

HOMELESS CHILDREN/YOUTH HAVE THE RIGHT TO A FREE, APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2015

What is the McKinney Vento Homeless Act and what defines a homeless student?

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is federal legislation that protects “homeless” school age children/youth by ensuring school stability. Entitlements such as transportation, free lunch program, and immediate enrollment assist in removing barriers to their education.

Children/youth who lack a **fixed, regular and adequate** night time residence and have lost their “permanent” housing due to a **causal event** such as: eviction, fire, flood, natural disaster, domestic violence situation, substandard housing, or economic hardship. A youth who has runaway, been thrown out of their home by their parents or who is living on their own may also be defined as homeless. These families may be “doubled up” with family or friends (not by choice), living in a shelter, transitional housing, motel, vehicle, or on the street due to a lack of housing.

ELIGIBILITY IS DETERMINED ON A CASE BY CASE BASIS!

Is there any reason to delay enrolling a homeless child/youth?

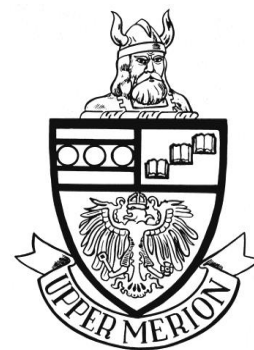
No! One of the entitlements under McKinney-Vento is the right of **immediate** enrollment, even if parents/students lack records normally required for enrollment such as birth certificates, academic records, medical records (including immunizations), and proof of residency. Enrollment is defined as attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

Does residency have to be proven?

No, because homeless families are unable to establish a “home” on a permanent basis, a school cannot require proof of residency that might prevent or delay enrollment of school age children.

How is it decided where the student will attend school?

The law indicates that the LEA shall, according to the child/youth’s “**best interest**”, continue the student’s education in the **school of origin** (where they were attending when they lost their permanent housing) for the duration of homelessness OR assist in the enrollment process to the school district where they temporarily are housed. It is the right of the parent/guardian to choose which school, although it is typically assumed it is in the best interest of the student, for stability purposes, to stay in the school of origin as long as it is feasible.



<http://www.education.pa.gov/Pages/Codes%20and%20Regulations/Basic-Education-Circulars.aspx>

PDE’s Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program mandates that every LEA in Pennsylvania designate a district homeless liaison.

Upper Merion Area School District’s homeless liaison is John Moody, Director of Student Services. Should you have any concerns/information about a student’s housing circumstances, as it may pertain to possible homelessness, contact Mr. Moody as soon as possible at: 610-205-6407 or jmoody@umasd.org