

Homeless Children and Youth Policy

I. Definitions

A. Homeless children and youth are defined as homeless 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.
- children displaced from their housing during naturally occurring disasters:
- When children and their families are displaced from their housing as a result of a natural disaster, there is often a period of instability in which various private organizations and local, State, and Federal agencies provide assistance. The School should determine such children's eligibility for McKinney-Vento services on a case-by-case basis. In making this determination, they should take into consideration the services that are available through these other sources.

If a child or youth's living situation does not clearly fall into the situations described above, the School should consider the relative permanence of the living arrangements. Determinations of homelessness should be made

and from the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services;

- Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the requirements of this policy; and
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated to locations where they receive services.

In meeting these responsibilities, School liaisons must assist homeless children and youth with such activities as the following:

- Enrolling in school and accessing school services;
- Obtaining immunizations or medical records;
- Informing parents, school personnel, and others of the rights of homeless children and youth;
- Working with school staff to make sure that homeless children and youth are enrollment or placement;
- Helping to coordinate transportation services for homeless children and youth; and
- Collaborating and coordinating with State Coordinators for the Education of education and related support services to homeless children and youth.

School liaisons can identify preschool-aged homeless children by working closely with shelters and social service agencies in their area. In addition, the liaison should work with school personnel, who can inquire, at the time they are enrolling homeless children and youth in school, whether the family has preschool-aged children.

The School liaison should also collaborate with the school district special education program. The Individual with Disabilities Education Act ("IDEA") requires that highly mobile children with disabilities, such as migrant and homeless children who are in need of special education and related services, are located, identified and evaluated. Additionally, IDEA requires that homeless preschoolers and all homeless children be included in the "Child Find" process for early identification of special education needs.

length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location; and the time remaining in the school year.

- To Facilitate Immediate Enrollment, the following practices should be considered:

1. Train all school enrollment staff, secretaries, guidance counselors, school social workers, and principals on the legal requirements regarding immediate enrollment;
2. Review all regulations and policies to ensure that they comply with this Policy;
3. Develop affidavits of residence or other forms to replace typical proof of residency. Such forms should be carefully crafted so that they do not create further barriers or delay enrollment;
4. Develop caregiver affidavits, enrollment forms for unaccompanied youth, and other forms to replace typical proof of guardianship, so as not to create further barriers or delay enrollment;
5. Establish school-based immunization clinics or other opportunities for on-site immunizations;
6. Collaborate with community-based or public agencies to provide school uniforms within a district and among neighboring districts;
7. Accept school records directly from families and youth;
8. Contact the previous school for records and assistance with placement decisions;
9. Develop short educational assessments to place students immediately while awaiting complete academic records;
10. Inform families and youth in a language they can understand or in an accessible format, as appropriate, of their right to attend either their school of origin or local school;
11. Inform families and youth in a language they can understand or in an accessible format, as appropriate, of their right to transportation and immediate enrollment;

7. Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth should be informed that they can provide written or oral documentation to support their position;
8. Students should be provided with all services for which they are eligible while disputes are resolved;
9. Written notice should be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in a language the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth can understand. The notice should include:
 - a. Contact information for the School homeless liaison and State coordinator, with a brief description of their roles;
 - b. A simple, detachable form that parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth can complete and turn in to the school to initiate the dispute process. (The School should copy the form and return the copy to the parent, guardian or youth for their records when it is submitted);
 - c. A step-by-step description of how to dispute the School's decision;
 - d. Notice of the right to enroll immediately in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute;
 - e. Notice that "immediate enrollment" includes full participation in all school activities;
 - f. Notice of the right to appeal to the State if the district-level resolution is not satisfactory; and
 - g. Timelines for resolving district- and State-level appeals.

IV. Prohibition Against Segregation

Homelessness alone is not sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment. Services provided with McKinney-Vento Act funds must not replace the regular academic program and must be designed to expand upon or improve services provided as part of the School's regular academic program.

V. Transportation

At the request of the parent or guardian (or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison), transportation shall be provided to or from the "school of origin" in accordance with the following requirements:

- If the homeless child or youth continues to live in the area in which the school of origin is located, that School must provide or arrange for the child's or youth's transportation to or from the school of origin.
- If the homeless child or youth continues his or her education in the school of origin but begins living in an area served by another LEA, the LEA of origin and the LEA in which the homeless child or youth is living must agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the LEAs cannot agree upon a method, the responsibility and costs for transportation are to be shared equally.

VI. Comparable and Coordinated Services

The School must provide services to each homeless child and youth that is comparable to services offered to other students in the School. Homeless children are also entitled to participate in the regular after-school program provided by the School, and the School must address all barriers to their full participation in these programs. If no after-school programs are provided by the school or the programs provided do not meet the needs of homeless children, McKinney-Vento funds may be used for after-school services for homeless children, and for non-homeless children who are at risk of failing in, or dropping out of, school.

The School must provide comparable services to a homeless student who does not attend a Title I school. School must reserve funds for homeless children who do not attend participating Title I schools and may, for instance, provide support services to children in shelters and other locations where homeless children live. Services should be provided to assist homeless students to effectively take advantage of educational opportunities.

42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.

Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, As Amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 Non-regulatory Guidance