



Ohio

McKinney-Vento Homeless Act Guidance

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The federal [Every Student Succeeds Act](#) prioritizes the needs and barriers of vulnerable youth, including students experiencing homelessness. Students experiencing homelessness are more likely to experience trauma and feel unsettled, move frequently and be highly mobile. Accordingly, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Program has guided the work to ensure that homeless children have equal access to the same high-quality educational opportunities as non-homeless children and youth. Creating systems and supports for Ohio's students will allow districts, schools, local liaisons and every school employee to better identify and support students experiencing homelessness. It is important for students to be in contact with reliable individuals who support and encourage the whole student, academically and non-academically.

OHIO DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION CONTACT FOR HELP REGARDING THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS

Susannah Wayland
State Homeless Education Coordinator
(614) 387-7725
HomelessEducation@education.ohio.gov

The Ohio Department of Education's Foster Care Education Program webpage contains up-to-date information and can be accessed at the Department's McKinney Vento [website](#).

McKinney-Vento Homeless Definition

Homeless students can be highly mobile and lack long-term housing. Students who are experiencing homelessness often experience interruptions in their education and fall behind in school. Maintaining educational stability should be a priority for schools and districts when working with students who are experiencing homelessness.

WHO MEETS THE DEFINITION OF HOMELESS?

Students meet the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless when they lack a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence. Students who are sharing the housing of another person (doubled up) due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason meet the definition of homeless. This includes students living in motels, hotels, RV parks or campgrounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations, as well as those living in emergency or transitional shelters or abandoned in hospitals.

ARE MIGRANT STUDENTS CONSIDERED HOMELESS?

While migrant students are not always homeless, some may meet the definition of homeless under McKinney-Vento. If a student is a migrant worker or has parents who are migrant workers and the student lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, the student is eligible for McKinney-Vento benefits. The living arrangements of migrant students should be considered on a case-by-case basis. It might be helpful to ask questions about the type of housing, mailing address, stability of utilities or how many families are living in the student's home to better determine if the Act applies to the student.

District Responsibility

Your district is responsible for creating and maintaining a system that supports students who are experiencing homelessness. Identifying homeless students, appointing a local liaison and maintaining dispute resolution procedures are all important activities that your district is responsible for.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR LOCAL LIAISONS?

Your district is responsible for naming and supporting the local liaison. You should appoint an individual as local liaison who is accessible, knowledgeable and has the time necessary to do the job. More information on the local liaison is available in this document under *Local Liaisons*.

SHOULD MY DISTRICT BE INVOLVED IN ENROLLMENT DISPUTES?

It is important that your district has and will consistently review its dispute procedures. More information is available in this document under *Dispute Resolution*.

WHAT TYPE OF PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD OUR DISTRICT PERSONNEL RECEIVE?

Identifying and supporting homeless students involves a network of individuals, including your local liaison, school administrators and staff. Your district must ensure professional development for your local liaison while also providing opportunities for all school personnel to participate in annual McKinney-Vento awareness training. For your district and building leadership teams, it is beneficial to have ongoing conversations about how to identify and address the needs of homeless students. The state homeless education coordinator can provide resources and training opportunities upon request.

HOW DOES MY DISTRICT TRACK AND REPORT ENROLLED HOMELESS STUDENTS?

It is important for your district to keep accurate data on the number of homeless children and youth through the [Education Management Information System \(EMIS\)](#). Your local liaison makes the eligibility determination and then informs your EMIS coordinator of the primary nighttime residence.

WHAT DOES MY DISTRICT NEED TO DO TO MAKE SURE IT CAN IDENTIFY HOMELESS STUDENTS?

Your district must review and revise residency requirements to ensure they are sensitive to those in homeless situations and do not create additional barriers for homeless students. Your enrollment paperwork must include a statement to identify homelessness. Your attendance officer needs to be aware of the signs of homelessness and use sensitivity when referring families to the local liaison. If absences are related to a student's homeless situation, the absence should be considered excused. Although your district must identify homeless students, it cannot use invasive techniques in the identification and eligibility of homeless students.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN A FAMILY SECURES PERMANENT HOUSING IN THE MIDDLE OF A SCHOOL YEAR?

A student and his or her family may find permanent housing in the middle of a school year. Your district must continue the student's education in the student's current school, unless the parent or guardian chooses to enroll the student in a new attendance area. Your district must provide services to identified homeless students under McKinney-Vento for the remainder of that school year even when the family has found permanent housing.

DOES MY DISTRICT NEED TO WORK WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES?

Yes. A knowledge of the resources available in the community helps local liaisons and schools offer opportunities for additional support to homeless students. Coordinating with local social services agencies and other agencies or entities that provide services to homeless children and their families helps better support the whole student.

Local Liaisons

The local liaison acts as the primary support and advocate for homeless students and provides resources, McKinney-Vento services and information. Your district must appoint a local liaison to identify and support each student experiencing homelessness.

WHAT IS THE ROLE OF OUR LOCAL LIAISON?

Your liaison serves as the direct contact between families and school. The local liaison is responsible for the academic and non-academic support of homeless students, ensuring student enrollment and the delivery of McKinney-Vento resources to increase stability in and out of the classroom. The first step in serving homeless youth is identification. After identification, the local liaison is responsible for ensuring that families are aware of transportation services, educational opportunities and nutrition programs.

In addition to directly supporting homeless families, your local liaison is responsible for distributing public notice of McKinney-Vento rights in locations that serve the homeless population. This includes shelters, food pantries,

public libraries and soup kitchens. Public notices should be easy to read and understand. This might mean creating publications in any language that more than 5 percent of the student population speaks.

Your local liaison should work with your school district to ensure that school personnel are actively participating in professional development activities to understand the unique needs and barriers of homeless students.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT WHEN DESIGNATING A LOCAL LIAISON?

Your local liaison is a pivotal support for students experiencing homelessness. This person must have the time and ability to carry out the responsibilities and duties in law. In larger districts, it might be beneficial to appoint or hire an individual whose primary responsibility is McKinney-Vento.

HOW DO LOCAL LIAISONS SUPPORT HOMELESS YOUTH?

Local liaisons support student academics and address non-academic barriers that are unique to homeless students. There are many ways to address these barriers.

Your liaison must:

- 1) Provide referrals to outside services such as:
 - a. Health;
 - b. Dental;
 - c. Mental health; and
 - d. Substance abuse;
- 2) Make sure that your students have access to all eligible programs, including public preschool;
- 3) Ensure that parents can participate fully in their student's education; and
- 4) Distribute McKinney-Vento resources to all students at the beginning of the school year, as well as post information in schools and areas that serve the homeless population.

Your liaison also should:

- 1) Consider that some homeless students also meet the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness. After confirming eligibility, the local liaison should refer families to housing services;
- 2) Identify a point of contact at each school to help identify potential homeless students; and
- 3) Create a system and procedures to streamline support for these students.

Identification

The identification of a homeless student is the first step in ensuring educational stability and providing necessary services and supports. A district that is active in identification will be able to better support a student's educational, social and emotional stability and encourage full participation in school.

HOW CAN OUR LIAISON ENSURE ACCURATE IDENTIFICATION OF HOMELESS STUDENTS?

Your liaison is responsible for identifying homeless students using a variety of techniques ranging from basic outreach to more tailored strategies.

Here are a few strategies for identifying homeless students:

1. Housing questionnaires: Use a housing questionnaire for every student enrolling at the beginning of each school year. This allows your district to identify homeless youth without stigmatization.
2. Referral forms: Forms are helpful for both homeless shelters and schools. Homeless shelters can use these forms to connect school-aged children to schools, while schools can use them to connect students to community resources.
3. Local liaison contact information: Make contact information readily available by posting information in schools, shelters and food pantries. All local liaison contact information also is available on the Ohio Department of Education's [website](#).
4. Language access: Provide materials and forms in languages that 5 percent or more of your students speak.

5. Outreach and staff training: Hold an annual training for teachers, administrators and support staff. Focus on the signs of homelessness, the impact of homelessness on students and the steps to take after a student is identified as homeless.
6. Community resources: Work with shelters, food pantries and other organizations that serve homeless families to get their assistance in identifying homeless students and their families.

Best Interest Determination

Educational stability is critical for students experiencing homelessness. When making a determination, a district should consider the best interest of a homeless student to remain in the school the student is currently attending. The district must consider student-centered factors when making a best interest determination.

WHAT IS A BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION?

Since the top priority is educational stability for a homeless student, a school needs to work with the student and his or her parents or guardians to decide where a student will attend school. One option is that the student can stay in the school he or she was attending at the time homelessness occurs or there was a change to the student's living situation. This is called the school of origin. A second option is to move to the school in the district where the student currently is living. A student should only move schools if staying in the school of origin creates barriers to educational stability or if the parent requests a move.

WHICH INDIVIDUALS MAKE THE BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION?

In making this decision, the preference of the student and family are paramount. If there are concerns, the student's parents or guardians, school counselors and teachers with a connection to the student should play a significant role in determining the best interest of the student. The local liaison serves as a resource to the student and family for understanding school options, emphasizing school stability and assisting in making the best interest decision.

WHAT IS IMPORTANT WHEN MAKING A BEST INTEREST DECISION?

When considering whether to move a student to another school, there are many factors to consider. While it is important to maintain educational stability for homeless youth, the social and emotional stability also are important. Some factors to consider might be:

- 1) The student's connections to the school through teachers, counselors, friends and the placement of siblings;
- 2) The distance from new housing to school;
- 3) Special programming, such as gifted programs, career-tech programs, College Credit Plus, Advanced Placement classes, etc.;
- 4) Quality special education services; and
- 5) Language services, if the student is an English learner

IS TRANSPORTATION A CONSIDERATION IN DETERMINING THE BEST INTEREST OF THE STUDENT?

The impact of lengthy transportation or public transportation on a student is a consideration. However, the cost of transportation costs is not a consideration when making a best interest determination.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO IN A BEST INTEREST DETERMINATION?

A local liaison should meet with the student and his or her family when identified as homeless to share resources and discuss any concerns regarding the student's educational stability. The liaison or another administrator should communicate the decision to continue a student's education in the school of origin **within five school days** of identification.

If a school considers all student-centered factors and decides it is in the best interest of the student to move to the school in the district where the student currently lives, the local liaison must inform the family within five school days of this decision. Homeless students always have the option of attending the school in the district he or she is currently living in. Homeless students also can attend magnet schools if they meet all enrollment

requirements or a community school. If the student, parent or guardian disagrees with the best interest determination, they have the right to appeal the determination through your district's dispute resolution procedure.

WHAT IF THE SCHOOL DETERMINES IT IS NOT IN THE BEST INTEREST OF A STUDENT TO ATTEND THE SCHOOL OF ORIGIN?

If the school has considered all factors and determines it is not in the best interest of the student to attend the school of origin, the school must provide its decision and the appeal process in writing to the guardian or unaccompanied youth. If a guardian or unaccompanied youth chooses to appeal the school's decision, the student shall be enrolled in the desired school or kept in the currently enrolled school until the dispute resolution process is completed and there is a final decision. Find more information in this document under *Dispute Resolution*.

Immediate Enrollment

An essential practice to ensure the stability of homeless youth is the immediate enrollment of homeless students. Delays in enrollment can negatively impact attendance. Additionally, it can lead to other adverse outcomes, such as inaccurate enrollment in classes, not receiving necessary academic services and falling behind in coursework. When it is not in the best interest of the student to remain in his or her school of origin, the new school must immediately enroll the student with or without the necessary documentation.

MUST A SCHOOL ENROLL A STUDENT BEFORE IT RECEIVES THE STUDENT'S TRANSCRIPTS?

Yes. You cannot deny a homeless student enrollment due to delayed or incomplete records, transcripts or a missed deadline for registration. A school should enroll and place in a class a homeless student the same day he or she arrives. The student should fully participate in class and extracurricular activities. Sometimes it is not possible to place a student in a classroom the same day of enrollment due to district enrollment procedures. In this case, the school should speed up the normal procedures and give special consideration to students experiencing homelessness. While records are in transition, a school cannot remove or fail to enroll a student.

WHAT DOES A RECEIVING SCHOOL NEED TO DO?

Often, a homeless family does not have access to the student's records, such as immunizations or proof of residency and lacks the ability to have them transferred. If a homeless student is enrolling in school without records, the school needs to contact the previous school and have all records sent. If there is a delay in receiving records, the receiving school may use school assessments to determine the student's placement until the school receives the records.

WHAT DOES A TRANSFERRING SCHOOL NEED TO DO?

If a homeless student has transferred to a new school, the receiving school must send requested records within one school day of the receiving school's request. The transferring school cannot hold the records or delay the transfer if the student has outstanding fees or fines. It is beneficial to collaborate with receiving schools to share information that the transferred records might not include. This could mean the counselor from the previous school connects with the counselor of the receiving school to discuss career planning information.

Academic Credits

Districts must work to support credit retention and keep homeless students on track for graduation. All districts should have a system in place to quickly access and review transcripts to ensure proper placement and continuation of the youth's education. It is important to understand that transcripts for highly mobile students are not always accurate and may not reflect the student's completed coursework. Asking the student for information on past coursework is always helpful.

WHAT IF THERE IS A DELAY IN RECEIVING RECORDS AND TRANSCRIPTS IN THE TRANSFER PROCESS?

Schools should immediately enroll the student and receive transferred records within **one school day** of enrollment. To avoid an extended delay, the receiving school should reach out to the previous school to

request records. The receiving school also should use its own evaluation measures to place the student in the appropriate classes. Asking the student about previous work and courses also can help determine the correct class placement. As districts and schools receive more information, they should revisit placement and curriculum decisions.

WHAT IF THE PREVIOUS DISTRICT AWARDS CREDITS IN A DIFFERENT MANNER THAN THE RECEIVING DISTRICT?

When a student comes from a district that awards semester credits versus whole-year credits, your district can award for the portion of the course the student completed. You should not require a student to start coursework over. You should award credits for a demonstration of learning.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER WAYS OUR DISTRICT CAN ENSURE PROPERLY ASSIGNED CREDITS?

Your district or school may choose to use credit recovery programs and other evaluations to facilitate the credit concerns of the transferring student. You may request the course syllabus from the previous district to determine educational gaps and needs. Writing a [credit flexibility plan](#) can address identified needs. You should make every effort to make sure the student is given credit for work already completed. Some other ways to make sure a student receives credit are to provide:

1. Partial credit for material completed;
2. Hybrid classes (classes with online and classroom components);
3. Online classes;
4. Independent studies geared to an individual student's knowledge gaps; and
5. Formal assessments for class placement and testing out.

Dispute Resolution

The Every Student Succeeds Act reauthorized the McKinney-Vento Act (42 USC § 11431 et.seq.). It focuses on identifying and removing barriers for homeless youth to make sure they have the same access to an education as provided to non-homeless youth in the state.

To this end, the Ohio Department of Education encourages your district to establish personal relationships and work closely with families or unaccompanied youth to informally settle any disputes regarding eligibility, enrollment or school selection. In some cases, the situation may require a more formal dispute resolution process to ensure that the student is receiving all entitled services. For this reason, your district should have a local dispute resolution procedure. [A sample dispute resolution procedure](#) that the Department drafted is available on the Department's website. Your district or school may adapt or edit the sample as needed to meet the needs of a district. Your district or school may wish to consult its own legal counsel regarding the applicability of the form to your needs as well.

During the best interest determination or dispute resolution proceedings, your district or school should immediately enroll students requesting or identified for services under the McKinney-Vento Act. This includes all available appeals. Your district or school must make determinations regarding eligibility, enrollment or school selection within five school days.

WHAT MUST A DISTRICT'S LOCAL DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCEDURE INCLUDE?

A procedure to:

- Immediately enroll the youth in the school in which enrollment is sought pending final resolution, including all available appeals;
- Provide a written explanation to parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth of any decision regarding school selection or enrollment that the district or school makes; and
- Provide a written explanation to parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth about rights and information on how to appeal such a decision.

HOW SHOULD OUR DISTRICT OR SCHOOL NOTIFY A FAMILY OF A SCHOOL OR DISTRICT DETERMINATION?

Upon determination of eligibility, enrollment or school selection, your district or school must provide a written explanation of any decisions made to parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth. The written explanation should be easy to understand and free of jargon. When feasible, it is best practice to translate the explanation into the recipient's home language. Additionally, the written explanation should include the contact information for the local liaison and state homeless education coordinator, as well as notice of the right to file an appeal and a step-by-step description of how to do so.

WHAT SHOULD THE DISTRICT OR SCHOOL DETERMINATION INCLUDE?

A written explanation from the district or school about how the school reached its decision regarding eligibility, school selection or enrollment should, at a minimum, include:

- A description of the action that the district or school proposed or refused;
- An explanation of why the district or school proposed or refused action;
- A description of any other options the district or school considered;
- The reasons why the district or school rejected any other options;
- A description of any other factors relevant to the decision and information related to the eligibility or best interest determination such as the facts, witnesses and evidence relied upon and their sources;
- Appropriate timelines to assure any relevant deadlines are met;
- Contact information for the local liaison and state homeless education coordinator and a brief description of their roles; and
- Notification to the parent or unaccompanied youth that he/she has a right to have a lawyer assist him or her in the process.

CAN A DETERMINATION BE APPEALED?

Once a district or school has made a determination, a parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth may appeal the decision. The district or school should have a formal appeals procedure. An effective strategy for resolving disputes impartially is to establish the formal local dispute resolution procedure at the district level. Throughout the dispute resolution process, it is the responsibility of the local liaison to assist the student and families in preparing the appeal. This includes making the school's resources (e.g., copying, mailing or obtaining records) available to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth.

There is no local dispute resolution procedure for districts who wish to appeal the decision of another district. Other agencies should respect a district's identification of eligibility under the McKinney-Vento Act. If a district does have a question regarding the actions of another district, it can contact the state homeless education coordinator.

WHO INITIATES THE DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS?

A parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth may appeal a decision regarding eligibility, enrollment or school selection. The district or school should have a formal appeals process in place. The local liaison should guide the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth through the appeal process.

SHOULD STUDENTS BE ENROLLED WHILE THE OUTCOME OF A DISPUTE IS PENDING?

Yes. A key priority of the McKinney-Vento Act is ensuring the educational stability of students experiencing homelessness. Additionally, the school setting may serve as a homeless student's only predictable and consistent environment. If a dispute arises over eligibility, enrollment or school selection, the district must enroll immediately the student in the school in which enrollment is sought. The student should remain in this school placement pending final resolution of the dispute, including all appeals. By enrolling a student immediately, a district or school can ensure that the student's education continues uninterrupted.

WHAT IS OUR LIAISON'S ROLE IN THE DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS?

Your local liaison is responsible for ensuring that the school and district are providing the appropriate information and resources to parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth. Additionally, in the case of a dispute, the local liaison is responsible for guiding parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth through the local dispute resolution process and assisting them in the preparation of any appeals. This also includes

recording evidence to use in writing an appeal if a parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth cannot do so themselves. If a dispute cannot be resolved at the local level, the local liaison must guide the parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth through the state-level dispute resolution process.

WHAT IF A DISPUTE CANNOT BE RESOLVED AT THE LOCAL LEVEL?

If a dispute cannot be resolved at the local level, parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth may appeal to the Ohio Department of Education. No different than the local dispute resolution process, the local liaison should provide parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth with relevant information (e.g., list of legal and advocacy service providers, contact information for the state homeless education coordinator). The local liaison guides the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth through the state-level dispute resolution process, which may include helping them gather relevant facts and preparing the appeal. The parent, guardian, unaccompanied youth or the local liaison, if requested, should send the appeal to the state homeless education coordinator at the Department. It is best practice for the local liaison to follow up with the state homeless education coordinator after filing an appeal.

Upon filing the appeal with the Department, the state homeless education coordinator will investigate the complaint. After gathering and receiving the necessary information, the Department will decide on the appeal within 15 school days from the receipt of all necessary documents. It will provide the final decision to the district superintendent, building principal, local liaison and parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth. The state decision is final. All parties shall adhere to the final determination.

HOW CAN MY DISTRICT OR SCHOOL AVOID DISPUTES?

Your district or school should have an established process to determine eligibility. This may include providing a questionnaire about the nature of the family's hardship, the family's nighttime residence and any other pertinent details. Additionally, your local liaison should set up a time to contact or meet the family to identify additional supports and services that they may need and that community partnerships can provide. You should provide the family information and rights related to McKinney-Vento at the time the questionnaire/interview is completed.

WHAT IF A DISPUTE INVOLVES AN UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH?

Your district and local liaison should provide an unaccompanied youth with the same information, resources and opportunity to appeal a best interest determination as a parent or guardian. Additionally, your local liaison should provide an unaccompanied youth with the same support and guidance as any parent or guardian.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act

WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS OF HOMELESS CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES?

Homeless children and youth who are on individualized education programs (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act), Section 504 Plans (Rehabilitation Act) or any other educational plans have the same rights under McKinney-Vento as students not on service plans. This identification and collaboration effort includes [IDEA part C](#) for children birth to age two.

WHAT ROLE DOES OUR LIAISON PLAY IN ASSISTING STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES?

Your local liaison plays an important role in making sure a student on an educational plan is receiving the necessary supports and services. Coordinating with outside community agencies, such as emergency shelters, transitional shelters and other advocacy groups, can help in identifying indicators of a potential disability. Consistently reviewing special education policies and procedures is helpful to ensure that there are no barriers to access and success.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A STUDENT LEAVES A DISTRICT AND GOES TO ANOTHER DISTRICT DURING THE EVALUATION PROCESS?

If a homeless student transfers schools in the middle of an initial evaluation, the receiving school should continue the evaluation process. Districts should evaluate the student completely and provide special education services, if eligible, within 30 days of the transfer.

WHAT ARE SOME TIPS AND SPECIAL CONSIDERATIONS TO MEET THE NEEDS OF A HOMELESS STUDENT WHO NEEDS SPECIAL EDUCATION SERVICES?

Your district can work together to support children and youth who need or receive special education services by:

- Creating regular and ongoing communication between your liaison, teachers and special education staff;
- Inviting your local liaison to IEP meetings;
- Obtaining input from the local liaison about the best interest determinations;
- Reviewing annually data on homeless students and identifying strategies to meet needs;
- Providing a surrogate parent, if needed, for unaccompanied youth;
- Coordinating services if the student moves to a neighboring district during the evaluation period; and
- Coordinating services through IDEA Part C to ensure early intervention services are available to homeless infants and toddlers.

WHAT HAPPENS IF THE PARENT IS NOT AVAILABLE FOR THE IEP MEETING?

Whenever a district cannot identify or locate a parent, or the child is an unaccompanied homeless youth or ward of the state, the school district may assign a surrogate parent. For questions regarding surrogate parents and training, please contact the Office for Exceptional Children by [email](#) or phone at (614) 466-2650.

ARE IDEA PART C SERVICES REQUIRED FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS?

Yes. Any state receiving federal IDEA Part C funds must make early intervention services available to infants and toddlers with disabilities who are homeless and their families. Because early intervention is for children birth to age 3, the Ohio Department of Developmental Disabilities works with families wherever they are. A service coordinator is assigned to help a family move through evaluation to determine eligibility and assessment to determine a service plan, whether the child is in child care or at home. If an infant or toddler is homeless, the service coordinator will work with the child and his or her parents anywhere the family is able. More information about IDEA Part C in Ohio can be found [here](#).

High School

High school students who are experiencing homelessness face a unique set of challenges. Ensuring that they have the resources and information to graduate on time, apply for college or attend a career-technical high school is incredibly important. Your district or school must consider the unique needs of homeless students who are close to graduating.

HOW CAN SCHOOLS HELP STUDENTS GRADUATE ON TIME?

Moving schools frequently due to homelessness can put a student behind or create barriers to receiving credit. Keeping students on track to graduate includes making sure all districts involved transfer all credits and assign partial credit for any time and course material completed. Find more information in this document under *Academic Credits*.

WHAT SUPPORTS ARE AVAILABLE FOR GRADUATING STUDENTS WHO ARE APPLYING TO COLLEGE?

For those homeless students who are looking to apply to college, there are a few ways to help them. If the student needs to retake the ACT, beyond what the school provides at no charge, your local liaison can file for a fee waiver. If the student has exceeded the available fee waivers for the ACT, your district can use Title I funds to cover the fees.

The Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or [FAFSA](#), can be daunting to someone who has never gone through the process or who may be lacking records and information helpful in filling out the application. Your liaison should make sure the student is aware of the process and have a school counselor walk through the application. This can greatly reduce anxiety about the process.

Homeless students should have the same access to college credit programs as all other eligible students. This includes Advanced Placement (AP) classes and [College Credit Plus](#) classes. If your district does not cover these costs for students, you can use Title I funds for students eligible for McKinney-Vento services.

ARE HOMELESS STUDENTS IN CAREER-TECHNICAL EDUCATION ANY DIFFERENT?

While they still are eligible for McKinney-Vento resources, homeless students enrolled in career-tech schools have a different set of barriers in their education. Your district must ensure that homeless students do not face barriers to enrollment and participation in career-tech programs. Removing barriers may include covering the cost of required materials and fees for homeless students. If a career-technical school already has exhausted all other resources, Title I funds may be used to cover the cost of materials and required fees. The state of Ohio will pay for any professional credentials.

Non-Academic Barriers

Homelessness not only impacts a student's education but also his or her well-being outside of the classroom. Supporting the whole student, both academically and non-academically, will provide stability and help to succeed.

WHAT ARE NON-ACADEMIC BARRIERS?

Homeless students may face many non-academic barriers obstacles that affect their ability to stay in school and reach their full potential. For many students, this can include hunger, mental illness and changes in family structure. Students also might lack important paperwork, such as a birth certificate, that they may need outside of the school setting.

HOW CAN OUR DISTRICT OR SCHOOL ADDRESS NON-ACADEMIC BARRIERS?

All homeless students are eligible for free lunch without income verification and should begin receiving this benefit immediately. It also can help to provide a student mentor for support and stability for the student. Additionally, your district or school should use community resources to make sure the student has clothes, personal hygiene products, alarm clocks and anything else that would help a student succeed in school.

WHAT ARE SOME OTHER WAYS TO SUPPORT A HOMELESS STUDENT?

Your district or school cannot deny homeless students enrollment because they lack documentation such as birth certificates, social security cards or vaccination and health records. However, these documents are helpful to the student. An older student will need these documents to register to vote, obtain a driver's license, and apply to college. Using the below resources and walking students through the process can help them get these important documents and address non-academic barriers.

For a birth certificate:

1. Visit the local vital statistics office in your county;
2. Visit the Ohio Department of Health, Office of Vital Statistics, 225 Neilston St., Columbus, OH 43215, Monday through Friday, 8 a.m.-5 p.m.;
3. Mail an application to Ohio Department of Health, Vital Statistics, PO Box 15098, Columbus, OH 43215-0098, along with the fee in the form of check or money order made payable to Treasurer, State of Ohio; or
4. Order online.

The cost is \$21.50, payable by cash, check, credit card or money order in person; credit card for online; and check or money order by mail.

For Social Security Cards:

1. [Social Security Administration Website](#).

For Immunization Records:

1. Contact previously attended schools for any maintained records; and
2. Use the statewide [Immunization Information System](#).

CAN MY DISTRICT USE TITLE I FUNDS FOR NON-ACADEMIC BARRIERS?

Yes. However, community partners often are willing to help support students who are experiencing homelessness. Check with food banks, nonprofits and local businesses to help relieve non-academic barriers before using Title I funds.

Transportation

Getting to and from school can create stress and an additional barrier to education for homeless students and their families. Your district must provide transportation for homeless students to support student success and educational stability.

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN PROVIDING TRANSPORTATION?

Your local liaison, transportation director and other district or school administrators should work together to develop effective transportation policies and procedures. You must establish ongoing communication and clearly assigned responsibilities so that homeless students receive transportation in an efficient and timely way.

HOW ARE SERVICES AND COSTS SHARED WHEN THERE IS MORE THAN ONE DISTRICT INVOLVED?

A homeless student could attend the school of origin but live in another school district. In this case, both districts should agree to share the transportation cost and responsibility. If the districts are unable to agree on a method, each district will be responsible for 50 percent of the transportation costs.

WHAT IF THE FAMILY SECURES PERMANENT HOUSING DURING THE YEAR?

A family may find permanent housing during the school year. In this case, the student still is eligible for transportation services to and from the school he or she is attending for the remainder of the school year.

WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR INFORMING PARENTS OF THEIR TRANSPORTATION RIGHTS?

Your local liaison makes sure the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth and any unaccompanied youth know about all transportation services and options.

WHAT HAPPENS DURING A DISPUTE OVER TRANSPORTATION SERVICES?

When there is a transportation dispute, the student must have transportation to and from the school until there is a resolution. The state homeless education coordinator and the state director of transportation are available to provide assistance and guidance.

MUST THE HOMELESS STUDENT RECEIVE TRANSPORTATION TO EXTRACURRICULAR ACTIVITIES?

Yes. McKinney-Vento requires transportation to extracurricular activities.

WHAT KIND OF TRANSPORTATION CAN OUR DISTRICT OR SCHOOL USE?

It is important that the mode of transportation does not create barriers to a homeless student's education. It must allow a student to fully participate in the entire school day. Transportation arrangements should not make a student be late to school or leave before the end of the school day. The type of transportation should not stigmatize the student or disclose a student's housing status. In addition, the age of the student is an important consideration. For example, using public transportation for young students might not be appropriate.

The transportation chosen should consider the age, ability and needs of the student and his or her family.

Transportation types include:

1. Public transportation;
2. Gas cards: Some parents may have working automobiles. Your district may provide a gas card or use a voucher system so that parents can drive their children to and from school. You must create a system to account for attendance and miles traveled to and from school with the student;
3. Taxis; and
4. Special education buses.

If homeless students can drive cars or use taxis, your local liaison should consult with your school district attorney about liability and requirements for background checks for the drivers.

DOES OUR DISTRICT OR SCHOOL NEED TO TRANSPORT PRESCHOOLERS?

Yes. Students enrolled in preschool when they become homeless must remain enrolled and continue receiving McKinney-Vento Services, including transportation. Preschools that do not typically provide transportation services must provide transportation for their students experiencing homelessness.

CAN MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS PAY FOR TRANSPORTATION?

Yes. If your district receives a subgrant from the McKinney-Vento Act, you may use subgrant funds to cover the excess cost of transportation. While not specific in law, the expectation is that the district will cover the same level of cost for transporting homeless students as other students, before using subgrant funds.

CAN OUR DISTRICT OR SCHOOL USE TITLE I, PART A SET-ASIDE FUNDS TO SUPPORT TRANSPORTATION SERVICES?

Yes. You may use funds reserved for homeless students under Title I, Part A (set-aside funds) to provide services that other students ordinarily do not receive. This includes transportation to and from the school of origin.

Your local liaison should coordinate with your Title I director to assess the needs of your homeless students. Together, they should determine how to meet transportation needs using the Title I, Part A set-aside for homeless students. More information regarding the Title I homeless set-aside can be found in *Title I – Funding to Serve Homeless Students*.

Your district or school may use Title I, Part A set-aside funds for homeless students for other transportation needs. This includes transportation that:

1. Enables a homeless student to participate in an educational activity after school if transportation is not available;
2. Allows parents to be more involved in their children's education; or
3. Supports preschool transportation.

WHAT PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SHOULD MY DISTRICT PROVIDE TO TRANSPORTATION PERSONNEL?

All parties involved in student transportation, including bus drivers, should be familiar with the McKinney-Vento Act and how to identify homeless students. Often, bus drivers are the first and last school personnel to encounter students experiencing homelessness over the course of a day. As a result, they may develop supportive relationships with the students. Drivers may assist with identifying students in homeless situations, since they observe changes in when and where students get on and off school buses.

Title I – Funding to Serve Homeless Students

The Title I homeless set-aside is an amount of money that your district may set aside to use for services for students who meet eligibility requirements under the McKinney-Vento law. Both Title I and non-Title I schools can use these funds for homeless students. There are a variety of categories you can use depending on the needs of students. Your Title I coordinator should reach out to your Title I program specialist or the state homeless education coordinator when unclear about the use of these funds for homeless students.

HOW MUCH MONEY SHOULD MY DISTRICT OR SCHOOL SET ASIDE?

Your district or school should determine the number of homeless students identified and recorded in EMIS and arrive at a dollar amount that will suffice their needs. A needs assessment should be completed, along with input from your local liaison, to ensure that the dollar amount set aside will support enrollment, attendance and academic success of homeless students.

CAN THE TITLE I SET-ASIDE FUND THE POSITION OF OUR LOCAL LIAISON?

Yes. You can use the set-aside to fund a full-time employee, a portion of a full-time employee or a part-time employee.

CAN MY DISTRICT OR SCHOOL PAY FOR TRANSPORTATION SERVICES WITH THE TITLE I SET-ASIDE FUNDS?

Districts can use Title I homeless set-aside to cover excess cost of transportation. This is the amount of money spent to transport a student after exhausting all other state and local funding sources. You also may use Title I set-aside to pay for transportation services that your district ordinarily does not provide. This includes preschool transportation, extracurricular transportation and interim transportation services.

WHAT CATEGORIES OF SERVICES CAN TITLE I SET-ASIDE FUNDS PROVIDE?

Your district or school may use the Title I set-aside to fund the needs of homeless students to address academic and non-academic success. You can use set-aside funds after you have exhausted all state and local funding sources.

The categories that funds can be used for include:

1. Uniforms and supplies;
2. Enrollment services such as records transfer, birth certificates and immunizations;
3. Referrals or services for medical, dental, mental health, substance abuse and domestic violence issues;
4. Costs associated with removing barriers to participation, retention and success in school. This includes extracurricular fees, test fees, cap and gown fees, material fees for courses, high school equivalency assistance, credit retrieval, etc.;
5. Before- and after-school programs, summer school programs, tutoring and mentoring;
6. Fines and fees;
7. Outreach, including services to re-engage youth and coordination with community agencies; and
8. Family engagement.