



# McKinney-Vento 101: School Access and Stability under the McKinney-Vento Act

Riverview Gardens School  
District

# Today's Goals

- Overview of McKinney-Vento law
- Quiz
- Warning signs of homelessness
- Being Prepared
- The Numbers
- Q&A

# The McKinney-Vento Act Overview

- The McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act is a federal law that ensures immediate enrollment and educational stability for homeless children and youth. McKinney-Vento provides federal funding to states for the purpose of supporting district programs that serve homeless students.

## Defining Homeless

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." The act provides examples of children who would fall under this definition:

- Children and youth sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason
- Children and youth living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- Children and youth living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Children and youth abandoned in hospitals
- Children and youth awaiting foster care placement
- Children and youth whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g. park benches, etc.)
- Children and youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations
- Migratory children and youth living in any of the above situations

## Awaiting Foster Care Placement

The McKinney-Vento Act draws a distinction between children and youth who are "in" foster care, and those who are "awaiting" foster care. Missouri defines "awaiting" foster care as the period of time between the initial placement of the child into state care and the 30-day shelter care hearing.

## Enrollment and Transportation

The McKinney-Vento Act requires schools to enroll homeless children and youth immediately, even if they lack normally required documents, such as immunization records or proof of residence. The act ensures that homeless children and youth have transportation to and from their school of origin if it is in the child's or youth's best interest.

Under McKinney-Vento Act, children in homeless situations have the right to:

- Go to school, no matter where they live or how long they have lived there.
- Attend either the local school or the school of origin, if this is in their best interest; the school of origin is the school the child attended when he/she was permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin.
- Enroll in school immediately, even if missing records and documents normally required for enrollment, such as a birth certificate, proof of residence, previous school records, or immunization/medical records.
- Have access to the same programs and services that are available to all other students, including transportation and supplemental educational services.
- Attend school with children not experiencing homelessness; a school cannot segregate a student because he or she is homeless.

## Quiz: Should you inquire further?

Look at the following referral scenarios and consider whether the child in question is eligible for homeless services.

- High school junior Linda's parents are migrant workers who travel throughout the year following crop harvests for work. During her freshman year, she stopped moving with them in an attempt to finish high school, and for the rest of that year, she has slept on a cot in the garage of a friend's rental house: she has not been in a shelter or on the street.
- Della is a sixth grade student in the foster care system. She has lived with three different foster family placements in the last year, resulting in three different school moves. She would like to return to the school she attended at the beginning of the year.
- Lloyd enters Hillsdale Elementary in November of the third grade year. He seems under stress but otherwise normal. He tells a teacher that he and his mother have come to live with his grandmother, who became ill a few weeks ago. His father lives in another state.

# Answers

- Yes. A student may remain eligible for homeless services for several years, even if her nighttime location becomes more stable. A cot in a garage is not a regular sleeping space, and it may be lost suddenly if the friend's landlord objects to her presence. This scenario can be common for unaccompanied youth.
- No. While a student awaiting foster care placement is eligible for homeless services, one who has a placement is not homeless, even if she remains mobile. A district has no responsibility to return her to her school of origin. However, if the student was classified as homeless at some point in the year (such as between placements), she continues to be eligible for homeless services through the end of the academic year, so you may decide to return her to the first school.
- Maybe. If the student has come to live with his grandmother because of her illness, and the family has other accommodations to which they will return later, he would not be considered homeless. However, if the student has come to live with his relative for economic reasons, and/or his family would have no other accommodations if they had to leave the grandmother's house, he could be considered homeless. Many students do live with grandparents, with or without their parents, and the determination should be based on how stable the student's situation is and what other alternatives are available.

# Increased Awareness-Potential Warning Signs of Homelessness

**Lack of Continuity in Education** • Attendance at many different schools • Lack of personal records needed to enroll • Inability to pay fees • Gaps in skill development • Mistaken diagnosis of abilities • Poor organizational skills • Poor ability to conceptualize **Poor Health/Nutrition** • Lack of immunizations and/or immunization records • Unmet medical and dental needs • Increased vulnerability to colds & flu • Respiratory problems • Skin rashes • Chronic hunger (may hoard food) • Fatigue (may fall asleep in class) **Transportation and Attendance Problems** • Erratic attendance and tardiness • Numerous absences • Lack of participation in after-school activities • Lack of participation in field trips • Absences on days when students bring special treats from home • Inability to contact parents **Poor Hygiene** • Lack of shower facilities/washers, etc. • Wearing same clothes for several days • Inconsistent grooming – well-groomed one day and poorly groomed the next **Lack of Privacy/Personal Space After School** • Consistent lack of preparation for school • Incomplete or missing homework (no place to work or keep supplies) • Unable to complete special projects (no access to supplies) • Lack of basic school supplies • Loss of books and other supplies on a regular basis • Concern for safety of belongings • Refusing invitations from classmates



# Potential Warning Signs of Homelessness

**Social and Behavioral Concerns** • A marked change in behavior • Poor/short attention span • Poor self esteem • Extreme shyness • Unwillingness to risk forming relationships with peers and teachers • Difficulty socializing at recess • Difficulty trusting people • Aggression • “Old” beyond years • Protective of parents • Clinging behavior • Developmental delays • Fear of abandonment • School phobia (student wants to be with parent) • Need for immediate gratification • Anxiety late in the school day

**Reaction/Statements by Parent, Guardian, or Child** • Exhibiting anger or embarrassment when asked about current address • Mention of staying with grandparents, other relatives, friends, or in a motel or comments, such as: - *“I don’t remember the name of our previous school.”* - *“We’ve been moving around a lot.”* - *“Our address is new; I can’t remember it.”* (may hide lack of permanent address) - *“We’re staying with relatives until we get settled.”* - *“We’re going through a bad time right now.”* - *“We’ve been unpacking, traveling, etc.,”* to explain poor appearance and/or hygiene.

- (These warning signs were adapted from flyers developed by Illinois and Pennsylvania Departments of Education)

# How Your School Social Worker Can Help Students and Families Experiencing Homelessness

- ✓ Counsel identified students individually and in groups on such issues as transition, grief and loss, mental health, and family violence.
- ✓ Ensure access to free meal programs, transportation, school supplies, basic needs, and other needed resources.
- ✓ Create a referral list of agencies and community-based supports that work directly with students and families experiencing homelessness.
- ✓ Represent the students' best interests regarding enrollment, discipline, intervention, and multidisciplinary team meetings.
- ✓ Develop and implement "welcome programs" that help students gain trust and stability as quickly as possible in their new environment.
- ✓ Advocate for parent involvement in multidisciplinary team meetings, parent-teacher conferences, school activities, and student recognition ceremonies.
- ✓ Ensure that parents and students understand their educational rights.
- ✓ Educate teachers, staff members, and administrators through in-services and presentations.
- ✓ Arrange for district homeless liaisons to speak to school personnel about the needs of students who are experiencing homelessness.
- ✓ Consult with teachers on effective strategies to meet the students' social and emotional needs during classroom and instructional time.
- ✓ Establish partnerships with faith-based groups and community agencies to create a network of support.
- ✓ Develop mentoring connections with community members, school faculty and staff members, and district personnel to provide one-on-one support.
- ✓ Work with administrators to review, revise, and monitor policies of enrollment and suspension that consider the unique needs of students experiencing homelessness.
- ✓ Help create a welcoming and nonjudgmental campus climate for parents.
- ✓ Identify and apply for grant funding opportunities to provide resources for students experiencing homelessness.
- ✓ Organize volunteer opportunities for school personnel at local shelters serving the homeless.

# Professional School Counselors

Students Experiencing Homelessness May:	You can help by:	Strategies you can use include:
Often have high levels of depression, anxiety, and low self-esteem due to the stress of homelessness.	Addressing these needs and related behavioral considerations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reinforcing positive behaviors.</li> <li>• Teaching and modeling skills such as problem solving, critical thinking, and cooperative learning.</li> <li>• Supporting and recognizing individual accomplishments.</li> <li>• Increasing the frequency distribution of earned reinforcers.</li> <li>• Maintaining the privacy of the student.</li> <li>• Letting the student know you are glad he/she is in school.</li> </ul>
Live in shelters and homes that house more than one family and are often noisy.	Compensating in the classroom.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Providing quiet time during school hours.</li> <li>• Having a "New Student Packet" containing a few school supplies and a welcome card from the class.</li> <li>• Allowing the child to do homework at school.</li> <li>• Assigning the student personal space.</li> <li>• Having a "safe place" for student belongings.</li> </ul>
Have parents who may be embarrassed by their homelessness.	Respecting and supporting parents.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Making parents feel valued as partners in their child's education.</li> <li>• Providing parents with assessment results and related goals and objectives prior to their next move (when possible).</li> <li>• Allowing parents extra time to pay for trips or assisting in accessing resources to help pay for special events.</li> <li>• Helping parents become familiar with services available for homeless students, including outside agencies.</li> </ul>



# Preparing Role Groups to Identify Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Role Group	Connection to Homeless Students	Training
Administrators and Teachers	May notice if a student is suddenly falling behind in school; coming to school fatigued, hungry, or wearing the same clothes; hoarding belongings; or having uncharacteristic discipline problems	Awareness of homelessness and behaviors that might indicate trauma and crisis related to homelessness, understanding of ways to discuss homelessness with students, familiarity with protocol for referring the student to the local liaison
Social workers Counselors Nurses	May encounter students who are experiencing academic, behavior, health, or hygiene problems that may be related to homelessness	Awareness of homelessness and behavioral, mental, and physical health problems that might indicate trauma and crisis related to homelessness; understanding of ways to discuss homelessness with students; familiarity with protocol for referring the student to the local liaison
Secretaries and Registrars	Often are the first people in a school to meet a family, child, or youth who may be experiencing homelessness when enrolling a child or youth; see addresses the family lists or multiple school enrollments that could indicate a homeless situation	Understanding of the definition of homeless; awareness of what a parent or child might disclose that could indicate homelessness; understanding of how to determine if a family living doubled up may be homeless; proficiency with discussing homelessness discreetly and respectfully; familiarity with protocol for

# Preparing Role Groups to Identify Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Cafeteria workers	May see a student who is not eating because he or she did not bring lunch or did not have money to buy lunch, seems inordinately hungry, is asking peers for food, is taking large portions, or hoarding food; may overhear that a student is homeless; may have a special rapport with a student who discloses homelessness	Understanding of possible indicators of homelessness related to food, proficiency in discussing homelessness with students, familiarity with protocol for referring a student to the local liaison
Bus drivers	May see a new child on the bus route living with another family, which could indicate doubling up due to homelessness; may overhear that a child is experiencing homelessness; may see uncharacteristic discipline problems from a child; may have a special rapport with a child who discloses homelessness	Understanding of possible indicators of homelessness at the bus stop or on the bus, ways to discuss homelessness with students, familiarity with protocol for referring a student to the local liaison



# Case 1

Nineteen year old Casey comes in for enrollment. Casey is accompanied by Ms. Williams (fiancé of her brother's father). Casey tells you that she is living with her brother's father and his family due to the recent death of her mother. Ms. Williams discloses to you that Casey's mother was killed across the street from the family's home. The children heard gunfire and came out to find their 35 year old mother dead in the street. Casey's father is incarcerated and she has no other family that can assist her.

1. How might your role as a key school player help Casey?
2. Are there other family members who may benefit from your help?



# Case 2

Billy is a first grade student at Fairview Elementary School. Billy was taken into temporary state custody on November 1, 2015. Billy has been placed in a residential facility for 30 days. Billy will be provided transportation services to and from school. Billy is to have no contact with biological family per the Children's Division worker.

1. How might your role as a key school player assist Billy?



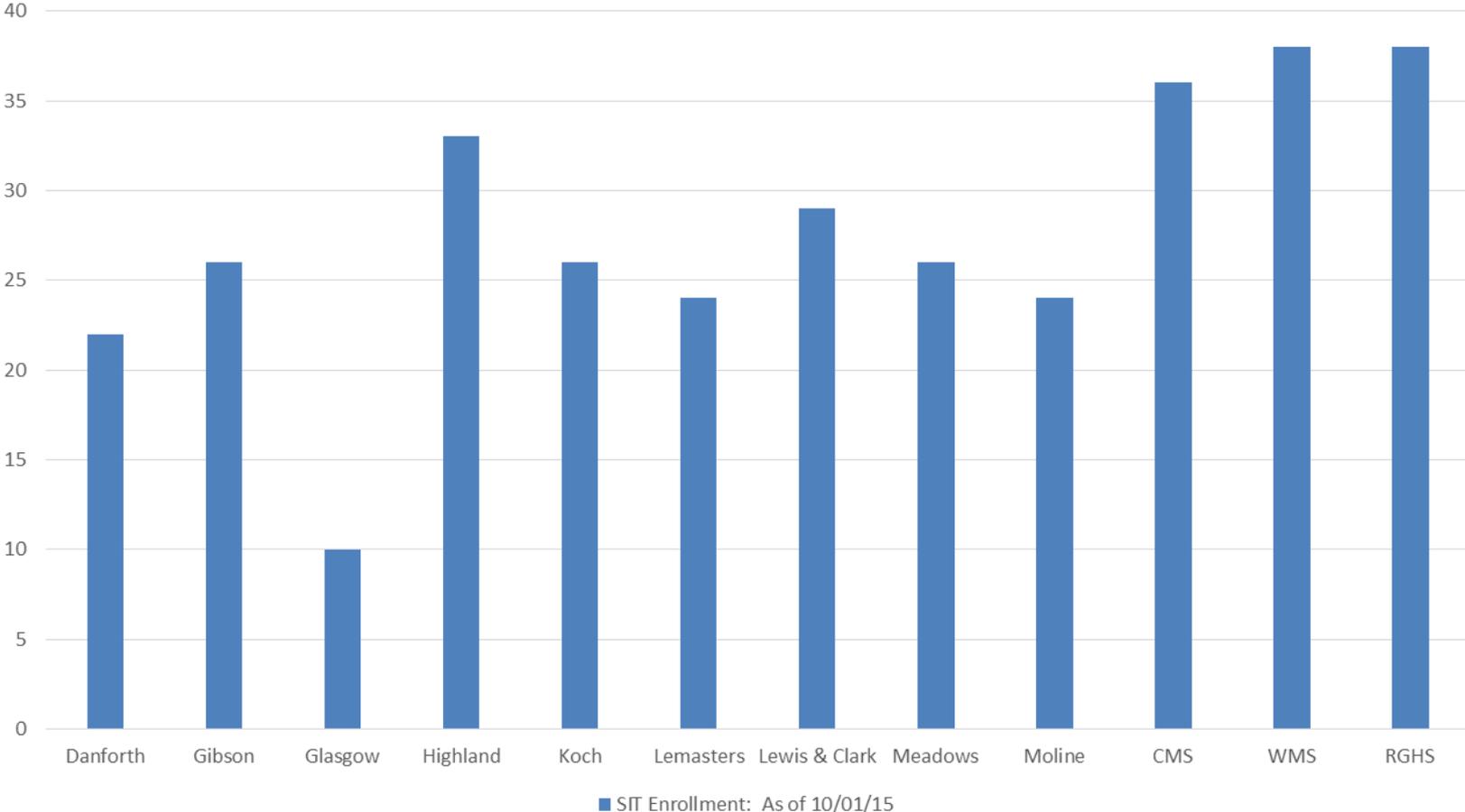
# Case 3

Ms. Jones came in for an intake appointment. Ms. Jones is enrolling three children, all under the age of 10. Ms. Jones shares that she lost her housing as she was unable to work after the death of her 2 year old son. While you are talking, Ms. Jones becomes very upset. Ms. Jones shares with you a copy of her son's obituary. Ms. Jones reports that neither she nor her children have received any therapeutic support to help deal with the loss.

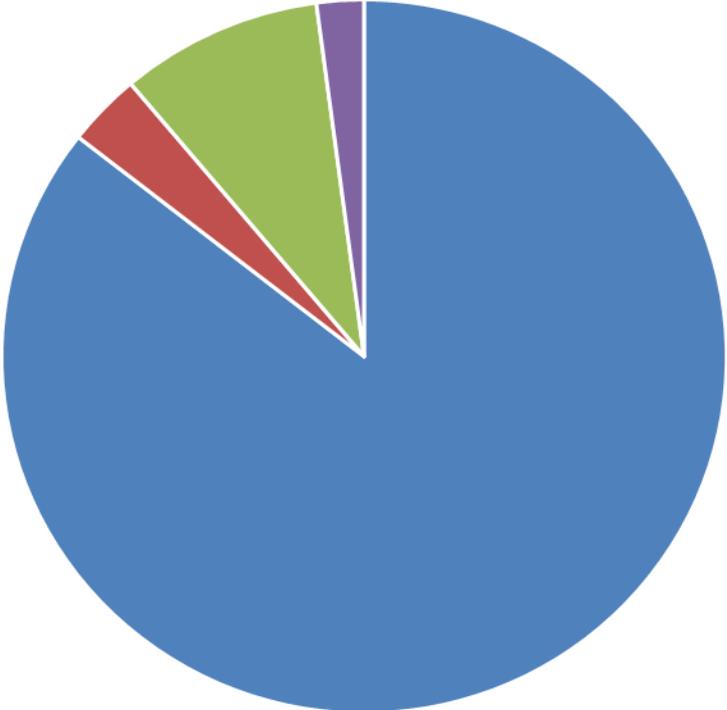
1. How might your role as a key school player assist this family?
2. What referrals would you make to this family?



SIT Enrollment: As of 10/01/15



Number of Students by Enrollment Category



■ Doubled-Up ■ Shelters ■ Unaccompanied Youth ■ Hotel/Motel

# Three W's...

- WHAT did you learn?
- So WHAT? (relevancy, importance, usefulness)
- Now WHAT? (applying what I've learned)

