



Homeless Children and Youth

Definition of Homelessness:

The McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Act defines homeless children and youth to be those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Examples include:

- children and youth sharing housing due to a loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- living in hotels, motels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative, adequate housing;
- abandoned in hospitals;
- living in a public or private place not designated for, or normally used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar places;
- living in one of the above circumstances and who are migratory according to the definition in Section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965

The Local Liaison for Homeless Children and Youth (Liaison)

The Local Liaison for Homeless Children and Youth (Liaison) serves as a primary contact between homeless families and school staff, District personnel, shelter workers, and other service providers. The Liaison is responsible for safeguarding the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness who attend school in this District. The Liaison must be notified immediately upon the enrollment or assignment of a homeless child/youth. The Liaison will coordinate District operations and services so that:

- A. homeless children/youth are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies and the Liaison shall pay special attention to identifying, locating and enrolling homeless children/youth who are not currently attending school;
- B. homeless children/youth are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in schools of that District;
- C. homeless youth receive credit for full or partial schoolwork;
- D. homeless families and children/youth have access to and receive all educational services for which they are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs), early intervention services, including IDEA Part C (birth-age three (3), and any District preschool programs;



- E. homeless families and children/youth receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;
- F. parents or guardians of homeless students are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education;
- G. public notice of the educational rights of homeless children/youth is disseminated at locations frequented by parents or guardians of such children, and unaccompanied youth, such as schools, shelters, soup kitchens, and public libraries in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth;
- H. enrollment/assignment disputes are mediated/handled in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act and any other governing applicable laws, regulations, rules or policies, including but not limited to Board policies, District guidelines, applicable laws, and the State Consolidated Plan;
- I. the parents or guardians of any homeless child and any unaccompanied homeless minor are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation to the school that is appropriately selected;
- J. school personnel receive professional development and other support; and
- K. unaccompanied youths are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards as the State establishes for other children and youths, are informed of their status as independent students under Section 480 of the Higher Education Act (HEA), and their right to receive verification of this status from the Liaison.

As part of the Liaison's duties, the Liaison will coordinate and collaborate with the State Coordinator for Homeless Children, other community, District and social service agencies, and school personnel responsible for providing education and other services to homeless children and youth and their families. This includes coordinating and collaborating with 1) other school districts on inter-district issues, such as transportation or the transfer of school records; and 2) the necessary entities and individuals when collecting and providing the State Coordinator with reliable, valid, and comprehensive required data.

Such coordination should be designed to: 1) facilitate homeless children/youth having access and reasonable proximity to available education and related support services; and 2) raise the awareness of school personnel and service providers of the effects of short-term stays in a shelter and other challenges associated with homelessness.



Early Childhood Homeless

Homeless preschool-age children have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth. To the extent that the District offers a public education to preschool children, including District Head Start programs, the District must meet Federal requirements for homeless preschool children.

The Liaison will identify homeless children who are five years old or younger (i.e., preschool-age) by working closely with shelters in the area. Additionally, the Liaison will work with Federally qualified health centers and social service agencies, such as agencies that administer the Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants and Children (WIC), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and other public benefits. The Liaison will also collaborate with early childhood education providers and programs to identify preschool-age children, and work with school personnel who may ask whether the family has any preschool-age children when enrolling homeless children and youth in school. The Liaison will also work with the District's early intervention and special education programs to assist with the "child find" process required by IDEA, Parts B and C.

In addition, the Liaison and/or designee will assist with enrolling homeless preschool-age children in preschool. According to Federal guidance, the Liaison will remind preschool program staff of the importance of preschool services for homeless children and how waiting lists can create barriers for homeless families who wish to enroll their children. The Liaison will also identify preschool programs that keep slots open specifically for homeless children.

Liaison's Role Following a Natural Disaster or Catastrophic Event

Due to a natural disaster or other catastrophic event, many families may lose their homes and the Liaison will conduct outreach and identification following these events. When such a disaster occurs, the Liaison will be proactive by preparing schools to enroll large numbers of displaced students and arranging for additional staff to help with the identification and enrollment process. Liaisons will also notify agencies working with such families of how schools will enroll and serve eligible students. Liaisons will publicize the rights and services of homeless students directly to the affected families and those who are helping those families. The Liaison shall provide or distribute brochures on the rights of such students and families were displaced people assemble.

Record Collection of Homeless Students

Upon enrollment of a child or youth experiencing homelessness, the Liaison will coordinate with appropriate administrative staff to assure that the school last attended by the child/youth is immediately contacted to provide relevant academic or other relevant records. If upon enrollment the student does not have any immunization required for enrollment by State law or any other medical records, the Liaison will assist the family or student in obtaining the immunizations, screenings, or other necessary medical records.



Transportation for Homeless Students

The School shall provide transportation services for all homeless children. The Liaison and/or designee will work with the District's Director of Transportation and other District administrators and staff to provide transportation for the homeless student.

1. Prior to enrollment students indicate if they need transportation
2. Transportation is assigned on the first day of school
3. When homelessness occurs after enrollment students will work with their engagement coach on all new transportation request
4. Engagement coaches are responsible to work with the student, family engagement coordinator, and community partners to ensure transportation is never a barrier that prevents the student from attending school
5. Since homelessness may occur across the school, county or State boundary lines, coordination among multiple agencies may be necessary. The School will work with appropriate State and local agencies to address transportation issues that may not be resolved by the school. The School shall provide or arrange for adequate and appropriate transportation to and from the school of origin while any disputes are being resolved.

Dispute Resolution

When a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, the homeless student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. The homeless student will be provided with all services for which he or she is eligible while the dispute is being resolved.

Homeless families and youths have the right to challenge placement and enrollment decisions. The District will provide the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of decisions related to the school selection or enrollment made by the school, District or State involved, along with a written explanation of appeal rights.

The District will refer the unaccompanied youth, parent, or guardian to the Liaison who will expeditiously carry out the dispute resolution process. The Liaison shall assist the child and family prepare the appeal and make the school's resources, such as copying, mailing, or obtaining records, available to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth. Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth shall be informed that they can provide written or oral documentation to support their views. Written documentation initiated at the building level or by the Liaison should be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in a language the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth can understand.

Upon determination of eligibility, enrollment or school selection, the District will provide a written explanation of any decisions made to parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth. The written explanation will be easy to understand and free of jargon. When appropriate, the District will translate the decision into the recipient's dominant language. At a minimum, the written



explanation of how the District reached its decision regarding eligibility, school selection or enrollment will include:

- A description of the action that the District proposed or refused;
- An explanation of why the District proposed or refused the action;
- A description of any other options the District considered;
- The reasons why the District rejected any other options;
- A description of any other factors relevant to the District's decision and information related to the eligibility or best interest determination. This includes the facts, witnesses and evidence relied upon and their sources;
- Appropriate timelines to ensure any relevant deadlines are met;
- Contact information for the District's local liaison and state homeless education coordinator and a brief description of their roles; and
- Notice to the recipient of their right to file an appeal, including step-by-step instructions of how to file an appeal.

The Liaison, FERPA, and Personally-Identifiable Information (PII)

Failure to protect personal information, including personally identifiable information (PII), can result in an inappropriate release of information that endangers students, their caregivers, and possibly school personnel and a violation of the Federal Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). The Liaison works with other school personnel to secure the PII contained in student databases and records. Further, conversations about homeless students must be held in private locations to prevent information from being overheard. Many homeless students are survivors of domestic violence or other safety issues that must be addressed in student records and information release procedures. It is paramount that this personal information be protected to secure the safety of students, their caregivers, and school personnel.

Training on Eligibility for Other Federal Programs

In order to facilitate coordination with other Federal programs serving homeless children and youths, a State Coordinator is responsible to provide training on the definitions of terms related to homelessness and eligibility requirements for Federal programs that serve homeless individuals. Such Federal programs include the Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grant programs administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). The Liaison who has received this training may submit an affirmation that students meet the HUD definition of homelessness so that these students may qualify for the HUD homeless assistance programs if additional eligibility requirements are met.