

# McKinney-Vento Homeless Act Plan and Protocol 2024-2025

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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 reason (sometimes referred to as "doubled-up")
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks (for recreational vehicles), 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 of 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 online enrollment process 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 of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (UHY) 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 is 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 and the student's family/unaccompanied youth. The student is identified in the student information system, PowerSchool, by the District Liaison. 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.

Services available to homeless students include but are not limited to after-school tutoring, cost of field trips, classroom supplies, clothing, transportation, mental health supports, and basic 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 provided to families/UHY 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. School counselors and the district social worker work with families to find other community resources, if needed.

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 District 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

Eligible students shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students. If the homeless student is currently residing beyond the bus transportation route of the school of origin, grant funds will used to provide transportation or off-set transportation costs for the family. If the student is living outside the district, the two districts will coordinate to share responsibility for transportation, if possible.

Students and unaccompanied 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 should be signed by parents/unaccompanied youth and the district liaison prior to receiving transportation services. **(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**

Blount County Schools is currently operating under the Community Eligibility Provision (CEP) to provide all students with free breakfast and lunch. Should we not continue under CEP, the District Liaison will notify the Child Nutrition Program Department of any homeless students so they may be provided access to the free meals program.

## **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 and clothes are provided for students through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Grant.

A **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.

**2-1-1** provides highly trained community specialists to help homeless students and families access the best local resources and services to address any need.

**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 contracted partnerships with licensed therapists.

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 may assist families after natural disasters.

## **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 are eligible to remain in the student's for McKinney-Vento Services 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 parent/guardian input. If there is a dispute, the child will remain in school of origin until dispute is resolved. Parents/guardians 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 regional and national conferences each year, as funds allow.
- 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 Health and Support Services. This information includes the following:

- LEA Homeless Policy and Plan
- Contact Information for the District Homeless Liaison
- Information for Parents
- 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
- Ensure each student who qualifies for homeless services receives free and appropriate education
- Collaborate with transportation and Child Nutrition Program personnel to coordinate services.
- Inform families and students of educational rights.
- Post informational posters in schools and local community businesses about homelessness.
- Maintain records to document homeless students' progress.
- Provide professional development to 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 who may be facing homeless situations.
- Ensure 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.

	BLOUNTY SCHOOLS	COPY DISTRIBUTION School Federal Programs Child Nutrition
	Housing Information Form	
	questionnaire will help determine if the student meets eligibility requirements for services under the Me	
Stud	ent: Parent(s)/Guardian(s):	
Scho	ol: Grade: Email:	
Hom	e Phone: Cell Phone:	Text? Y or N
Addr	ress: City:	Zip:
ls th	his address PERMANENT or TEMPORARY? (Circle one)	
 If the	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) e student is living in shared housing, please check all of the following reasons that apply.	
	Loss of housing       Parent/guardian is deployed         Economic situation       Mutual agreement to benefit be         Temporarily waiting for house or apartment       Other (Please explain)         Provide care for a family member       Other (Please explain)	
Is the	e student living apart from parents or guardians? Yes No (Circle one)	
List a	any siblings of the student, including preschool age siblings:	
	ng School and Grade	
Siblir	ng School and Grade	
Churd	Housing and Education Rights	e fellessies siehter
1)	ents without fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residences are eligible for services and have th Immediate enrollment in the school they last attended or the local school where they are curre they do not have all of the documents normally required at the time of enrollment without fear treated differently due to their housing situations;	ently staying, even if
2) 3)	Transportation to the school of origin for the regular school day; Access to free meals, Title I and other educational programs, and transportation to extra-curric same extent that is offered to other students;	
4)	Additional support and resources as deemed necessary and appropriate to engage in school ac	tivities.
By si	questions about these rights can be directed to the local McKinney-Vento liaison. gning below, I acknowledge that I have received and understand the above rights. My signature als his information to be shared with the student's homeroom teacher.	so grants permission
*Sigr	nature of Parent/Legal Guardian/UHY: Date:	
	School Liaison's determination of circumstances:	
Com	HOMELESS: NOT HOMELESS:	
Scho	ool Homeless Liaison Signature: Date:	
	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 purpose	
Lcer	tify, based on information submitted by the school and verified by the Principal, the above named	- student meets eligibility

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: \_\_\_\_

APPENDIX B MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS REQUEST FORM (ONE CHILD PER FORM PLEASE)		
STUDENT'S NAME	AGE	GENDER
SCHOOL	G	RADE
PERSON INITIATING REQUEST		
REASON FOR REQUEST		
ASSISTANCE REQUESTED: Medical/Health (Glasses, hearing aids, doctor/dental v Educational Needs (Supplies, equipment, etc.) Clothing (State specific sizes) Transportation School Activities (Field trips, intervention, extra-curric Describe below:	visit, etc.) cular, etc.)	
School Homeless Liaison Approval (Sign)		Date
District Homeless Liaison Approval (Sign)		Date
<i>Central Office Use (Circle)</i> <i>ARP Homeless II Funds FY24</i>	<i>MV Grant FY25</i>	
□ I attest the requested assistance was received.		Date
Name (Print) (Sign)		
COMMENTS		

#### **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

\_\_\_\_

#### School Selection Checklist for Decision Making

(Adapted from the Texas Homeless Education Office)

School of Origin Considerations	Local Attendance Area School Considerations
Continuity of Instruction	Continuity of Instruction
Student is best served due to circumstances that	Student is best served due to circumstances that
look to his or her past.	look to his or her future.
□ Age and Grade Placement of the Student	□ Age and Grade Placement of the Student
Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is	Maintaining friends and contacts with peers in
critical to the student's meaningful school	the school of origin is not particularly critical to
experience and participation. The student has	the student's meaningful school experience and
been in this environment for an extended period	participation. The student has attended the
of time.	school of origin for only a brief time.
Academic Strength	Academic Strength
The child's academic performance is weak and	The child's academic performance is strong and
the child would fall further behind if he/she	at grade level; the child would likely recover
transferred to another school.	academically from a school transfer.
Social and Emotional State	Social and Emotional State
The child is suffering from the effects of	The child seems to be coping adequately with
mobility, has developed strong ties to the	mobility, does not feel strong ties to the current
current school, and does not want to leave.	school, and does not mind transferring.
Distance of the Commute and Its Impact The advantages of remaining in the school of origin outweigh any potential disadvantages presented by the length of the commute.	Distance of the Commute and Its Impact 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.
Personal Safety of the Student	Personal Safety of the Student
The school of origin has advantages for the	The local attendance area school has
safety of the student.	advantages for the safety of the student.
Student's Need for Special Instruction	Student's Need for Special Instruction
The student's need for special instruction, such	The student's need for special instruction, such
as Section 504 or special education and related	as Section 504 or special education and related
services, can be better met at the school of	services, can be met at the local attendance
origin.	area school.
□ Length of Anticipated Stay	Length of Anticipated Stay
The student's current living situation is outside	The student's current living situation appears
of the school of origin's attendance zone, but the	stable and unlikely to change suddenly; the
living situation continues to be uncertain. The	student will benefit from the developing
student will benefit from the continuity offered	relationships with peers in school who live in
by remaining in the school of origin.	the local community.

6A-1 | NCHE Homeless Liaison Toolkit: Appendix 6.A School Selection Checklist for Decision-Making

## **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 Please note: Information regarding student's address, phone number, a FERPA and can only be released to parent/guardian, the student, or to designated as a representative of the parent/guardian.	and information protected by
School that parent chooses child to be immediately enrolled in and /or dispute is resolved:	•
Is this the school of origin <sup>*</sup> ?  Yes No *School of Origin means the school that the child attended when permanentl the child was last enrolled.	ly housed or the school in which
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 Complair	nt
Taken within school day(s) after receiving notice of the compl	aint.
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: D	ate:

#### 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

#### 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 (Date)