Educating Students Experiencing Homelessness

[Webinar]

\ Wednesday, February 13, 2019
\ 2:00 - 3:15 PM EDT
About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and technical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- Website: http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org
- Facebook Group: https://www.facebook.com/groups/SchoolHouseConnection/
- Newsletter: https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up/
- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships
Educating Students Experiencing Homelessness
[Fifth Edition]

A Primer on Legal Requirements and Implementation Strategies for Educators, Advocates and Policymakers

https://www.americanbar.org/groups/public_services/homelessness
Today’s Agenda

- State Coordinators and Liaisons
- Definitions and Identification
- Overcoming homelessness through education
  - McKinney-Vento
  - Title I
  - Early Childhood
  - Postsecondary Education
ESSA, McKinney-Vento, and Title I

● All ESSA amendments (McKinney-Vento and Title I Part A) are in effect.

Resources:

● Two-page overview of McKinney-Vento
● One-page overview of Title I and Homelessness

https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/k-12/
State Coordinators

Every state educational agency (SEA) must have a State Coordinator who can “sufficiently carry out” their duties. 11432(d)(3)

- Ensure McKinney-Vento students receive “the full protections and services provided by” the law. 11432(f)(7)
- Monitor all Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). 11432(f)(5)
- Gather and post homelessness data on the SEA website. 11432(f)(1)(A) & (f)(3)
- Provide professional development for liaisons. 11432(f)(6)

**Note:** LEAs include school districts and charter schools, as well as county offices of education, intermediate units, education service centers, etc., depending on state law.

Find State Coordinator contact info: https://nche.ed.gov/states/state_resources.php
Local Liaisons

- Every local educational agency (LEA) must designate a liaison for homeless children and youth.
- Liaisons must be “able to carry out” ten specific duties. 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)
- What does this mean?
  - The U.S. Department of Education Guidance states that LEAs “should allocate sufficient time for... liaisons to do their jobs effectively and should support them in fulfilling their duties as outlined in the law and in making timely decisions.”

Resource: Liaison Self-Assessment Tool
Local Liaisons:

Duties 1-4

McKinney-Vento liaisons must ensure that:

1. Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other entities and agencies;
2. Homeless children and youth are enrolled and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in school;
3. Homeless families, children and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, early intervention (IDEA Part C), and preschool programs administered by the LEA;
4. Homeless families, children, and youth receive referrals to health, dental, mental health, housing, substance abuse, and other appropriate services;
Local Liaisons:  

Duties 5-8

McKinney-Vento liaisons must ensure that:

5. Parents and guardians are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate;

6. Public notice of homeless students’ rights is disseminated in locations frequented by parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth, including schools, shelters, libraries and soup kitchens, in an understandable manner and form;

7. Enrollment disputes are mediated;

8. Parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth are informed of and assisted in accessing transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin;
Local Liaisons:

Duties 9-10

McKinney-Vento liaisons must ensure that:

9. School personnel providing McKinney-Vento services receive professional development and other support; and

10. Unaccompanied youth are:
    a. enrolled in school,
    b. have opportunities to meet the same challenging academic standards other children and youth, including through receiving partial credits,
    c. and are informed of their status as independent students for the FAFSA and receive verification of that status.
Definition: Who is eligible?

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. \textit{11434a(2)}

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason. \textit{[75.8\% of identified MV students in 2015–16]}
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations. \textit{[Motels: 6.5\% of identified MV students in 2015–16]}
Definition: Who is eligible?

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. 11434a(2)

- Living in emergency or transitional shelters. [14.4% of identified MV students in 2015–16]
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
  - What is substandard? Check utilities; infestations; mold; dangers. Guidance A3
  - This definition applies to migrant students.
**Unaccompanied Homeless Youth**

**Definition:**

A child or youth who meets the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness and is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. 11434a(6)
1.3 million children and youth, preK-12, identified and enrolled in school in the 2016-17 school year.

- 7% increase over 4 years
Over 4 million unaccompanied homeless youth ages 14-24.

- Prevalence is statistically the same in rural and urban areas.
Over 1.2 million children under 6 years old were estimated to have experienced homelessness over the 2015-16 school year.

- Infancy is the period of life when a person is most at risk of living in a homeless shelter.
Identification

How can schools effectively identify McKinney-Vento students?

67% of students say they were uncomfortable telling people at school about their homelessness and asking for help.
Identification Tips from the Experts

Ayesha Buckner, Homeless Liaison, Orleans Parish School Board, Louisiana
Identification Tips

1. I don’t like the word homeless, so I use In Transition.
2. Training school personnel is essential.
3. Have several POC’s at a school site.
4. Mandate every student completes the Louisiana Student Residency Questionnaire when they enroll in a school.
5. Display McKinney-Vento literature in places frequented by families and youths (libraries, recreational centers, schools, agencies, etc.).
Identification Tips (cont.)

6. I work closely with our 3 Centralized Enrollment Family Centers (from birth - 12th grade).
7. I collaborate with the regional Continuum of Care.
8. Establish trusted relationships with parents, guardians, caregivers, and unaccompanied students.
9. Consistently meet families where they are. How may I help you?
Identification Tips from the Experts

Heather Denny, McKinney-Vento State Coordinator and Title I Specialist, Montana
Create a Program that Meets Community Needs

- Guidance that reflects local community conditions helps people better understand McKinney-Vento and identify eligible students.
- Guidance that Includes State or Local Laws/Statutes
  - Montana Guidance for Enrolling Unaccompanied Homeless Youth
- Guidance that Addresses the Needs of Specific Populations in Your Area
  - OPI Guidance for Working with Military and Veteran Families
- Guidance that Reflects Local Emergencies
  - OPI Wildfire Guidance
Create a Culturally Responsive Program

- Build a collaborative relationship with the community (tribal education, elders, community leaders, etc.)
- Select the right person to be the homeless liaison
- Examine your own cultural bias
  - School cultures tend to be “white middle class” even when the teacher is a person of color
- Be trauma informed
- Rename the program to fit within the culture of the community
  - Kalispell - HEART Program
  - Browning - Āisspōōmőōtsiyō •p "we help each other" (Blackfeet language)
Educational Impacts

- **42% of students** who experienced homelessness say they dropped out of school at least once; **60% say it was hard to stay in school while they were homeless.**
- Homelessness is associated with an **87% likelihood of dropping out of school.**
- Over time, the achievement gaps between homeless and low-income elementary students tend to persist and may even worsen.
Overcoming Homelessness Through Education

- Lack of a high school diploma or GED is the top risk factor for young adult homelessness: 346% more likely.
- By 2020, 65% of all jobs will require education beyond high school.
- The McKinney-Vento Act is an important strategy to overcome homelessness.
McKinney-Vento: School of Origin

Each LEA shall, according to the child’s or youth’s best interest:

- Keep the student in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, and until the end of the academic year in which the student becomes permanently housed; or
- Enroll the student in any public school that housed students living in the attendance area where the student is living are eligible to attend. 11432(g)(3)(A)
School of Origin: Definition

The school attended when permanently housed or the school in which last enrolled, including a preschool. 11432(g)(3)(I)

What is a “preschool”?  
- Publicly-funded program for children 0-5 for which the LEA is a financial or administrative agent, or is accountable for providing early childhood education.  
- Preschools operated, administered or funded by an LEA, including funded by Title I or similar govt. Grants.  
- Head Start programs receiving LEA funding or for which the LEA is the grant recipient.  
- Preschool special education.  
- LEA funded or administered home-based early childhood services.  
  Guidance N4; Fed. Data Guide
School of Origin: Definition

Includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools, when the student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin.

Help with school of origin and preschool:
www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/early-childhood/
Determining Best Interest

In determining best interest, the LEA shall:

- Presume that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student’s best interest. 11432(g)(3)(B)(i)-(ii)
  - Unless contrary to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.

- Consider student-centered factors, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, & safety.
  - For preschool children, consider attachment to teachers; availability and quality of services in the new area; and travel time. Guidance N3

- **Give priority** to the request of the parent/guardian.

- **Give priority** to the request of an unaccompanied youth.
Transportation to the School of Origin

- LEAs must provide transportation to and from the school of origin (including preschools), including until the end of the year when the student obtains permanent housing, at a parent’s or guardian’s request (or at the liaison’s request for unaccompanied youth).
  - Even if transportation is not typically provided.
- If staying in the same LEA, that LEA must provide or arrange transportation to the school of origin.
- If crossing LEA lines, both LEAs must determine how to divide the responsibility and share the cost, or they must share the cost equally. 11432(g)(1)(J)(iii); Guidance J5
Other Transportation

- LEAs must provide transportation to extra-curricular activities if lack of transportation is a barrier. Guidance J11
- LEAs also must provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students. 11432(g)(4)(A)
- Transportation must be arranged promptly to ensure immediate enrollment and not create barriers to attendance, retention or success. Guidance J1
Immediate Enrollment

- **62%** of McKinney-Vento students said that proof of residency requirements posed a major challenge for them when enrolling in a new school.
- **56%** said lack of cooperation between their new and old schools (records transfer) posed a major challenge.
- **60%** found changing schools difficult to navigate.
Immediate Enrollment

McKinney-Vento students are entitled to immediate enrollment in any public school that students living in the same attendance area are eligible to attend, even if: 11432(g)(3)(C)

- Students do not have required documents, such as school records, records of immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, guardianship, or other documents; or
- Students have missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.
Immediate Enrollment

- “Enrollment” includes attending classes and participating fully in school activities. 11434a(1)
- The liaison must assist in obtaining immunization and other health records or screenings, and immunizations if needed; the student must be enrolled in the interim. 11432(g)(3)(C)(iii)
- Enrolling schools must obtain school records from the previous school; the student must be enrolled while records are obtained. 11432(g)(3)(C)(ii)
- Immediate enrollment applies even without parent or guardian. 11432(g)(1)(H)(iv)
  ○ Typically, unaccompanied youth enroll themselves.
Preschool Enrollment

• Immediate enrollment applies to preschools, as long as there is space.
  ○ McKinney-Vento children should be prioritized on wait lists.
  ○ Some preschool programs hold slots open for McKinney-Vento children.
• State McKinney-Vento plans must describe procedures that ensure that homeless children have access to public preschool programs administered by the SEA or LEAs. 11432(g)(1)(F)(i)
McKinney-Vento Tips from the Experts: Determining Best Interest

1. Respect the intentions of the parent, guardian, caregiver, and unaccompanied youth. Making sure they understand that you will support their decision.
2. Present scenario if the student stays in the School of Origin (pros/cons).
3. Present scenario if the student transfers to another school (pros/cons).
McKinney-Vento Tips: Transportation

1. Develop a positive working relationship with the transportation person at each school site.
2. All schools in Orleans Parish provide transportation to and from school, and most have activities buses for after school programs (tutoring, extracurricular activities).
3. Transportation is scheduled during registration at the school site.
4. Students can/do have different pick-up and drop-off locations and may take different buses on different days of the week (to accommodate sometimes unconventional schedules).
5. I provide bus tokens for parents to attend school functions and meetings.
6. Collaborate with other school districts to facilitate transportation to School of Origin.
McKinney-Vento Tips: Immediate Enrollment

1. The One APP (centralized enrollment process) allows McKinney-Vento students to enroll in a school any day of the week.
2. During this process, “MCKV STUDENT” is noted in the student’s electronic file to notify the receiving school the student will need services (free meals, uniforms, school supplies, EL/ECS services, fee waivers, bus schedule, etc.).
3. I sign the Enrollment Placement Letter, call the school’s social worker/registrar to inform them that a McKinney-Vento student is headed their way and will need services, and then I also send a copy of the Enrollment Placement Form along with the services the student may need.
McKinney-Vento Tips: Use the Assets You Already Have

Transportation -
- Contact local shelters and hotels where families are located to establish safe bus stops (*DV shelters).
- Think outside the box - a contract with a local church to use their van to pick up students might be an option (may need FERPA waivers).
- Use district owned vehicles - vans, Driver’s Ed cars, etc., instead of taxis.
- Students can ride the special education bus if a route exists.
- Students may need multiple drop off/pick up locations - notify the drivers. of each bus the student may need to ride (critical for unaccompanied youth).
- Bus drivers need to be trained on McKinney-Vento and trauma.
As of 2017-18, state report cards must disaggregate achievement and high school graduation data for McKinney-Vento students. 20 USC 6311(h)(1)(c)
Getting to Graduation:

Earning Credits

- SEAs and LEAs must implement procedures to identify and remove barriers to McKinney-Vento students receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework completed at a prior school. 11432(g)(1)(F)(ii); 11432(g)(6)(A)(x); Guidance O2

Quick Guide for Counseling Staff:
https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/quick-guide-for-counselors-working-with-students-experiencing-homelessness/
Getting to Graduation: Full Participation

- States must implement procedures to remove barriers to academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs.  
  11432(g)(1)(F)(iii)
  - LEAs should anticipate and accommodate the needs of McKinney-Vento students to enter these programs and consider giving them priority on waitlists. Guidance p. 16
  - SEAs and LEAs should develop policies to expedite full participation in extracurricular activities and work with athletic associations to adjust policies to facilitate participation. Guidance p. 25
Getting to Graduation:  
*Trauma-informed Care*

- Homelessness is inherently traumatic and frequently violent.
- SEAs and LEAs should train staff on the traumatic effects of homelessness and specific strategies to provide trauma-informed care.
- SEAs and LEAs should ensure school personnel consider issues related to homelessness prior to taking disciplinary action.

Guidance pages 33-34
Getting to Graduation: Removing Barriers

- SEAs and LEAs must develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of McKinney-Vento students, including barriers due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences. 11432(g)(1)(I)
  - This is a “broad, on-going requirement... with regular input from homeless parents, youth, and advocates so that new barriers... do not prevent” students from full, immediate enrollment and services. Guidance A4
Getting to Graduation: Title I

- McKinney-Vento students attending any school in the LEA are automatically eligible for Title IA services. 20 USC 6315(c)(2)(E); Guidance M1
- All LEAs that receive Title IA funds must set-aside the funds necessary to provide McKinney-Vento students with services comparable to services provided in Title IA schools. 20 USC 6313(c)(3)
  - Amount must be based on the total LEA allocation prior to expenditures or transfers.
  - Amount must be sufficient to provide comparable services to homeless students, regardless of other services provided with reserved funds. Guidance M5
Getting to Graduation: LEA Title I Plans

- Must be coordinated with McKinney-Vento programs.
- Must describe the services provided to McKinney-Vento students, including with reserved funds, to support their enrollment, attendance and success. 20 USC 6312(a)(1); (b)(6)
- Should describe the method used to determine the amount of the set-aside for students experiencing homelessness.
  - May be based on a needs assessment
- Should describe how the liaison was involved in determining the amount. Guidance M8
Getting to Graduation: Using Title I Funds

Funds may be used:

- For McKinney-Vento children and youth attending any school in the LEA.
- For services not ordinarily provided to other students.
- To fund the McKinney-Vento liaison. To provide transportation to the school of origin.
- For educationally related support services, including preK.

20 USC 6313(c)(3) Guidance M4, M5, M10, J7
Getting to Graduation Tips from the Experts: Career and Technical Education

- 3 years of CTE cut the drop-out rate from 8.9% to 4.6%.
- Participation in CTSOs lowered the drop-out rate to 0.
- Reframe CTE as an intervention (not elective).
- Use Title I set-aside funds to cover costs of supplies, uniforms, etc.
- Engage community supports in covering other costs (food, travel, etc.).
Be Data Smart

Team up with your school/district improvement team to analyze homeless data.

- They are the subgroup most likely to fail state testing, to be chronically absent, to drop out.
- Make sure you are looking at them as a subgroup
- Compare them to low income students and to Title I students.
- Make sure they are actually receiving services.
- Make sure they are being identified for special education and getting needed services (identification rates for homeless students may be double the rate for all other students).
Getting to Graduation Tips from the Experts (cont.)

1. Develop a positive relationship with the Director of Federal Programs and External Grants.
2. Review One App guidelines (centralized enrollment process).
3. Make sure the proper staff knows which children are McKinney-Vento.
4. Check in weekly with site POC’s.
5. Do monthly academic, attendance, medical, and behavior checks via the PowerSchool (data system).
6. Collaborate with high school counselors to ensure McKinney-Vento students are receiving credits via credit accrual (also providing them with computers to work on after school hours and the weekend).

7. Ensuring McKinney-Vento students have access to tutoring and extracurricular activities.

8. Stress “Fee Waivers”.

Getting to Graduation (cont.)
Early Childhood Education

Head Start, Early Head Start and subsidized child care programs (CCDF) have special requirements for children experiencing homelessness:

- Outreach
- Prioritize
- Enroll immediately
- Collect and report data

More information: www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/early-childhood/
Postsecondary Education

- Unaccompanied homeless youth are automatically considered independent students for the FAFSA.
  - Must be determined to be unaccompanied and homeless after July 1 of the prior year.

- Youth who are unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting are also automatically considered independent students.
  - Must be determined as such during the school year in which the application is submitted.
Postsecondary Education

- Independent students: complete the FAFSA without parental signature or income information.
- Unaccompanied youth need verification that they are unaccompanied and homeless from a liaison, shelter provider, or financial aid administrator.

More information: www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/higher-education/
Early Childhood Tips from the Experts

Work with your local Head Start programs and with private day care providers who accept Child Care subsidies.

- Both provide services to homeless preschool aged children.
- Title I requires collaboration between schools and early childhood programs.

If preschool is public - students have the same rights to transportation, school meals, and other services.

- Preschool students receiving special education services provided by a local district may have school of origin rights if they were enrolled.
- Provide services at times these students can eat a meal at school.
Early Childhood Tips (cont.)

1. Have a MOU with local Early Start/Head Start Agency.
2. Conduct training to Early Start/Head Start staff.
3. Conduct awareness activities for parents.
4. Attend and participate in Early Start/Head Start events.
5. Invite Early Start/Head Start Agency to participate in webinars.
Postsecondary Tips from the Experts

1. Ensure counselors know which students are McKinney-Vento.
2. Meet with 12th grade unaccompanied youth to explain their status and give assistance for completing FAFSA.
3. Meet with McKinney-Vento 12th graders to discuss College or Career Plan.
4. Emphasize the importance of researching a college: required ACT/SAT score, does it offer your major, is there an out of state fee, cost to attend, room/board, books, distance from home, etc.)
5. Monitor McKinney-Vento 11th/12th graders are attending ACT/SAT Prep.
Postsecondary Tips (cont.)

6. Check-in with students participating in dual enrollment/career paths.
7. Encourage students to complete a financial cost for the colleges they are interested in attending (the visual is amazing).
8. Encourage unaccompanied youth to check in with me every 2-3 weeks while in school, so that I may continue to submit their Homeless Verification for FAFSA.
9. Establish a relationship with the local colleges and universities POC’s or Liaisons.
SchoolHouse Connection Scholarship Program

- Deadline in November
- Eligible students:
  - Born on or after November 9, 1999
  - Entering college for the first time during the 2020-2021 school year.

https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/youth-leadership/scholarship-program/
Education Leads Home: A National Campaign Building Stronger Futures for Homeless Students

- Young children will participate in quality early childhood programs at the same rate as their housed peers by 2026.
- High school students will reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2030.
- Post-secondary students will reach a 60 percent post-secondary attainment rate by 2034.

www.educationleadshome.org

Stay tuned: State Partnerships Project, State Progress Reports, New Research, and more.
Resources

- SchoolHouse Connection: http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/
- National Center on Homeless Education: https://nche.ed.gov
- National Network for Youth: http://www.nn4youth.org
- DVDs for awareness-raising: vimeo.com/pjulianelle
  - “The McKinney-Vento Act in Our Schools”
  - “Education and Homelessness: Young Children to Young Adults”
Thanks!

Ayesha Buckner, Homeless Liaison, Orleans Parish School Board, Louisiana
ayesha_buckner@nops.k12.la.us

hdenny@mt.gov

Patricia Julianelle, Director of Program Advancement and Legal Affairs, SchoolHouse Connection
patricia@schoolhouseconnection.org