

School Community Liaison, Homeless Coordinator

Homelessness and Assistance

What is McKinney-Vento?

The McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act is the primary piece of legislation dealing with the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The Act is also known as Title X, Part C of the Every Student Succeeds Act. 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.

How does McKinney-Vento define homelessness (42 U.S.C. § 11434a (2))?

Homelessness is defined as students who lack a **fixed, regular, and adequate** nighttime residence; and includes students that are:

- sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, campground not deemed as residential communities due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- living in emergency or transitional shelters
- abandoned in hospitals
- living in public or private places not ordinarily used for regular sleeping accommodations for human beings
- living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings substandard housing bus or train stations, or similar setting
- migrant and living in any of the above-described situations

What protections does the McKinney-Vento Act require for homeless children and youths?

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, State educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) must review and revise policies and procedures to remove barriers to a high-quality education for homeless children and youths.

Every SEA must have an Office of the State Coordinator to oversee implementation of the Act, and every LEA must designate a local liaison able to carry out their duties to ensure that homeless students are identified and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school.

The McKinney-Vento Act also requires that:

- homeless students who move have the right to remain in their schools of origin (i.e., the school the student attended when permanently housed or in which the student was last enrolled, which includes preschools) if that is in the student's best interest;
- if it is in the student's best interest to change schools, homeless students must be immediately enrolled in a new school, even if they do not have the records normally required for enrollment;
- transportation must be provided to or from a student's school of origin, at the request of a parent, guardian, or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local liaison;
- homeless students must have access to all programs and services for which they are eligible, including special education services, preschool, school nutrition programs, language assistance for English learners, career and technical education, gifted and talented programs, magnet schools, charter schools, summer learning, online learning, and before and after-school care;

- unaccompanied youths must be accorded specific protections, including immediate enrollment in school without proof of guardianship; and
- parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youths have the right to dispute an eligibility, school selection, or enrollment decision.

How can a district homeless education liaison ensure McKinney-Vento identification and eligibility determinations take place?

Local education liaisons should clearly define the process for communication when anyone in the school recognizes signs of homelessness. The most supportive identification process is in collaboration with school staff to ensure students receive services and supports needed to be successful despite the challenging living situation. Large districts may choose a point-of-contact at each building to facilitate the identification and eligibility determination process.

The homeless education liaison will:

- make McKinney-Vento eligibility determinations on a case-by-case basis
- ensure families and students understand the McKinney-Vento provisions
- form a team to make a best interest determination with the parent or caretaker's input, for school selection keeping educational stability and consistency at the forefront of all decisions.
 - Remain in the school of origin
 - Be immediately enrolled in the attendance area school (the school where the student is resting their head at night)
- ensure nutrition, educational supports, transportation, and other wraparound supports needed are supplied to ensure regular and consistent school attendance
- connect students with key school staff who can further support the student
- point the family to community resources that may support efforts to find stable housing and to support other needed services such as behavioral and mental health.

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