

Tallapoosa County

McKinney-Vento Homeless Act Plan and Protocol

Section 1: Overview

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act was authorized in 1987 and most recently re-authorized in December 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). The McKinney-Vento is designed to address challenges that homeless children and youth face in enrolling, attending and succeeding in school. The new or changed requirements focus on;

1. Identification of homeless children and youth;
2. Preschool-aged homeless children and their families have access to and receive services under LEA preschool programs, including Head Start, Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Early Intervention Program for infants and toddlers with Disabilities and other programs administered by the LEA;
3. Collaboration and coordination with other service providers, including public and private child welfare and social services agencies; law enforcement agencies, juvenile and family courts, mental health services, domestic violence agencies, child care under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act; and providers of emergency, transitional and permanent housing, including public housing agencies, shelter operators, and operators of transitional housing facilities.
4. Professional development and technical assistance at both the State and local levels.
5. Removing enrollment barriers, including barriers related to missed application or enrollment deadlines, fines, or fees, records required for enrollment, including immunization or other required health records, proof of residency, or other documentation or academic records; including documentation of credit transfer:
6. School stability, including the expansion of school or origin to include preschools and receiving schools and the provision of transportation until the end of the school year, even if a student becomes permanently housed;
7. Privacy of student records, including information about a homeless child or youth's living situation; and
8. The dispute resolution process.

Definition of Homelessness

Homeless children and youth are defined as those individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes-

Children and youth who are:

- sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reasons (sometimes referred to as “doubled-up”)
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;

- living in emergency or transitional shelters; or
- abandoned in hospitals;

Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

Child and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

Residency and Educational Rights

Students who are in temporary, inadequate and homeless living situations have the following rights:

Immediate enrollment in the school they last attended or the school in whose attendance area they are currently staying even if they do not have all the documents normally required at the time of enrollment.

Services provided to Homeless Children and Youth will be equitable to those services offered to other students in the school system, including educational services for which the child/youth meets the eligibility criteria. Educational services will include all available programs but not limited to programs for the disadvantaged, handicapped, limited English proficiency, career/technical education, academically gifted and talented, Title I services and school meal programs.

Parent(s)/Guardian(s), when applicable, will be given the opportunity to participate in the decision-making process regarding the educational planning for the homeless student.

The LEA will ensure that transportation is provided, at the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of the unaccompanied youth) to and from the school of origin. (Provisions are made for transportation costs.)

School Records

The enrollment of homeless children shall not be denied or delayed due to any of the following barriers:

- Lack of birth certificate
- Lack of school records or transcripts
- Lack of immunization or health records
- Lack of proof of residency
- Lack of transportation
- Guardianship or custody requirements

A temporary social security number can be obtained through the school office by the office staff or the counselor. Students needing assistance with obtaining immunization should be referred to the Homeless Liaison. Assistance will be provided to obtain needed immunizations. This process will not delay student enrollment.

The records of the homeless child/youth shall be maintained in the same manner as those of other students.

Records shall be maintained in a manner consistent with Section 438, Protection of the Rights and Privacy of Parents and Students, of the General Education Provisions Act.

If a homeless child/youth, including preschool aged children, transfers to another location (within or outside the system), records will be transferred in a timely manner to the new school.

Resolution of Disputes Regarding Placement of Homeless Students

Homeless children and youth are entitled to the same rights and protections including due process, afforded other students in the Tallapoosa County School System.

Parents and guardians of homeless youth who are dissatisfied with the decision regarding the school assignment are entitled to appeal the decision to the Superintendent of Education.

In the event that a dispute cannot be resolved, the parties involved will immediately notify the State Department of Education, Office of Homeless Children and Youth, wherein the dispute will be resolved through the federal programs compliance procedure. A dispute of placement does not preclude the enrollment of the child/youth.

Section 2: Identification and Eligibility

Procedures to identify and Verify Eligibility of McKinney-Vento Students

The Tallapoosa County Homeless Plan for Children and Youth is based on the guidelines established by the State Department of Education as outlined in the Alabama Plan for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. The plan is designed to insure that all services are administered in compliance with The Act and the State Plan.

A residency questionnaire is included in the enrollment packet for all students. **(Appendix A)**

Each school has a designated Homeless Liaison that works with the District Homeless Liaison in identifying students that are homeless. Many students are identified as they enroll in the system and others are identified as the home situation changes during the school year.

If assistance is needed in areas such as school supplies, medical, dental, vision, clothing, fees, extracurricular activities and transportation, a request form is completed by the family, school staff, counselor and/or liaison. **(Appendix B)**

School personnel are trained on identifying homeless students, procedures for enrolling homeless students, board policy concerning enrollment, dispute and complaint procedures. Dispute and complaint forms along with the McKinney-Vento enrollment form are available on the district website.

Section 3: Services and Standards

Title I Services and Funding

Services provided to Homeless Children and Youth will be equitable to those services offered to other students in the school system, including educational services for which the child/youth meets the eligibility criteria. Educational services will include all available programs but not limited to programs for the disadvantaged, handicapped, limited English proficiency, career/technical education, academically gifted and talented, Title I services and school meal programs.

Services available include but are not limited to after school tutoring, cost of field trips, classroom supplies, clothing, transportation, and medical, vision and dental needs of homeless students. Homeless posters provided by the National Center for Homeless Education are posted in all schools and in community businesses. Information for homeless parents, children and youth, along with enrollment, dispute and complaint forms are available on the district website also. School counselors and the district social worker will work with families to find other community resources if needed.

The Federal Programs Director will enter all eligible students into PowerSchool upon receiving documentation of a homeless student.

A written request for assistance for Homeless student(s) is made to the Homeless Liaison at each school when services are required and then sent to the central office Homeless Liaison to be processed

Transportation

Tallapoosa County School District will ensure that students that qualify as homeless students shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students. If the student is living outside the district then the two districts will share responsibility if possible.

Students and accompanied youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services are eligible to receive these transportation services for the entire duration in which they are homeless.

The Transportation Memorandum of Understanding will be signed by parents/unaccompanied youth and the district liaison. **(Appendix C)**

***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.*

Food Services

Each Tallapoosa County School student identified as homeless shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the child nutrition program. Students who qualify will receive free breakfast and lunch as offered by each school for the entire duration of the homeless situation.

Academic Services

Students identified as homeless shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school including educational services, preschool, educational programs for children with disabilities or for students with limited English proficiency, programs in vocational and technical education and programs for gifted students.

Preschool Enrollment- the McKinney-Vento Act requires early care and education programs administered by the LEA's enroll students experiencing homeless immediately. This does not require them to exceed legal capacity limits or to enroll a child once a class is full. Students will be put on a waiting list if programs are at capacity.

Partnerships

Tallapoosa County School System is committed to meeting all the needs of homeless students through partnering with local agencies. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Grant has provided most of the services for homeless students. School supplies, doctor and dental visits, glasses, food and clothes are provided for students through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Grant.

The United Way can be consulted to provide resources to qualifying students who are not homeless but have many educational, physical and emotional needs that can't be met through any other resource.

Local doctor, dental and vision offices partner with the district and help students by reducing costs for services.

A number of **local churches** in each school community provide toys and food at Thanksgiving and Christmas to needy students and their families, while district funds are used for clothes and school supplies. The First Baptist Church of Dadeville also has a childrens' clothing ministry to assist families in need.

The **American Red Cross** has and will continue to assist with families after a storm event.

The district homeless coordinator also meets quarterly with the Tallapoosa/Coosa Social Services Organization. This provides collaborative resources from Russell Medical, DHR, area schools, Health Department, Housing Authority, and the United Way.

Section 4: Enrollment Procedures

Immediate Enrollment of Students

Any student who claims to be homeless will be immediately enrolled even if they do not have the required documents such as:

- School records
- Medical records
- Proof of residency
- Guardianship papers or other documents

Enrolling schools must obtain school records from the previous school, and students must be enrolled in school while records are obtained.

Enrollment of Unaccompanied Youth

Unaccompanied Youth experiencing homelessness will be enrolled in school immediately. The student will be informed of their rights to transportation and their right to appeal school or district decisions. The Liaison will ensure that the unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that may arise over school enrollment or placement.

School Selection

Tallapoosa County School District will keep students in homeless situations in their school of origin defined as the school attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled, unless it is against the parent/guardians wishes or unless it is determined to be in the student's best educational interest. Students and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services are eligible to remain in their school or origin for the entire duration in which they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing. Students and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services may also choose to enroll in any public school that students living in the same attendance areas are eligible to attend.

Appeal and Dispute Process

If a dispute arises over qualification of McKinney-Vento services, the student shall receive all rights and services provided by Tallapoosa School District, pending resolution of the dispute. The child, youth, parent or guardian shall be referred to the District Homeless Liaison, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as quickly as possible by ensuring that the unaccompanied youth have the right to:

Remain in their school of origin

Transportation to and from the school of origin

Immediately enroll in a new school serving the area in which they are currently living even if they don't have typically required documents

Equal access to programs and services such as gifted, special education, vocational education and English Language Learner services.

**** All barriers to enrollment are removed for students experiencing homelessness.**

(Appendix D)

Section 5: Professional Development

McKinney-Vento Professional Development Opportunities

District Staff will attend state professional development as it is provided each year.

Professional Development is provided at the beginning of each school year, principals, school liaison, counselors, office staff and teachers on homeless definitions, enrollment procedures and policies.

District Website

Information is placed on the Tallapoosa County Schools website under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Program link. This information includes the following:

- LEA Homeless Plan Contact Information

- Information for Parents

- Link to the National Center for Homeless Education

Section 6: Educational Staffing and Support

The McKinney-Vento District Liaison's Role and Responsibilities

Ensure that procedures are established and followed across the school district

Provide each student who qualifies for homeless services will receive free and appropriate education

Collaborate with transportation and Child Nutrition Program personnel to coordinate services.

Ensure that homeless students are aware of their educational rights.

Post "Homeless" posters in schools, local community and businesses.

Maintain records to document homeless students' process.

Provide professional development to district wide staff responsible for enrollment and assisting students.

Maintain all district data collection and reporting requirements on students experiencing homelessness.

School Level Liaison's Role and Responsibilities

Each school will assign a staff member who will serve as the homeless liaison.

Identify students that may be facing homeless situations.

Ensure that all enrollment procedures are followed.

Monitor school attendance and academic achievement.

Identify physical, emotional and mental needs and issues homeless students may have.

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS
REQUEST FORM
(ONE CHILD PER FORM PLEASE)

STUDENT'S NAME _____ AGE _____ RACE _____ SEX _____

SCHOOL _____ DATE _____ GRADE _____

PERSON INITIATING REQUEST _____

REASON FOR REQUEST

ASSISTANCE REQUESTED:

Medical/Health (Glasses, hearing aids, doctor/dental visit,
etc.) Educational Needs (Supplies, equipment, etc.)

Clothing (State specific
sizes) Transportation

Extracurricular School Activities (Field trips, intervention, extra-curriculum, etc.)

APPROVAL SIGNATURE _____

Circle One: School Homeless Liaison/Guidance Counselor Principal Social Worker Nurse

District Homeless Liaison Approval _____ Date _____

INITIAL TO INDICATE RECEIPT OF REQUESTED ASSISTANCE _____ Date _____

SCHOOL OFFICIAL

COMMENTS

Print Name (Parent) _____ Signature (Parent) _____

Date _____

TRANSPORTATION MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Dear Parent/Guardian/Unaccompanied Youth,

Your child(ren) or you, as an unaccompanied homeless youth, are currently eligible for services through the McKinney-Vento program. Per the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, transportation will be provided to your child(ren) or you, as an unaccompanied youth, to and from school.

The following describes our agreement with you regarding transportation:

Pick-Up

Students must be at the selected location at the time coordinated by the homeless liaison/transportation department.

Drop-Off

An adult pre-approved by parents and guardians must be present at the selected location to pick-up students too young to be left unsupervised. The homeless liaison/transportation department will provide the time that the adult must be present for pick-up of students; parents and guardians must notify the liaison if an adult other than the parent or guardian will be picking up the student.

Communication of Absences

If a student is going to be absent from school and therefore does not need transportation for part or all of a day, parents or guardians must call and inform the designated driver no later than 6:00 a.m. on the day of the absence so the driver can plan accordingly.

Behavioral Expectations

Students and parents are expected to follow Tallapoosa County Schools' policies for student behavior. Disciplinary actions for students who violate the behavior policies will be followed as they are for any student enrolled in Tallapoosa County Schools

If a student's residence changes, the homeless liaison/transportation department must be contacted for transportation to be arranged. The transportation department may be reached at 256-373-2003

Individual Transportation to and from the School of Origin

Individuals transporting students to their school of origin from outside their attendance zone are eligible for mileage reimbursement. Mileage reimbursement is limited to the distance to and from the student's current residence

_____ (address) and the school

of origin _____. Mileage claims should be completed on the board approved travel form and turned in to the Homeless Liaison by the 10th of each month.

Driver's Name: _____ Contact Phone Number: _____

If Tallapoosa County Schools fails to provide the agreed upon transportation services, the liaison should be contacted. Your liaison is Kathy Ledbetter and may be reached at 256-825-0746.

Please sign below to acknowledge that you understand and agree with these expectations and terms.

Parent/Guardian Name (Printed)

Signature

Date

Homeless Liaison Name (Printed)

Signature

Date

