

McKinney-Vento Homeless Act

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act a federal law first enacted in 1987, states that each state educational agency is to ensure that children and youth who are homeless have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to all other students.

Who is Homeless?

As defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the term homeless children and youth is defined as an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence including children and youth who:

- are sharing housing due to loss of permanent housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- are living in motels, hotels, substandard trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative and adequate housing
- are living in an emergency or transitional shelter
- have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- are migratory children meeting the descriptions listed above
- are 'doubling up' with relatives or friends
- are unaccompanied youth (21 years old or younger and are not in physical custody of a parent or guardian)

Rights of Homeless Students

If found to be eligible for services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, families with school-aged children have the right to:

- attend school
- enroll immediately, even if missing records and documents normally required for enrollment
- stay in the school they attended before becoming homeless (school of origin), if the parent/guardian so chooses
- receive transportation services to and from the school of origin
- participate fully in school programs, activities, and receive school services according to the students' needs
- receive free meals

All public schools that receive federal funding must provide certain services to homeless students. Any child that is identified as homeless must be allowed to enroll in school immediately at the school nearest to where he/she is staying, or at the child's school of origin,

whichever is in the best interest of the child. If a child is enrolled in a school other than the one preferred by the parent/guardian, the school district must provide a written explanation as to why it was selected. Transportation will be provided to the child if he/she is to remain in the school of origin. The school district must assist homeless children in obtaining or transferring immunization records, birth certificates, school transcripts, or other necessary paperwork. This may be done by the required homeless liaison, who will also assist homeless families and unaccompanied youth in obtaining services.

Homeless students must be allowed to attend school events, field trips, and extracurricular activities.

Services Available to Homeless Families

When meeting with school officials, ask about additional services that may be available for homeless children.

Your child may have access to free breakfast and lunch, transportation services, special education programs, English language programs, school activities, and homeless assistance programs.

Contact:

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