

# WHITNEY INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

McKinney Vento Homeless Education Plan



**Whitney Independent School District**  
**305 South San Jacinto**  
**Whitney, Texas 76692**  
**(254) 694-2254**

## Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

- Under federal and state law, children and youth experiencing homelessness have a right to a free, appropriate public education (FAPE). The [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#) (federal law) provides assistance to states to help them ensure educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. This program helps State Educational Agencies (SEAs) ensure that homeless children, including preschoolers and youths, have equal access to FAPE, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth.
  - Children experiencing homelessness are to be provided services comparable to those received by other students in the school they attend, including transportation services, and education programs for which such students are otherwise eligible, such as services provided under [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#), as amended by the [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) of 2015 or similar state or local programs and programs for students with disabilities.
  - State law also addresses the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Texas Education Code (TEC) §§ 25.001, 25.002, and 29.153 address educational rights concerning school admission and preschool for homeless students.

## McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

- The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act (Act) provides important protections and rights for homeless children and unaccompanied homeless youth.
- The purpose of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is to identify and remove barriers for children and youth experiencing homelessness and ensure that students in these circumstances have equitable access to all available supports and resources to meet the same challenging state academic standards established for all students.

## The Definition of Homelessness

- The McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act provides a definition of homeless children and youths to be used by state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs). It defines homeless children and youth to be those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Under the larger umbrella of lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, the law also provides several examples of situations that meet the definition. The examples include children and youths:
  - sharing housing due to a loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
  - living in hotels, motels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate housing;
  - living in emergency or transitional shelters;
  - abandoned in hospitals;
  - living in a public or private place not designated for, or normally used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
  - living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar places;
  - living in one of the above circumstances and who are migratory according to the definition in Section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 [42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)].

## Homeless Student Identification

- Every LEA must identify students experiencing homelessness within their district.
  - WISD will use a student residency questionnaire to help determine whether or not students qualify as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act.

## Homeless Student Enrollment

- Students who are experiencing homelessness are to be enrolled immediately.

- Districts cannot require students experiencing homelessness to provide proof of residency, immunizations, birth certificates guardianship documents, or any other sort of required paperwork before enrolling.
- Requiring missing paperwork or any other delay to enrollment is a violation of the McKinney-Vento Act.

## Dispute Resolution

- Disagreements over eligibility, school selection, or enrollment may be disputed.
- If a dispute arises:
  - the child or youth must be immediately enrolled in the school of origin or school located in the child's attendance zone, as requested by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals;
  - the parent or guardian of the child or youth or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth must be provided with a written explanation of any decisions related to eligibility, school selection, or enrollment made by the school, LEA, or State educational agency (SEA), including the rights to appeal the decision;
  - the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth must be referred to the local liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process; and
  - in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local liaison must ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in the school in which the youth seeks enrollment pending resolution of the dispute [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(E)].

## Transportation

- Students experiencing homelessness have the right to transportation to their school of origin.
  - This provision applies even if a student moves outside of the school of origins' attendance zone or district boundaries.
  - School of origin transportation must continue for the duration of the child's homelessness or until the end of the school year in which a child becomes permanently housed.

## Nutrition Benefits

- All students who are identified as homeless or in foster care are eligible for the US Department of Agriculture Child Nutrition Program.
  - Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) must ensure there is an expedited process in place for all students who qualify to receive nutrition benefits upon enrollment.
  - The process must expedite communication with the LEA nutrition coordinator to ensure that eligible students are not charged in error or experience delays in receiving these benefits.

## Contact Your McKinney-Vento Liaison

- Parents, guardians, and students can contact their district school LEA McKinney-Vento Liaison with questions on the program.
  - If you need any assistance reaching the LEA McKinney-Vento Liaison, please contact **Melissa Marbut**, WISD McKinney-Vento Liaison, at (254) 694-2536 or [melissa.marbut@whitneyisd.org](mailto:melissa.marbut@whitneyisd.org).
    - The campus nurse on each WISD campus serves as the campus liaison.
  - If you need assistance from the regional liaison, please contact **Tonya Ramos**, Educational Service Center, Region 12 McKinney-Vento Liaison, at (254) 297-1167 or [tramos@esc12.net](mailto:tramos@esc12.net).

## McKinney-Vento Liaison Duties

- Identify

- Identify students experiencing homelessness in collaboration with school personnel and other organizations and agencies.
- Enrollment
  - Ensure students experiencing homelessness are enrolled and provide equitable access to succeed in school.
- Access to Services
  - Ensure students experiencing homelessness and families have access to educational services for which they are eligible.
- Referrals
  - Provide referrals for medical, housing, and other appropriate services for students experiencing homelessness.
- Inform
  - Inform parents or guardians of educational opportunities available to students and how they can participate in their student's education.
- Post Educational Rights
  - Post educational rights in locations frequented by students, parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth.
- Mediate Disputes
  - Ensure enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with local, state, and federal guidelines.
- Transportation
  - Inform parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth of all transportation services available, including school of origin transportation.
- Professional Development
  - Provide school personnel professional development and supports to ensure identification of McKinney-Vento eligible students.
- Unaccompanied Youth
  - Ensure unaccompanied youth (UY) are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same state academic standards as housed students, and are informed of their independent status for the purpose of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).