

Educational Rights of Homeless Children

All agencies that provide services to youth or families with children should ensure that the youth receiving services have access to free, appropriate public education. Please utilize the information and resources below to connect youth in your programs to education and related services. The Balance of State Continuum of Care encourages all service providers to contact their school district's homeless liaison and follow policies set in place by the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) state plan.

❖ **HUD inquires about the policies and efforts of the Continuum of Care and grantees for homeless youth.**

- 1- Indicate if the CoC has established policies that require homeless assistance providers to ensure all children are enrolled in school and connected to appropriate services within the community?
- 2- Describe the CoC's efforts to collaborate with local education agencies to assist in the identification of homeless families and inform them of their eligibility for McKinney-Vento education services.
- 3- Describe how the CoC has, and will continue, to consider the educational needs of children when families are placed in emergency or transitional shelter.
- 4- For projects serving families, does the applicant/sponsor have policies and practices that are consistent with, and do not restrict the exercise of rights provided by the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act, and other laws relating to the provision of educational and related services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness?
- 5- For projects serving families, does the applicant/sponsor have a designated staff person responsible for ensuring that children are enrolled in school and connected to the appropriate services within the community, including early childhood education programs such as Head Start, Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and McKinney-Vento education services?

❖ **To find out more information about the Missouri DESE's policies and state plan, or to contact your school district's homeless liaison, visit**

<http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/discretionarygrants/homeless/index.html>

❖ **National Center for Homeless Education- at the SERVE Center** has documents and resources available for ordering. FREE products are available in limited quantities for agencies and school districts.

To order, visit the website http://center.serve.org/nche/online_order.php

NCHE several items for ordering, including some of the resources listed below.

Parent poster

This poster, geared towards parents, explains who qualifies as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and lists the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Place these posters in your school or community to generate public awareness.

Parent Pack Pocket Folder

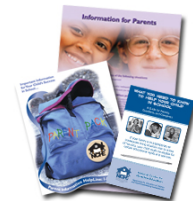
This sturdy, laminated folder provides parents a place to keep important records and documents related to their children's education. The folder also includes information on the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness and helpful tips about enrollment and disenrollment.

Parent booklet

This brochure explains the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness, and informs parents about ways in which they can support their children's education during times of mobility.

Surviving on Your Own: Information for Youth on How Schools Can Help (youth booklet)

This pocket-sized booklet for unaccompanied youth explains how schools can help youth who are living on their own without a parent or guardian. It is made of a durable, laminated paper to resist wear and tear and fits easily inside a back pocket.



Educating Missouri's Homeless Children

The McKinney-Vento Act, part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, guarantees homeless children and youth an education equal to what they would receive if not homeless.

Who is Homeless?

According to the McKinney-Vento Act, homeless children and youth include individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This includes the following situations:

- Sharing the housing of others (known as doubling-up) due to loss of housing or economic hardship
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Abandoned in hospitals
- Awaiting foster-care placement
- Living in a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings

The McKinney-Vento Act also recognizes unaccompanied youth who are homeless. According to the act, an unaccompanied youth is a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian.

Which School Can a Homeless Child Attend?

There are two choices for a student in a homeless situation — the school of origin and the school of residency. The school of origin is the school the child attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled. The school of residency is the school serving the area where the child or youth is currently physically dwelling. When determining the school of best interest, a homeless child or youth should remain in the school of origin (to the extent feasible) unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the parent or guardian or to the wishes of the unaccompanied youth.

Enrollment

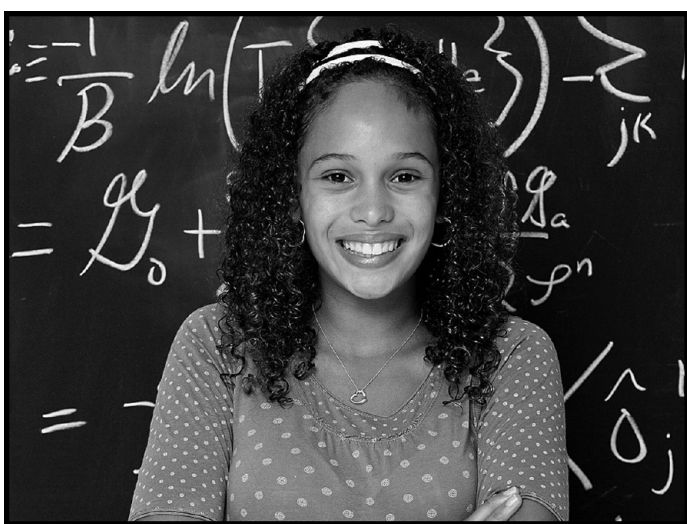
The McKinney-Vento Act requires the immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth. These children must be allowed to attend school even if they are unable to produce previous academic records, immunization and medical records, proofs of residency, birth certificates, or other documentation that is usually required.

Transportation

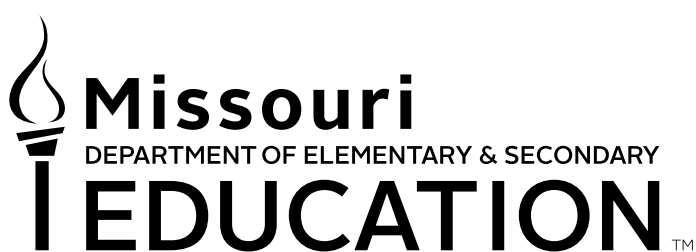
School districts must provide transportation for homeless children and youth to the school of best interest. Districts must also provide transportation during the resolution of any pending disputes. While disputes over enrollment, school placement or transportation arrangements are being resolved, students must be transported to the school of choice of the parent or the unaccompanied youth.

The Homeless Coordinator

A school district's homeless coordinator plays a vital role in ensuring that children and youth experiencing homelessness enroll and succeed in school. The McKinney-Vento Act requires that every school district appoint a homeless coordinator who serves as the link between homeless families and school staff, district personnel, shelter workers and social-service providers.



Call Missouri's Homeless Coordinator at (573) 522-8763



Grants and Resources
P.O. Box 480 • Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480
• <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/discretionarygrants/homeless>

The Department of Elementary and Secondary Education does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in its programs and activities. Inquiries related to Department programs and to the location of services, activities, and facilities that are accessible by persons with disabilities may be directed to the Jefferson State Office Building, Civil Rights Compliance (Title VI/Title IX/504/ADA/Age Act), 205 Jefferson Street, Jefferson City, MO 65102-0480; telephone number 573-526-4757 or Relay Missouri 800-735-2966.