

# **Benton County School District**



## **Title IX**

### **Homeless Children and Youth**

### **Handbook**

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## **Homeless Children and Unaccompanied Youth Handbook**

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## Benton County Schools Procedures for Enrolling Homeless Students

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act assures preschool-aged and school-aged children certain rights.

### **Definition:**

The McKinney-Vento Acts defines “homeless children and youth” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The term includes:

Children and youth who are: Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (*sometimes referred to as doubled-up*);

- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Abandoned in hospitals; or
- Awaiting foster care placement;
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in the circumstances described above.

### **Requirements:**

The McKinney-Vento Act provides certain rights for homeless students. They include waiving certain requirements such as proof of residency when students are enrolling and allowing categorical eligibility for certain services. The Act also states:

- Homeless students may attend their school of origin or the school where they are temporarily residing.
- Homeless students must be provided a written statement of their rights when they enroll and at least two times per year
- Homeless students may enroll without school, medical, or similar records.
- Homeless students have a right to transportation to school.
- Students must be provided a statement explaining why they are denied any service or enrollment.
- Students must receive services, such as transportation, while disputes are being settled.

## **Procedures for Identifying a Homeless Student**

A student may be considered homeless if:

- The student indicates a homeless status at the time of enrollment
- An affidavit of residency indicates that the arrangement is temporary due to necessity (due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason)

## **Procedures for Enrolling a Homeless Student**

The school may not deny, delay, or transfer enrollment solely because a student is homeless, or because a homeless student is unable to produce school, medical, or residency records.

A school enrolling, or about to enroll, a homeless student shall:

- Immediately enroll the student, regardless of the availability of educational and/or immunization records
- If a student attempts to register without a parent/guardian, an effort should be made to contact the parent/guardian
- The homeless student may not be barred from enrollment due to lack of immunization until an effort has been made to obtain records. If records cannot be obtained, assistance should be provided in getting the student properly immunized.
- If a birth certificate is not available, the student should be registered. Department of Human Services may be contacted to assist in obtaining a copy of the birth certificate.
- The student will be identified as homeless in SAM.
- Make a reasonable effort to verify that the child is homeless.
- Contact the school last attended to obtain relevant academic and other records
- If student records cannot be obtained or records are not available an educational record (cumulative folder) will be developed. In these cases, an academic diagnostic test may be administered to assist in the determination of the student's skill levels and appropriate placement.
- Priority shall be given in evaluations of homeless students suspected of having a disability.
- Provide free meals within one school day after the student is enrolled. If necessary, assistance will be provided for the completion of free and reduced lunch forms.
- Provide access to the same services comparable to those offered to other students in the school that the homeless student attends such as:
  - transportation services
  - educational services
  - school nutrition programs
  - vocational and technical programs
  - extra-curricular and enrichment activities
- Coordinate with and/or refer students to other community resources in offering assistance to the homeless student/family
- Contact the district homeless liaison: Olivia Prachett 662-224-6252.

**It is important that the academic and educational programs for children who are temporarily without a home are no different than those of the general student population.**

## **Benton County Schools Transportation of Homeless Children and Youth Policy**

**Key Transportation Contact:**                      **Lance MCallum, Director of Transportation**

The mode of transportation for homeless and other highly mobile students is determined by the student's best interest.

### ***Homeless Liaison's Role***

1. Provide Transportation Director with information about the transportation needs and pickup location of homeless students.
2. Provide Transportation Director with the name of each homeless student's grade placement, contact information, and classroom teacher's name.

### ***Transportation Director's Role***

1. Communicate regularly with the district homeless liaison and principals of schools which serves homeless students.
2. Establish procedures to receive information about the transportation needs and pickup location of homeless students.
3. Train bus drivers on the rights and needs of homeless students, as well as on the need for sensitivity and confidentiality.
4. Develop a bus routing system that can respond flexibly and quickly to new "pickups."
5. Work with parents or guardians to arrange for transportation that is in the student's best interest, including transportation to and from the school or origin, if necessary.

## **Benton County Schools**

### **Procedures for Resolution of Disputes Regarding Placement of Homeless Students**

1. If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the Benton County Schools shall immediately enroll the homeless student in the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent or guardian, pending resolution of the dispute. Disputes shall be resolved at the district level rather than the school level. The same provision applies to the placement of unaccompanied youth.
2. The Benton County Schools shall provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written statement of the school placement decision and the appeal rights. The unaccompanied youth, parents, or guardian shall be referred to the Benton County Schools liaison, who shall expeditiously carry out the dispute resolution process.
3. The dispute resolution process involving intra-district disputes shall be informal and accessible. Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth may initiate the dispute resolution process directly at the school they choose, as well as at the school district or Benton County School Liaison's office. The process officially begins when the parents, guardians, or youth complete and turning the form to the school or District. Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth shall be informed that they can provide written or oral documentation to support their position.
4. Written notice shall be written in a language the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth can understand and include the following:
  - A. Contact information for the Benton County Schools Homeless Liaison and State coordinator, with a brief description of their roles.
  - B. A simple, detachable form that parents, guardians may complete and turn in to the school to initiate the dispute process. The school shall copy the form and return the copy to the parent, guardian, or youth for their records when it is submitted.
  - C. A step-by-step description of how to dispute the school's decision.
  - D. Notice of the right to enroll immediately in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute.
  - E. Notice that "immediate enrollment" includes full participation in all school activities.
  - F. Notice of the right to appeal to the State if the district-level resolution is not satisfactory.
  - G. Timelines for resolving district and State appeals.
5. All written protests submitted to the district shall be considered by the Benton County Schools Board at the first regularly scheduled meeting subsequent to the submission of the written protest.
6. The state-level appeal process, involving the State coordinator, shall be used to resolve the dispute if needed. The State established timelines for resolution shall be followed.

### Homeless Identification List

List student’s name, MSIS number, and the corresponding number(s) from the tables below to indicate additional services provided and any/all barriers for each homeless student.

Student Name	Grade	Withdrew	Services Provided	Living Conditions	Barriers	Date

#### Services

1. Addressing need related to domestic violence	10. Obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment
2. Assistance with participation in school programs	11. Parent education related to rights and resources for children
3. Before, after school, mentoring, summer programs	12. Referrals for medical, dental, and other health services
4. Clothing to meet school requirements	13. Referral to other programs and services
5. Coordination between schools and agencies	14. School supplies
6. Counseling	15. Staff professional development and awareness
7. Early childhood programs	16. Transportation
8. <b>Emergency assistance related to school attendance</b>	17. Tutoring or other instructional support
9. Expedited evaluations	

#### Barriers

1. <b>Eligibility for homeless services</b>	5. School records
2. Immunizations	6. School selection
3. Other barriers	7. Transportation
4. Other medical records	

# D i s p u t e R e s o l u t i o n F o r m H o m e l e s s E d u c a t i o n

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act acknowledges that disputes may arise between the school district and homeless students and their parents/guardians. Guidance for school selection is provided in law. The law includes dispute resolution among the required duties of the local district liaison. For more information, consult the Dispute Resolution Procedure.

## LEVEL 1: LIAISON DETERMINATION

Date Complaint Received: \_\_\_\_\_

Name of District: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone Number: \_\_\_\_\_

Student's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Area of concern (e.g. School of Origin):  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Relevant Evidence:  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Determination: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Liaison's Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Resolution: \_\_\_\_\_



APPEAL

Petitioner signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Question at issue on appeal:

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