



West Point Consolidated School District

Federal Programs HOMELESS PROCEDURES

Procedures Designed for the Identification and
Registration of Homeless Students

District Homeless Liaison
Kris Hollis

VISION

All students will be successful.

WPCSD Mission Statement

The mission of the West Point Consolidated School District is to provide an educational system characterized by innovation, individualized instruction, and shared responsibility in a safe and supportive environment.

Overview

The federal government's legal definition of homeless is defined as anyone who lacks a fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime residence. This person may be sharing housing due to economic struggles (doubled-up) or living in a shelter, hotel or motel. In addition, this person may be living in a public place not designed for sleeping. This definition also includes an unaccompanied youth, a child or youth abandoned in a hospital, or a migrant child who qualifies under any of the previously mentioned reasons above. An unaccompanied youth must meet the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless and not be in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

These procedures are intended to address the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. This law protects homeless students from discrimination and mandates equal access to educational programs and services. The law requires that homeless students are enrolled immediately in school and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school. Students who are identified as homeless must have barriers to their education removed. Enrollment documents must not serve as barriers to homeless students being in school. Homeless students must have transportation to the school of origin if it is in the child's best interest. The school of origin is the school attended when permanently housed or the school last enrolled before becoming homeless. Preschool homeless students are also included in the school of origin definition. Homeless students must be identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other entities. School personnel providing homeless services must receive professional development and other support to carry out homeless responsibilities. The goals of the McKinney-Vento Act are to ensure that students are enrolled in school and receive a free, appropriate public education.

All school districts must have a homeless dispute process. It is recommended that the homeless dispute process be consistent with the state's homeless dispute process. School districts must have procedures to ensure that homeless students receive full or partial credit in credit programs. Furthermore, school personnel must consider issues related to homelessness prior to taking disciplinary actions.

The West Point Consolidated School District(WPCSD) recognizes the need for quality programs in preparing and meeting the needs our students in a homeless situation for the future. The goal for our program is to ensure that students in homeless situations are provided with stability and success in their education.

Personnel Responsibilities

District Homeless Liaison (DHL)

The Director of Federal Programs will serve as the District Homeless Liaison(DHL). The District Homeless Liaison (DHL) is responsible for identifying and monitoring the identification of homeless students for all District schools in the West Point Consolidated School District (WPCSD). The DHL will update all district And school personnel on current homeless procedures. The DHL will ensure that all School Homeless Contacts (SHCs) receive training and updates on procedures regarding the identification of homeless students. Furthermore, the DHL will serve as the district liaison between the parent and the school to

ensure that services are provided to all homeless students. Finally, the DHL will provide technical assistance to school staff, as needed, regarding procedures and services for homeless students.

School Homeless Contact (SHC)

The principal at each school shall designate the school guidance counselor as the School Homeless Contact (SHC). The SHC is responsible for helping with the identification of homeless students at the school site. Having a SHC at each site ensures that all students who qualify for homeless services are identified. The SHC will maintain a copy of all homeless applications at the school. The SHC serves as the school contact for homeless students. The SHC will direct any questions or concerns regarding homeless procedures to the DHL prior to completing applications. In addition, the SHC will attend any homeless training when made available. The SHC, with the assistance and support of the DHL as needed, will update school staff about homeless procedures.

Enrollment Documents

The West Point Consolidated School District (WPCSD) uses the documents below for enrolling students in homeless situations. Descriptions of enrollment documents for enrolling students under the McKinney-Vento Act are given below.

Homeless Registration Checklist

This checklist is completed by the School Homeless Contact (SHC) for all students who enroll as homeless. This checklist ensures that all procedures are followed as required under the McKinney-Vento Act (See Appendix A).

Student Survey

This survey is completed by the parent, guardian, or caregiver for all students who enroll in the WPCSD. This survey is the initial process to the identification of all homeless students (See Appendix B).

Student Identification for Referral and Eligibility Form

This form is completed by the SHC for all students who enroll as homeless. (See Appendix C). It provides student identification information which includes eligibility criteria and the parent interview process.

Statement of Initial Contact

This statement is completed by the parent, guardian, or caregiver for all students who enroll as homeless. It provides a brief explanation of the special situation for enrolling the student under the McKinney-Vento Act (See Appendix D).

Affidavit for Missing Enrollment Documentation

This affidavit must be completed by all parent, guardians, or caregivers for all students who enroll as homeless (See Appendix E).

Caregiver's Authorization Form

This form is required when anyone enrolling the student is not the legal parent or guardian (See Appendix F).

Parent Notification of Possible Homeless Eligibility

This notification is sent home by the School Homeless Contact (SHC) to parents who indicated a possible homeless situation on the Student Survey and did not complete the homeless paperwork during registration (See Appendix G).

Status Notification for McKinney-Vento Eligibility

This notification is completed by the SHC for all students who enroll as homeless. It is given to the parent, guardian, or caregiver as confirmation of student enrollment status (See Appendix H). Parents, guardians, or caregivers are encouraged to consult with the District Homeless Liaison (DHL) if they have questions or concerns.

Homeless Identification Form

This form is completed by the SHC to identify services and barriers that apply to the student (See Appendix I). All services and barriers are entered monthly by the Office of Federal Programs in the Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS).

Letter to School Personnel

This letter is sent to the SHC by the DHL. This letter serves as the official notification of the student's classification status of homeless (See Appendix J).

School Uniforms Form

This form is completed by the SHC or the DHL if emergency school uniforms are needed (See Appendix L).

School Supplies Form

This form is completed by the SHC or the DHL if school supplies are needed (See Appendix M).

Other Information

Other information is provided by the DHL or the SHC to the parent, guardian, or caregiver to ensure that the family is well informed about the definition of homeless, educational rights, and resources in the community.

Registration Procedures**Homeless Screening**

When a student is new to the district and the parent, guardian, or caregiver is unable to provide all enrollment documentation and/or a possible homeless situation is indicated on the *Homeless Survey*, the School Homeless Contact (SHC) will consult with the family in a confidential location to make a determination of homelessness. If the SHC determines that the student meets the McKinney-Vento

classification of being in a homeless situation, the student will enroll in the district and complete the homeless registration paperwork. For the convenience of all students enrolling at the middle and high school, the School Homeless Contact (SHC) may call the DHL for a phone consultation. However, it is not necessary for the SHC to contact the DHL if the SHC is certain that the student is homeless.

When a parent, guardian, or caregiver indicates on the student's enrollment application a homeless situation, the registration is not complete. For the convenience of all students enrolling in school, the homeless registration paperwork is completed at the school site, since residency verification must be completed at the student's assigned school. The SHC will consult with the family in a confidential location and assist them with completing the McKinney-Vento registration paperwork. The SHC will follow the *Homeless Registration Checklist* to ensure that all required processes are completed (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #1).

McKinney-Vento Student Survey

The School Homeless Contact (SHC) will review the *McKinney-Vento Student Survey* to determine if a possible homeless situation exists. If the student's status has changed, the parent, guardian, or caregiver will complete another survey prior to completing the homeless registration paperwork (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #2).

Registration Process

Once it is determined that the child is homeless, the School Homeless Contact (SHC) will complete the *Student Identification for Referral and Eligibility Form* during a consultation with the parent, guardian, or caregiver (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #3). The parent, guardian, or caregiver must complete the *McKinney-Vento Statement of Initial Contact*. This statement explains briefly why the parent, guardian, or caregiver is enrolling the student under the McKinney-Vento Act (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #4).

Then the parent, guardian, or caregiver will complete the *McKinney-Vento Affidavit for Missing Enrollment Documentation* (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #5). The SHC must check for missing enrollment documents and indicate all items missing on the affidavit prior to giving it to the parent, guardian, or caregiver for completion. If the person enrolling the student is not the legal parent or guardian, then the caregiver must complete the *McKinney-Vento Caregiver's Authorization Form* (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #6).

When in doubt about any processes, the SHC will contact the District Homeless Liaison (DHL) immediately for further consultation and guidance. The SHC will then review the client consultation paperwork with the parent, guardian, or caregiver and then check on the *Student Identification for Referral and Eligibility Form* that the client consultation is complete (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #7). The SHC will then make a legible copy of the parent, guardian, or caregiver's driver's license or identification card and any other documentation to support the application file (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #8). Then the SHC will complete and give the *Status Notification for McKinney-Vento Eligibility* to the parent, guardian, or caregiver (See Appendix A, Status Notification for McKinney-Vento Eligibility #9).

If school uniforms are needed the SHC will complete a referral form to local organizations for assistance (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #10). If the student needs school supplies, then the SHC may provide them at the school. If supplies are bought with Title funds, then the SHC must complete the School Supplies form. A copy of the forms completed for school supplies and school uniforms must be kept on file at the school. Then the SHC must complete the *Homeless Identification Form* to identify services and barriers for the homeless student (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #12). The SHC will contact the Office of Federal Programs with the information to be reported into the Mississippi Student Information System(MSIS). Finally, the SHC must check **all** application paperwork to ensure completion and sign off on it (See Appendix A, Homeless Registration Checklist #13).

Dispute Policy

The West Point Consolidated School District (WPCSD) takes a proactive approach in prescreening families to ensure that students meet the McKinney-Vento classification status of homeless prior to completing the homeless paperwork. During client consultations, parents or caregivers receive clear explanations of the registration process and their rights. This process minimizes the possibility of any disputes. The *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act* acknowledges that disputes may arise between the school district and homeless students and their parents, guardians, or caregivers when the student is placed in a school other than the one requested. Guidance for school selection is provided in the law.

The following procedures are specified in the Act:

- Enrollment: Immediately enroll the homeless student in the school preferred by the parent, guardian, or caregiver until the dispute is settled.
- Written explanation: Provide a written explanation of the school placement decision to the parent, guardian, guardian, caregiver, or unaccompanied youth.
- Liaison: The District Homeless Liaison is assigned to carry out the dispute resolution in an expeditious manner.
- It is the responsibility of the school district to inform the parent, guardian, or caregiver of homeless students of the Dispute Policy.

If a parent disagrees with the eligibility decision of the District, he or she will be provided with the Dispute Resolution Process – School Form (See Appendix K). This form may be obtained from the School Homeless Contact. The School Homeless Contact will have the parent complete the form and refer the parent to the school principal. The school principal will attempt to solve the dispute at the school level and document on the form. The school principal will notify the District Homeless Liaison immediately of the dispute and forward a completed copy of the Dispute Resolution Process – School Form. If the dispute is unresolved, then the parent will be referred to the District Homeless Liaison. The District Homeless Liaison will document the dispute on the Dispute Resolution Process – District (See Appendix K). If the dispute is unresolved with the District Homeless Liaison, then the parent will be referred to the Superintendent. The Superintendent will follow Board Policy KN Complaints – Title I for handling complaints.

The West Point Consolidated School District established the following procedures for resolving complaints made regarding the education of a homeless child or youth, the following process will be used:

1. If the complaint is not resolved at the district level within five (5) days of receipt of a written complaint, the complainant will be taken to the Superintendent of the district the student is attending or wishes to attend. In addition to presenting the written complaint, an appointment will be made for the complainant to meet with the Superintendent to discuss the complaint. At the end of the discussion with the Superintendent, a written resolution will be provided within five (5) days of the date of the discussion.
2. If the complaint is still not resolved, the complainant will be afforded an opportunity for an informal hearing within ten (10) working days, at which time oral and written testimony may be taken.
3. Failure to resolve the complaint in an informal hearing will necessitate a formal hearing on the matter. The complainant will be advised on the right to request in writing a formal hearing. The complainant will have fifteen (15) days from the date of the informal hearing to make a written request for a formal hearing. Upon receipt of the request of the formal hearing, the district shall make an on-site investigation of the complaint.
4. The formal hearing will be conducted by the local superintendent and school board. The local hearing panel will provide opportunity for the complainant or the complainant's representative, or both, and the district involved to submit evidence, including the opportunity to question parties to the dispute and any of their witnesses.
5. The entire procedure, from receipt of the complaint to a satisfactory resolution, shall be completed within a period of not more than sixty (60) days.
6. The complainant has the right to appeal the final resolution of the Local Education Agency to the Commissioner of Education within thirty (30) days after receipt of the written decision.

While the dispute is being resolved, the child or children in question must be enrolled in school. If the dispute is concerning the school of "best interest," the child must be enrolled in the school preferred by the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth unless previous arrangements have been implemented.

Education of Homeless and Unaccompanied Youth

Definition and Identification of Unaccompanied Youth

An *unaccompanied youth* is defined in the McKinney-Vento Act as “a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.” (42 U.S.C. § 11434a(6)). This definition can be used to describe youth who are residing with a caregiver who is not a parent or guardian as well as youth who are living without the care of an adult.

An unaccompanied youth must fit the definitions of both homeless and unaccompanied in the McKinney-Vento Act to receive assistance under the provisions in the law. That is, an unaccompanied youth is a child or youth who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian *and* lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

There are many youths who do not live in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, however, only those who are homeless are eligible for McKinney-Vento services.

In the case of unaccompanied youth, the District Homeless Liaison will coordinate with the School Homeless Contact to determine if the student meets the definition of unaccompanied youth. The determination is based upon the extenuating circumstances that caused the student not to be in the physical custody of his/her parent(s). Each case will be determined on an individual basis. However, the student will be allowed to enroll in school. The student will be identified as “unaccompanied” in the “other” section of McKinney-Vento Student Survey. The residency information of the caregiver or guardian will be required upon approval of status.

There is no lower age limit for unaccompanied homeless youth. The upper age limit, as with all McKinney-Vento eligible students, is 21 to incorporate mandates for public education under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), which allows youth up to age 21 to receive special education services.

McKinney-Vento eligibility determinations are based on the youth’s current living situation, not the circumstances that caused the student to leave home. An unaccompanied homeless youth is eligible for services regardless of whether the student was asked to leave the home or chose to leave due to conditions in the home. While it can be easy to consider the reason a youth left home trivial—that the youth has a perfectly good home or that the youth simply needs to abide by the rules set by the student’s parents—there may be other circumstances that warrant the youth being out of the home at this time. Sometimes the “rest of the story” is never known by school staff as the youth may not be willing to disclose uncomfortable or embarrassing details.

Ultimately, regardless of your understanding of the full details that led to the student being unaccompanied and homeless, your responsibility under the McKinney-Vento Act is to ensure the student has an equal opportunity to attend and succeed in school.

It is important for the local liaison to reinforce training with school staff that the school's primary responsibility is to enroll and educate homeless children and youths in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act. Judgments regarding why a youth left home fall outside the purview of the public education system. Schools are required to enroll any unaccompanied youth who fits the definition of homeless.

Section 9.3 McKinney-Vento Act Provisions for Unaccompanied

Homeless Youth

Unaccompanied homeless youth are ensured the same educational rights that the McKinney-Vento Act provides for other homeless students, which include the right to:

- enroll immediately, even if they do not have paperwork normally required for enrollment or have missed application or enrollment deadlines [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C)(i)];
- attend either the local attendance area school or the school of origin, with the placement decision based on the student's best interest, giving priority to the youth's request [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(B)(ii)];
- attend either the local attendance area school or the school of origin, with the placement decision based on the student's best interest, giving priority to the youth's request [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(B)(ii)];
- remain in the school of origin (including the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools) for the duration of the homelessness and until the end of the school year in which the student becomes permanently housed [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(A)(i), 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(I)(ii)].
- receive transportation to and from the school of origin [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)];*
- receive educational services, such as free school meals and Title I services and participate in gifted and talented programs, vocational and technical education, alternative education, programs for English learners, and any other services comparable to what housed students receive [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)]; and
- not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(i)].

In addition to the provisions that apply to all homeless students, the McKinney-Vento Act includes the following provisions specifically for unaccompanied homeless youth:

- ☐ Unaccompanied homeless youth shall be immediately enrolled without proof of guardianship [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(H)(iv)];

☐ During a dispute over school selection or enrollment, unaccompanied homeless youth shall receive a written statement explaining the school's decision, the youth's right to appeal the decision, and a referral to the local liaison, and students must be enrolled in school immediately while disputes are resolved [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E)];

- Local liaisons must ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth
 - are immediately enrolled in school;
 - have opportunities to meet the same state academic standards as other children and youth; and
 - are informed of their status as independent students for the purpose of applying for financial aid for higher education and provided verification of such status for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(x)].

To promote and ensure the academic success of its students, the WPCSD ensures that the following rights of all students identified as homeless. WPCSD will provide comparable educational and supporting services to all homeless children and youth. These services may include but are not limited to, Special Education Services, Migrant Services, Title I Services, Disability Services, English Language Learner Services, Child Nutrition Services, Gifted Services, Career and Technology Services.

School Homeless Liaison will ensure that homeless students receive appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school in accordance with state guidelines. This may include but is not limited to, credit recovery, distance learning or online courses.

Guide in best interest determination:

- Contacting the last school to obtain mastery of skills, teacher recommendations,
- Verifying for student in Mississippi using the state's database MSIS
- Reviewing last report card or progress report
- Reviewing data available in student management system

The School Homeless Contact, Building Principal, Curriculum Coordinator, and other support staff/resources will work to make the best interest determination for the student.

Transportation

If homeless students are in need of transportation the School Homeless Liaison will contact the District Homeless Liaison. The DHL will coordinate transportation with the transportation department.

A homeless student will be admitted to the district school in the attendance area in which the student is living or to the student's school of origin as requested by the parent and in accordance with the student's best interest. Transportation will be provided to and from the student's school of origin at the request of the parent, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the district's liaison.

If it is determined that the best interest of the homeless student to attend school in another district, the LEA will conduct consultation with appropriate district personnel prior to initiating transportation. The parties will discuss cost sharing of transportation and establish a memorandum of agreement.

My signature below means that I have received and agree to abide by the district's procedures concerning the Education of Homeless and Unaccompanied Youth.

Printed Name

Signature

Date