

ST. STEPHEN'S INDIAN SCHOOL



McKinney-Vento Homeless Program Policies

Introduction: This Section is Informational ONLY

The McKinney-Vento Act requires all states and LEAs/schools to develop, review, and revise their policies to remove barriers to enrollment, identification, and retention in schools with children and youth experiencing homelessness. This LEA/school policy is designed to help LEAs/schools comply with this mandate. It is broad and specific and can be abbreviated or otherwise adapted to accommodate the needs of any LEA/school. This sample document can be used as guidance when reviewing an LEA/school's current policy or when drafting a new policy to ensure compliance with federal law.

Strategic partners in getting school policies revised may include:

- Education Resource Center Education Program Administrators & School Improvement Specialists
- School board members
- School administrators/Title I and other federal program directors
- School staff, including school counselors, social workers, and teachers
- Local Tribal council members
- Outside agency representatives
- Parents and students
- Homeless coalitions
- Domestic violence coalitions and agencies
- Community advocates
- Family and youth shelter and service providers
- Higher education, including schools of education, law, public policy, social work, nursing, sociology, and psychology
- The state education agency

Note. Due to the reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Act, a homeless student's living situation shall be treated as a confidential student education record, shall not be deemed to be directory information, and shall be handled in a manner consistent with the Federal Education Rights and Privacy Act.

The Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) McKinney-Vento Program contains a timeline for the dispute resolution process which is a requirement to be in compliance with federal regulations. See Appendix 1.

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Overview

Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act,, children and youth experiencing homelessness must have access to appropriate public education, including preschool, and be given a full opportunity to meet state and local academic achievement standards. They must be included in state- and school wide assessments and accountability systems. St. Stephen's Indian School ensures that children and youth in transition are free from discrimination, segregation, and harassment.

Homelessness exists in our community. Children and youth who have lost their housing live in a variety of places, including motels, shelters, shared residences, transitional housing programs, cars, campgrounds, substandard housing and others. Their lack of permanent housing can lead to potentially serious physical, emotional, and mental distress. St. Stephen's Indian School ensures that all children and youth receive a free appropriate public education and are given meaningful opportunities to succeed in our school. St. Stephen's Indian School also follows the requirements of the McKinney- Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Information regarding this policy is distributed to all students upon enrollment or when students seek to withdraw from school. It is also posted publicly including other places where children, youth, and families receive services, including schools, cultural and community centers, local businesses, family and youth shelters, soup kitchens, motels, campgrounds, drop-in centers, welfare departments, health departments, and other social service agencies.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youths

The term 'homeless children and youth' means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

It includes children and youth 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 shelters;
- Are abandoned in hospitals;
- Have a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
- Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing,¹ bus or train stations, or similar settings; or

Refugee, immigrant and migratory children and unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) are considered homeless if they meet the above

¹ Substandard housing is housing that poses a serious risk to the health, safety, or physical well-being of occupants. Substandard housing may lack water, heat, electricity, or be infested with mold or vermin. It may also lack basic functional parts such as a working kitchen or indoor plumbing.

definition.

The local McKinney-Vento liaison is responsible for identifying students who meet the definition of homeless children and youths. Eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis, using information provided on the Housing Questionnaire, self-referrals from families and unaccompanied homeless youth, as well as referrals from school staff and other community partners.

Enrollment

The terms 'enroll' and 'enrollment' are defined to mean attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

The school selected immediately enrolls the child/youth, even if the child or youth lacks records normally required for enrollment. Enrollment may not be denied or delayed due to the lack of any document normally required for enrollment, including:

- Proof of residency;
- Transcripts/school records (the enrolling school must contact the student's previous school to obtain school records. Initial placement of students whose records are not immediately available can be made based on the student's age and information gathered from the student, parent, and previous schools or teachers.);
- Immunizations or immunization/health/medical/physical records (if necessary, the school must refer students to the local homeless liaison to assist with obtaining immunizations and/or immunization and other medical records. Health records may often be obtained from previous schools or state registries, and school- or community-based clinics can initiate immunizations when needed.);
- Proof of guardianship;
- Birth certificate;
- Any other document requirements, including Certificate of Indian Blood (CIB);
- Unpaid school fees;
- Lack of uniforms or clothing that conforms to dress codes; or
- Any factor related to the student's living situation.

Homeless students who do not live with their parents or guardians may enroll themselves in school.

Upon identification of a homeless child or youth, St. Stephen's Indian School:

- 1) Provides the student with immediate access to all programs, activities, and provides services comparable to services offered to other students in the school.
- 2) Immediately contacts the school where the student's records are located in order to obtain a copy of such records and coordinate the transmittal of records for students with disabilities pursuant to 34 CFR §300.323(g).
- 3) Immediately refers the parent or guardian of the homeless student to the local

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homeless Liaison, who assists in obtaining necessary immunizations or medical records if the child or youth needs to obtain immunizations or medical records.

Guardianship

For purposes of school placement, any parent, guardian, or person who has legal or physical custody of a homeless child or youth shall enroll that child or youth directly in a school.

School of Origin

School of origin means:

- The school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled, including preschools;
- The designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools for a homeless student who completes the final grade level served by the school of origin; and
- The school in which such child would have been entitled or eligible to attend based on such child's last residence before the circumstances arose which caused such child to become homeless if the child becomes homeless after such child is eligible to apply, register, or enroll in the kindergarten or if the child is living with a school-age sibling who attends school in the school district of origin. [42 USC §11432\(g\)\(3\)\(G\)](#)

School Selection

Placement in a school shall, according to the child's best interest:

- Continue the child or youth's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year, or for the duration of the academic year if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year.
- Enroll the child or youth in any school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.

Parents/guardians may request their child to attend St. Stephen's Indian School and to the extent feasible St. Stephen's Indian School will try to comply with these requests.

In determining the best interests of the child or youth, schools shall presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the child's or youth's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth.

In the case of an unaccompanied youth, St. Stephen's Indian School's homeless liaison assists in placement or enrollment decisions, giving priority to the views of the unaccompanied youth. The school of origin means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. The school of origin also

includes the designated receiving school at the next level.

The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the child or youth lives with the homeless parents or guardian or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

Comparable Services

Each homeless child or youth is provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school, such as:

- Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria such as ELL or special education programs
- Programs for "At Risk" students
- Programs for gifted and talented students
- Before- and after-school programs
- Programs in career and technical education
- School nutrition programs
- Transportation

Transportation

Transportation to the school of origin at the request of a homeless child's parent/guardian or the homeless liaison in the cases of an unaccompanied youth, following best interest provisions (outlined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act under Local Education Agency Requirements).

- The homeless liaison determines with the family the best means of transportation.
- The homeless liaison arranges for transportation.
- When a student obtains permanent housing, transportation to the school of origin must be provided until the end of the academic year, if it is in the student's best interest to remain in that school. At this point, parents/guardians can choose to enroll the child in the school in the attendance area in which they live.
- When the child, youth, or unaccompanied homeless student's temporary residence and school of origin are different, the LEAs/schools collaborate on the method and cost of transportation. The LEAs/schools share the cost of transportation.

Title I, Part A

Children and youth in transition are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services, regardless of what school they attend. The trauma and instability of homelessness put students at sufficient risk for academic regression and warrant additional support. St. Stephen's Indian School ensures that:

- 1) Title I, Part A funds are set aside as are necessary to provide homeless students, who

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may have unique needs that differ from their permanently housed peers, with educationally related support services.

- 2) The Schoolwide Program Plan includes a description of how the plan is coordinated with McKinney-Vento.
- 3) The Schoolwide Program Plan describes the services provided to homeless students.
- 4) Reserved funds are used to provide education-related support services to homeless students, both in school and outside of school, and to remove barriers that prevent regular attendance.
- 5) Homeless children and youth in transition are assessed, reported on, and included in accountability systems, as required by federal law and U.S. Department of Education Regulations and Policy Guidance. [20 USC §§6312\(b\)\(6\) & 6313\(c\)\(3\)](#)

Access to Free Meals

St. Stephen's Indian School provides free meals to all children identified as homeless. The U.S. Department of Agriculture has determined that all homeless children and youth are automatically eligible for free meals to ensure that homeless children and youth are ready to learn. When a homeless student enrolls at St. Stephen's Indian School, the Homeless Liaison provides a child's name to the school's food service office for immediate processing, and free school meals commence immediately. Homeless students do not have to complete a free or reduced-priced meal application. [42 USC §§1758\(b\)\(5\) & \(b\)\(12\)\(A\)](#)

Fee Waiver

Student fees for the purposes of serving homeless children include but are not limited to fees for field trips, fees for art courses/projects, foods courses, technical education courses/projects, and yearly class fees. To encourage all homeless students to participate in all school activities, payments of all student fees are automatically waived if the student is identified as homeless. The waiving of fees is done directly by the school counselor and/or a building administrator.

Removal of Barriers

St. Stephen's Indian School will review and revise local policies that may act as barriers to the identification of homeless students and their enrollment and retention in school, including barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences. [42 USC §§11432\(g\)\(1\)\(I\)&\(g\)\(7\)\(A\)](#)

Complaint/Dispute Resolution Process

If a dispute arises between a parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth over a decision on eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, the school (1) must immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought pending resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals, and (2) shall provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written notice of the school's decision regarding eligibility, school selection, or enrollment (including attending classes and participating fully in school activities) and their right to appeal such decisions. Refer to Appendix 1 for the full Dispute Resolution Process.

Privacy of Student Information

Information about a student's living situation shall be treated as a student education record and shall not be deemed to be directory information under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). A parent/guardian or homeless unaccompanied youth may consent to the release of a student's address information in the same way they would for other student education records under FERPA.

Questions about this policy or the protections available to McKinney-Vento students can be directed to the Local Liaison: Charlotte Longenecker, 307-856-4147, charlotte.longenecker@bie.edu

Duties of Local Homeless Liaison

Every school, regardless of whether it receives a McKinney-Vento subgrant, is required to designate a local homeless liaison for children and youth. The local liaison for St. Stephen's Indian School serves as one of the primary contacts between families experiencing homelessness and school staff, shelter workers, and other service providers. The local liaison coordinates services to ensure that homeless children and youth enroll in school and have the opportunity to succeed.

The St. Stephen's Indian School local liaison ensures that:

- 1) Students experiencing homelessness are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
- 2) Students experiencing homelessness enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, school.
- 3) Students experiencing homelessness and their families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq), and other preschool programs administered by the school.
- 4) Students experiencing homelessness receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services.
- 5) Parents or guardians of students experiencing homelessness 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.
- 6) Parents or guardians of students experiencing homelessness, and unaccompanied youth, are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school district of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services.
- 7) Disputes regarding eligibility, school selection, enrollment, and/or transportation are mediated in accordance with the requirements of McKinney-Vento.
- 8) A record is maintained of all appeals of enrollment, school selection, and transportation.

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- 9) Public notice of the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness is posted in locations where such students receive services, such as schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians of students experiencing homelessness, and unaccompanied youth.
- 10) School personnel providing services to students experiencing homelessness receive professional development and other support.
- 11) Unaccompanied youth:
 - a) Are enrolled in school.
 - b) Have opportunities to meet the same challenging state academic standards as the state establishes for other children and youth, including receiving credit for full or partial coursework earned in a prior school.
 - c) Are informed of their status as independent students under 480 of the higher education act of 1965 (20 U.S.C. 1087vv) and that the youth may obtain assistance from the local educational agency liaison to receive verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid described in §483 of such Act (20 U.S.C. 1090).
- 12) School personnel, service providers, advocates working with students , parents and guardians of students experiencing homelessness, and unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness are informed of the duties of the McKinney-Vento liaison.
- 13) Trainings and sensitivity/awareness activities are conducted for the school staff at least once each year. The trainings and activities are designed to increase staff awareness of homelessness, facilitate immediate enrollment, ensure compliance with this policy, and increase sensitivity to homeless children and youth. ([42 USC §11432\[g\]\[6\]\[A\]-\[B\]](#))