

MARENGO COUNTY SCHOOLS

Homeless Plan and Procedures

Approved By:



Superintendent's Signature

September 2, 2015
Date



Federal Programs Director

September 2, 2015
Date

MARENGO COUNTY SCHOOLS

ADMISSION POLICY FOR HOMELESS, MIGRANTS, AND ELL STUDENTS

Pursuant to the requirements of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act as amended by the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act and the McKinney-Vento Act, all homeless children, migrants, and English language learners must have equal access to the same free appropriate public education, including public preschool education, provided other children and youth. This shall be the policy of the Marengo County School System. Such children will be provided the opportunity to meet the same challenging state content and state student performance standards to which all students are held without being stigmatized or isolated.

The enrollment of homeless, migrant, and limited English proficient children and youth shall not be denied or delayed due to any of the following barriers:

- Lack of birth certificate
- Lack of school records or transcripts
- Lack of immunization or health records
- Lack of proof of residency
- Lack of transportation
- Unaccompanied; no guardian

HOMELESS EDUCATION PLAN

Purpose of the Program

Homeless children and youth will be provided the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education regardless of their residency status. The program will ensure that these students are afforded equal access to academic and other services that will allow them to meet the same challenging state achievement standards as non-homeless students.

The program provides procedural guidelines to ensure that homeless students are not denied enrollment due to the lack of registration documentation at the time of enrollment. Homeless children and youth, including preschool age children, will be enrolled immediately pending obtainment of the necessary documents. The school counselor will assist parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth in obtaining the proper documentation.

The homeless education program makes every effort to provide homeless children and youth with a stable school environment by enrolling students in the *school of origin* and providing them with transportation to and from the school of origin. Provisions are made for parents guardians, or unaccompanied youth to decline enrollment in the *school of origin*.

The program provides for a homeless liaison that will ensure program implementation and coordinate efforts to ensure that homeless children and youth, including preschool age children, are provided the opportunity for academic success.

Identification & Registration Procedures

Homeless children and youth are often undetected. The district will conduct training sessions with the appropriate school personnel to inform them of methods of identifying homeless children without using stigmatizing terminology. The district will use a *Residency Questionnaire* (Appendix A) to facilitate identity of homeless children and youth and preschoolers. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will complete the *Residency Questionnaire* at the time of registration. The school counselor may provide appropriate assistance to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth in answering the questionnaire if necessary.

A copy of the Residency Questionnaire must be submitted to the Marengo County School System's Homeless Liaison on the day of registration. The school will maintain the original form in a file separate from the student's permanent record for audit purposes during the year. This file should be housed in the school counselor's office.

The parent or guardian may enroll a homeless child or youth with or without proof of residency, birth certificate, social security number, immunization record, or school records. The school counselor or principal's designee will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth appropriate assistance in obtaining the necessary records and documents for enrollment. Enrollment without the required immunization record will be pending receipt or acquisition of immunization documentation. The existing method of assigning a student number will be employed when a student enrolls without a social security number.

The Marengo County School System will employ practices that increase the awareness of the Homeless Education program. The district shall notify parents/guardians of homeless children and youth of available resources and assist them in accessing the resources.

The Marengo County School System shall conduct an annual evaluation of its Homeless Education program to determine the effectiveness of the program. The system will adjust practices and procedures as needed to improve the effectiveness of implementation and student achievement.

DEFINITION:

For the purpose of identifying homeless children and youth, the Marengo County School System shall use the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless children and youth. The Act defines homeless children and youth (twenty-one years of age and younger) as:

- Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are:
 - Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up);
 - living *in* motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - Living in emergency or transitional shelters; abandoned in hospitals; or
 - Awaiting foster care placement.
- Children and youth who 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.
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

The teen *unaccompanied youth* includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, cars, on the streets, or in other inadequate housing and children, youth denied housing by their families (sometimes referred to as "throwaway" children and youth), and school-age unwed mothers, living in homes for unwed mothers, who have no other housing available.

The *school of origin* is the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

An unaccompanied youth may enroll himself or herself. In this case, the school principal or designee will immediately contact the Marengo County School System's Homeless Liaison to report the enrollment of an unaccompanied youth. The school will provide the youth with proper assistance in language that the student understands. The Marengo County School System's Homeless Liaison (Appendix B) will assist the homeless unaccompanied youth in obtaining eligible educational services.

The application process for free and reduced priced meals can be expedited for homeless children and youth. The determination for free meals may be made without completing the full application process (source: U.S. Department of Agriculture: http://www.nlchp.org/FA_Education/new_usda_memo.pdf).

Identification of Homeless Preschoolers

The Marengo County School System's Homeless Liaison will collaborate with local community service agencies (e.g. Head Start, Department of Human Resources, Health Department, faith-based organizations and the court system, etc.) and school personnel to identify homeless preschoolers. The district will also include homeless preschoolers and homeless children in the "Child Find" process as required by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act.

School Placement

The school system will make school placement decisions in the "best interest" of the homeless child or youth. Students will continue in the *school of origin* for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year. Students may enroll in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

If school enrollment decision is contrary to the wishes of the child or youth's parent/guardian, the school will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision, a statement of the right to appeal, and procedure for appealing the placement decision. The complainant must file a School Enrollment Dispute (Appendix C) with the school in which the student is presently enrolled. The principal of this school will notify the Marengo County School System's Homeless Liaison of the dispute and take steps to resolve the dispute.

When a dispute arises regarding school placement, the system will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, pending resolution of the dispute. The Marengo County School System's Homeless Liaison will expeditiously take steps to resolve the dispute (See Appendix D). If the dispute cannot be settled by the homeless liaison, the liaison will assist the complainant in seeking technical assistance from an appropriate service agency.

APPENDIX A

RESIDENCY QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Where is the student currently living?

Section A		Section B	
<input type="checkbox"/>	In a shelter	<input type="checkbox"/>	The choices in Section A do not apply
<input type="checkbox"/>	With more than one family in a house or apartment	<i>If you checked this section, STOP here. You do not need to complete the remainder of this form. Submit the form to school personnel.</i>	
<input type="checkbox"/>	In a motel, car, or campsite		
<input type="checkbox"/>	With friends or family members (other than parent /guardian)		
<i>If you checked a box in Section A, CONTINUE to item number 2 and complete the remainder of this form.</i>			

2. The student lives with:

- | | |
|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 parent | <input type="checkbox"/> a relative, friend(s) or other adult(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 2 parents | <input type="checkbox"/> alone with no adult(s) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1 parent and another adult | <input type="checkbox"/> an adult that is not the parent or the legal guardian |

School _____

Name of Student _____ Male Female

Birth Date ____/____/____ Age ____ Social Security Number ____/____/____
Month Day Year

Name of Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) _____

Address _____

E-911 Address (Street Address)

City State Zip Code Telephone Number (____) _____

Signature of Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) _____

School Use Only -Do Not Write in this Space.	
Section A Determination:	
Principal's Signature	Date

For Section A choices, fax this form to the Central Office Contact Person.

APPENDIX B

The homeless liaison shall work to ensure that homeless children and youth, including preschoolers are identified, enrolled in school, and receive all eligible services to facilitate student academic success. The responsibilities listed below are not all inclusive but shall be primary duties of the liaison. The homeless liaison shall ensure that:

- , Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
- , Homeless students enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the schools of the **district**;
- , Homeless children and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, including g Head Start, and preschool programs administered by the school system, and referrals to health, mental health, dental and other appropriate services;
- Parents or guardians of homeless children and youth are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate **in** the education of their children;
- Parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing **transportation services**;
- Transportation cost disputes between the school system and school system of enrollment are resolved;
- Sensitivity and confidentiality training is provided to transportation and school personnel regarding the needs of homeless children and youth;
- Enrollment d disputes are mediated in accordance with the requirements of the McKinney - Vento Act;
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated to locations where children and youth receive services under the Act;
- Required reports concerning the homeless education program are submitted to appropriate agencies and the State Department of Education; and
- Evaluation of the homeless education program is conducted annually and necessary program and implementation adjustments are made in a timely manner.

**MARENGO COUNTY SCHOOLS
Dispute Resolution
Final District Decision Form**

Student Name:	School Name:
Parent/Guardian/Unaccompanied Youth Name:	Relationship to Student:
Street Address (City, State, Zip):	Phone Number:

Base on the investigation conducted by Student Support Services, it has been determined that the above named student _____ **IS** or _____ **IS NOT** (check one) entitled to enrollment in and/or transportation to the above named school due to the following reason(s):

You may appeal this decision to the Alabama State Department of Education within three working days. If you do not file an appeal, the district's decision will go into effect on _____ (date).

If you would like to appeal this decision, you must complete the appeal information below. For help completing the appeal, please contact the Homeless Liaison at 334 295-4123. If you are an unaccompanied youth and would like to file an appeal, the Homeless Liaison must help you.

Stephanie Pope (Date)
Student Support Services

Parent/Guardian/Unaccompanied Youth Appeal to the Alabama State Department of Education

I understand that I have the right to appeal the district's decision to deny enrollment of my child to the requested school and that my right to appeal must be exercised within three working days of the above date. I understand that the above student must remain enrolled and provided with transportation (if feasible) until the State makes a determination (within ten days).

Based on the explanation provided:

_____ I do not wish to appeal this decision.

_____ I wish to appeal this decision to the Alabama State Department of Education. Please forward this information to:

State Coordinator for Homeless Education
Alabama State Department of Education
Federal Programs
50 North Ripley Street
Montgomery, AL 36130
1-888-725-9321 (toll free)

APPENDIX D

DISTRICT ENROLLMENT DISPUTE FORM

Student's Name _____ SSN/SN _____

School Name _____ Grade _____

District Action on Complaint

Taken within _____ school days after receiving notice of the complaint. Was the complaint resolved at the district level? _____ Yes _____ No

If the dispute was resolved at the district level, describe the action taken by the county homeless liaison to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of the complainant:

If the dispute was not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, did the county homeless liaison convene a meeting of the interested parties to attempt resolution of the dispute? Yes _____ no
If yes, when and where did the meeting take place? Describe the outcome of the meeting.

If no, will a meeting be held for resolution purposes? When? Where?

If a resolution cannot be derived at the district level, the county homeless liaison should assist the complainant in contacting service organizations to provide technical assistance to the complainant. Did the county homeless liaison assist the complainant in this manner? Yes _____ no

Name of service organization contacted for assistance _____

Was the dispute resolved? _____

Date _____

Describe the resolution.

Complainant's Signature

Homeless Liaison

APPENDIX E

EVALUATION STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

STANDARD	EVIDEN CE
1	Within one (1) full day of an attempt to enroll in School, homeless children and youth will be in attendance.
2	Homeless pre-k to 12 children and youth will have stability in school.
2.1	Attendance rates will be at or above the relevant district average.
2.2	Students will remain in the school of origin for the period of homelessness or, if permanently housed, for the remainder of the school year, unless parents or unaccompanied youth requested transfer to another school.
3	Homeless children and youth will receive specialized services when eligible.
3.1	Eligible homeless preschool children can participate in public preschool (Head Start, state pre-k, preschool programs for children with disabilities under IDEA, meals, programs for children with limited English proficiency, and Title I pre-school programs).
3.2	Eligible homeless children and youth can receive special education and related services under IDEA, educational and related aids and services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency.
3.3	Homeless children and youth will receive appropriate services, based on assessment of individual needs, through a combination of resources, including, but not limited to Title I, McKinney-Vento, and other federally funded programs.
4	Parents or persons acting as parents of homeless children and youth will participate meaningfully in their children's education.
4.1	Parents or persons acting as parents will have a face -to-face conference with the teacher, guidance counselor, or social worker within 30 days of enrollment.
4.2	Parents or persons acting as parents will be provided with individual student reports informing them of their child's specific academic needs and achievement on academic assessments aligned with state academic achievement standards.

STANDARD	EVIDENCE
4.3 Parents or persons acting as parents will report monitoring or facilitating homework assignments.	
4.4 Parents or persons acting as parents will share reading time with their children (I.e., parent reads to child or listens to child read).	
4.5 Parents who would like parent skills training will attend available programs.	
4.6 Parents or guardians will demonstrate awareness of McKinney rights.	
4.7 Unaccompanied youth will demonstrate awareness of McKinney-Vento rights.	
8 Homeless children and youth in grades 3-12 will meet their state's academic standards.	
5.1 Performance on standards-based assessments in reading and math will be within or above the proficient range or will show a one-for-one gain.	
5.2 Rates of promotion to the next grade level will be at or above the district average.	
5.3 Rates of high school graduation or equivalent will be at or above the district average.	

PROGRAM COMMENTS/RECOMMENDATIONS

Common Signs of Homelessness

Lack of Continuity in Education

- Attendance at many different schools
- Lack of records needed for enrollment
- Gaps in skill development

Poor Health/Nutrition

- Lack of immunizations and/or immunization records
- Unmet medical and dental needs
- Chronic hunger (may hoard food)
- Fatigue (may fall asleep in class)

Transportation and Attendance Problems

- Erratic attendance or tardiness
- Inability to contact parents
- Numerous absences
- Avoidance of class field trips

Poor Hygiene

- Wearing the same clothes for several days
- Lack of shower facility or washers to stay clean

Not Ready for Class

- Lack of basic school supplies
- Concern for the safety of belongings
- Incomplete or missing homework

Social and Behavioral Cues

- Change in behavior
- "Old" beyond years
- Protective of parents
- Poor/short attention span
- Poor self-esteem
- Difficulty or avoidance of making friends
- Difficulty trusting people
- Need for immediate gratification

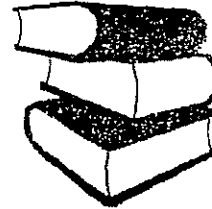
Reactions/Statements by Parent, Guardian, or Child

- Anger or embarrassment when asked about current address
- Mention of staying with grandparents, other relatives, friends, or in a motel
- Comments such as:
 - "I don't remember the name of my previous school."
 - "We've been moving around a lot."
 - "Our address is new; I can't remember it" (may hide lack of a permanent address).
 - "We're going through a bad time right now."

Note: These are general guidelines. There is significant variability among the school-age homeless population.

Warning signs adapted from flyers developed by the Illinois and Pennsylvania Departments of Education.

EDUCATION OF CHILDREN & YOUTH IN HOMELESS SITUATIONS



The federal McKinney-Vento Act protects the rights of children and youth in homeless situations to attend and succeed in school, including pre-school. The McKinney-Vento Act applies to all children and youth who do not have a fixed, regular and adequate residence, including children and youth who are: staying with friends or relatives because they lost their housing; awaiting foster placement; or living in emergency or transitional shelters, motels, domestic violence shelters, campgrounds, inadequate trailer parks, cars, public spaces, abandoned buildings and bus/train stations.

Children and youth in homeless situations have the right to:

- ▶▶ Go to school, no matter where they live or how long they have lived there;
- ▶▶ Choose between the local school where they are living, the school they attended before they lost their housing, or the school where they were last enrolled;
- ▶▶ Enroll in school without proof of residency, immunizations, school records, or other documents;
- ▶▶ Get transportation to school;
- ▶▶ Get all the school services they need;
- ▶▶ Be free from harassment and isolation; and
- ▶▶ Have disagreements with the school settled quickly.

For help enrolling in school or with other education issues, families, children and youth should contact their **State Coordinator** for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (listed on the back).
Or call the National Law Center, at (202) 638-2535.










QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT THE LAW

Q: WHAT IS THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT?









A: The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law, passed in 1987 to help people experiencing homelessness. Part of the law protects the rights of children and youth who are homeless to go to school. In December 2001, Congress changed the law to give more rights to children, youth and families who are homeless.

Q: WHO IS HOMELESS UNDER THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT?

A: The law says that a child or youth without a fixed, regular and adequate residence is homeless. It does not matter how long the child or youth has been without a home. It also does not matter if the child or youth is living with a parent or is separated from parents. Under the Act, students are homeless if they are:

-  Living with a friend, relative or someone else because they lost their home or can't afford a home;
-  Staying in a motel or hotel;
-  Living in an emergency or transitional shelter or a domestic violence shelter;
-  Staying in substandard housing;
-  Living in a car, park, public place, abandoned building or bus or train station;
-  Awaiting foster care placement;
-  Living in a campground or an inadequate trailer home;
-  Abandoned in a hospital; or
-  Living in a runaway or homeless youth shelter.

Liaisons must also:










-  Reach out to children and youth in all different kinds of homeless situations;
-  Settle disagreements between schools and families or youth quickly;
-  Make sure pre-schoolers who are homeless enroll in Head Start, Even Start or other pre-school programs;
-  Put up notices about the education rights of students in homeless situations;
-  Make sure parents and guardians can take part in their children's education;
-  Refer students to any medical, dental, mental health or other services they need;
-  Coordinate with social services and housing agencies to ensure access to education; and
-  Make sure students have a full and equal chance to do well in school.

The school guidance counselor, social worker, secretary, principal and nurse can also help families and youth in homeless situations. Social workers and case managers at shelters can also help.

Q: CAN STUDENTS STAY IN THE SAME SCHOOL AFTER THEY LOSE THEIR HOUSING?

A: YES. Children and youth in homeless situations have the right to stay in the school they went to before they lost their housing, or to stay at whatever school they were enrolled in last. These schools are called "schools of origin." It is important for students to stay in

Schools can provide transportation in different ways, including:

-  Re-routing school buses and making sure buses go to shelters, motels and other places where students live;
-  Providing passes for public buses and subways, including passes for caretakers when needed;
-  Using the transportation systems social services use;
-  Using approved van or taxi services;
-  Reimbursing parents, guardians or youth for gas;
-  Working with service and shelter providers and public assistance agencies to make transportation plans or provide transportation;
-  Getting corporate or other sponsorship for transportation costs;
-  Using Title I and other federal and local money for transportation; and
-  Building close ties among Liaisons, school staff and the pupil transportation department.


Q: IF STUDENTS WANT TO GO TO THEIR LOCAL SCHOOL, CAN THEY?

A: YES. Children and youth in homeless situations have the right to go to the local school where they are living, if they do not want to stay at their school of origin. The local school must let students experiencing homelessness go to classes and participate fully in school activities as soon as they come to the school.

Students can go to classes and participate right away, even if they do not have:

Q: DO SCHOOLS HAVE TO GIVE STUDENTS IN HOMELESS SITUATIONS ALL THE SERVICES THEY NEED?

A: YES. Schools must make sure children and youth in homeless situations get all the educational and supplemental services they need. For example, students must have access to:

 **Pre-school**

Liaisons must make sure eligible children can attend Head Start, Even Start and other pre-school and pre-kindergarten programs.

 **School meal programs**

Students in homeless situations should get free breakfast and lunch at schools that offer meals, if they want these meals. Schools can apply directly for free meals for students who are homeless.





Families and youth do not have to provide social security numbers when they apply for free or reduced meals. If students or their families get welfare (TANF) or food stamps, they are automatically eligible for free breakfast and lunch at school.

 **Programs for language minority students**

Students who are learning to speak English have the right to any special language services they need. Schools cannot ask any families or youth if they are U.S. citizens or what their immigration status is. Schools cannot make families or youth show immigration documents or give a social security number. These rules apply to all families or youth, whether they are homeless or not.

Q: ARE THERE SPECIAL RULES FOR YOUTH LIVING ON THEIR OWN?

A: YES. Youth on their own have all the rights described in this booklet. They also have the right to get extra help from Liaisons. Liaisons must:


-  Help youth decide what school to attend, considering the youth's wishes, and help them enroll in that school;
-  Make sure youth know about their rights to transportation and help set up transportation;
-  Make sure youth know they can disagree with school decisions, and how to have those disagreements settled; and
-  Make sure youth are immediately enrolled in school during any disagreement.

Youth on their own cannot be kept out of school because they do not have a parent or guardian to enroll them.

Q: CAN STUDENTS IN HOMELESS SITUATIONS BE SENT TO SEPARATE SCHOOLS?



A: NO. Separate schools that are just for students in homeless situations are against the law. Public schools also cannot put students experiencing homelessness in separate classes or programs just because they are homeless. Call or email the Law Center, the National Center for Homeless Education or the National Coalition for the Homeless for more information about this question. See page 14 of this booklet for contact information.

 **Call a lawyer for help.**

School districts and states can be sued in court for not following the McKinney-Vento Act. Courts can make school districts and states follow the law. To find legal aid groups in your area, look on the web at www.ptla.org/links.htm#services, or www.lsc.gov/fundprog.htm, or call your state bar association.


A list of lawyers who help students with disabilities can be found at www.protectionandadvocacy.com/pa12.htm.

 **Contact the U.S. Department of Education.**

The Department can investigate states and school districts that do not follow the law. To reach the Department's Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program, call (202) 401-0113.

 **Contact the National Law Center.**


Go to www.nlchp.org or call (202) 638-2535.

 **Contact the National Center for Homeless Education.**

Go to www.serve.org/nche or call toll free (800) 308-2145.

 **Contact the National Coalition for the Homeless.**

Go to www.nationalhomeless.org or call (202) 737-6444.

 **Contact the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.** Go to www.naehcy.org.

Remember, this booklet outlines only some basic information about the McKinney-Vento Act. It does not provide legal advice. Each individual case will vary, and parents and youth should get help.