

**Virtual Learning Academy of St. Clair County (VLA)
Board of Education Policy**

**Homeless Students
(McKinney-Vento Homeless Act)**

The Virtual Learning Academy is committed to identifying homeless children and youth and providing a free and appropriate public education in the same manner received by all students of the Academy.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines “homeless children and youths” as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” Lacking any one of these three conditions would make a child or youth eligible. Determining whether or not a child or youth meets the “definition” of homeless must be determined on a case by case basis. The following list of examples included in the law, are not meant to be exclusive but are meant to address some of the more common situations of homelessness.

1. Children or youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or abandoned in hospitals.
2. Children or youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
3. Children or youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings.
4. Migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances as described.
5. An unaccompanied youth, who fit the definition of homeless as defined in the McKinney-Vento Act, are also eligible for services.

Homeless pre-school aged children and their families shall be provided equal access to educational services for which they are eligible, including pre-school programs provided by the district.

The VLA shall remove the barriers with respect to the immediate enrollment, retention; including attendance and the education of homeless children and youths.

1. Ensure that homeless children and youths are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their homelessness.
2. Designate an appropriate staff person to serve as the liaison for homeless children and youths, to ensure that:
 - a. The VLA will enroll homeless children and youths in homeless situations immediately, even if they do not have documents normally required for enrollment, such as previous school records, medical or immunization records. Proof of residency, proof of guardianship, birth certificate, or other documents.

- i. The McKinney-Vento act defines the term “enroll” as attending classes and participating fully in school activities.
 - b. Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
 - c. Homeless children and youths enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools of the local educational agency.
 - d. Homeless families, children and youths receive educational services for which such families, children and youths are eligible, including Head Start and preschool programs administered by the local districts, and referrals to State agencies including but not limited to health care, dental, mental health and appropriate services.
 - e. The parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
 - f. Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth will be disseminated where such children and youth receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act.
 - g. Enrollment disputes will be mediated in accordance with the Educational Agency requirements of implementing a coordinated system for ensuring that homeless children and youths:
 - i. Are advised of the choice of schools provided.
 - ii. Transportation services. (The parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to and from the school.)
 - iii. Educational services for which the homeless children or youths meet the eligibility criteria including services provided under Title I, educational services for children with disabilities and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency.
 - iv. Programs in vocational and technical education.
 - v. Programs for gifted and talented students.
 - vi. School nutrition programs.
 - vii. Before and after school programs.
3. Homeless children and youths have the right to remain in their school of origin or in the local attendance area school, which is determined by the needs of the student. The school of origin is the school the child attended while in permanent residence or was last enrolled. The local attendance area school is any public school that a non-homeless student would attend based upon the attendance area in which the student is actually living; are eligible to attend.

4. Homeless children and youths have the right to dispute a school assignment if the assigned school is other than their school of origin. In determining what is in the best interest of the homeless child or youth the VLA shall, to the best of its ability, keep the student in their school of origin; except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the homeless children and youth's parent or guardian or, an unaccompanied youth, or at the request of the VLA's homeless education liaison. The VLA Board of Education requires a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, to be provided to the homeless parent or guardian, or the unaccompanied youth, if the student is sent to a school other than the school origin or a school is requested by the parent or guardian.
5. The parent or guardian, unaccompanied youth or the local homeless liaison may request transportation be provided to and from the school of origin as follows:
 - a. If the homeless student continues to live in the district of the homeless student's school of origin; transportation will be provided in accordance with the VLA's transportation policy and administrative guidelines.
 - b. If the homeless student must move to an area served by another district but continues their education at the school of origin, both the district in which the homeless student resides and the school of origin must agree upon a method to distribute the responsibilities and costs for transportation to the school of origin. If the districts cannot agree, the responsibility and costs must be shared equally.

Board Approved: March 8, 2017

42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq. (McKinney-Vento Homeless Act), 42 U.S.C. § 11434(1), 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii), 42 U.S.C. § 11434A(6), 42 U.S.C. §§ 11432(g)(H)(iv)