

## **HOMELESS EDUCATION**

The McKinney–Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act guarantees a free and appropriate public education for all homeless children and youth. B.E.C. 42 U.S.C. 11431 outlines procedures for deciding school placement, enrolling students, and determining responsibility.

### **What is the definition of a “homeless youth” under McKinney-Vento?**

“Homeless” is defined as “anyone lacking a fixed, adequate, regular nighttime residence.”

### **What situations fit this definition?**

- Staying in the home of other people due to unavailable housing, financial hardship, or similar circumstances
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks (in some instances – examples: leaking roof, no heat, etc.), public places, or campgrounds due to unavailable suitable housing option
- Living in an emergency shelter or transitional housing
- Unaccompanied (not living in direct care of legal parent or guardian) or runaway youth
- Refugee and migrant youth

### **How does McKinney-Vento help these students?**

The law makes sure that these students receive a free and suitable public education by removing barriers to school enrollment and full, basic, daily participation in school activities. This includes:

- Immediate enrollment
- Free and Reduced School Lunch
- Help from school with any necessary enrollment documents
- Help from school setting up transportation service (if the student qualifies)
- Help from school with getting basic uniform clothing
- Help from school with basic school supplies
- Help from school with any basic clothing needs

### **Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program**

The main purpose of the Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program is to make sure homeless youth have access to free and appropriate public education while removing barriers that homeless children face. Its goal is to have the educational process continue as uninterrupted as possible while the children are in homeless situations.

### **McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001**

On July 22, 1987, the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act became public law. This was the first comprehensive federal law dealing with the problems of homelessness in America. The law was included in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, it is now called the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001. McKinney-Vento is included in the ESSA Guidelines to support children and youth experiencing homelessness

**Examples of Homelessness**

- Students staying with friends or family because they lost housing
- Students living in a shelter, including transitional programs
- Students staying in motels because their family cannot get their own home
- Students living on the streets, in a car, van, tent or other nonpermanent structure

**Summary of Educational Rights for Homeless Students**

- Choice to attend school of origin, school of current residence (Best Interest Determination)
- Immediate enrollment
- Assistance from school district in obtaining required documentation; ie: immunization records
- Prompt access to appropriate education services
- Transportation 41
- Free breakfast and lunch

**How can you refer a student who you suspect may be homeless?**

Contact the student's School Social Worker. Include the information you know that leads you to suspect the student may be homeless.

**Contact:** Ashley Shaffer, LSW, Social Worker, 814-736-9636 ext. 1620