

Homeless children have the right to a free, appropriate public education.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001

Who is considered homeless?

The term homeless children and youth is defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This includes children or youth:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason;
- Living in a motel, hotel, trailer park or campground due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations or similar settings;
- Living in substandard housing (no running water or working utilities, infestations, etc.).

An unaccompanied homeless youth is a child or youth that is not in the care of their parent or legal guardian and meets the definition of homeless under McKinney Vento.

Does residency have to be proven?

No, because homeless families are unable to establish a “home” on a permanent basis, a school cannot require proof of residency that might prevent or delay the enrollment of school-age children.

What choice of schools do homeless students have?

The law indicates that the local education agency shall, according to the child’s best interest:

(i) continue the child’s or youth’s education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness (I) in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year;

OR

(ii) for the remainder of the academic year, if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or (II) enroll the child or youth in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

Additionally, unaccompanied homeless youth have the right to immediately enroll in school, even if they do not have a legal guardian present.

Is there any reason to delay enrolling a homeless child?

No. The school selected shall immediately enroll the child/youth in school, even if the child or youth lacks records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation. The terms “enroll” and “enrollment” are defined to include attending classes and participating fully in school activities. The enrolling school must immediately contact the last school the child or youth attended to obtain relevant academic and other records. Immunization records can be transferred over the phone from the school nurse of the sending school to the school nurse of the receiving school.

What supports can school districts provide to homeless students?

Homeless students are eligible for supports and services to remove barriers to educational success. Details about academic supports can be found on the District’s website:

www.mtisd.org/families/homeless.

The District will support families with accessibility to health-related resources and referrals to physical/mental health providers, not limited to access to a physician, dentist, and other specialty

doctors. The District may assist with transportation for access to medical providers as well as assist with overcoming barriers related to insurance.

The District shall provide transportation for homeless students to their school of origin or the school they choose to attend within the school district. If the school of origin is outside district boundaries or homeless students live in another district but will attend their school of origin in this district, the school districts shall agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs of the transportation.

Information regarding the Free Lunch program available to homeless students can be found on the District's website: www.mtlsd.org/families/homess

Additionally, supports may include clothing to meet school requirements, access to school supplies and resources, assistance with credit recovery, tutoring supports, expedited evaluations, and assistance to participate in school activities including parent engagement opportunities, sports, club, etc.

Homeless Dispute Process

If at any time there is a disagreement about homeless status or best interest for school placement, the District will notify the family in writing of their determination that the family/unaccompanied youth is ineligible for McKinney Vento services.

At this time, the district will provide the family/unaccompanied youth with the ability to dispute their determination. Additional details can be found on the District's website: www.mtlsd.org/families/homeless

Throughout the dispute process, the child/youth, including unaccompanied youth, will continue to be educated in the school of origin or immediately enrolled in the school they are seeking enrollment until the dispute process is finalized. Transportation will continue throughout the dispute process. All disputes will be sent to the ECYEH Regional Coordinator who will issue a determination. If any party disagrees with the determination, they can elevate the dispute to the state coordinator.

Family Engagement

Families are a valued member of our community and an essential part of a child's success. Opportunities for participation in school and building sponsored events are communicated in a variety of ways throughout the school year. If you need assistance to participate, please contact your building principal.

Community Partnerships

The District partners with community agencies to support families through collaboration.

Additional details can be found on the District's website: www.mtlsd.org/families/homeless

Where can you call for assistance?

The Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program exists to help homeless children with a wide variety of services. We can assist homeless children during this time of change and stress. If you are homeless with school-age children or you are a school, agency or shelter employee, please contact one of the persons listed below.

1) Mt. Lebanon School District Homeless Liaison:

Dr. Ronald P. Davis, Assistant Superintendent of Secondary Education
412-344-2039

2) If you require further assistance, please contact:

Storm Carmara, State Coordinator Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program
Pennsylvania Department of Education
333 Market Street, 5th Floor
Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333
(717) 772-2066