

# MERRILLVILLE COMMUNITY SCHOOL CORPORATION

McKinney-Vento Act Newsletter



## Mission Statement

**WE challenge our students with an inclusive, world-class education that affords exciting opportunities for growth and development. WE engage our families and community through timely and accurate communications that cultivate dynamic relationships. OUR commitment establishes Merrillville schools as the dominant leader of relentless success.**

## Vision Statement

**Merrillville Community School Corporation provides high-quality learning experiences that prepare students to be productive citizens in a global society.**

## Understanding the McKinney-Vento Act

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law that ensures all children and youth experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as other children. This includes the right to enroll, attend, and succeed in school, regardless of housing status.

## Who Qualifies

A student may qualify for McKinney-Vento services if they lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes children and youth who:

- Live in shelters, motels, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- Stay in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, or other public places
- Share housing with others due to loss of housing or economic hardship
- Live in temporary or transitional housing situations

## Rights Under the McKinney-Vento Act

Students who qualify under the McKinney-Vento Act have the right to:

- **Immediate Enrollment:** Enroll in school without delay, even without required documents such as proof of residency, immunization records, or school transcripts.
- **School Stability:** Remain in the school of origin (the school last attended) if it is in the student's best interest, even if the family moves outside the school district.
- **Transportation:** Receive transportation to and from the school of origin if requested.

- **Access to Programs:** Participate fully in all school activities and programs, including meals, extracurriculars, and special education services.
- **Support Services:** Receive assistance from the district's McKinney-Vento liaison to connect with community resources and educational support.

## KNOW YOUR RIGHTS

The McKinney-Vento Act



### IS YOUR FAMILY TEMPORARILY STAYING IN:

- someone else's house or apartment due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason?
- a hotel or motel?
- a shelter?
- a car, park, campground, abandoned building, or other inadequate space?

**Your local school district's homeless liaison may be able to help!**

If your family is staying in these living situations, your children have the right to receive extra services and supports in school under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. These include:

- Staying in the same school, even if you move, and receiving free transportation to and from that school if it is in your best educational interest to stay
- Immediate enrollment, even if you don't have the documents that are typically required for enrollment
- Receiving free school meals
- Connecting younger children to early childhood services
- College readiness assistance for high school students
- Referrals to the community for help with other needs



Please reach out to the homeless liaison to see if your child may be eligible.



**INSERT LIAISON NAME AND CONTACT INFORMATION**

If you are unable to reach the liaison, please contact your McKinney-Vento Homeless Education State Coordinator: [schoolhouseconnection.org/homeless-directory](http://schoolhouseconnection.org/homeless-directory)

[SCHOOLHOUSECONNECTION.ORG/MCKINNEY-VENTO-ACT](http://SCHOOLHOUSECONNECTION.ORG/MCKINNEY-VENTO-ACT)

## The Role of the McKinney-Vento Liaison

Each school district has a designated McKinney-Vento liaison who helps identify eligible students, ensures their rights are protected, and connects families with resources. The liaison can assist with:

- Enrolling students in school
- Arranging transportation
- Accessing free meals and school supplies
- Referrals to community agencies for housing, clothing, and health care

## How Families Can Get Help

If a family's living situation changes or becomes unstable, they should contact the school counselor or McKinney-Vento liaison as soon as possible. The liaison will help determine eligibility and provide support to ensure the student's education continues without interruption.

### District McKinney-Vento Liaison Contact:

Name: Dr. Michelle Rushing

Phone: 219-650-5300

Email: [mrushing@mvsc.k12.in.us](mailto:mrushing@mvsc.k12.in.us)

## Community Resources

- Merrillville's Community Resource Guide
  - [MCSC Community Resource Guide.pdf](#)
    - Local Housing Assistance Programs
    - Food Pantries and Meal Services
    - Health and Mental Health Clinics
    - Clothing and School Supply Drives
    - Transportation Assistance
  - [McKinney-Vento: Homeless Children and Youth Program](#)
  - [What is the McKinney-Vento Act?](#)
  - [FAFSA](#)

## Staying Connected

Families are encouraged to stay in touch with their child's school and the McKinney-Vento liaison to ensure ongoing support. Schools are committed to helping every student succeed, regardless of housing challenges.

Parents can **effectively** support learning at home by establishing consistent, flexible routines that blend academic work with free play, creating a dedicated, comfortable workspace, and fostering open communication with educators. Prioritize a balance of screen time, encourage curiosity through reading and everyday activities, and provide emotional encouragement rather than just academic oversight.

Here are key strategies from educational resources:

- **Create Routine & Structure:** Establish a daily schedule that includes dedicated time for learning, meals, physical activity, and rest.
- **Designate a Learning Space:** Set up a specific, comfortable area for schoolwork, whether it's a desk or a designated spot at the kitchen table.
- **Encourage Play and Exploration:** Incorporate unstructured play (blocks, art) and structured play (games, puzzles) to boost creativity and problem-solving.
- **Connect Everyday Life to Learning:** Use cooking to teach math, nature walks for science, and discussions about daily tasks to boost language skills.
- **Read Regularly:** Foster a love for reading by reading aloud, visiting the library, and allowing children to choose books.
- **Communicate with Teachers:** Maintain regular contact with educators to understand curriculum goals and to discuss your child's progress and needs.
- **Balance Screen Time:** Use digital tools for educational purposes, ensuring they enhance rather than replace active learning.
- **Support Emotional Health:** Provide a supportive environment where children feel safe expressing anxiety, using journaling or conversation to process their thoughts.

**Together, we can ensure every child has the opportunity to learn, grow, and thrive.**