" for all Boston Public Schools, more stringent requirements for proof of residency, and stricter penalties for families found to be in violation of the residency policy.

#### **How is Boston "residency" defined?**

In order to attend Boston Public Schools, a student must actually reside in the City of Boston. "Residence" is the place where a person dwells permanently, not temporarily, and is the place that is the center of his or her domestic, social, and civic life. Temporary residence in the City of Boston, solely for the purpose of attending a Boston public school, shall not be considered residency.

The residence of a minor child is presumed to be the legal residence of the parent(s) or guardian(s) who have physical custody of the child. Any student 18 years or older may establish a residence apart from his or her parent(s) or guardian(s) for school attendance purposes.

#### **How does BPS verify Boston residency?**

Families registering for the Boston Public Schools or submitting a change of address must demonstrate Boston residency by submitting one document from each of three categories (see below). Call any Family Resource Center (FRC) or check the BPS web site ([www.bostonpublicschools.org/residency](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/residency)) for a complete list of acceptable proofs of residency.

In order to verify residency, BPS reserves the right to request additional documents and/or to conduct an investigation. Because residency can change for students and their families during the school year, BPS may verify residency at any time.

#### **What if I don't have the required proofs of residency with me when I register?**

All new applicants are required to submit the required three proofs. Applicants who do not have the required documents will be asked to return to the center with the

appropriate materials in order to register. FRC staff will not accept any substitutions for items on the list of acceptable proofs.

#### **What if I don't have a lease?**

If you are a tenant at will ("month-to-month") and do not have a written lease, ask your landlord to complete and sign the landlord/shared tenancy affidavit, available at any FRC or at [www.bostonpublicschools.org/residency](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/residency). This, along with evidence of your most recent rent payment, will fulfill the proof of residency requirement for Column A. Your landlord does not have to be present when you register, and the affidavit does not have to be notarized.

#### **What can I use for proof of recent rent or mortgage payment?**

You may present a copy of a money order, cancelled check, or rent receipt. You also may present a copy of a bank statement that shows an automatic deduction for rent or mortgage payment.

#### **What if I own my home but do not have a copy of the deed?**

Contact the financial institution that handles your mortgage or the Suffolk County Registry of Deeds (24 New Chardon St., Boston, [www.suffolkdeeds.com](http://www.suffolkdeeds.com), 617-788-8575).

#### **What if I own a home but do not pay a mortgage (i.e., the home is paid for)?**

If you no longer pay a mortgage on your home, you must submit a copy of the property deed, along with a copy of the discharge of mortgage. This will satisfy your proof of residency requirement for Column A.

#### **What if I do not pay for utilities, or if none of the utility bills are in my name?**

If you live in a household where all utilities are in someone else's name, AND if this is noted on your lease or landlord/shared tenancy affidavit, then you may submit proof of residency from Column B in the name of your landlord or the person you live with. If your lease specifies that all utilities are included, and you do not have a land-line telephone or cable television, FRC staff will verify this information and your application will be processed.

### **Is a cell phone bill an acceptable document to satisfy Column B?**

No. Only a home telephone (“land-line”) bill satisfies this requirement.

### **What if I have recently moved and have not yet received any utility bills?**

To fulfill the requirements of Column B, you also may submit a work order from any utility company stating that your service has been ordered or installed.

### **What if I cannot produce all three required proofs?**

If your personal circumstances make it impossible for you to provide proof of residency from each of the three columns, consult the staff at the FRC. Bring copies of any proofs of residency you have, and describe the circumstances that prevent you from having the required proofs. Staff will work with you, and if necessary, fill out an application for appeal. All appeal applications will be reviewed by the FRC Director and submitted to the Superintendent’s Office for decision.

### **What if I live with a friend or relative?**

If you share housing with a friend or relative, you may use the landlord/shared tenancy affidavit (available on the web site and at FRCs) to fulfill the proof of residency requirement in Column A. Ask your friend or relative complete and sign the affidavit to affirm your residence.

If you are temporarily “doubled up” with a friend or relative due to economic hardship, loss of housing, or a similar reason, you may qualify as homeless under the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act. Homeless families are not required to produce the same proofs of residency. Please contact the BPS Homeless Student Initiative (617-635-8037) or FRC staff for assistance in registering your child.

### **What if my family is homeless?**

The proof of residency policy does not apply to homeless students and families. Contact the BPS Homeless Student Initiative (617-635-8037) or visit a FRC for assistance with registering your child. If you are staying in a shelter, bring a letter from the shelter staff stating that you are living there.

### **What if I am an undocumented immigrant?**

Any child whose family lives in the City of Boston is guaranteed access to a free public education in the Boston Public Schools. No family will be denied access to school because of their immigration status. Undocumented immigrant families living with friends or relatives may be considered “homeless” (see above).

### **Will documents that I submit to prove residency remain confidential?**

All documents submitted to prove residency will be marked with the student's name and considered part of his or her confidential record. The BPS will adhere to the standards of confidentiality set forth in state and federal laws in maintenance of these records. For more information about the confidentiality of student records, refer to *A Guide to the Boston Public Schools for Families and Students*.

### **How does the new residency policy apply to the exam schools?**

Like all BPS students, exam school students must live in the City of Boston in order to attend the school. The new residency policy requires that all applicants to the three exam schools (Boston Latin Academy, the O'Bryant School of Mathematics & Science and Boston Latin School) who are not currently enrolled in BPS must prove Boston residency no later than the first Friday in February to attend school the following September. Applicants who have not provided proof of Boston residency by the first Friday in February will not be considered for invitation to any exam school. If you have questions about the exam school admissions process, call 617-635-9512.

### **How can I report a suspected violation of the residency policy?**

Families, staff, students and others can report possible residency violations by calling the anonymous *Residency Tip Line*, 617-635-6775.

### **What are the consequences of residency fraud?**

Any student who is discovered not to reside in the City of Boston will be dismissed from the Boston Public Schools. Additional penalties – including fines and legal action – may be imposed on families found to be in violation of the residency policy. The student’s family may appeal this determination first through the Ombudsperson, next through the Chief Operating Officer, whose decision shall be final. A student may remain in school until all administrative appeals are exhausted.

### **If you have additional questions...**

... call or visit a Family Resource Center:

- North Zone (Roxbury) 617-635-9010
- East Zone (Dorchester) 617-635-8015
- West Zone (Roslindale) 617-635-8040

... or visit the BPS web site:

[www.bostonpublicschools.org/residency](http://www.bostonpublicschools.org/residency)