

## **McKinney-Vento Act Requirements for Schools**

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, such as free textbooks.

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.
- Students are automatically eligible for Title I services.
- School districts must reserve a portion of Title IA funds to serve homeless students.
- School districts must review and revise policies that provide barriers to homeless students.
- Schools must post information in the community regarding the rights of homeless students, in schools and other places that homeless families may frequent.

- **School districts must identify a McKinney-Vento Liaison to assist students.**

## **Who is Considered Homeless?**

Children and youth experiencing homelessness find shelter in a variety of places. To help educators identify homeless children, the Act defines who is considered homeless. According to the U.S. Department of Education, people living in the following situations are considered homeless:

- **Doubled up with family or friends due to economic conditions**
- **Living in motels and hotels for lack of other suitable housing**
- **Runaway and "Throwaway" children and youth**
- **Homes for unwed or expectant mothers for lack of a place to live**
- **Homeless and domestic violence shelters**
- **Transitional housing programs**
- **The streets**
- **Abandoned buildings**
- **Public places not meant for housing**
- **Cars, trailers, and campgrounds**
- **Awaiting foster care**
- **Migratory children staying in housing not fit for habitation**

## **The Challenge**

The challenge of providing an education for homeless students is growing. Over 1.35 million children experience homelessness each year.\* People who do not have their own home are highly mobile, moving as many as 12 times as often as their permanently housed peers. In addition, domestic violence touches as many as 63% of homeless parents+. The instability that homeless children experience as they move frequently between the homes of family or friends and shelters makes it difficult for children and youth to have a place to do homework or even attend school at all. To further complicate things, students can have a difficult time enrolling in school due to a lack of records such as immunization or birth records, school transcripts, or a lack of a permanent address. Children who experience delays or absences often fall behind quickly, making their education more challenging.

After receiving reports that up to 50% of homeless children were not attending school, Congress established the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The McKinney-Vento Act was created with the goal of ensuring the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth in school. It provides states with funding to help remove barriers to education.

\*Burt, M. & Laudan, A. (2000). *America's Homeless II: Populations and Services*. The Urban Institute.

+Stern, L. & Nunez, R. (1999). *Homeless in America: A Children's Story*. The Institute for Children and Poverty: New York.

The McKinney-Vento Act also ensures homeless children transportation to and from school free of charge, with their choice of what school they want to attend regardless of what district the family resides in. It further requires schools to register homeless children even if they lack normally required documents, such as immunization records or proof of residence. To implement the Act, States must designate a statewide homeless coordinator to review policies and create procedures, including dispute resolution procedures, to ensure that homeless children are able to attend school. Local school districts must appoint Local Education Liaisons to ensure that school staff are aware of these rights, to provide public notice to homeless families (at shelters and at school) and to facilitate access to school and transportation services.

The McKinney-Vento Act is a conditional funding act. This means that the federal government gives grants to states and, in return, the grantee states are bound by the terms of the act. If a state chooses not to accept federal funds for these purposes, it does not have to implement the act.