



McKinney-Vento Homeless Act Plan and Protocol 2023-2024

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Section 1: Overview

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act was authorized in 1987 and most recently re-authorized in December 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The McKinney-Vento is designed to address challenges that homeless children and youth face in enrolling, attending and succeeding in school. The new or changed requirements focus on;

1. Identification of homeless children and youth;
2. Preschool-aged homeless children and their families have access to and receive services under LEA preschool programs, including Head Start, Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Early Intervention Program for infants and toddlers with Disabilities and other programs administered by the LEA;
3. Collaboration and coordination with other service providers, including public and private child welfare and social services agencies; law enforcement agencies, juvenile and family courts, mental health services, domestic violence agencies, child care under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act; and providers of emergency, transitional and permanent housing, including public housing agencies, shelter operators, and operators of transitional housing facilities.
4. Professional development and technical assistance at both the State and local levels.
5. Removing enrollment barriers, including barriers related to missed application or enrollment deadlines, fines, or fees, records required for enrollment, including immunization or other required health records, proof of residency, or other documentation or academic records; including documentation of credit transfer:
6. School stability, including the expansion of school or origin to include preschools and receiving schools and the provision of transportation until the end of the school year, even if a student becomes permanently housed;
7. Privacy of student records, including information about a homeless child or youth's living situation; and
8. The dispute resolution process.

Definition of Homelessness

Homeless children and youth are defined as those individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes-

Children and youth who are:

- sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reasons (sometimes referred to as "doubled-up")
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- living in emergency or transitional shelters; or
- abandoned in hospitals;
- Children and youth 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;
- Child and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

Residency and Educational Rights

Students who are in temporary, inadequate and homeless living situations have the following rights:

- Immediate enrollment in the school they last attended or the school in whose attendance area they are currently staying even if they do not have all the documents normally required at the time of enrollment.
- Services provided to Homeless Children and Youth will be equitable to those services offered to other students in the school system, including educational services for which the child/youth meets the eligibility criteria. Educational services will include all available programs but not limited to programs for the disadvantaged, handicapped, limited English proficiency, career/technical education, academically gifted and talented, Title I services and school meal programs.
- Parent(s)/Guardian(s), when applicable, will be given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process regarding the educational planning for the homeless student.
- The LEA will ensure that transportation is provided, at the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of the unaccompanied youth) to and from the school of origin. (Provisions are made for transportation costs.)

School Records

The enrollment of homeless children shall not be denied or delayed due to any of the following barriers:

- Lack of birth certificate
- Lack of school records or transcripts
- Lack of immunization or health records
- Lack of proof of residency
- Lack of transportation
- Guardianship or custody requirements

A temporary social security number can be obtained through the school office by the office staff or the counselor. Students needing assistance with obtaining immunization should be referred to the Homeless Liaison. Assistance will be provided to obtain needed immunizations. This process will not delay student enrollment.

The records of the homeless child/youth shall be maintained in the same manner as those of other students.

Records shall be maintained in a manner consistent with Section 438, Protection of the Rights and Privacy of Parents and Students, of the General Education Provisions Act.

If a homeless child/youth transfers to another location, records will be transferred in a timely manner to the new school.

Resolution of Disputes Regarding Placement of Homeless Students

Homeless children and youth are entitled to the same rights and protections including due process, afforded other students in the Blount County School System.

Parents and guardians of homeless youth who are dissatisfied with the decision regarding the school assignment are entitled to appeal the decision to the Superintendent of Education.

In the event that a dispute cannot be resolved, the parties involved will immediately notify the State Department of Education, Office of Homeless Children and Youth, wherein the dispute will be resolved through the federal programs compliance procedure. A dispute of placement does not preclude the enrollment of the child/youth.

Section 2: Identification and Eligibility

Procedures to identify and Verify Eligibility of McKinney-Vento Students

The Blount County Homeless Plan for Children and Youth is based on the guidelines established by the State Department of Education as outlined in the Alabama Plan for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. The plan is designed to insure that all services are administered in compliance with The Act and the State Plan.

A housing screener is included in the enrollment packet for all students. (English and Spanish)

Each school has a designated Homeless Liaison that works with the District Homeless Liaison in identifying students that are homeless. Many students are identified as they enroll in the system and others are identified as the home situation changes during the school year.

The School Homeless Liaison helps the family complete the Housing Information Form (**Appendix A**). The liaison makes a decision based on family information whether the student is homeless or not. The form is signed and submitted to the district's Homeless Liaison. The District Homeless Liaison makes a determination of the status of the application. If it is determined by the liaison that the student meets the criteria for Homeless, the form is signed and notification is sent to the school liaison, student's family/unaccompanied youth, and the Child Nutrition Program Department for immediate processing for access to the free meals program, and the student is identified in the student data information program at the Central Office. This process provides immediate access to a listing of the LEA's Homeless students.

If assistance is needed in areas such as school supplies, medical, dental, vision, clothing, fees, extracurricular activities and transportation, a request form is completed by the family, school staff, counselor and/or liaison. (**Appendix B**)

School personnel are trained on identifying homeless students, procedures for enrolling homeless students, board policy concerning enrollment, dispute and complaint procedures. Dispute and complaint forms along with the McKinney-Vento enrollment form are available on the district website.

Section 3: Services and Standards

Title I Services and Funding

Services provided to Homeless Children and Youth will be equitable to those services offered to other students in the school system, including educational services for which the child/youth meets the eligibility criteria. Educational services will include all available programs but not limited to programs for the disadvantaged, handicapped, limited English proficiency, career/technical education, academically gifted and talented, Title I services and school meal programs.

Once Blount County School System began receiving the McKinney-Vento Homeless Grant, services to the homeless students has increased. Such services available include but are not limited to after school tutoring, cost of field trips, classroom supplies, clothing, transportation, mental health supports, and medical, vision and dental needs of homeless students. Parents, homeless children and youth will be informed of services available through various ways. An informational packet is mailed to the available home address which includes a list of community resources available and the educational rights of homeless students. Homeless posters provided by the National Center for Homeless Education are posted in all schools and in community businesses. Information for homeless parents, children and youth, along with enrollment, dispute and complaint forms are available on the district website also. School counselors and the district social worker will work with families to find other community resources if needed.

All eligible students will be documented in PowerSchool.

A written request for assistance for Homeless student(s) is made to the Homeless Liaison at each school when services are required and then sent to the central office Homeless Liaison to be processed.

Homeless students must obtain written permission from a parent or guardian for ongoing mental health services. Unaccompanied homeless youth may opt-in with permission from the district homeless liaison, acting in loco parentis.

Transportation

Blount County School District will ensure that students that qualify as homeless students shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students. In the event that transportation to and from their school of origin is in the same district, grant funds will be used to provide transportation to and from school. If the student is living outside the district then the two districts will share responsibility if possible.

Students and accompanied youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services are eligible to receive these transportation services for the entire duration in which they are homeless.

The Transportation Memorandum of Understanding will be signed by parents/unaccompanied youth and the district liaison. **(Appendix C)**

***School of Origin is defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.*

Food Services

Each Blount County School student identified as homeless shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the child nutrition program. Students who qualify will receive free breakfast and lunch as offered by each school for the entire duration of the homeless situation.

Academic Services

Students identified as homeless shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school including educational services, preschool, educational programs for children with disabilities or for students with limited English proficiency, programs in vocational and technical education and programs for gifted students.

Preschool Enrollment- the McKinney-Vento Act requires early care and education programs administered by the LEA's enroll students experiencing homeless immediately. This does not require them to exceed legal capacity limits or to enroll a child once a class is full. If classes are full, the homeless child will be referred to the closest preschool program available. Students will be put on a waiting list if programs are at capacity.

Partnerships

Blount County School System is committed to meeting all the needs of homeless students through partnering with local agencies. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Grant has provided most of the services for homeless students. School supplies, doctor and dental visits, glasses, food and clothes are provided for students through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Grant.

The social worker, employed by Blount County School System, assists families in finding the right community resources available for them as needed.

Blount County is fortunate to have established many Community Partnerships. **The Blount County Hope House** is one resource that can help in areas that most funds are not able to, such as housing (domestic violence), electrical, food, and water bills.

The United Way Needy Children Fund Is used to provide resources to qualifying students who are not homeless but have many educational, physical and emotional needs that can't be met through any other resource. This fund is used in partnership with the homeless grant funds as needed.

Karing for Kids partners with Blount County Schools to assist with the cost of medical, vision and dental needs and occasionally transportation as needed.

Local doctor, dental and vision offices partner with the district and help students by reducing costs for services.

Counseling services are provided to homeless students through different partnerships. **The Blount County Children's Center** provides counseling for child abuse students as needed. A **licensed counselor** is contracted by Blount County to assist students with mental, emotional and social issues. This counselor works with many of the identified homeless students. Also, the **Gateway Counseling Services** are available to students at four schools through a grant. This counselor also meets with students as needed.

A number of **local churches** in each school community provide toys and food at Thanksgiving and Christmas to needy students and their families, while district funds are used for clothes and school supplies.

The local **American Red Cross** has and will continue to assist with families after a storm event. There were 12 families affected by a tornado during the spring of last year. Many lost everything and were helped by the American Red Cross as well as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Grant Fund.

Section 4: Enrollment Procedures

Immediate Enrollment of Students

Any student who claims to be homeless will be immediately enrolled even if they do not have the required documents such as:

- School records
- Medical records
- Proof of residency
- Guardianship papers or other documents

Enrolling schools must obtain school records from the previous school, and students must be enrolled in school while records are obtained.

Enrollment of Unaccompanied Youth

Unaccompanied Youth experiencing homelessness will be enrolled in school immediately. The student will be informed of their rights to transportation and their right to appeal school or district decisions. The Liaison will ensure that the unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that may arise over school enrollment or placement.

School Selection

Blount County School District will keep students in homeless situations in their school of origin defined as the school attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled, unless it is against the parent/guardians wishes or unless it is determined to be in the student's best educational interest. Students and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services are eligible to remain in their school or origin for the entire duration in which they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing. Students and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services may also choose to enroll in any public school that students living in the same attendance areas are eligible to attend.

School Selection Checklist for Decision Making will be used to determine school selection in the best interest of the child along with parents input. If there is a dispute, the child will remain in school of origin until dispute is resolved. Parents will be informed of the process and given the form for complaints and dispute resolution. **(Appendix D)**

Appeal and Dispute Process

If a dispute arises over qualification of McKinney-Vento services, the student shall receive all rights and services provided by Blount School District, pending resolution of the dispute. The child, youth, parent or guardian shall be referred to the District Homeless Liaison, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as quickly as possible by ensuring that the unaccompanied youth have the right to:

- Remain in their school of origin
- Transportation to and from the school of origin
- Immediately enroll in a new school serving the area in which they are currently living even if they don't have typically required documents
- Equal access to programs and services such as gifted, special education, vocational education and English Language Learner services.

** All barriers to enrollment are removed for students experiencing homelessness.

(Appendix E and F)

Section 5: Professional Development

McKinney-Vento Professional Development Opportunities

- District Staff will attend state professional development provided each year.
- District Staff will attend the National Association Education for Homeless Children and Youth Conference each year.
- Professional Development is provided at the beginning of each school year, principals, school liaison, counselors, office staff and teachers on homeless definitions, enrollment procedures and policies.

District Website

Information is placed on the Blount County Schools website under Federal Programs. This information includes the following:

- LEA Homeless Plan
- Contact Information
- Information for Parents
- Enrollment Forms
- Policy
- Link to the National Center for Homeless Education

Section 6: Educational Staffing and Support

The McKinney-Vento District Liaison's Role and Responsibilities

- Ensure that procedures are established and followed across the school district
- Provide each student who qualifies for homeless services will receive free and appropriate education
- Collaborate with transportation and Child Nutrition Program personnel to coordinate services.
- Ensure that homeless students are aware of their educational rights.
- Post "Homeless" posters in schools, local community and businesses.
- Maintain records to document homeless students' process.
- Provide professional development to district wide staff responsible for enrollment and assisting students.
- Maintain all district data collection and reporting requirements on students experiencing homelessness.

School Level Liaison's Role and Responsibilities

Each school will assign on staff member who will serve as the homeless liaison.

- Identify students that may be facing homeless situations.
- Ensure that all enrollment procedures are followed.
- Assist families in completing the McKinney-Vento Enrollment form.
- Monitor school attendance and academic achievement.
- Identify physical, emotional and mental needs and issues homeless students may have.

APPENDIX A



Housing Information Form

COPY DISTRIBUTION
 School _____
 Federal Programs _____
 Child Nutrition _____

This questionnaire will help determine if the student meets eligibility requirements for services under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Student: _____ Parent(s)/Guardian(s): _____

School: _____ Grade: _____ Email: _____

Home Phone: _____ Cell Phone: _____ Text? Y or N

Address: _____ City: _____ Zip: _____

Is this address **PERMANENT** or **TEMPORARY**? (Circle one)

Please choose which of the following situations, if any, the student currently resides in (you may choose more than one).

- Substandard house or apartment with a parent or guardian
 Motel, car, or campsite
 Shelter or other temporary housing
 With friends or family members (other than or in addition to parent/guardian)

If the student is living in shared housing, please check all of the following reasons that apply.

- | | |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Loss of housing | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/guardian is deployed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Economic situation | <input type="checkbox"/> Mutual agreement to benefit both parties |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Temporarily waiting for house or apartment | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Please explain) _____ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Provide care for a family member | |

Is the student living apart from parents or guardians? Yes No (Circle one)

List any siblings of the student, including preschool age siblings:

Sibling _____ School and Grade _____
 Sibling _____ School and Grade _____

Housing and Education Rights

Students without fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residences are eligible for services and have the following rights:

- 1) Immediate enrollment in the school they last attended or the local school where they are currently staying, even if they do not have all of the documents normally required at the time of enrollment without fear of being separated or treated differently due to their housing situations;
- 2) Transportation to the school of origin for the regular school day;
- 3) Access to free meals, Title I and other educational programs, and transportation to extra-curricular activities to the same extent that is offered to other students;
- 4) Additional support and resources as deemed necessary and appropriate to engage in school activities.

Any questions about these rights can be directed to the local McKinney-Vento liaison.

By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received and understand the above rights. My signature also grants permission for this information to be shared with the student's homeroom teacher.

***Signature of Parent/Legal Guardian/UHY:** _____ **Date:** _____

School Liaison's determination of circumstances: HOMELESS: _____ NOT HOMELESS: _____
Comments: _____
School Homeless Liaison Signature: _____ Date: _____
<small>Email this form to Meagan Holt, District Homeless Liaison, mholt@blountboe.net. All campuses must keep original forms separately from the Student Permanent Record for audit purposes during the year.</small>

I certify, based on information submitted by the school and verified by the Principal, the above named student meets eligibility requirements for services under the McKinney-Vento Act.

District Homeless Liaison: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX B

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS REQUEST FORM

(ONE CHILD PER FORM PLEASE)

STUDENT'S NAME _____ AGE _____ GENDER _____

SCHOOL _____ GRADE _____

PERSON INITIATING REQUEST _____

REASON FOR REQUEST

ASSISTANCE REQUESTED:

- Medical/Health (Glasses, hearing aids, doctor/dental visit, etc.)
- Educational Needs (Supplies, equipment, etc.)
- Clothing (State specific sizes)
- Transportation
- School Activities (Field trips, intervention, extra-curricular, etc.)

Describe below:

School Homeless Liaison Approval (Sign) _____ Date _____

District Homeless Liaison Approval (Sign) _____ Date _____

Central Office Use (Circle)

ARP Homeless II Funds FY23

MV Grant FY23

ARP Homeless II Funds FY24

MV Grant FY24

I attest the requested assistance was received. Date _____

Name (Print) _____ (Sign) _____

COMMENTS

APPENDIX C

Blount County Schools

TRANSPORTATION MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Dear Parent/Guardian/Unaccompanied Youth,

Your child(ren) or you, as an unaccompanied homeless youth, are currently eligible for services through the McKinney-Vento program. Per the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, transportation will be provided to your child(ren) or you, as an unaccompanied youth, to and from school.

The following describes our agreement with you regarding transportation:

Pick-Up

Students must be at the selected location at the time coordinated by the homeless liaison/transportation department.

Drop-Off

An adult pre-approved by parents and guardians must be present at the selected location to pick-up students too young to be left unsupervised. The homeless liaison/transportation department will provide the time that the adult must be present for pick-up of students; parents and guardians must notify the liaison if an adult other than the parent or guardian will be picking up the student.

Communication of Absences

If a student is going to be absent from school and therefore does not need transportation for part or all of a day, parents or guardians must call and inform the designated driver no later than 6:00 a.m. on the day of the absence so the driver can plan accordingly.

Behavioral Expectations

Students and parents are expected to follow Blount County Schools' policies for student behavior. Disciplinary actions for students who violate the behavior policies will be followed as they are for any student enrolled in Blount County Schools.

If a student's residence changes, the homeless liaison/transportation department must be contacted for transportation to be arranged. The transportation department may be reached at 205-850-3001.

Individual Transportation to and from the School of Origin

Individuals transporting students to their school of origin from outside their attendance zone are eligible for mileage reimbursement. Mileage reimbursement is limited to the distance to and from the student's current residence and the school of origin school based on the current IRS charitable organization service rate.

If Blount County Schools fails to provide the agreed upon transportation services, the liaison should be contacted. Your liaison is Meagan Holt and may be reached at 205-775-1950.

Please sign below to acknowledge that you understand and agree with these expectations and terms.

_____ Parent/Guardian/UHY Name (Printed)	_____ Signature	_____ Date
_____ Meagan Holt, Homeless Liaison	_____ Signature	_____ Date

APPENDIX D

School Selection Checklist for Decision Making

(Adapted from the Texas Homeless Education Office)

School of Origin Considerations	Local Attendance Area School Considerations
<input type="checkbox"/> Continuity of Instruction <i>Student is best served due to circumstances that look to his or her past.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Continuity of Instruction <i>Student is best served due to circumstances that look to his or her future.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Age and Grade Placement of the Student <i>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.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Age and Grade Placement of the Student <i>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.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Strength <i>The child's academic performance is weak and the child would fall further behind if he/she transferred to another school.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Strength <i>The child's academic performance is strong and at grade level; the child would likely recover academically from a school transfer.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Social and Emotional State <i>The child is suffering from the effects of mobility, has developed strong ties to the current school, and does not want to leave.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Social and Emotional State <i>The child seems to be coping adequately with mobility, does not feel strong ties to the current school, and does not mind transferring.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Distance of the Commute and Its Impact <i>The advantages of remaining in the school of origin outweigh any potential disadvantages presented by the length of the commute.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Distance of the Commute and Its Impact <i>A shorter commute may help the student's concentration, attitude, or readiness for school. The local attendance area school can meet all of the necessary educational and special needs of the student.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Safety of the Student <i>The school of origin has advantages for the safety of the student.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal Safety of the Student <i>The local attendance area school has advantages for the safety of the student.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Student's Need for Special Instruction <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be better met at the school of origin.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Student's Need for Special Instruction <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met at the local attendance area school.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Length of Anticipated Stay <i>The student's current living situation is outside of the school of origin's attendance zone, but the living situation continues to be uncertain. The student will benefit from the continuity offered by remaining in the school of origin.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Length of Anticipated Stay <i>The student's current living situation appears stable and unlikely to change suddenly; the student will benefit from the developing relationships with peers in school who live in the local community.</i>

APPENDIX E

BLOUNT COUNTY BOARD OF EDUCATION
McKinney-Vento Enrollment Complaint Dispute Form

School: _____

Student's Name: _____ Grade: _____

Current Address: _____

Current Phone: _____ Current Email: _____

Parent/Guardian/Complaining Party's Name: _____

Relationship: Parent Guardian Unaccompanied Youth Other: _____

Please note: Information regarding student's address, phone number, and information protected by FERPA and can only be released to parent/guardian, the student, or to a person specifically designated as a representative of the parent/guardian.

School that parent chooses child to be immediately enrolled in and /or transported to/from until dispute is resolved: _____

Is this the school of origin*? Yes No

**School of Origin means the school that the child attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled.*

If no, from which school was the student transferred? _____

Reason for the Complaint: (Explain in the space provided)

Signature of parent/guardian/complaining party

Date

Principal's Actions on the Complaint

Taken within _____ school day(s) after receiving notice of the complaint.

Date Homeless Liaison was notified of the dispute: _____

Action taken by principal to resolve the dispute:

Was the dispute resolved? Yes No Explanation:

Principal Signature: _____ Date: _____

APPENDIX F

**Blount County Schools
Dispute Resolution
Final District Decision Form**

Student Name:	School Name:
Parent/Guardian/Unaccompanied Youth Name:	Relationship to Student:
Street Address (City, State, Zip):	Phone Number:

Based on the investigation conducted by the Office of Federal Programs, it has been determined that the above named student ___ **IS** or ___ **IS NOT** (check one) entitled to enrollment in and/or transportation to the above named school due to the following reason(s):

You may appeal this decision to the Alabama State Department of Education within three working days. If you do not file an appeal, the district's decision will go into effect on _____(date). If you would like to appeal this decision, you must complete the appeal information below. For help completing the appeal, please contact the Homeless Liaison at 205-775-1950. If you are an unaccompanied youth and would like to file an appeal, the Homeless Liaison must help you.

Meagan Holt, District Homeless Liaison

(Date)

Parent/Guardian/Unaccompanied Youth Appeal to the Alabama State Department of Education

I understand that I have the right to appeal the district's decision to deny enrollment of my child to the requested school and that my right to appeal must be exercised within three working days of the above date. I understand that the above student must remain enrolled and provided with transportation (if feasible) until the State makes a determination (within ten days).

Based on the explanation provided:

___ I do not wish to appeal this decision.

___ I wish to appeal this decision to the Alabama State Department of Education. Please forward this information to:

State Coordinator for Homeless Education
Alabama State Department of Education
Federal Programs
50 North Ripley Street
Montgomery, AL 36130
334-694-4529