

Mckinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Homelessness is often thought of as something that only happens to people with particular traits, habits, or economic standing, but it impacts people from all backgrounds. Consider the following: lack of affordable housing, job loss, serious illness/accident, natural disaster, significant life changes, child and youth abuse and domestic violence are among some of the reasons for a loss of housing

In January of 2002, Congress authorized the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to help people experiencing homelessness. The federal law includes the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program that entitles children who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence to a free, appropriate education and requires schools to remove barriers to their enrollment, attendance and success in school. The McKinney-Vento Program meets the needs of homeless students attending Unity Classical Charter School by addressing academic challenges and family issues affecting their success in school.

Examples of living situations that may qualify include, but are not limited to:

- Living with a friend, relative or other person/family because of a loss of housing
- Staying in a motel or hotel because of a loss of housing, fleeing domestic violence, or natural disaster
- Living in an emergency shelter, transitional housing or domestic violence shelter
- Living in a car, park or public place, abandoned building or bus station
- Living temporarily in substandard housing
- Living in a campground or an inadequate trailer home
- Living in a runaway or homeless youth shelter; run away youth
- Youth living on their own, even if their families want them to come home

Unity Classical Charter School Mckinney-Vento Data

Nationally rates of homelessness are higher today than at any point of data collection for homelessness.

Total Number of Students Identified:

- 2019-2020 0
- 2019-2018 0
- 2018-2017 1

Enrollment

Enroll in school immediately, even if missing records and documents normally required for enrollment, such as a proof of residency, academic records, birth certificate, proof of residence, or immunization/medical records. The receiving school shall immediately contact

the school last attended by the child or youth to obtain relevant academic and other records. If a student does not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the school McKinney-Vento liaison must assist in obtaining them immediately; the student must be enrolled in school in the interim.

Students in transition must be enrolled in school immediately, even if they have missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness (ESSA, 2016).

Immediate enrollment is defined in the law as actively attending classes and participating fully in all school activities while the school gathers records.

Children and youth experiencing homelessness often do not have the documents ordinarily required for school enrollment. However, school may be the only opportunity for these children and youth to benefit from a stable environment, uninterrupted adult attention, peer relations, academic stimulation, and reliable meals. Enrolling homeless students in school immediately provides them with needed stability and avoids disconnecting them from school for days or weeks while documents are gathered.

Enrolling Without a Legal Guardian

Children or youth experiencing homelessness and enrolling in a school may not be living with their parents or legal guardians. Frequently, children in families experiencing homelessness are sent to live temporarily with friends or relatives. In other situations, youth have been forced to leave home due to abusive environments or are on their own for other reasons.

If a student may be or is eligible for McKinney-Vento services, no proof of guardianship is required. Lack of a legal guardian or guardianship documents cannot delay or prevent the enrollment of an unaccompanied youth. 42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(3)(C), (g)(1)(H)(iv), (g)(1)(F)(ii).

Therefore, schools may not condition school enrollment upon the receipt of proof of legal guardianship by caregivers of homeless, unaccompanied youth; nor may they require caregivers to become legal guardians within a certain period of time, after the child enrolls in school. The decision to seek legal guardianship is a serious decision that affects significantly the legal rights of the parent and caregiver well beyond the education arena. In addition, it is important to note that the absence of an available caregiver must not impede enrollment. Unaccompanied, homeless youth who are on their own completely must be enrolled in school immediately.

Unaccompanied Youth

The term "unaccompanied youth" includes youth in homeless situations who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. A youth may also be unaccompanied but not homeless. Please involve the school McKinney-Vento liaison to assist any youth with enrollment.

Youth without a parent should go to the local school and be immediately enrolled and referred to the school McKinney-Vento Liaison for an assessment.

Unaccompanied youth in transition include young people:

- who have run away from home
- been thrown out of the home, and/or
- been abandoned by parents or guardians.
- left home for their own reasons

These young students are separated from their parents for a variety of reasons. For most of these individuals, leaving home is a survival issue. School may be the only safe and stable environment available to unaccompanied youth. Yet unaccompanied youth often face unique barriers to enrolling and succeeding in school. Without a parent or guardian to advocate for them and exercise parental rights, they are sometimes denied enrollment and remain out of school for extended periods of time. Unaccompanied youth also may not understand their educational rights or know how to acquire this information. (NCHE).

Access to Programs & Services

- Students will have access to the same programs and services that are available to all other students, including transportation and supplemental educational services.
- Child Nutrition
- All eligible McKinney-Vento students will receive free meal benefits. There is no Free & Reduced Application required. The USDA policies allow for automatic enrollment of students identified for McKinney-Vento services, to ensure students receive meals quickly.

School Selection

Students eligible for the McKinney-Vento Program can attend either the school assigned to the current temporary address (referred to as home school) or the school of origin. The school of origin is defined as the school the student was attending when the student was permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled. The school of origin includes Title 1 and Special Education preschool programs. (ESSA, 2016). School of origin also includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools when a student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin (ESSA, 2016).

If a student is assigned to a school other than the one requested by the parent/guardian/caregiver/youth, the school system personnel must provide a written explanation to the parent, guardian or youth including the right to appeal the decision to the District McKinney-Vento Specialist. The explanation must be in a manner and form understandable to the parent/guardian/caregiver/youth and a copy of the written explanation must be sent to the District McKinney-Vento Specialist.

Special Education Assignments

If Special Education Services assigns a student with an IEP to a specific school/classroom that best meets the student's educational needs, the student in transition will attend the school placement. If a parent/guardian/caregiver does not agree with the placement, the parent/guardian/caregiver should follow the appeals process through Special Education Services. Any student assigned by Special Education Services and has transportation as a service written in the IEP will receive transportation.

Transportation

A student eligible for services under the McKinney-Vento Act can receive transportation to and from the current residence to the school of origin or home school for the current academic school year.

NOTE: Unity Classical Charter School's Transportation Department determines the mode of transportation (ex. bus or vendor). Transportation to after school activities, before and after school care and any locations other than the current residence must first be approved by transportation.

Dispute Process

If the parent/guardian/youth disagree on the McKinney-Vento eligibility and/or school placement, a process is in place to appeal the decision. Every state must establish procedures to promptly resolve disputes regarding the educational placement of students in transition.

If a student is denied eligibility or sent to a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, the LEA must provide the parent/guardian/youth with a written explanation of its decision and the right to appeal.

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, a student in transition has the right to attend either the school of origin, if this is in the student's best interest, or the home school.

School of origin is defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. Home school is defined as any public school that non homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend. School of origin includes Title 1 preschool, Special Education preschool, feeder schools (ESSA, 2016).

Whenever a dispute arises, the student must be enrolled immediately to the requested school and be allowed to participate fully in all school activities while the dispute is being resolved. Upon resolution, the student will be immediately transferred to the original school placement if dispute was denied.

The school must refer the student, parent, or guardian to the district McKinney-Vento specialist to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.

Please refer to your school liaison for the Unity Classical Dispute Process guidelines.

Who is Eligible?

Families are the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population in the United States. The McKinney-Vento Act contains a specific definition of homelessness that includes a broad array of inadequate living situations.

Examples of living situations that may qualify are:

- Living with a friend, relative or other person
- Hotel or motel
- Shelter or transitional housing
- Car, park or other public place
- Campground, storage unit, abandoned building or other inadequate home
- Youth living on their own, runaway youth or youth kicked out

The living situations above do not include all situations that may qualify. If you or someone you know is in transition and would like to speak with someone about the program, please contact the McKinney-Vento Liaison at your child's school.

Requesting Services

Services provided include immediate enrollment, school selection promoting stability, nutrition and academic support. McKinney-Vento services are provided for the duration of a school year and do not automatically renew. To obtain more information about eligibility, services provided and how to access services, please contact your child's McKinney-Vento liaison at their current school.

You may also contact Unity Classical Charter Schools Homeless Liaison or NC Homeless Education State Coordinator.

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