

McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless

The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness used by all public schools in the United States includes children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition includes children and youth living in shelters, transitional housing, cars, campgrounds, motels, and sharing the housing of others temporarily due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons. It is the same definition of homelessness used by Head Start, child nutrition, and other federal programs serving families and youth.

Here's some info about serving young homeless children:

- Homeless children are automatically eligible for Head Start and public preschool programs.
- If a program has openings, homeless children must be immediately enrolled even if they lack documents typically needed for enrollment, e.g., proof of age or immunization, and even if they missed an application or enrollment deadline.
- Programs can prioritize and even hold slots open for homeless students.
- For students who become homeless after enrollment, the program where they are enrolled at that time becomes their school of origin. The same is true for a student who is already homeless and then moves into another homeless situation. In either case, if it is in their best interest, children can remain in that program and are entitled to receive transportation provided or arranged by the LEA(s), even if they move outside the attendance zone or school district. If it is not in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin, the program where the child is enrolled should help facilitate the student's transition to a program serving the area where they are currently staying.

Here are some things to consider for your MOU when serving children experiencing homelessness:

- Meet with the homeless liaison in the local education agency to discuss training opportunities, resources, and strategies for working together to develop the MOU.
- Identify activities and trainings to conduct with the homeless liaison on each other's programs for outreach and identification of children. Examples of activities include parent nights, community fairs, and enrollment events.

- Ensure young children experiencing homelessness are addressed consistently in both the LEA and preschool professional development activities.
- Determine parameters for sharing information with each other and with service organizations.
- Include the sharing of data on students and the program for increasing awareness, applying for funding, building collaboration efforts, and supporting student educational needs.
- Create a common enrollment form for schools, preschool programs, and community service providers, e.g., shelters, food banks, etc.
 - This can include a release for parent to authorize sharing information.
- Design a protocol for identifying homeless children in school (e.g., homeless parent enrolls child in preschool program but also has school-age children or vice versa) and in the community (what a service provider should do when they encounter a homeless family with children).
- Develop a process to refer families for education and community services such as housing assistance and counseling for trauma.
- Incorporate transition meetings with the school district liaison for families experiencing homelessness.

For more information visit:

National Center for Homeless Education's information page on early education at:

<https://nche.ed.gov/preschool-early-childhood/>

or

NC Homeless Education Program at:

<https://hepnc.uncg.edu/>