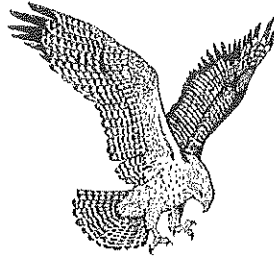


Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District
Student Handbook for Students Experiencing
Homelessness or Foster Care
2022-2023



Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District
Michelle Austin, Homeless Liaison
724-659-4661

The McKinney-Vento Act

On July 22, 1987, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act became public law. This was the first comprehensive federal law that addressed homelessness in America. On December 10, 2015, the President signed into law the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA), which reauthorizes the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA). Under the previous version of ESEA, the No Child Left Behind Act, the education of homeless children and youth was included in Title X, Part C. Under ESSA, homeless education is included in Title IX Part A.

Provisions of the Act:

Homeless children have the right to attend either their original school or the school in the area in which they currently reside for the duration of their homelessness, or until the end of the school year if the family finds permanent housing.

Schools are to immediately enroll homeless children and unaccompanied youth, even if they are unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, and any other required documentation.

In the case where the educating district is different than the district where the student is temporarily residing, both school districts are responsible for the facilitation of transportation in the best interest of the student.

Immediately upon enrollment, homeless students are entitled to receive a daily, free school breakfast and lunch.

Program Overview

The Allegheny-Clarion Valley Area School District acknowledges the additional stressors that a child or youth experiencing homelessness will face. Allegheny-Clarion Valley, in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act, will protect homeless children and youth by providing equal access to educational services, transportation, nourishment, hygiene and support.

Defining Homelessness

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homelessness as any child or youth that lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Furthermore, this includes:

- Children in families that are doubled-up
- Living in motels, hotels, campgrounds, campers, buses, trains, transition shelters, hospitals, churches, camps, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, etc.
- Reside at a nighttime residence that is not designed for or ordinarily used for regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.
- Unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian, perhaps they have run away from home, been thrown out of their home, abandoned by family, or separated from parents for other reasons
- Children of migrant families

Common Barriers Facing Homeless Children

Homeless children face a variety of legal, social and emotional barriers that may interrupt their education. These may include:

- Lack of school supplies, food, clothing, etc.
- Residency and guardianship requirements
- Lapses in program continuity
- Delays in educational evaluations
- Lack of transportation
- Missing academic and health
- Lack of awareness regarding the extent and effects of homelessness

- Inadequate parental resources
- Social stigma attached to homelessness

Rights of Children & Youth Experiencing Homelessness

According to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act, eligible students have the following rights:

- Receive a free & appropriate public education
- Immediate enrollment in school, even if lacking documents that are required:
Records, Birth Certificate, Immunization of Records, Proof of Residence, etc.
- Continue attending their school of origin when appropriate:
A school district must provide you with a written explanation of its position and inform you of your right to appeal the decision if they believe attending the school of origin is not in the best interest of your child
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin if necessary
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students similar needs

The Identification Process

It is the responsibility of the Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District to identify children & youth experiencing homelessness. To fulfill this responsibility an identification/application process has been established. The following methods of identification will be utilized:

- Self-Identification, Parent Identification, Staff Identification.
An individual student, or parent/guardian, may identify himself or herself as a student or family experiencing homelessness at any time. Staff members must immediately notify the school liaison when this information is received. Upon notification the notify the school liaison when this information is received. Upon notification the

homelessness liaison will contact the student/family to begin the identification process.

- **School District Identification**
Often times, neighboring homelessness liaisons will contact the school district to share pertinent information about students. Homelessness liaisons should contact one another with information that will aide in the identification of children & youth experiencing homelessness. If information is received the homelessness liaison will contact the student/family to begin the identification process.
- **Identification at Enrollment**
The Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District has included a Residency Questionnaire as part of the enrollment documents. Students/families may utilize this form to declare homelessness. Upon notification the homeless liaison will contact the student/family to begin the identification process.

Community Outreach Program

The Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District attempts to seek out children & youth experiencing homelessness in our community. Informational posters with contact information have been displayed at:

- Allegheny-Clarion Valley Elementary School
- Allegheny-Clarion Valley Jr/Sr. High School
- Emlenton Truck Plaza
- Emlenton Quality Inn
- Emlenton Laundromat
- Parker Laundromat

Community Partnerships

- AC Valley Team
- Clarion County Children Round Table

- Center for Community Resources
- Student Assistance Program
- Venango Children Roundtable
- Venango County Outreach

District Wide Activities

- School Reach Messenger
- Social Media – School's Website/Facebook
- District Calendar/Handbook

Health Resources

See attachment – Also complete listing on Website

Foster Care Information

School districts are required to employ a foster care point of contact to serve as a support system for students/families that are experiencing transitions in their lives. For more information please reach out to Mrs. Michelle Austin at 724-659-4661 or michelle.austin@acvsd.org.

Dispute Resolution Process

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment for a student eligible under the McKinney-Vento Act:

The child or youth shall be immediately enrolled into the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District will provide its share of the transportation to the school selected for the duration of the dispute resolution process.

If the Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District disputes the identification of an individual, the student and parent/guardian will be contacted in writing to communicate their concerns. The Homeless Liaison will maintain communication until the dispute is resolved.

If dissatisfied with the school's decision, the parent, guardian, or youth may appeal the decision to the state level. Contact information will be provided by the Homeless liaison to do so.

Contacts include:

Michelle Austin, Homeless Liaison

724-659-4661 ext. 3105

michelle.austin@acvsd.org

www.education.pa.gov/homeless

Wendy Kinnear, PA Regional Coordinator

724-458-6700

Wendy.kinnear@miu4.org

**Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District
Student/Parent Acknowledgement of Services**

_____ (Student Name) has been identified as a child or youth experiencing homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act.

This identification guarantees the availability of support services at the Allegheny-Clarion Valley School District. The following services will be granted during the 2022-20223 school year.

- _____ Transportation, as described
- _____ Free School Breakfast/Lunch
- _____ Special Education Services
- _____ Referral to Student Assistance Program
- _____ Waived Athletic Fees
- _____ Student/Family wishes to remain with the school of origin (AC Valley SD) otherwise see additional information below
- _____ Additional Services, as described

I understand that the following services will be available during the 2022-2023 school year.

- _____ Unaccompanied Youth Sign/Date
- _____ Parent/Guardian Sign/Date
- _____ Homeless Liaison Sign/Date