



Steelton-Highspire School District

McKinney-Vento

Parent/Guardian Handbook



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McKinney-Vento Program

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law intended to ensure educational stability for children and youth experiencing homelessness. This mandate is fulfilled through a homeless liaison. The Superintendent or Executive Director assigns the position to a person who has the capacity to carry out the mandates under the Act.

The Definition of Homelessness:

Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, children and youth who lack a fixed, regular or adequate nighttime residence will be considered homeless.

- Fixed: A fixed residence is one that is stationary, permanent and not subject to change.
- Regular: A regular residence is one which is normal, routine and used on a regular basis.
- Adequate: An adequate residence is suitable for human habitation. It meets both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.

Living situations under the Act include:

- Shelters and transitional housing programs
- Cars, parks and substandard housing
- Sharing the housing of others (doubled-up) due to economic hardship or loss of housing
- Hotels, motels or campgrounds due to lack of other suitable housing
- Migrant youth living in any of the above situations

Children and youth who are residing in the one of the above living situations due to an event occurring which forced them to leave their home would qualify for McKinney-Vento protections.



Student Rights Under the Act:

- Right to continue at the school of origin, the school they attended before becoming homeless or the school in which they were last enrolled.
- Right to transfer to the school of residence.
- Right to immediate enrollment even if they lack normally required documents such as immunization records or proof of residence.
- Right to receive transportation to and from their school of origin for the duration of homelessness or for the rest of the school year after becoming permanently housed.
- Right to be placed on the free school breakfast and lunch program.
- Assistance with fees/ fines including field trips, physical education, lab fees, school sponsored extracurricular activities and other school fees.
- Assistance in obtaining educational items including school supplies.
- Assistance with connecting to social service agencies in the community.

Red Flags of Homelessness:

- Attendance at several schools/ preschools
- More than one family at the same address
- Hotel, motel or shelter address
- Secretive or hostile when asked about address or current living situation
- Unable to share current address
- Sleeping in class
- Inappropriate dress for the weather
- Hunger and hoarding of food
- Attention seeking behavior
- Missing class for a long period of time

Unaccompanied Youth

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, an unaccompanied youth is defined as a child or youth who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian and lacking a fixed, regular or adequate nighttime residence. An unaccompanied youth does not need a precipitating event to be eligible for McKinney-Vento services. When a homeless unaccompanied youth is identified, the district will follow the above procedures but also include the items listed below.



- Upon identification and referral to the district's homeless liaison, the liaison will confirm the youth's unaccompanied youth status.
- The student will either be immediately enrolled in the district of residence or remain in the district of origin as an independent student. This means unaccompanied youth are able to enroll without a parent or guardian.
- The district's unaccompanied youth procedures are as follows:
 - If the student is 18 or older and is a regular education student, he/she will have the right to his/her educational record and sign all documentation as an independent student.
 - If the student is under age 18 or has an IEP, the parents or guardians will retain their educational rights under FERPA.
 - If the student has an IEP and there is no parental involvement in his/her education, a surrogate parent or adult caregiver will be assigned to the student.
 - If the student is under the age of 18, is a regular education student and has no parental involvement, a district administrator or adult caregiver will be assigned to assist the student with educational decisions.
 - When an adult caregiver is assigned to the youth, this individual will complete the district's caregiver form.
- The district liaison will assist with credit accrual and provide college and career counseling.
- The district liaison will provide a homeless unaccompanied youth verification letter for college financial aid purposes.

References

ECYEH Sample Procedures-

https://drive.google.com/file/d/1iVxkhf_hQQYhH4sD5vl43x9zZ09o2jVC/view

NCHE Determining Eligibility for MKV- https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/det_elig.pdf



Homeless Liaison Responsibilities:

- Homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities.
- Homeless children and youths are immediately enrolled in and have full access to the educational program with or without necessary documentation for enrollment.
- Homeless children and youths have access to the same education programs, including early educational programs, as housed students within the local education agency (LEA).
- Homeless families and homeless children and youths receive referrals to outside agencies including medical, dental, mental health, housing and other appropriate services.
- The parents/ guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians of such children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, including the student handbook and district website. The information will be in a manner and form understandable to the parents, guardians and unaccompanied youths.
- Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with Pennsylvania Department of Education requirements.
- The parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of their right to transportation. Transportation will be set up without delay.
- School personnel providing services under this subtitle receive professional development and other support.
- Unaccompanied youths will be worked with directly as independent students.



McKinney-Vento Dispute Process

Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act, every state must develop procedures for the prompt resolution of disputes regarding the educational placement of homeless children and youths. 42 U.S.C §11432(g)(1)(C). The state must ensure that Local Education Agencies (LEAs) comply with requirements set forth in the McKinney-Vento Act including ensuring immediate enrollment, providing written notice to families concerning school selection, enrollment decisions and providing enrollment and pendency in the school of choice while a dispute is being resolved. 42 U.S.C §11432(g)(2)(A). The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) has developed the following procedures to govern the resolution of disputes regarding enrollment, school selection, homeless status and complaints of non-compliance with legal requirements pertaining to the education for homeless children and youths:

Level 1 Dispute- A dispute may be raised with a LEA.

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the child or youth involved must immediately be admitted to the school in which they are seeking enrollment, pending resolution of the dispute 42

U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(E)(i). PDE recommends that the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth who initiates the dispute contact the LEA liaison for individuals experiencing homelessness as soon as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. If the person initiating the dispute does not contact the LEA liaison directly, the LEA shall be responsible for contacting the LEA liaison regarding the dispute as soon as possible and referring the family or youth involved to the liaison.

The LEA liaison shall ensure that the child or youth is immediately enrolled, explain the dispute resolution process to families and help them to use it 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(E)(iii). The LEA shall issue a written disposition of the dispute within 20 business days after the LEA liaison is notified of the dispute. The disposition shall be provided to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth and shall explain the basis for the decision and advise the parent, guardian or youth of the right to appeal. 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(E)(i).



NOTE: The LEA should use and maintain copies of PDE's "Notice of Procedural Safeguards" form which ensures that all LEAs (a) inform families of the basis of their decision regarding enrollment or school selection; (b) notifies families of their right to remain in their school of choice pending resolution of the dispute and (c) explains the procedures for challenging the decision of the LEA.

Level 2 Dispute- A complaint may be filed with a McKinney-Vento coordinator. If the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth is dissatisfied with the LEA's disposition of a dispute or would like to raise any issue of McKinney-Vento Act noncompliance, they may file a complaint or appeal with a McKinney-Vento site or regional coordinator or with the state coordinator. (See attached list which contains contact information for all of the McKinney-Vento coordinators in Pennsylvania). In lieu of filing an appeal with a McKinney-Vento coordinator, a parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth may elect to appeal the LEA decision directly to a court of competent jurisdiction. Participation in the appeal procedure is not required prior to taking legal action.

Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youths should be informed that they can provide written or oral documentation to support their position; and Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youths should be given the opportunity to challenge the school system's assertions.

A regional or site coordinator with whom a complaint or appeal is filed must notify the state coordinator immediately. Upon being notified, the state coordinator will review the complaint or appeal and assign it to a site or regional coordinator for disposition. The coordinator to whom the appeal is assigned may contact, interview and accept documentation from any individual or LEA involved, and shall issue a written disposition within 20 business days after the complaint or appeal has been assigned. The disposition shall be provided to the LEA and the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth involved. The child or youth shall continue to be enrolled in the school in which he or she is seeking enrollment until the complaint or appeal is resolved or until a disposition from a McKinney-Vento



coordinator is received.

If a decision cannot be reached or agreed upon as the regional coordinator level, the dispute will be forwarded to the state coordinator for resolution. The state coordinator will view all information and interview all concerned parties involved. The Office of Chief Counsel will be included in the resolution process as needed. If mediation services are needed, the state coordinator will assist in the mediation and may also invite those involved to have the dispute mediated at any time in the process through the Dispute Resolution Program operated by the Commonwealth Office of General Counsel (OGC). The [OGC Dispute Resolution Program](#) is a voluntary informal process through which a trained mediator assists in reaching a mutually acceptable resolution.

Participating in mediation is not a waiver of the right to file a lawsuit nor is participation in mediation required prior to taking legal action.

NOTE: The parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth may file a complaint with the McKinney-Vento site, regional or state coordinator on the attached complaint form. However, the use of the attached form is not mandatory. Any dispute raised by a homeless family or youth concerning school enrollment or any other right under the McKinney-Vento Act whether received via telephone, letter or any mode of communication shall be treated as a complaint.

<https://www.education.pa.gov/K-12/Homeless%20Education/Pages/DisputeResolutionProcess.aspx>



McKinney-Vento Resources

SHSD School Board Policy 251 Homeless Students

<https://go.boarddocs.com/pa/stlh/board.nsf/public#>

42 USC CHAPTER 119, SUBCHAPTER VI, Part B: Education for Homeless Children and Youths

<http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim%40title42/chapter119/subchapter6/partB&edition=prelim>

PDE BEC- Education for Homeless Youth

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/uscode/Pages/EducationforHomelessYouth.aspx>

Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716.pdf>

EHYC Fact Sheet

<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160315ehcyfactsheet072716.pdf>

District Liaisons

District-Level Liaison: Dr. Samantha Neidlinger, sneidlinger@shsd.k12.pa.us
717-704-3800 ext. 3862

Building-Level Liaison: Dr. Sadie Kinnarney, skinnarney@shsd.k12.pa.us
717-704-3800 ext. 4204

****If you and/or your family are experiencing homelessness, please contact us using the information above as soon as possible. We will be glad to assist you!**

Local Contacts

- Online homeless liaison directory in Pennsylvania:



<https://directory.center-school.org/homeless>

- ECYEH Region 2: 610-987-8509 or www.berksiu.org/ecyeh

Local Resources

- 211
- Homeless Coalition: <https://www.berksiu.org/students-families/k-12-education-student-services/ecyeh/resources/>
- Online shelter directory: <https://directory.center-school.org/homeless/shelter/search>