District Gets Tough on Address Fraud
Offers Amnesty Period through November 20, 2010

November 2, 2010 (San Francisco) – Since last March, the SFUSD has investigated and identified the families of 200 students who falsified their residency information when applying for San Francisco public schools. Those families were informed that their children’s enrollment has been cancelled, and that they must reimburse the district for any costs associated with investigating their false residency claims. These same families could also face civil or criminal prosecution for making false statements regarding residency in the school application process.

This week, letters are being sent to 35,000 households of students currently enrolled in SFUSD. The letter will explain that families who obtained enrollment for their child through a false residency claim will now have a one-time amnesty period (until November 20, 2010) to declare their true residency.

In the letter, Superintendent Carlos Garcia writes, “We understand that parents falsely claiming San Francisco residency may have the best possible motives, namely, to obtain the best education for their children. However, by securing a spot through a false residency claim, parents committing address fraud are displacing San Francisco children whose parents have the same hopes for their children, and who, in many cases, have been turned away from their desired schools after having diligently followed the rules.”

Families with false address information on their applications must come to the Educational Placement Center (EPC) and fill out a Change of Address form with proper verification of their true residence.

Families who come forward voluntarily with their true residence will be given the opportunity to complete the remainder of the semester in their child’s present SFUSD school. They will not be charged investigation reimbursement costs and will not be prosecuted for making false statements to the district prior to that date. The amnesty period does not apply to families who have already been contacted by the district regarding a finding of false residency.

In preparation for instituting a new student placement system, the district has significantly increased its ability to verify all documentation submitted by families during the application process and to prove that an applicant falsified information.

SFUSD does have a procedure, called interdistrict transfer, for those outside the city to obtain admission to a San Francisco public school. However, interdistrict transfer is available only after students who live in the city are placed in the schools to which they have applied.

(more)
Frequently Asked Questions About Residency Fraud

What is considered to be “true residency”?
A San Francisco resident is an individual who is a full time occupant of a dwelling located in San Francisco who, on any given day, is likely to be at their stated address when not in work or in school. A minor’s residence is presumed to be the legal residence of the parent(s) or guardian(s) who have physical custody of the minor. Temporary residence in San Francisco, solely for the purpose of attending a SFUSD school, shall not be considered residency.

How does the Amnesty Period work?
The Amnesty Period is a one-time opportunity for families committing residency fraud to come forward by filling out a Change of Address form at the EPC and bringing appropriate documents to verify residency. This needs to be completed by November 20, 2010.

If a family takes advantage of the Amnesty Period, the child(ren) will be allowed to finish up the Fall semester in their current school. If the residence is outside of the City, an interdistrict permit to continue in SFUSD will be approved by SFUSD until the end of the semester. Additionally, the District will not initiate an address investigation and will not pursue investigative costs and possible civil and criminal action.

At the end of the semester, the child(ren) who live in another city will be withdrawn from their current school and must apply for enrollment in their district of residence or re-apply with an interdistrict transfer for enrollment into another SFUSD school that is not over-subscribed.

I live outside of San Francisco, but I also own property in the City. Can I use my San Francisco address to enroll in school in SFUSD since I pay taxes in the City?
A person who owns property in San Francisco, but does not reside in San Francisco, is not considered a resident. Business addresses may not be used as residences.

What is residency fraud?
Parent(s)/Guardian(s) are committing residency fraud if they submit an address that is not their true residence in the application and enrollment process or in other documents submitted to the District.

What happens if the parents do not live together?
If the parents are separated and live at different addresses, the student must physically reside with the custodial parent at the reported San Francisco address for at least 50% of the time.

What happens if the District investigates and I am caught using a false address?
The student will be withdrawn from school and the parent must reimburse the District for investigative costs. In the past, these costs have ranged from $400 to $5000. The District may also pursue civil or criminal action against anyone making false claims.

If the child does not reside in the City, they must enroll into their district of residence. An interdistrict permit will not be approved for enrollment into SFUSD for one year after revocation of enrollment due to fraud.

What if I do not come forward during the Amnesty Period?
The District will continue to investigate residency fraud. If it is revealed that a child is enrolled using a false address (or any other false information provided to the District) the child(ren) will be withdrawn from school, the family will be responsible for all investigative costs, and the District may pursue civil and criminal action.

Can my child enroll into a SFUSD school if we live outside of San Francisco?
Any child may apply for an interdistrict permit request if they live outside of San Francisco. Non-residents do not participate in the regular enrollment process. Placement into schools will be granted only after all SF residents have been placed, usually in June or July, on a space-available basis.

However, with the exception of the Amnesty Period, if enrollment is revoked based on residency fraud or other false claims, an interdistrict permit to attend school in San Francisco will not be granted for one year after revocation.

**If the District alleges that I may have used a false address, can I challenge the decision?**
If the parent/guardian feels that the District's decision to revoke enrollment was made in error, s/he may submit a letter and supporting evidence to the EPC within 7 days of notification to challenge the decision. The parent will receive a meeting with a representative from the EPC to discuss the challenge. The district will respond within a reasonable amount of time to notify the parent/guardian of whether the decision to revoke enrollment has been sustained or reversed. The student will remain enrolled in school until the decision to revoke enrollment is sustained or reversed. This decision shall be final. It is likely that a challenge will result in additional investigative costs and parents will be responsible for the additional costs if the revocation is upheld.

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