

Transportation

Who is homeless? (Sec. 725)

The term “homeless children and youth”–

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence ...; and

(B) includes–

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

(ii) children and youths 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 ...

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

This document was collaboratively developed by:

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEH CY)–512-475-8765–
www.naehcy.org

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)–800-308-2145–
www.serve.org/nche

National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH)–202-737-6444 ext. 18–
www.nationalhomeless.org

National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP)–202-638-2535–
www.nlchp.org

National Network for Youth (NN4Y)–
202-783-7949–www.NN4Youth.org

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle B–Education for Homeless Children and Youth), reauthorized in January 2002, ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. This brief explains the legislation and offers strategies for implementing it in a school district. Additional briefs on various topics in the law may be found on the websites of the organizations listed below.

Key Provisions

- ☐ Local Educational Agencies (LEAs), otherwise known as school districts, must provide students experiencing homelessness with transportation to and from their school of origin, at a parent or guardian’s request.
- ☐ For unaccompanied youth, LEAs must provide transportation to and from the school of origin at the LEA homeless liaison’s request.
- ☐ “School of origin” is defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.
- ☐ If the student’s temporary residence and the school of origin are in the same LEA, that LEA must provide or arrange transportation. If the student is living outside the school of origin’s LEA, the LEA where the student is living and the school of origin’s LEA must determine how to divide the responsibility and cost of providing transportation, or they must share the responsibility and cost equally.
- ☐ In addition to providing transportation to the school of origin, LEAs must provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students.

(See Endnotes for the text of the law.)

Changing schools greatly impedes students’ academic and social growth. A “rule of thumb” is that it takes a child four to six months to recover academically after changing schools. Highly mobile students have also been found to have lower test scores and overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools. This diminished achievement hurts students and schools.

Although the McKinney-Vento Act permits students in homeless situations to remain in their schools of origin despite their residential instability, lack of transportation commonly prevents them from continuing in their schools of origin. Therefore, LEAs are now required to provide transportation to the school of origin. The resulting educational stability will enhance students’ academic and social growth, while permitting schools to benefit from the increased test scores and achievement shown to result from student continuity.

Strategies for Implementation

- ☐ Coordinate with local housing authorities and community-based organizations to house students near their schools of origin.
- ☐ Re-route school buses (including special education, magnet school, and other buses).
- ☐ Ensure that school buses travel to shelters, transitional living projects, and motels where homeless students reside.
- ☐ Provide sensitivity training to bus drivers and arrange bus stops to keep students’ living situations confidential.

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Transportation (continued)

- ☐ Develop close ties among LEA homeless liaisons, school staff, and pupil transportation staff.
- ☐ Designate a district-level point of contact to arrange and coordinate transportation.
- ☐ Provide passes for public transportation, including passes for caregivers when necessary.
- ☐ Collaborate with local public agencies and service providers to develop transportation plans or provide transportation.
- ☐ Take advantage of transportation systems used by public assistance agencies.
- ☐ Coordinate with public assistance agencies, whose clients cannot work unless their children are in school.
- ☐ Reimburse parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth for gas.
- ☐ Obtain corporate or other sponsorship for transportation costs.

For many more implementation strategies, call 800-308-2145 or e-mail homeless@serve.org to request a copy of the National Center for Homeless Education's FREE publication on transportation for children and youth in homeless situations developed from the 2000 National Symposium on Transportation.

Sources for mobility data:

Dr. Joy Rogers of the Loyola University Department of Education, Education Report of Rule 706 Expert Panel presented in B.H. v. Johnson, 715 F. Supp. 1387 (N.D. Ill. 1989), 1991.

"Pervasive Student Mobility: A Moving Target for School Improvement," Finding #9, Study of the Chicago Panel on School Policy and the Center for School Improvement at the University of Chicago (1996).

Victoria, Texas' "One Child, One School, One Year" policy, which led to increased attendance in district schools and a significant increase in state education funds, as well as improved test scores.

Every state is required to have a coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth, and every school district is required to have a liaison for homeless students. These individuals will assist you with the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. To find out who your state coordinator is, visit the NCHE website at www.serve.org/nche.



For further information on the McKinney-Vento Act and resources for implementation, call the NCHE HelpLine at 800-308-2145 or e-mail homeless@serve.org.

Local contact information:

Endnotes

(1) *In General*—Each State shall submit to the Secretary a plan to provide for the education of homeless children and youths within the State. Such plan shall include the following: ... (J) Assurances that ... (iii) the State and its local educational agencies will adopt policies and practices to ensure that transportation is provided, at the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison), to and from the school of origin, as determined in paragraph (3)(A), in accordance with the following, as applicable:

(I) *If the homeless child or youth continues to live in the area served by the local educational agency in which the school of origin is located, the child's or youth's transportation to and from the school of origin shall be provided or arranged by the local educational agency in which the school of origin is located.*

(II) *If the homeless child's or youth's living arrangements in the area served by the local educational agency of origin terminate and the child or youth, though continuing his or her education in the school of origin, begins living in an area served by another local educational agency, the local educational agency of origin and the local educational agency in which the homeless child or youth is living shall 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 local educational agencies are unable to agree upon such method, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally...*

(4) *Comparable Services*—Each homeless child or youth to be assisted under this subtitle shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected under paragraph (3), including the following: (A) Transportation services..."

McKinney-Vento Act Sec. 722(g)(1)(J)(iii) and (g)(4)(A); 42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(1)(J)(iii) and (g)(4)(A).