



Commissioner's Back-to-School Meeting

Connecticut State Department of Education | August 15, 2017

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Update from the Office of Student Supports and Organizational Effectiveness

McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth

Homelessness Defined

The term "homeless children and youth" is defined as:

- children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth 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 lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals;
- children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public 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
- migrant children identified as homeless because of living circumstances described above.

Please note that during 2015-16 there were 3,659 homeless children and youth identified in Connecticut public school districts.

Program Purpose and Design

The McKinney-Vento Act guarantees a free, appropriate public education for all homeless children and youth by removing barriers to their enrollment and attendance in school and supporting their educational success. This federal law requires every school district to:

- ensure homeless children and youth are identified and enrolled in school;
- remove barriers to the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth;
- provide school stability for students experiencing homelessness by allowing them to either remain in their school of origin or enroll in the attendance area school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment;
- ensure access to programs and services, including special education services, preschool services, free school meals, Title I services, gifted and talented services, and before- and after-school care;
- designate a liaison for students experiencing homelessness who is able to carry out the duties described in the law;
- ensure school personnel receive professional development and other support to effectively carry out the law;
- ensure that parents and youth are informed of and assisted in accessing transportation;

continued

- ensure that homeless children, youth, and families receive referrals to health, dental, mental health, housing, substance abuse, and other appropriate services;
- disseminate public notice of McKinney-Vento rights in locations frequented by parents and youth, in a manner and form understandable to them;
- ensure access to Head Start, Early Intervention, and local education agency (LEA) administered preschool programs;
- ensure unaccompanied homeless youth are informed, and receive verification, of their status as independent students for college financial aid; and
- remove barriers that prevent any homeless youth from receiving credit for full or partial course-work satisfactorily completed at a prior school.

Supports for Students and Families

Educational barriers experienced by homeless students are often more complex and challenging than those experienced by other students. To ensure resources are used effectively and have the greatest impact on students and families experiencing homelessness, districts should also organize:

- **Academic Supports:** tutoring or other instructional support; obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment; expediting student evaluations; and mentoring programs.
- **Health Services Referrals:** medical and dental care; social, emotional, and behavioral health services; and other health services.
- **Social Services Connections:** early childhood programs; counseling services; need-based and entitlement programs; addressing needs related to domestic violence; and emergency assistance affecting school attendance.
- **Logistical Supports:** assistance with participation in school programs; transportation for extracurricular activities; school supplies; summer programs coordination between schools and agencies; parent education related to rights and resources for children; and clothing to meet school requirements.

Funding

The Connecticut State Department of Education awards limited federal funding through a competitive proposal process to LEAs to assist homeless children and youth with enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. Any local or regional board of education or regional educational service center applying on behalf of a local or regional board of education that serves an identified homeless population of children and youth located within Connecticut is eligible to apply for available funding. Services provided with McKinney-Vento funds must not replace the regular academic program and must be designed to expand or improve services provided as part of the school's regular academic program.

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