

HOMELESS STUDENTS

JAAA

In order to ensure that homeless students have equal access to the same free appropriate public education as provided to other students, the following will apply:¹

DEFINITION

Homeless students are individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and include the following:

1. Students 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 the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.
2. Students who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
3. Students who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
4. Migratory students who meet one of the above described circumstances.

ENROLLMENT/PLACEMENT

The school district will consider the best interests of the student with parental involvement in determining whether the student should be enrolled in the school of origin or the school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the homeless student is actually living are eligible to attend. To the extent feasible, and in accordance with the student's best interest, the student should continue his/her education in the school of origin except when contrary to the wishes of the parent or guardian. If the student is unaccompanied by a parent or guardian, the homeless coordinator will consider the views of the student in deciding where the student will be educated. The choice regarding placement will be made regardless of whether the student lives with the homeless parents or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

The school selected will immediately enroll the homeless student, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, immunization records, proof of residency, or other documentation. However, the school district may require a parent or guardian of the student to submit contact information.

¹McKinney-Vento Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, Subtitle B, Sections 721-725

The school district will provide a written explanation, including a statement regarding the right to appeal, to the homeless student's parent/guardian (or the homeless student if unaccompanied) if the school district sends the student to a school other than the school of origin (*school of origin* is defined as the school that the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled) or other than a school requested by the parent or guardian.

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school, the student will be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The student or parent/guardian will be referred to the school district's homeless coordinator, who will carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.

SERVICES

Each homeless student will be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school district including, but not limited to, transportation services, educational services for which the student meets eligibility criteria (such as educational programs for disadvantaged students, students with disabilities, and gifted and talented students), vocational programs and technical education, school meal programs, preschool programs; before- and after-school care programs, and programs for students with limited English proficiency. Homeless students will not be segregated in a separate school or in a separate program within a school based on the student's status as homeless.

TRANSPORTATION

In the event that it is in the best interest of the homeless student to attend the school of origin, transportation to and from school will be provided at the request of the parent/guardian or, in the case of an unaccompanied student, the homeless coordinator. If the student's temporary housing is outside the school district of the school of origin, the Hamblen County school district will work with the school of origin to agree on a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for transporting the student. If an agreement cannot be reached, the costs will be shared equally.

RECORDS

Any records ordinarily kept by the school, including immunization records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, and evaluations for special services or programs, of each homeless child or youth will be maintained so that appropriate services may be given the student so that necessary referrals can be made and so that records may be transferred in a timely fashion when a homeless student enters a new school district. Copies of records will be made available upon request to students or parents in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act.

COORDINATOR

The board designates the following individual to act as the school district's homeless coordinator:

Assistant Director of Schools for Curriculum and Instruction
210 East Morris Boulevard
Morristown, Tennessee 37813
Phone: 423-586-7700
Fax: 423-586-7747

Dr. Brenda Dean

The school district will inform school personnel, service providers, and advocates working with homeless families of the duties of the homeless coordinator. The homeless coordinator will ensure that:

1. Homeless students are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
2. Homeless students enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, schools in the school district.
3. Homeless families and students receive educational services for which such families and students are eligible (including Head Start, Even Start, and preschool programs administered by the school district) and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services.
4. The parents or guardians of homeless students are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
5. Public notices of the educational rights of homeless students are disseminated where such students receive services such as schools, family shelters, and soup kitchens.
6. Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with law.
7. The parent or guardian of a homeless student and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school selected.
8. Unaccompanied youths will be assisted in placement or enrollment decisions, their views will be considered, and they will be provided notice of the right to appeal.
9. Students who need to obtain immunizations or immunization/medical records will be referred to the Hamblen County Health Department.

Approved 05/08/03

Procedures for Serving McKinney-Vento Students **Hamblen County Schools**

Students, who meet the federal definition of Homeless Children and Youth, will be immediately enrolled in school, regardless of immunization status, school records, or proof of residency. Schools may ask for these items, but enrollment will not be dependent upon the submission of the documentation.

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 continue in school. Students who meet one or more of the following criteria may be considered homeless:

- Staying in a motel or hotel.
- Living in an emergency or transitional shelter or a domestic violence shelter
- Living in a car, park public place, abandoned building or bus or train station.
- Living in a campground or an inadequate trailer home.
- Abandoned in a hospital.
- Living in a runaway or homeless shelter
- Living in a “doubled up” situation with another family or families due to economic difficulties.

Unaccompanied Youth are defined as: young people who are not accompanied by a parent or guardian. These students include those who have run away from home, been thrown out of their home or who have been abandoned. In some circumstances, these students are in the U.S. without a parent or guardian; parents often remain in another country. These students have the same rights as homeless students.

Students who meet one or more of the following are eligible and entitled to the following:

- Preschool
- School Meal Programs
- Programs for language minority student
- Title I services even in Non-Title I Schools
- Programs for gifted & talented students
- Transportation back to their School Of Origin
- Extra tutoring services
- Referrals for food, clothing & counseling

Upon identification:

- Schools will invite parents/guardians to a teacher conference within 30 days of enrollment
- Monitor the need for additional supplies
- Assist the child & parents with rights and needs
- Ensure students are attending school and achieving academic success by utilizing resources such as Graduation Coaches, School Counselors, School Resource Officers, Teachers, and tutoring as interventions.
- To enroll the student in McKinney-Vento Services, the school should fax a Transition Form (Temporary Housing Application, Form 43, available in First Class) to **Calvin Decker at 585-3786** at Miller Boyd Alternative School. (This form is located in the "Forms" folder on your First Class Desktop, attached.) Mr. Decker's phone number is (423) 585-3785.
- If you have additional questions about the homeless status of a student, please contact the Assistant Director of Schools for Administration.

Upon enrollment, parents will be given a copy of parental/student rights under the McKinney-Vento Act, asked to sign that they received a copy of the rights, and have an opportunity to select services on the form. (See Enrollment Form, attached) Parents are

invited to a conference with their child's teacher within 30 days of enrolling as a homeless student by the school liaison, registrar, or district homeless liaison. Parents will sign that they have received the Notice of Parental Rights and a time for a conference with the child's teacher, counselor, or social worker. A copy of this information will be sent from the child's identifying school to the district's Homeless Liaison.

The principal, school liaison, or principal's designee will fax a copy of the Temporary Housing Application (Form 43 is available in First Class.) This form will be faxed to the District Homeless Liaison at 585-3786. Please include any services needed, such as transportation to the school of origin, school supplies, personal hygiene items, outside services such as counseling, clothing, and food. Upon a parent's request, transportation to and from the school of origin may be provided. The school principal or designee will contact the District's Homeless Liaison, who will coordinate these services with the HCDOE Transportation Department.

The homeless liaison will also coordinate services or referrals with outside agencies. Every effort will be made to keep the student's status confidential. Students will not be segregated or stigmatized based on their living situation or arrangement.

Students will be allowed to remain in their school of origin; however, a child's best interest will be considered when placing the child in a school. School of origin is defined to be the school at which they were enrolled while they had permanent housing and became homeless OR the school they last attended.

Things considered by the district homeless liaison as in the best interest of the child include:

- Impact on the instructional day
- schools available with services for a child's needs
- guidance/counseling services available
- schools that may be closer to a parent's workplace
- schools which are in good standing or meeting the academic needs of their students

- priority schools as indicated by not meeting AYP or other state benchmarks
- parent's input
- student's input
- time that will be spent on the bus or during transportation.

In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Homeless Liaison will consider the youth's desire of schools and will act in the best interest of the student.

After considering the above criteria, the district's Homeless Liaison and the Assistant Director of Schools will place the student in school. If there is a dispute between the Liaison and the parent or student in the case of unaccompanied youth, the district's Homeless Liaison will provide the parent with written notice of what the district has determined to be in the best interest of the child. In this written communication, the parent will be advised that he or she may appeal to the State's Homeless Coordinator within 10 days and be given the contact information of the State's Homeless Coordinator, who is currently Paula Gadis (615) 741-3262. During this 10 day period, the student will be enrolled in the parent's choice of school (school or origin within the district or the newly zoned school, as requested by the parent.) If there is no appeal within 10 days, the district's Liaison's choice prevails.