

Education for Homeless Children and Youth

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program is funded under the McKinney –Vento Homeless Assistance Act to ensure that homeless children and youth have access to the same free, appropriate public education that is provided to all children. It further requires that attendance laws not be used to keep homeless children and youth from attending school. All faculty and staff must complete a mandatory in-service regarding homeless education each year.

Who is Homeless?

The McKinney-Vento Act (Section 725) defines “homeless children and youth” (school-age and younger) as:

- A. Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth who are:
 - a. Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (i.e. “doubled-up”).
 - b. Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
 - c. Living in emergency or transitional shelters (i.e., Family Life Center, Room at Inn, etc).
 - d. Abandoned in hospitals.
 - e. Awaiting foster care placement (i.e., DHR has removed the children from the home and placed them in a transitional/temporary setting such as a relative’s home or an assessment unit).
- B. 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.
- C. Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- D. Migrant/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 the 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.

Determinations of homelessness will be made on a case-by-case basis by the homeless education staff (256-218-2100).

Education for Homeless Children and Youth

Enrollment Records

The enrollment of homeless children and youth shall NOT be denied or delayed due to any barriers including the lack of the following enrollment requirements:

- Legal guardianship/custody requirements
- Parent/Guardian's photo ID
- Birth certificate
- School records and/or transcripts
- Immunization or health records
- Proofs of residence
- Transportation
- Second Party Residence Documentation Form.

If a homeless student does NOT have a student identification number when enrolling, please call the Division of Student Support Services at 256-218-2100 and one will be assigned. If you have any additional questions about enrolling a homeless child or youth, please call the Homeless Education staff at 256-218-2100. The Homeless Liaison will assist with securing documentation needed for the student's record. *However, the student MUST be enrolled immediately and attend classes while awaiting documentation/records.*

Withdrawal of Homeless Students

Before withdrawing a homeless student from a school, contact the system's Homeless Liaison at 256-218-2100 for assistance. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires the district to maintain the student in his/her "school of origin" (i.e., the school the student attended when homelessness began) to the extent that it is feasible. Feasibility is to be determined by the Student Support Director in collaboration with the Transportation Coordinator.

Child Nutrition Program - Free Meal Eligibility for Homeless Children

Homeless children are entitled to free meals (breakfast and lunch). To expedite the delivery of these services, school officials may accept documentation that children are homeless from the Homeless Education Program's staff. Documentation to substantiate free meal eligibility must consist of the child's name or a list of names, effective date(s) and the signature of the Homeless Education Program's staff. This documentation is acceptable in lieu of a free/reduced price meal application. If the household does not complete an application for the child, school officials are authorized to complete an application on behalf of the homeless student. If you have any questions regarding free meal eligibility, you may call the Homeless Education staff at 256-218-2100.

Education for Homeless Children and Youth

Parents/Guardians/Students Rights

Homeless children have the right to:

- A. Enroll immediately without providing transcripts/school records, immunization/health records, proofs of residence, guardianship/custody requirements, birth certificates, and/or social security cards/numbers.
- B. Attend school, no matter where they live or how long they have lived there. The student must be given access to the same public education, including preschool education and special education services provided to other children.
- C. Remain in the school in which they were enrolled prior to becoming temporarily housed OR enroll in the school that serves the address of the temporary housing. The school choice decision is based upon parental choice and/or feasibility as determined by the district.
- D. Request a written explanation of school placement and the right to appeal an enrollment decision if system personnel attempt to send the student to a school other than the one the parent requests.
- E. Request a written dispute resolution process. During this process, the student has the right to remain in his/her current school.
- F. Receive transportation to school and to school-related programs.
- G. Attend school and participate in school programs with children who are not homeless. Children cannot be separated from the regular school program because they are homeless.
- H. Enroll in school without giving a permanent address. Schools cannot require proof of residence that might prevent or delay school enrollment.
- I. Enroll and attend classes while the school arranges for the transfer of school and immunization records or any other documents required for enrollment.
- J. Receive free meal eligibility through the Child Nutrition Program (CNP).
- K. Obtain a student identification number by calling 256-218-2100 if the student's social security card/number is unavailable.

Services Provided to Homeless Students

The Student Support Director and Homeless Education staff can be reached at 256-218-2100 to access the following referral services for homeless students and their parent/guardians:

- Uniforms and school supplies.
- Medical, dental or mental health services.
- Domestic violence prevention information and/or crisis telephone numbers to access domestic violence counselors and/or shelters.
- Transportation assistance.
- Referral to school based services and community agencies as determined by Homeless Education staff.

Education for Homeless Children and Youth

Posting of Homeless Information

Homeless Education posters must be *visibly* posted in the vicinity of the main office. The two posters contain the Rights of Parents and Rights of Students who are homeless as well as information on how to access services provided to homeless children and youth. The posters may be ordered using Form SS-400 - Requisition for Division of Student Support Services Forms. Form numbers for the posters are SS-505 and SS-506.

Social Workers/ Mental Health Workers

In order to provide social services to all students, licensed social workers are employed by the Scottsboro City Schools Public School System.

Social Workers' Areas of Responsibility

- Provide support to parents/guardians/students by providing crisis prevention/intervention; conflict resolution strategies; case service coordination; individual, family, and/or group counseling; development and assessment of student assistance plans; agency referral and collaboration; appropriate documentation of services rendered; home visits; training; assistance with special education services.
- Provide support to school personnel by providing consultation with school professionals; program monitoring and evaluating program success; staff in-service training; educational system assessment and program development; multidisciplinary services.
- Strengthen the connections between home, school, and community by identifying, linking and/or advocating for essential services to remove barriers to learning and ensure students' academic success.

McKinney-Vento (Homeless Education) Dispute Resolution Procedure

The dispute resolution process begins at the time a school/district challenges the right of either a parent/guardian to enroll a child or to continue a child's enrollment in school. This also applies to an unaccompanied youth and his/her right to enroll or continue enrollment. If there is a dispute regarding a student's homeless status, school selection/enrollment and/or request for transportation, the student must be immediately enrolled in the school where enrollment is sought and provided with transportation services (if requested).

The district then must follow the procedures it has established to resolve disputes. However, the district's procedures must provide the parent/guardian/ unaccompanied youth with an opportunity to submit information before it makes a final determination regarding the student's homeless status. If the district makes a final determination that a student is not homeless, it must provide the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth with written notice that the student is not entitled to attend the requested school. This written notice must also:

1. state the rationale/basis for the district's determination;
2. state the date as of which the student will be withdrawn from the requested school;
3. advise that the district's final determination may be appealed to the Alabama State Department of Education;
4. provide the name and contact information for the district's homeless liaison;

Education for Homeless Children and Youth

5. inform the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth that the district's homeless liaison is required to assist him/her in filing such an appeal; and
6. include the appropriate form needed to file an appeal to the Alabama State Department of Education.

The student must remain enrolled and provided with transportation (if requested) until the district makes a final determination and for a maximum of 30 days after the determination to give the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth the opportunity to appeal to the Alabama State Department of Education. The Homeless Liaison is available to assist the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth with the appeal's process and may be contacted at 256-218-2100.

STAFF

Corky Hood- Director of Student Support Services

Jason Hass- Director of Secondary Curriculum and Homeless Liaison

Kim Wilem, LICSW-PIP

Rachel Cook, LSW