

HOMELESS CHILDREN HAVE THE RIGHT
TO A FREE, APPROPRIATE PUBLIC EDUCATION

(McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001)

Who is considered homeless?

Children or youth and their families living in a shelter, transitional housing, motel, vehicle, campground, on the street, or doubled up with relatives or friends due to a lack of housing are considered to be homeless.

Does residency have to be proven?

No, because homeless families are unable to establish a “home” on a permanent basis, a school cannot require proof of residency that might prevent or delay the enrollment of school-age children.

What choice of schools do homeless students have?

In determining the best interest of the child or youth under McKinney-Vento Act, the LEA shall:

- Continue the child’s or youth’s education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; and for the remainder of the academic year even if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year, or
- Enroll the child or youth in 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.

Is there any reason to delay enrolling a homeless child?

No. The school selected shall immediately enroll the child/youth in school, even if the child or youth lacks records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, or other documentation. The terms “enroll” and “enrollment” are defined to include attending classes and participating fully in school activities. The enrolling school must immediately contact the last school attended to obtain relevant academic and other records. Immunization records can be transferred over the phone from the school nurse of the sending school to the school nurse of the receiving school.

Where can you call for assistance?

The Homeless Children’s Initiative exists to help homeless children with a wide variety of services. We can assist homeless children during this time of change and stress. If you are homeless with school-age children or you are a school, agency, or shelter employee, please contact one of the following:

- Dr. Jacy Clugston Hess, Ephrata Area School District Liaison for Homeless Students, (717) 721-1513 or jacy_hess@easdpa.org
- Region 2 of the Pennsylvania Homeless Children’s Initiative, which serves Berks, Chester, Dauphin, Lancaster, Lebanon, and Schuylkill Counties (Berks County Intermediate Unit #14).

Kristen Hoffa, Regional Coordinator, (610) 987-8509 or krihof@berksiu.org

Melissa DeMotta, Site Coordinator, (610) 987-8436 or meldem@berksiu.org

Tabitha Kramer, Program Specialist, (610) 987-8464 or tabkra@berksiu.org

- Sheldon Winnick, State Coordinator, Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, Pennsylvania Department of Education, 333 Market Street, 5th Floor, Harrisburg, PA 17126-0333, (717) 783-6468 or swinnick@pa.gov