

## Procedures for Enrolling Homeless Students

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act assures preschool-aged and school-aged children certain rights.

### Definition:

The McKinney-Vento Acts defines “homeless children and youth” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

- Children and youth who are:
  - Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a 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; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.
- A student who is in a home for CPS placement or in Foster Care does not classify as **HOMELESS**.
- Once a student is classified as homeless they remain classified and are eligible for services for the entire year.

### Requirements:

The McKinney-Vento Act provides certain rights for homeless students. They include waiving certain requirements such as proof of residency when students are enrolling and allowing categorical eligibility for certain services. The Act also states:

- Homeless students may attend their school of origin or the school where they are temporarily residing.
- Homeless students must be provided a written statement of their rights when they enroll and at least two times per year
- Homeless students may enroll without school, medical, or similar records.
- Homeless students have a right to transportation to school.
- Students must be provided a statement explaining why they are denied any service or enrollment.
- Students must receive services, such as transportation, while disputes are being settled.

## Procedures for Identifying a Homeless Student

A student may be considered homeless if:

- The student indicates a homeless status at the time of enrollment
- An affidavit of residency indicates that the arrangement is temporary due to necessity (due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason)

## Procedures for Enrolling a Homeless Student

The school may not deny, delay, or transfer enrollment solely because a student is homeless, or because a homeless student is unable to produce school, medical, or residency records.

A school enrolling, or about to enroll, a homeless student shall:

- Complete Homeless Student Residency Questionnaire and send to District Homeless Liaison for consultation and approval.
- During the process of completing required documentation, **immediately (same day or within 24 hours)** enroll the student, regardless of the availability of educational and/or immunization records
  - If a student attempts to register without a parent/guardian, effort should be made to contact the parent/guardian
  - The homeless student may not be barred from enrollment due to lack of immunization until an effort has been made to obtain records. If records cannot be obtained, assistance should be provided in getting the student properly immunized.
  - If a birth certificate is not available, the student should be registered. Department of Human Services may be contacted to assist in obtaining a copy of the birth certificate.
  - The student will be identified as homeless in SAM student package.
- Make a reasonable effort to verify that the child is homeless.
- Contact the school last attended to obtain relevant academic and other records
  - If student records cannot be obtained or records are not available an educational record (cumulative folder) will be developed. In these cases, an academic diagnostic test may be administered to assist in the determination of the student's skill levels and appropriate placement.
  - Priority shall be given in evaluations of homeless student suspected of having a disability.
- Provide free meals within one school day after the student enrolled. If necessary, assistance will be provided for completion of free and reduced lunch forms. The Food Service Director will immediately be notified by the Homeless Liaison of the student's homeless identification to ensure student status is coded correctly for enrollment and appropriate services including automatic free lunch eligibility.
- Provide access to the same services comparable to those offered to other students in the school which the homeless student attends such as:
  - transportation services
  - educational services
  - school nutrition programs
  - preschool

- vocational and technical programs
- extra-curricular and enrichment activities
- Coordinate with and/or refer student to other community resources in offering assistance to the homeless student/family
- **It is important that the academic and educational programs for children who are temporarily without a home are no different than those of the general student population.**
- If there are any questions regarding McKinney-Vento status, refer these to the district Homeless Liaison.

### **School Selection:**

The District shall, according to the child’s best interest:

- Continue the child’s education in the school of origin\* if the child’s family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; \*school of origin also includes the feeder school pattern (“sister school”) if applicable
- Enroll the child in any school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child is actually living are eligible to attend.

### **Enrollment Disputes:**

- If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school, the child will be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute.
- The District will provide the child’s parent or guardian with a written explanation of the decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the right to appeal the decision.
- The District will refer the child, parent, or guardian to the homeless liaison, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.

### **Transportation:**

McKinney-Vento students are transported as all other students when living in the attendance zone. If students need transportation to their school of origin, the district transportation director will arrange. This transportation request can come from the parent or Homeless Liaison. It is the responsibility of the transportation office to communicate details of pickup/drop-off etc. with parent.

### **Comparable Services:**

The District will provide a homeless student with services that are comparable to services offered to other students in the school in which the child is enrolled, including:

- Transportation services;
- Educational services for which the child meets the eligibility criteria;
- Programs in vocational and technical education;
- Programs for gifted and talented students; and
- School Nutrition programs. (Homeless students are automatically eligible for free meals.)

### **Coordination of Services:**

- In order to improve education and other outcomes for homeless children and youths, the district will coordinate services (and funding) with programs including Title I, Part A, Title III, and Special Education.
- The District shall also coordinate the provision of services to homeless students with:
  - Local social services agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to homeless children and their families;
  - Other local educational agencies, on inter-district issues such as transportation or transfer of school records

### **Barriers to Enrollment:**

- The District shall review and revise any policies that may act as barriers to the enrollment of homeless students. The District shall give consideration to issues concerning transportation, immunization, residency, birth certificates, school records and other documentation, and guardianship. The District shall give special attention to ensuring the enrollment and attendance of homeless students who are not currently attending school.
- In addition, the District shall adopt policies and practices to ensure that homeless students are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their homeless status.

### **Notice of Rights:**

At enrollment the District shall provide written notice to the parent or guardian of the child (or directly to an unaccompanied youth) of the general rights provided under McKinney-Vento and contact information for the District's Homeless Liaison. This information will be publically posted at all schools, on the district website, and in community locations. Also, schools will share homeless information with parents.

### **Supporting Homeless Youth:**

- **Credit for Full and Partial Coursework**  
Accumulating enough credits to graduate can be very difficult for mobile students due to the variety of class offerings/requirements, methods of calculating credits, and graduation requirements across school districts. When a student transfers, it is the responsibility of the school counselor to ensure that homeless students receive credit for full and partial coursework completed in the prior school. When appropriate, school counselors will work with students to ensure access to programs such as credit recovery.
- **College and Career Readiness**  
High school counselors will assist homeless students in preparing for college including providing counseling related to college selection, completing the application process, and financial aid options. Additionally graduation planning will address career paths an related decision-making.

## **Homeless/Unaccompanied Youth-Additional Procedures**

The term “unaccompanied youth” includes a youth who is not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian (McKinney-Vento Act). These youth may have been denied housing by their families, left home voluntarily, or been abandoned by their parents or guardians.

Unaccompanied Youth include youth in homeless situations and have the same rights as other students experiencing homelessness. Specifically, they have the right to

- Remain in their school of origin or enroll in the school where they are temporarily residing.
- Transportation to and from the school of origin.
- Immediately enroll in a school serving the area in which they are currently living even if they don't have the typically required documents or a parent or guardian to authorize their enrollment.
- Equal access to programs and services.
- Ensure the prompt and fair resolution of any disputes

Unaccompanied youth will be referred to the District Homeless Liaison for Unaccompanied Youth identification. Once the identification has been made, the Homeless Liaison will notify the school and the Food Service Department. The schools are responsible for:

- Informing unaccompanied youth of their rights to transportation and assisting youth in accessing transportation.
- Providing unaccompanied youth with notice of their right to appeal school or school district decisions and ensuring that youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes.
- Referring youth to federally-financed youth shelters, the local social service agency, and other programs available.

The Homeless Liaison is responsible for:

- Serving as the youth's advocate during the dispute resolution process. The youth shall remain in the selected school while the dispute is being resolved.
- Informing school personnel of the specific needs of runaway and homeless unaccompanied youth

## **Helping Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Prepare for College:**

The Homeless Liaison will work with school counselors to make certain that students are informed of their options after high school and are college-ready. The College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 stipulates that Unaccompanied Youth determined to be homeless by a local liaison, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act funded shelter, HUD program, or college financial aid administrator may apply for federal financial aid as independent students. It will be the responsibility of the Homeless Liaison to work with school counselors to ensure that homeless students have assistance with completing the FAFSA, including informing them of their status as independent students and providing verification of that status.

Each Unaccompanied Homeless Youth will be informed of the following during his or her senior year:

- Unaccompanied Homeless Youth can complete the FAFSA without a parent or guardian's signature, and
- The parent or guardian's income is not considered when determining an independent student's need for financial aid.

## **Program Evaluation**

The District will conduct a Homeless Program Evaluation meeting annually to assist in revising and planning for current/future school years. The program evaluation will focus on correct student identification data, progress toward identified students achieving student proficiency rates on state assessments, reviewing student proficiency reports on reading and math assessments, reviewing attendance data, discipline referrals, promotion and retention and graduation rates amongst identified Homeless students. Other data used in review of effectiveness includes results of the spring Needs Assessment Survey results, review of MSIS data, and review of any complaints, as well as information reported to Homeless Liaison from coordinating services representatives.

## **Contact Information**

Calhoun County School District  
Homeless Liaison: Kim Springer-Hill  
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