Supporting Your Child in School

A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

National Center for Homeless Education
NCHE



If your family is in a temporary or inadequate living situation due to a loss of housing, your child might be eligible for certain educational rights and services.

National Center for Homeless Education
Supporting the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Services

Your child might be able to receive help through a federal law called the "McKinney-Vento Act" if your family lives:

- in an emergency or transitional shelter,
- in a motel/hotel, trailer park, or campground due to the lack of an alternative, adequate accommodation,
- in a car, park, abandoned building, or bus/train station,
- doubled-up with other people due to loss of housing or economic hardship.

McKinney-Vento Rights and Supports

Your McKinney-Vento-eligible children have the right to receive a free, appropriate public education that includes:

- The ability to immediately enroll in a new local school, even if they are missing records and documents normally required for enrollment, such as a birth certificate, proof of residence, previous school records, or immunization/medical records.
- The ability to enroll in school, attend classes, and participate fully in all school activities while the school gathers records, even if enrollment or application deadlines have passed.
- The ability to continue attending their school of origin or to immediately enroll in the local school where they are living. The student can attend the school of origin even if they currently live outside the district's boundaries. The school of origin is the school the student attended before losing housing or the school the student last attended.

*If the school district believes that the school you select is not in the best interest of your children, then the district must provide you with a written explanation of its position and inform you of your right to appeal its decision.

- The ability to receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested, at no cost to the parent or student.
- The ability to access the same programs and services that are available to all other students, including transportation and supplemental educational services.
- The ability to receive free school meals.

National Center for Homeless Education NCHE



NCHE Resources

Toll-Free Helpline: 305-306-8495 or NCHE.Helpline@safalpartners.com

NCHE can explain your child's school rights and how to contact your school district's local liaison. The local liaison can help enroll your child in school and ensure that your child receives the help they need.

Toll-Free Helpline
305-306-8495

NCHE.Helpline@
safalpartners.com

Website: https://nche.ed.gov

The NCHE website has a lot of useful information, including a webpage for parents who want to help their child in school:
https://nche.ed.gov/parent-resources/

Website
https://nche.ed.gov



Resource: Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness: An Introduction to the Issues

This NCHE publication is helpful for learning more about the educational rights and supports available to children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Children are more likely to succeed in school when:



- They attend school every day and arrive rested and fed.
- They have a quiet place to do homework, with time set aside every day to receive help from parents, guardians, or caregivers.
- Their health needs are taken care of, and any concerns are addressed early.
- They have the opportunity to talk about what they are learning in school with caring adults who show interest in their education.
- Time is set aside every day to read to younger children, or for older children to read together silently and discuss what they are reading.
- They are praised for actions such as putting their best effort into an assignment or test or showing persistence in a difficult situation.
- They have someone to listen to their concerns or problems. It is helpful to discuss these issues with a teacher or school counselor.
- They are encouraged to participate in activities such as school clubs, sports, or music.

Frequently Asked Questions

When I move, should I keep my child in the same school or transfer my child to the local school?



Moving from one school to another can be upsetting for children. They must leave the friends and teachers they know and become accustomed to new friends, teachers, and classes. As a result, it may be best for your child to stay in the same school (the school of origin), even if you move to a different area.



Here are some questions to consider when deciding whether your child should stay in the same school or move to a new school where you're living:

- How old is your child?
- How permanent is your current living arrangement? Do you plan to move back close to the school of origin, or do you think you'll stay near your current living arrangement?
- Is your child attached to their school of origin? An older child who feels very connected to their school of origin and/or is about to graduate might have a harder time changing schools.
- How will moving schools affect your child's emotional well-being? Would changing schools be overwhelming?
- Would moving schools affect your child's access to programs, teachers, or friends that support their well-being and learning?
- Is this a good time of year for your child to change schools, such as at the end of a semester or school year, after testing, or after an event that is important to your child?
- How much time would your child spend going back and forth to the school of origin? A long ride might negatively impact your child.
- Are there safety issues to consider when choosing which school your child should attend?



What if the school and I disagree about where my child should attend school?

The school district must inform you in writing why your child should attend a different school than the one you prefer. The district must also inform you in writing how you can appeal this decision. Your child can still be enrolled in, attend, and participate fully in the school you prefer while the disagreement is being resolved.

Who can I contact to help with my child's education?

- Every school district has a **local homeless education liaison**. This local liaison can help you decide which school would be best for your child and communicate with the school. The liaison can also help your child receive school supplies, supplemental services, and free school meals; set up transportation to and from the school of origin; and help you find community supports.
- When you enroll your child in a new school, ask to meet their teacher(s). Periodically, talk to your child's **teacher(s)** to discuss how they are doing. Get to know at least one teacher at your child's school to ask questions about their schoolwork and share helpful information to improve school outcomes.
- The **school counselor** can help your child navigate changes and challenges. Consider sharing information with this counselor about how your child is behaving at home or issues your child is facing that might affect their schoolwork or attendance.
- Other helpful people to know are the **school principal, attendance officer, bus driver, school social worker, and school nurse.**
- **All school and school district staff** can help ensure your child receives all the services they need to succeed in school. You are an important partner in your child's education, and working as a team with school and district staff will benefit your child.

What questions should I ask about services under the McKinney-Vento Act?



- Who is the local homeless education liaison? How can I contact them?
- Once my child qualifies for services under the McKinney-Vento Act, how long will they receive those services?
- What transportation is available for my child to stay in the same school (the school of origin)?
- If my child changes schools, who can help us quickly transfer records to the new school?



- How can my child receive free meals at school?
- How can my child receive free school supplies if needed?
- Who can help if my child needs special education services?
- How quickly can these services be set up?
- What academic help is available for my child, such as Title I programs or after-school tutoring?
- What programs can help develop my child's talents and address their unique needs?
- Are there sports, music, or other school or community-based activities available for my child?
- How can my child attend class field trips or participate in other school activities if I can't pay for them?
- Is a preschool program available for my younger children?
- Who can my child talk to about their interests in programs such as career and technical education or college?

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) offers technical assistance for the U.S. Department of Education's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program. NCHE is funded by the U.S. Department of Education. The views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the position or policies of the U.S. Department of Education.

Local Liaison

Dr. Kimberly Williams
Jackson County School District
Homeless Liaison
(228) 826-0120
kwj2420@jcsd.ms

State Coordinator for Homeless Education

Dr. Quentin Ransburg
MDE Office of Federal Programs
Interim Homeless and Emergency Impact Aid Coordinator
769-208-4674
qransburg@mdek12.org

National Center for Homeless Education NCHE

https://nche.ed.gov
305-306-8495
NCHE.Helpline@safalpartners.com

This document was produced under U.S. Department of Education contract GS10F090CA.