



Homeless Education Program FACT SHEET FOR PARENTS

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: The McKinney-Vento (MKV) Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law that protects the educational rights of homeless students. Most recently, MKV was reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) to ensure that every homeless child achieves and to meet the changing needs in education.

OSSE’s Homeless Education Program (HEP) Mission: The mission of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education’s (OSSE) Homeless Education Program (HEP) is to make sure that every homeless child and youth receives free, appropriate, public educational opportunities; to provide training and support to schools, shelters and the community; and to increase awareness about the issues that families experiencing homelessness face. To ensure that homeless families are well supported and that appropriate funds are provided to support students, OSSE regularly shares information regarding student status with schools in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

To learn more about your educational rights, please contact the HEP team as follows:

OSSE HEP Team Contacts			
Nicole Lee-Mwandha	State Coordinator	202-654-6123	Nicole.Lee-Mwandha@dc.gov
Danielle C. Rollins	Program Analyst	202-741-0255	Danielle.Rollins@dc.gov
Tasheen Stallings	Program Analyst	202-478-5927	Tasheen.Stallings@dc.gov

Homelessness Defined:

MKV defines homeless children as “individuals who lack a fixed (permanent), regular, and adequate (acceptable) nighttime residence.” The act gives examples of children who would fall under this definition:

- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic (financial) hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds because they do not have any other choices at the present time; are living in emergency or temporary shelter (including DC transitional housing); are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement.¹
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, private or public places not meant for human beings, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or places that are not safe.
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above; and
- Unaccompanied youth, including youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who qualify as homeless because they live in circumstances described above.

¹Children “awaiting foster care placement” will no longer be included in the definition of “homeless children and youths” as of December 10, 2016. However, children who were identified as “awaiting foster care placement” from the first day of the 2016-17 school year until December 9, 2016 will remain eligible for services in this category for the remainder of the 2016-17 school year.

What are the rights of homeless children and youths?

Students experiencing homelessness have the right to:

- Enroll, attend classes, and participate in all school activities immediately, even if they do not have their school records, medical records, or any other documents schools ask for during the enrollment process.
- Stay in their school of origin, or the school in which they were last enrolled before becoming homeless, if it is in their best interest to do so for them be successful in school.
- Attend the local school closest to the place where the family currently lives if it is in the best interest of the child or youth.
- Receive transportation assistance to and from school, if needed.
- Receive uniform assistance if wearing uniforms is a requirement of the school.
- Request help from the local homeless liaison for other supports, such as medical, dental, mental, and other health-related services.



What kinds of educational supports are available for homeless children and youths?

Every school has a local homeless liaison to help families with enrollment, make educational decisions, and to provide support to families experiencing homelessness. Some of the supports include school supplies; assistance with medical, dental and other services; and free school meals. The homeless liaison can also set up transportation to and from the school. A list of local liaisons is available on the OSSE Website at <http://osse.dc.gov/publication/district-columbia-homeless-liaison-contact-list>.

What is the parent's responsibility?

It is your responsibility, and local law requires you, to ensure that your children ages 5 to 17 are enrolled in and are attending school. If you have trouble identifying the local homeless liaison at your child's school or getting your child enrolled, contact OSSE immediately at Transitory.Services@dc.gov or 202-654-6123

What if a dispute arises over school selection or placement?

If a dispute arises over school selection or placement, a school must:

- Admit homeless children or youth to the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, until the dispute is resolved.
- Provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written statement of the school placement decision and the appeal rights. The written notice will outline the specific reasons for the school's decision.
- Refer the unaccompanied youth, parent, or guardian to the school liaison, who must carry out the dispute resolution process in a timely manner.
- Ensure disputes that cannot be resolved at the local level are referred to OSSE immediately by e-mail to Transitory.Services@dc.gov or fax to 202-299-2136. For additional assistance, call 202-654-6123.