

ILLINOIS STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education and Preschool



The purpose of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act is to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public pre-school education, as provided to other children and youth. Homeless young children are underserved due to the transient nature of homelessness and barriers to enrollment, which may be inadvertent, that children without stable homes often face, including:

- Screenings required for enrollment
- Waiting lists
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of birth certificates
- Lack of immunization and/or medical records

Early childhood programs should make every effort to address these barriers. Possible solutions including enrolling young children immediately while a parent or guardian is obtaining required documents, prioritizing homeless children to the top of the waiting list when there are no openings, and maintaining contact with the family. The school district's homeless liaison will assist families throughout the enrollment process.

**Illinois State Board of Education
Homeless Education Hotline:
1-800-215-6379**

If you have questions regarding identifying or enrolling homeless students, trainings, resolving conflicts, etc. please call (217)782-8535 or email:

Vicki Hodges, State Homeless Coordinator for McKinney-Vento Homeless Program
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ESSA: School Stability

“School of Origin” the school the student last attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including pre-school.

ESSA: Preschool Transportation

Transportation **must** be provided (even if not provided for other preschoolers) as long as remaining in the “school of origin” is in the child’s best interest.

Definition of Homeless

The Federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act’s definition of homelessness includes:

Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including —

- sharing housing of others, “doubled-up” due to lack of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
 - 1) Doubled-up often serves as a temporary shelter, but may not last or may place the children or youth in danger,
 - 2) A shelter is not always an option: shelters may not exist in the community, the shelter may be full, shelter policies may create barriers, shelter may create safety concerns, shelter may have stay limits.
- living in motels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations (lack of utilities, infestations, old, dangers (Guidance A3)
- living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- abandoned in hospitals;
- Living in a public or private place not designed for humans to live;
- living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. There is no age limit on unaccompanied youth.

Helpful Resources

Illinois Homeless Education Program

For Illinois specific information about the educational rights and needs of homeless children and youth and information about Illinois programs and liaisons.

<https://www.isbe.net/Pages/Homeless.aspx>

School District Homeless Liaison Locator

<http://webprod1.isbe.net/HomelessChildLiaison>

Lead Area Liaison Breakdown Map:

<https://www.isbe.net/Documents/IL-Map-with-Contacts.pdf>

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

<http://naehcy.org>

National Center for Homeless Education

<http://nche.ed.gov/>

SchoolHouse Connection

<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org>

Student Information System (SIS)

Children identified as homeless must be entered into the ISBE Student Information System.

What if—a family does not wish to be identified as homeless and refuses services?

If the child meets the MK-V definition of homeless, the child should be entered into SIS as homeless but the family is not required to accept services.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act requires districts that financially support pre-school programs (through state funded, IDEA, Title 1, district Head Start programs, etc.) to :

- Collaborate and coordinate with the district homeless liaison on identification and enrollment of preschool children from homeless families, with school staff, and community agencies;
- Immediately enroll preschool children from homeless families (who meet qualifications for the program) into the district’s preschool program, even if lacking proper documentation (e.g. birth certificates, medical/immunization records, payment assistance, residency documentation);
- Follow “Best Interest of the Child” determination when making placement decisions;
- Provide assistance to allow children to participate “fully” in education programs (bilingual assistance, school supplies, field trips, nutrition program, etc.);
- Partner with school staff and community agencies to: inform them of the educational rights of preschool children through training/in-service programs, develop the release of information forms among community agencies for reciprocal referrals;
- Ensure district policies and procedures do not serve as “barriers” for the enrollment and participation of preschool children from families in homeless situations;
- In collaboration with the districts homeless liaison, assist with: 1) registering and completing enrollment documents, 2) ensuring homeless preschool children receive services comparable to housed children, 3) ensuring parents/guardians have meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children, 4) ensuring homeless preschool children are not segregated or stigmatized.

