

Q: Can students stay in the same school after they lose their housing?

A: YES. Children and youth in homeless situations have the right to stay in the school they went to before they lost their housing, or to stay at whatever school they were enrolled in last. These schools are called “*schools of origin.*” It is important for students to stay in their school of origin, so they do not fall behind in school work and so they can keep the same teachers, friends and activities.

A: Students can stay in their school of origin for the entire time they are homeless, even if they move to a different school district. If students move into permanent housing during the school year, they can still finish the year in the school of origin. Students have the right to stay at their school of origin whether or not they live with their parents. Youth on their own cannot be kept out of school because they do not have a parent or guardian to enroll them.

Q: If students want to go to their local school, can they?

A: YES. Children and youth in homeless situations have the right to go to the local school where they are staying, if they do not choose to stay at their school of origin. The local school must let students experiencing homelessness go to classes and participate fully in school activities as soon as they come to the school.

Students can be transported, go to classes and participate right away, even if they do not have any kind of documentation, proof of residency, equipment/supplies, or immunizations.

Q: What if a student needs transportation to the school of origin?

A: School districts must provide or arrange transportation for students in homeless situations to stay at their schools of origin, even if students move to a different city, county or school district. If a student is living in the same school district as the school of origin, then that school district has to provide transportation to the school of origin. If the student moves across district lines, then both districts have to work together to provide transportation.

Schools can provide transportation in different ways, including:

- Re-routing school busses and making sure busses go to shelters, motels and other places where students live;
- Providing passes for public transportation, including passes for caretakers when needed;
- Using the transportation systems social services use;
- Using approved van or taxi services;
- Reimbursing parents, guardians or youth for gas;
- Working with service and shelter providers or public assistance agencies to make transportation plans or provide the transportation;
- Getting corporate or other sponsorship for transportation costs;
- Using Title I and other federal and local money for transportation;
- Maintaining cooperative relationships among Liaisons, for the Homeless, school staff and the pupil transportation department.



Explaining the McKinney-Vento Act to Lorain County School Administrators



*A cooperative venture of the
ESCLC and the Ohio Department of Education for the Education of Homeless Children*

Jim Hartline, ESCLC Projects
Coordinator 324-5777x1138
hartline@esclc.org

Q: What is the McKinney-Vento Act?

A: The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law, passed in 1987 to help people experiencing homelessness. Part of the law protects the rights of children and youth who are homeless to go to school.

In December of 2001, Congress made that law even stronger.

Children and youth in homeless situations now have the right to:

- Stay in their school even if they move;
- Enroll and attend a new school without proof of residency, immunizations, school records or other documentation;
- Get transportation to school;
- Go to pre-school programs;
- Receive all the school services they need;
- Have requests for enrollment or services and disagreements with schools settled quickly;
- Attend and fully participate in the school/programs they choose while disagreements are settled.

Q: Who is homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act?

A: The law says that a child or youth without a fixed, regular and adequate residence is homeless. It does not matter how long the child or youth has been without a home. It also does not matter if the child or youth is living with a parent or is separated from parents. Under the Act, students are homeless if they are:

- Living with a friend, relative or someone else because they lost their home or can't afford a home;
- Staying in a motel or hotel;
- Living in an emergency shelter or a domestic violence shelter;
- Staying in substandard housing;
- Living in a car, park, public place, abandoned building or bus or train station;
- Awaiting foster care placement;
- Living in a campground or an inadequate trailer home;
- Abandoned in a hospital;
- Living in a runaway or homeless youth shelter.

Migrant children, pre-school children, and youth on their own are homeless if they fit into one of these categories. Runaways can be considered homeless even if their families want them to come home. Students who live in any public or private place that is not supposed to be a regular residence are homeless.

Q: Does your school district have a Liaison?

A: Every school district must have a person in charge of making sure students who are homeless can enroll and succeed in school. The law calls that person the "Liaison." The Liaison must:

- Make sure students are enrolled in school immediately, even if they do not have the papers they would normally need;
- Settle disputes within a 5-day time period;
- Help families and youth get immunizations, immunization records or other medical records, if a student needs them;
- Tell parents and youth about all transportation services and help set up transportation;
- Make sure students get all the school services they need;
- Tell parents and guardians about all existing programs and services;
- Coordinate with Social Services personnel, Court-Schooled Case Managers and Homeless Agencies to ensure access to education at their school.
- Make sure the school procedures and Board Policies regarding Homeless Students are updated and in agreement with McKinney-Vento provisions.