

Dale County School System

Homeless Education Program

The Dale County School System will employ practices that increase the awareness of the Homeless Education Program. The system shall notify parents/guardians of homeless children and youth of available resources and assist them in accessing the resources.

The Dale County School System shall conduct annual evaluation of its Homeless Education Program to determine the effectiveness of the program. The system will adjust practices and procedures as needed to improve the effectiveness of implementation and student achievement.

DEFINITION:

For the purpose of identifying homeless children and youth, the Dale County School System shall use the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless children and youth. The Act defines homeless children and youth (twenty-one years of age and younger) as:

- A. Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are:
 - o Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (i.e. "doubled up").
 - o Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
 - o Living in emergency or transitional shelters
 - o Abandoned in Hospitals

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

- C. Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

- D. Migrants/ESL/ELL children who qualify as homeless if they are living in circumstances described above.

- E. The term unaccompanied youth includes a young person not in physical custody of a parent or guardian. This would include runaways living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, cars, on the streets, or in other inadequate housing; children and youth denied housing by their families (sometimes referred to as "throwaway children and youth"); and school-age unwed mothers living in homes for unwed mothers because they have no other housing available.

The *school of origin* is the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.

HOMELESS EDUCATION PLAN

Purpose of the Program

Homeless children and youth will be provided the opportunity to receive a free and appropriate public education regardless of their residency status. Our system will ensure that these students are afforded equal access to academics and other services that will allow them to meet the same challenging state achievement standards as non-homeless students.

The program provides procedural guidelines to ensure that homeless students are not denied enrollment due to the lack of registration documentation at the time of enrollment. Homeless children and youth will be enrolled immediately pending obtainment of the necessary documents. The school counselor will assist parents guardians, or unaccompanied youth in obtaining the proper documentation.

The homeless education program makes every effort to provide homeless children and youth with a stable school environment by enrolling students in the *school of origin* and providing them with transportation to and from the school of origin. Provisions are made for parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth to decline enrollment in the *school of origin*.

The program provides for a homeless liaison that will ensure program implementation and coordinate efforts to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided the opportunity for academic success.

Identification & Registration Procedures

Homeless children and youth are often undetected. The Dale County School System will conduct training sessions with appropriate school personnel to inform them of methods of identifying homeless children without stigmatizing students or families. The system will use a *Residency Questionnaire* (Appendix A) to facilitate identity of homeless children and youth. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth will complete the *Residency Questionnaire* at the time of registration. The school counselor may provide appropriate assistance to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth in answering the questionnaire if necessary.

A copy of the *Residency Questionnaire* must be submitted to the Dale County Schools Homeless Liaison on the day of registration. The school will maintain the original form in a file separate from the student's permanent record for audit purposes during the year. This file should be housed in the school counselor's office or in close proximity. School counselors will contact the system's Homeless Liaison if a student is suspected of being homeless.

The parent or guardian may enroll a homeless child or youth with or without proof of residency, birth certificate, social security number, immunization records, or school records. The school counselor or principal's designee will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth appropriate assistance in obtaining the necessary records and documents for enrollment. Enrollment without the required immunization record will be pending receipt or acquisition of immunization documentation. The existing method of assigning a student number will be employed when a student enrolls without a social security number.

An unaccompanied youth may enroll him/herself at any time throughout the school year. In this case, the school principal or designee will immediately contact the system's Homeless Liaison to

report the enrollment of an unaccompanied youth. The school will provide the youth with proper assistance in a language that the student understands. The system's Homeless Liaison (Appendix B) will assist the homeless unaccompanied youth in obtaining eligible educational services.

The application process for free and reduced price meals will be expedited for homeless children and youth. The determination for free meals may be made without completing the full application process.

Identification of Homeless Preschoolers

The Dale County School Systems Homeless Liaison will collaborate with local community service agencies (e.g. Head Start, Department of Human Resources, Health Department, faith-based organizations and the court system, etc.) and school personnel to identify homeless preschoolers. The district will also include homeless preschoolers and homeless children in the "Child Find" process as required by the Individual with Disabilities Education Act.

School Placement

The school system will make school placement decisions in the "best interest" of the homeless child or youth. Students will continue in the school of origin for the duration of the homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year. Students may enroll in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the student is actually living are eligible to attend.

If school enrollment decision is contrary to the wishes of the child or youth's parent/guardian, the school will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision, a statement of the right to appeal, and procedure for appealing the placement decision. The complainant must file a School Enrollment Dispute (Appendix C) with the school in which the student is presently enrolled. The principal of this school will notify the Dale County Schools Homeless Liaison of the dispute and take steps to resolve the dispute.

When a dispute arises regarding school placement, the system will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, pending resolution of the dispute. The Dale County Schools Homeless Liaison will expeditiously take steps to resolve the dispute (Appendix D). If the dispute cannot be settled by the homeless liaison, the liaison will assist the complainant in seeking technical assistance from an appropriate service agency.

Services for Homeless Students

The Dale County Board of Education will provide for homeless children a free and appropriate education inclusive of services comparable to those available to other students in the school for which eligibility criteria is met. The program will include educational programs for the disadvantaged, disabled, and limited English proficiency.

Once a homeless child has been identified, the counselors at each school have the responsibility of notifying the Dale County Schools Homeless Liaison in order that services may be offered to the student and his/her family.

Parents of Homeless students are encouraged to:

- Become actively involved in making suggestions in the planning and operations of the Title I program.
- Attend all informational meetings concerning Title I programs.
- Attend an annual public meeting to discuss the programs and activities that are carried out with Title I funds, to inform the parents of their right to consult in the design and implementation of projects, to solicit parents' input, and to provide parents with the mechanism for maintaining ongoing communication among parents, teachers, and agency officials.
- Consult with teachers on an on-going basis and attend parent/teacher conferences, if at all possible.
- Provide information and ideas on the effectiveness of the assistance that the student has received.

The Dale County School System will employ the following methods to inform school personnel, parents, and community members:

- Each year school personnel (counselors and building administrators) will receive training on identification of homeless students.
- The system will notify parents/guardians of homeless children and youth of available resources and assist them in accessing the resources as needed.
- Homeless posters provided by the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) are posted in all schools.
- Information for homeless parents, children and youth, along with enrollment, dispute and complaint forms are available on the district website.

The Federal Programs Homeless Advisory Committee will conduct an annual evaluation of its Homeless Education Program to determine the effectiveness of the program through surveys. The system will adjust practices and procedures as needed to improve the effectiveness of implementation and student achievement. This plan will be reviewed and revised, if necessary, each year.

The homeless liaison shall work to ensure that homeless children and youth, including preschoolers are identified, enrolled in school, and receive all eligible services to facilitate student academic success. The responsibilities listed below are not all inclusive but shall be primary duties of the liaison. The homeless liaison shall ensure that:

- Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
- Homeless students enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the schools of the district.
- Homeless children and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, and preschool programs administered by the school system, and referrals to health, mental health, dental, and other appropriate services.
- Parents or guardians of homeless children and youth are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- Parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services.
- Transportation cost disputes between the school system and school system of enrollment are resolved.
- Sensitivity and confidentiality training is provided to transportation and school personnel regarding the needs of homeless children and youth,
- Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act.
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated to locations where children and youth receive services under the Act.
- Required reports concerning the homeless education program are submitted to appropriate agencies and the State Department of Education.
- Evaluation of the homeless education program is conducted annually and necessary program and implementation adjustments are made in a timely manner.

Dale County School System
McKinney-Vento Act
Student Needs Assessment
Complete this form to assess student needs

Date: _____

Student: _____ Grade/School: _____

Parent/Guardian: _____ Phone: _____

Please indicate any areas of need/assistance:

(Check all that apply)

- Assistance with birth certificates, shot records, physicals, sport physicals, etc.
- Free School Meals
- Transportation to School of Origin
- Child's IEP
- Personal Hygiene Items
- Clothing for School Attendance
- Parenting Education
- School Supplies/Class Fees: backpack, materials, etc.
- Assessment for special programs – Please identify (Gifted, ELL, Speech)
- Tutoring
- Mentoring
- Referral-Medical, Dental, Counseling
- Referral – Housing, Food Pantries
- Assistance enrolling – Pre-K/Headstart

To Be Completed by the School

Assistance Provided:

DISPUTE RESOLUTION REGARDING THE ENROLLMENT OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Dale County School System will make school placement decisions in the best interest of the homeless child or youth. Students will continue in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness. Student may enroll in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the students reside, are actually eligible to attend.

If the school enrollment decision is contrary to the wishes of the child or youth's parent/guardian, the school will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision in a manner and form understandable to the parent, a statement of the right to appeal, and procedure for appealing placement decision. The principal of this school will notify the Dale County School System's Homeless Liaison of the dispute and take steps to resolve the dispute.

When a dispute arises regarding school placement, the system will immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals. The Dale County School System Homeless Liaison will expeditiously take steps to resolve the dispute. Students will receive all services for which they are eligible until final resolutions of all disputes and appeals. If the dispute cannot be settled by the homeless liaison, the liaison will assist the complainant in seeking technical assistance from:

State Homeless Coordinator
Alabama State Department of Education
5348 Gordon Persons Building
50 North Ripley Street
Montgomery, AL 36104-2101

Signature of Superintendent: _____

**Dale County School System
School Enrollment Dispute Form**

Fax this form to the central office contact person on the day of the complaint

School Name: _____ School Telephone: _____
School Address: _____ Fax Number: _____

Student's Name: _____ S/N: _____ Grade: _____
Current Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Complainant Information

Name: _____ Relationship to Student: _____
Current Address: _____
City: _____ State: _____ Zip Code: _____

Note: Student information regarding address, telephone number, information protected by Everyday School Records Act can be released only to parent(s), guardian, the student, or a person specifically designated as a representative of the parent or guardian.

Name of School that complainant chooses student to be immediately enrolled in and/or transported to/from until dispute is resolved: _____

Is this the school of origin? _____
If no, from which school was the student transferred? _____

Reason for complaint

Complainant Signature

Date

School Use Only

Principal's Action on the Complaint

Taken within _____ school day(s) after receiving the notice of the complaint

Date Central Office contact person was notified of the dispute: _____

Action taken by Principal to resolve the dispute:

**Dale County School System
Written Notification Form**

*This form should be completed by the school administrator or homeless liaison when the parent's/guardian's request to return to the school of origin is denied. Fax completed form to the homeless liaison at 334-774-1275 and give original to the parent/guardian along with **Dispute Resolution Form**.*

Date: _____ School: _____

Name and Title of Person Completing Form: _____

In compliance with Section 722 (g)(3)(E) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001, the following written notification is provided to:

Parent/Guardian: _____

Student(s): _____

After reviewing your request to enroll the student(s) listed above, the enrollment request is denied. This determination was based upon:

Please have parent/guardian sign and date below to indicate that they have received a copy of this form.

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

- You have the right to appeal this decision by completing the attached Dispute Resolution Form or provide your explanation verbally to the district's Homeless Liaison.
 - ❖ Resolution by the homeless liaison will be made within 7 business days of receipt of the Dispute Resolution Form.
 - ❖ If the matter is not resolved at that level, the Superintendent shall issue the District's decision within 10 business days of the second dispute by parent/guardian.
 - ❖ If the matter is not resolved at that level, the parent/guardian may appeal this decision by contacting the Alabama Department of Education Homeless Education Coordinator (see contact information below).
- The student listed above has the right to enroll immediately in the requested school, including full participation in all school activities pending resolution of the dispute.
- You may contact the state coordinator if further help is needed.

State Coordinator for Homeless Education, Amanda Gann
Alabama Department of Education
Office: (334) 242-8199
Fax: (334) 242-0496

**Dale County School System
Resolution Form**

This form is to be completed by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth when a dispute arises over school enrollment. The information may be shared verbally with the homeless liaison instead of completing this form. The Homeless Liaison can be contacted at the Central Office at 334-774-2355.

Date submitted: _____

Student(s): _____

Person completing form: _____

Relation to student(s): _____

I may be contacted at (phone or email): _____

I wish to appeal the enrollment decision made by: _____

School: _____

I have been provided with a written explanation of the school's decision (check one)

- Yes
- No

You may include a written explanation to support your appeal in this space, or you may provide your explanation verbally.

Signature of person submitting dispute: _____

Return completed Dispute Resolution Form to school or homeless liaison's office.

For School Use

Fax a copy of this completed form to the Homeless Liaison.

Give a copy to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.

Maintain the original at school.

Date received by homeless liaison: _____

**Dale County School System
District Enrollment Dispute Form**

Student's Name _____ SSN/SN _____

School Name _____ Grade _____

District Action on Complaint

Taken within _____ school days after receiving notice of the complaint. Was the complaint resolved at the district level? _____ yes _____ no

If the dispute was resolved at the district level, describe the action taken by the system's homeless liaison to resolve the dispute to the satisfaction of the complainant:

If the dispute was not resolved to the satisfaction of the complainant, did the system's homeless liaison convene a meeting of interested parties to attempt resolution of the dispute? _yes _no

If yes, when and where did the meeting take place? Describe the outcome of the meeting.

If no, will a meeting be held for the resolution purposes? When? Where?

If a resolution cannot be derived at the district level, the system's homeless liaison should assist the complainant in contacting service organizations to provide technical assistance to the complainant. Did the system's homeless liaison assist the complainant in this manner? _ yes _no

Name of service organization contacted for assistance _____

Was the dispute resolved? _____

Date _____

Describe the resolution.

Complainant Signature

Homeless Liaison

Dale County School System

Education Rights of Homeless Children and Youth

(This notice is distributed in the community for actively seeking to identify and serve homeless children and youth- Available in English/Spanish – Federal Programs Document Folder)

The school district is actively seeking to enroll children and youth who are homeless. If you are homeless or know of a child or youth that is homeless and not attending school, please contact the following person who will provide information and assistance during the enrollment process:

Homeless Liaison: Dale County Homeless Liaison at (334) 774-2355

- *Who is considered “homeless?”* Any child or youth not attending school who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence is considered homeless and includes those who are sharing housing with others due to loss of housing or economic hardship. It also includes children and youth who are living in hotels, camping grounds, emergency shelters, cars, bus or train stations, or other similar settings. If you are not sure, please call.
- *What are the education rights of homeless children and youth?* Our schools provide equal and comparable access to all students regardless of their home living situation. Homeless children and youth have specific rights that include:
 - a. Immediate enrollment in a school and, when desirable or feasible, at the “school of origin.”
 - b. Prompt provision of necessary services such as transportation and meal programs.
 - c. Appropriate support services and programs for which they are eligible such as programs for gifted, children with disabilities, vocational education, and preschool.
 - d. Academic assistance through the district’s federally funded Title I program.
 - e. Parent or guardian involvement school activities.
- *What is the “school of origin?”* The term “school of origin” means the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. It is the district’s responsibility to consider the best interests of the child or youth when making a decision regarding what school to attend. Consideration must be given to placement at the school of origin unless doing so is contrary to the wishes of the parent or guardian.
- *What if there is disagreement regarding school placement?* The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth (a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) may appeal the placement decision if the district makes a placement in a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth. The student will be immediately enrolled in the school in which the enrollment was requested by the student or parent while an appeal is pending. The person indicated above will provide information and assistance regarding such as appeal.

No Child or Youth Should Be Denied Access to a Free and Appropriate Public Education

SCHOOL USE ONLY				
Student Name	Date Distributed	Date School/District Notified of Student	Current Location of Student	School of Origin

**Dale County School System
McKinney-Vento Act
Referral Form**

(This notice is used to notify school administration that a student may be living in a homeless situation.)

PERSON MAKING THE REFERRAL:

Person Making Referral: _____ Title: _____

Email Address: _____ Phone: _____

STUDENT INFORMATION

The following student may be experiencing homeless conditions:

Student: _____

Current Address: _____

Contact Information (Parent/Guardian/Other): _____

REASON FOR REFERRAL

Please check one of the following as a reason for referral and indicate details. You may attach additional information if necessary.

Where is the student currently living? (Please check one)

- In a motel/hotel
- In a shelter
- With another family in a house or apartment due to loss of housing or economic hardship
- In a car, park, campground, street, or abandoned building
- Moving from place to place
- Temporary or emergency foster care

Other: _____

ADDITIONAL COMMENTS:

OFFICE USE ONLY	
Date Referral Received	Additional Comments:

Dale County School System McKinney-Vento Homeless Survey

A program evaluation is always an essential component of program improvement. Please consult with your leadership team and respond to the following questions.

1. Have you or someone from your school, spoken about the definition and rights of homeless students at a school staff meeting?

- Yes
- No

2. Please rank the following barriers to homeless student IDENTIFICATION, using 1 as the greatest barrier:

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>School Staff/admin resistance</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Parent resistance</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Lack of knowledge of definition – school level</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Lack of knowledge of definition by the parent</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Other: (please specify)

3. What percentage of parents/youth experiencing homelessness at your school have you personally communicated homeless rights to either verbally or in writing, such as providing a brochure (above and beyond posting notice i.e. poster)?

- 0-25 percent
- 25-50 percent
- 50 -75 percent
- 75-100 percent
- N/A We have no students experiencing homelessness at this time.

4. Does your school communicate and/or remind parents/youth experiencing homelessness of their rights to stay at the school of origin during the withdrawal process?

- Yes
- No
- N/A We have no identified students experiencing homelessness at this Time.

5. Does your school communicate rights to homeless parents/youth at the end of the school year? For example: “If your family is still in a transitional housing situation next school year, your child can remain at our school.”

- Yes
- No
- N/A Our school has never identified an student experiencing homelessness at the end of the school year.

6. How would you prefer to receive training from our program? Please choose one.

- Traditional – Meetings
- Webinars
- On-site school visits/training

7. What is the most challenging area of implementing provisions under the McKinney-Vento Act at your school? Please rank using 1 as the most challenging:

	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>4</i>
<i>Identification</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Immediate enrollment</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Arranging transportation to the school of origin</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<i>Receiving supportive funding for school participation and basic needs (field trips, supplies, etc.)</i>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

8. Please provide at least one “best practice” from your school in regards to serving students experiencing homelessness and/or complying with provisions as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act. Any and all input is greatly appreciated!

9. Please share any ideas, suggestions, and/or concerns with our Homeless Program. We want to hear from YOU!

Dale County School System
EVALUATION STANDARDS AND INDICATORS

	STANDARD	EVIDENCE
1	Within one (1) full day of an attempt to enroll in school, homeless children and youth will be in attendance.	School enrollment records
2	Homeless pre-k to 12 children and youth will have stability in school.	
2.1	Attendance rates will be at or above the relevant district average	Attendance monitored through school system Attendance Officer and Liaison
3	Homeless children and youth will receive specialized services when eligible.	Request for services form
3.1	Eligible homeless preschool children can participate in public preschool (Head Start, state pre-k, preschool programs for children with disabilities under IDEA, meals, programs for children with limited English proficiency, and Title I pre-school programs.	Enrollment, Residency Questionnaire, Child Find
3.2	Eligible homeless children and youth can receive special education and related services under IDEA, educational and related aids and services under Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency.	
3.3	Homeless children and youth will receive appropriate services, based on assessment of individual needs, through a combination of resources, including, but not limited to Title I, McKinney-Vento, and other federally funded programs.	Purchase orders, Communication Records/Emails from Transportation, CNP, etc.
4	Parents or persons acting as parents of homeless children and youth will participate meaningfully in their children's education.	STI PD, PTO Sign-in lists, Progress Reports, Open House, Conferences
4.1	Parents or persons acting as parents of homeless children and youth will have a face to face conference with the teacher, guidance counselor, or social worker within 30 days of enrollment.	Conference Log
4.2	Parents or persons acting as parents will be provided with individual student reports informing them of their child's specific academic needs and achievement on	Benchmark Tests, Progress Reports, Nine Week Data, End of Year Assessment Results

	academic assessments aligned with state academic achievement standards.	
4.3	Parents or persons acting as parents will report monitoring or facilitating homework assignments.	Tutors will be provided as needed
4.4	Parents or persons acting as parents will share reading time with their children (i.e, parent reads/listens to child reads)	
4.5	Parents who would like parent skills training will attend available programs.	Guidance Logs, Parental Involvement Records
4.6	Parents or guardians will demonstrate awareness of McKinney-Vento Rights.	Flyers, posters
4.7	Unaccompanied youth will demonstrate awareness of McKinney-Vento Rights.	Guidance Logs
5	Homeless children and youth in grades 3-12 will meet state academic standards.	State assessment data and report cards
5.1	Performance on standards-based assessments in reading and math will be within or above the proficient range or will show a one-for-one gain.	
5.2	Rates of promotion to the next grade level will be at or above the district average.	Promotion and Retention Rate
5.3	Rates of high school graduation or equivalent will be at our above the district average.	Graduation Cohort

Program Comments/Recommendations

When Residency Questionnaire is completed, the school designee will make contact with the Homeless Liaison. The Homeless Liaison will follow up with the student/parents. All district resources are channeled to support maintenance of the child in the school of origin. McKinney-Vento Act Orientation is provided annually for all faculty and staff to promote awareness and avoid stigmatization.

