

B-200 McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act

Washington State Requirements and Guidance for Homeless Education

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act is a federal law that ensures immediate enrollment and educational stability for homeless children and youth. McKinney-Vento provides federal funding to states for the purpose of supporting district programs that serve homeless students.

Defining Homeless

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." The act provides examples of children who would fall under this definition:

- Children and youth sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason
- Children and youth living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- Children and youth living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Children and youth abandoned in hospitals
- Children and youth awaiting foster care placement
- Children and youth whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g. park benches, etc)
- Children and youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations
- Migratory children and youth living in any of the above situations

Awaiting Foster Care Placement

The McKinney-Vento Act draws a distinction between children and youth who are "in" foster care, and those who are "awaiting" foster care. Washington state defines "awaiting" foster care as the period of time between the initial placement of the child into state care and the 30-day shelter care hearing.

Enrollment and Transportation

The McKinney-Vento Act requires schools to enroll homeless children and youth immediately, even if they lack normally required documents, such as immunization records or proof of residence. The act ensures that homeless children and youth have transportation to and from their school of origin if it is in the child's or youth's best interest. See WSSDA (Policy No. 3115) for more information.

Washington's Role

The McKinney-Vento Act provides grant funding to states and, in return, states are bound by the terms of the act. Washington receives approximately \$950,000 in funding each year from the U.S. Department of Education to support the education of homeless students in school programs. This is the only money specifically designated for serving the educational needs of homeless students in Washington. OSPI, as the state educational agency, designates a statewide Homeless Education Coordinator to review policies and create procedures, including dispute resolution procedures, to ensure that homeless children and youth are able to attend school.

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School District Responsibilities

Local school districts must designate a homeless liaison to ensure that homeless children and youth are identified and served. The liaison must provide public notice to homeless families (in the community and at school), and facilitate access to school services including transportation. School districts are also required to track their homeless students and report that data annually to OSPI.