

Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (McKinney-Vento)



COLORADO
Department of Education

PURPOSE

The intent of the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program is to remove all educational barriers facing children and youth experiencing homelessness, with an emphasis on educational enrollment, attendance and success.

WHO QUALIFIES?

Children or youth who lack a fixed, regular or adequate nighttime residence qualify for the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This includes children and youth who:

- Share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
- 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;
- Live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings; and
- Are migratory children
- Unaccompanied Youth- youth who fit the definition of homeless and are "not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian."

Many homeless families with children, and unaccompanied youth, are forced into motels or other temporary situations because there is no family or youth shelter available in the community. If shelters are available, many are full, or may have policies that separate the family or prohibit unaccompanied minors.

Children and youth who share the housing with others (doubled-up) and motel situations are extremely vulnerable, living in precarious, unstable and sometimes unsafe conditions. They may suffer the life-long impacts of toxic stress if their living situations are not stabilized.

HOMELESS EDUCATION AND COVID-19

As COVID-19 disrupts education, services and life across the country, children and youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability are exceptionally vulnerable. Resources and information on educational rights and protections for students who have experienced housing loss or instability during COVID-19 can be found on the [MKV webpage](#).

Are students experiencing housing loss due to COVID-19 covered by the McKinney-Vento Act?

A: Yes. Students who lack a fixed, regular and adequate primary nighttime residence due to COVID-19 are considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. They are entitled to the same legal protections and services as other students experiencing homelessness and/or housing crises.

Educational Rights of McKinney-Vento Eligible Children and Youth

- A McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Liaison in every school district who has the skills and capacity to carry out the duties of the position
- Identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness through outreach and coordination activities
- Immediate enrollment with full and equal opportunity to succeed in school
- Choice between the neighborhood school or the school of origin (school last enrolled in or attended)
- Transportation to the school of origin (including preschool)
- Immediate access to free school meals and educational services for which they are eligible
- Automatic eligibility for Title I, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015
- Referrals to health care, dental, mental health and substance abuse, housing and other appropriate services
- Unaccompanied youth are informed of their status as independent students on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)



What are some identification strategies to locate displaced children and youth?

A: During this time of health and economic insecurity, families with children are likely to experience economic hardships that put them at high risk of losing their housing. Since school buildings may be closed due to COVID-19, varied practices are required for identifying and providing services to children and youth who may qualify under the McKinney-Vento Act. Consider these [identification strategies](#) during COVID-19.

Collaboration and coordination with [local relief agencies and emergency and disaster](#) response teams are critical for identifying displaced children and youth. Building such relationships and developing a reliable communication system will help ensure that relief agencies and schools work together during and after the pandemic.

How do we enroll McKinney-Vento students if learning is remote and buildings are closed? How can we contact our existing students/families and assist students that are now losing housing and coming from other counties or other states?

A: Schools must enroll McKinney-Vento students immediately, even during this pandemic. Enrollment means “attending classes and participating fully in school activities.” If the school is offering no services or activities whatsoever to any students at this time, then McKinney students also would not receive services at this time. In that context, enrollment may mean simply entering the student into the school database, with a flag or other identification as McKinney-Vento eligible. However, most schools are offering meals and some form of virtual instruction or learning. That means McKinney-Vento eligible students need to be enrolled immediately, so they can participate in any and all activities the school is offering at this time—school meals, virtual classes, social work services outreach, etc. The law also requires that barriers to participation be addressed. For remote or virtual learning, barriers could include technology devices and internet access.

Are McKinney children and youth eligible to receive Title I, Part A services? What types of services may an LEA provide to homeless students with funds reserved under section 1113(c)(3)(A) of the ESEA?

A: Yes. McKinney-Vento eligible students are automatically eligible for services under Title I, Part A of the ESEA, whether or not they live in a Title I school attendance area or meet the academic standards required of other children for eligibility. Title I, Part A funds and ESSER funds may be used to provide a wide variety of services to McKinney-Vento eligible students. In addition to providing services to assist students in meeting the State’s challenging academic standards, Title I, Part A funds may be used to provide services to McKinney students, including those in Title I schools, that may not ordinarily be provided to other Title I students. Examples could include:

- student fees that are necessary to participate in general education program (Wi-Fi, technology);
- extended learning time (before and after school, Saturday classes, summer school) to compensate for lack of quiet time for homework in shelters or other overcrowded living conditions;
- Emergency Needs (clothes, food, hygiene items)
- Transportation (to/from school, food distribution sites, internet access)

Also, public school districts must set aside Title I funds to be used explicitly to support McKinney students. A full list of [Allowable Use of Funds](#) related to McKinney-Vento is available. Given the level of need for students experiencing a housing crisis during COVID-19 and potential school-building closures, districts may choose to increase the amount of Title I funds set aside for McKinney students in response to increased needs.

Where can I learn more?

- To learn more [visit the Colorado Department of Education Homeless Education webpage](#) or contact Kerry Wrenick at wrenick_k@cde.state.co.us or 303-866-6930.
- For information on district McKinney-Vento implementation, [contact local district liaisons](#).
- [View additional data on Colorado’s Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program](#).
- [View a summary from the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth on major Amendments on Homelessness and Foster Care in “The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015.”](#)
- [View all CDE fact sheets](#).