

WYNNE SCHOOL DISTRICT

McKinney-Vento Homeless Program

Guidelines and Procedures Handbook

2023-2024



School District Board of Education Reviewed: August 15, 2022

Statement Of Philosophy

It is the belief of the Wynne Public Schools that all students can learn. The McKinney-Vento Homeless program removes barriers to learning for homeless youth. Homeless youth will be served using all appropriate resources available to the district.

Definition of Homeless Youth

The term 'homeless youth' identifies individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. It includes youth who:

- Are temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Are living in motels, hotels, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Are living in emergency shelters
- Are abandoned in hospitals
- Have a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Are runaway children or children who are abandoned

Migratory and/or unaccompanied youth (youth not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian) are considered homeless if they meet the above definition. Homeless status is determined in cooperation with parents or for unaccompanied youth by the district program liaison. Homeless status may be documented through a variety of forms such as the State Housing Questionnaire form, Consent form, Services form, and Certification by the McKinney Vento Liaison.

Enrollment

The terms 'enroll' and 'enrollment' are defined to mean attending school and participating fully in school activities.

The school selected shall immediately enroll the youth, even if they lack records normally required for enrollment. Records will immediately be requested from the previous school. Homeless students who do not live with their parents or guardians may enroll themselves in school.

Lunch Waiver

- When a student is identified as homeless, they are automatically waived with or without paperwork. This is at the INITIAL point of identification.
- The free status stays with that student the entire school year until the student is "permanently" housed. Then they must complete the paperwork/application.

Residency

The homeless youth is a resident if they are personally present somewhere within the district with a purpose to remain but not necessarily to remain permanently.

The youth shall be considered a resident when living with a parent, or person in place of the parent, not solely for school purposes or for participation in extra-curricular activities.

1. Homeless youth and unaccompanied youth will be enrolled immediately, even if they lack immunizations and/or records ordinarily required for enrollment. Documents and records that cannot be used for enrollment delays include but are not limited to:
 - A. transcripts/school records
 - B. immunization, health, medical records

- C. birth certificates
 - D. proof of residency
 - E. proof of guardianship
2. Once the student is enrolled it is the responsibility of the school to contact the previous school and request records.
 3. The program liaison should be contacted as soon as possible to assist the family with supplies and other needs. This can be done through the counselors or by contacting the program's McKinney Vento Liaison directly.

School Selection

Placement in a school shall, according to the child's best interest:

- Continue the youth's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year, or for the duration of the academic year, if the youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year.
- Enroll the youth in any school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.
- Parents/guardians may request their child attend any school in the School District and to the extent feasible the district will try to comply with these requests.

In determining the best interests, to the extent feasible, the youth will be kept in the school of origin, except when doing so is contrary to the wishes of the youth's parent or guardian, for the duration of homelessness. In the case of unaccompanied youth, the program liaison or designee will assist in placement or enrollment decisions considering the youth's request.

The school of origin means the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. The choice regarding placement shall be made regardless of whether the youth lives with the homeless parents or guardian or has been temporarily placed elsewhere.

Fee Waiver

Homeless children fee waivers include but are not limited to: Fees for field trips, Art courses/projects, Foods courses, Technical Education courses/projects, and yearly class fees. These fees are to be automatically waived. The waiving of fees will be done directly by the McKinney Vento liaison and/or a building administrator. To encourage all homeless students to participate in all school activities, payment of all student fees will be waived if the student is identified as homeless.

If necessary, the Homeless funds may provide reimbursement to schools for field trips that are out of pocket expenses for homeless students. This may include food expenses not covered in the field trip fee. These decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Homeless Liaison, and are dependent upon a number of factors which may include funds available.

Transportation

1. At the request of a homeless child's parent/guardian or the program liaison in the cases of unaccompanied youth, transportation to the school of origin will be provided to homeless youth for the duration of homelessness, following best interest provisions (outlined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act under Local Education Agency Requirements).
 - A. In order for transportation to be set up, the program liaison will determine with the family the best means of transportation.
 - B. If it is determined that the student would be best served (especially younger children) on a school bus, an alternate form of transportation is immediately arranged until school bussing can be arranged through the transportation department.

- C. Once a bus is arranged, the transportation department will contact the liaison and the school and family will be informed of the new arrangements. If there is no bus available, an economical and appropriate option can be worked out between the Liaison and family.
 - D. When permanent housing is secured, the parent/guardian may choose to keep the youth in the school of origin until the end of the academic year but the parent/guardian is then responsible for transportation. At this point, parents/guardians can choose to enroll the child in the school in the attendance area in which they live.
2. When the youth or unaccompanied homeless student's temporary residence and school of origin are two different school districts, the districts will collaborate on the method and cost of transportation and will share the transportation cost.
 3. Refugee students who are not independently housed may be considered homeless unless families choose to not be considered so. The Liaison will discuss McKinney-Vento with families to determine if they are homeless. If it is deemed unsafe or too far for a non-English speaking homeless student to walk or arrange for their own transportation, then they will be transported.

Comparable Services

Each homeless child or youth shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected, such as

- Preschool programs
- School supplies
- Transportation services
- Educational services for which the child or youth meets eligibility criteria such as ELL or special education programs
- Programs for "At Risk" students
- Programs for gifted and talented students
- School nutrition programs
- Title I services

Educational Rights

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, children in homeless situations have the right to:

- Go to school, no matter where they live or how long they have lived there
- Attend either the local school or the school of origin, if this is in their best interest; the school of origin is the school the child attended when he/she was permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin
- Enroll in school immediately, even if missing records and documents normally required for enrollment such as a birth certificate, proof of residence, previous school records, or immunization/medical records
- Enroll, attend classes, and participate fully in all school activities while the school arranges for the transfer of records
- Have access to the same programs and services that are available to all other students including transportation and supplemental educational services
- Attend school with children not experiencing homelessness; segregation based on a student's status as homeless is prohibited

Supplemental Services may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Students may receive transportation to their school of origin.

- Students have a right to immediate enrollment, even if they don't have paperwork - health records, proof of residency, former school records, and immunization records.
- Students have a right to access to all of the school's programs/services just as all other students, including special education, migrant and vocational education, school nutrition programs (breakfast and lunch), and extracurricular activities.
- Students may receive tutoring services.
- Families may receive school supplies, clothing, and/or personal care items as the need presents itself.

Homeless Expenditure Guidance

Two Federal Funds are used to address the needs of Homeless students in the School District, Title I ESEA and a special Title X NCLB grant obtained through the Arkansas Department of Education. The Title X McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Grant funds our Supplemental Services Provider as well as providing limited funding to be used to serve Homeless Youth. Additional funding used to address the needs of Homeless students comes from local funding.

Under McKinney-Vento, homeless children must be provided access to the education and other services needed to ensure that they have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic achievement standards to which all students are held.

When homeless students are identified, a homeless supplemental service plan is developed to ensure that student needs are addressed. Student services are varied but all fall within the guidelines of the authorized activities listed below. Other authorized activities include working with families and community agencies to provide financial stability for the student's family with the eventual goal of obtaining suitable housing.

The district has had great success in addressing the needs of students/families by encouraging parents and school staff to contact the liaison when financial restraints prevent a student from participating in a school activity. While some fees have been immediately covered by donation funds the district will attempt to meet the needs by assisting the parent as they participate in school sponsored fundraising activities in the same manner as other families. Homeless services are available to parents/guardians at all times, and contact information for the McKinney Vento Liaison is sent home when students have been identified as homeless. Listed below are the guidelines for budgeting and spending McKinney-Vento funds. Funds may support activities authorized under the McKinney-Vento Act, including:

- Supplemental educational services - tutoring and academic enrichment programs;
- Expedited evaluations for various educational services;
- Professional development activities for educators working with homeless students;
- Health referral services;
- Excess cost of transportation to enable students to attend the school of origin;
- Early childhood education programs for pre-school-aged homeless children;
- Services to attract, engage, and retain homeless youth in public school programs;
- Before/After-School, mentoring, and summer programs with educational activities;
- Fees and costs associated with obtaining records of homeless children and youth;
- Educating parents of homeless children about rights and resources;
- Development of coordination between schools and agencies providing services;
- Pupil services (including violence prevention counseling) and service referrals;
- Activities to address needs that may arise from domestic violence;
- Purchase of supplies for non-school facilities to provide services listed above;
- Providing of school supplies, including those to be distributed at shelters; and
- Emergency assistance needed to enable homeless students to attend school.

COMPLAINT/DISPUTE RESOLUTION PROCESS

Federal regulations require that the Public Schools adopt procedures for receiving and resolving disputes pertaining to transition of children and youth experiencing homelessness as identified under the McKinney-Vento Act.

If the dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the child/youth must be immediately enrolled in the school in which he/she is seeking enrollment, pending resolution of the dispute [(PL 107-110, Section 722(g)(3)(E)(iv)].

Enrollment is defined as “attending classes and participating fully in school activities.”

The school must refer the student and parent or guardian to the district’s homeless liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible. The homeless liaison must ensure that the dispute resolution process is also applicable to unaccompanied youth.

Any individual who believes that the Public Schools has violated the regulations or law governing the McKinney-Vento Act should submit a detailed statement of facts supporting the allegation to the Public-School District’s Superintendent. The Superintendent shall investigate the complaint and provide the individual with the school’s decision regarding school selection or enrollment within thirty (30) days. This response must include information on their right to appeal the school’s decision [PL 107-110, §722(g)(3)(E)(ii)]. The written explanation shall be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in a language that the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth can understand.

If the dispute remains unresolved at the district level or is appealed, then the district’s homeless liaison shall forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the state homeless coordinator:

Arkansas Department of Education
Public School Program Advisor
Four Capitol Mall, Slot #26
Little Rock, Arkansas 72201

All complaints must include the following:

- ☐ The date;
- ☐ The name of the school district, unit, or individual the complaint is against;
- ☐ The name, address, and telephone number of the individual filing the complaint;
- ☐ A detailed description of the complaint, including specific facts; and
- ☐ The signature of the person making the complaint.

When a written complaint is filed, the Department of Education will investigate and issue a written response within sixty (60) calendar days from the date the complaint is received. The state coordinator will notify the LEA, school, and parent of the final school selection or enrollment decision.

Reconsideration:

If the complaint is not resolved to the satisfaction of the individual, the individual may forward a complaint to:

The Secretary of Education
U.S. Department of Education
555 New Jersey Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20208

Recruitment Letter and Program Summary

The following information should be used annually as part of the district's Homeless student "recruitment" efforts. Recruitment in this program simply refers to an effort to identify all students in the district who meet the district's definition of Homeless.

The notice is followed by a brief summary sheet which will accompany the letter, and should also be posted around the school district and in areas around Wynne which may be frequented by homeless families and those who may be aware of homeless families.

Both the letter and program summary are also made available and posted in Spanish.

Procedures for Identifying Homeless Students

- If you believe a student may be homeless, you may call Sherry Breckenridge, Homeless Liaison, at 870-587-0350, or you may contact a school counselor.
- The McKinney Vento Liaison will make the homeless determination and may ask the school counselor to send information home for parents to complete and return to the school.
- The McKinney Vento Liaison may also contact the child's parents (or child if over 18) concerning the homeless program.
- When the student returns forms to the counselor, please contact the McKinney Vento Liaison by phone or e-mail.
- The McKinney Vento Liaison will visit the school within one week, obtain a copy of the documentation letter, collect other student achievement and demographic data and develop a plan for student services with the counselor or others designated by the school principal.
- The McKinney Vento Liaison and appropriate school personnel will schedule a meeting and/or make contact with the parent(s) to review the plan and to determine the need for additional family support. If attempts to meet with the parent are not successful, the plan will be mailed to the parent and student services are initiated.
- The McKinney Vento Liaison will update parents concerning student progress and update the counselor on a quarterly basis concerning student progress and any family support being provided.

Supplemental Services may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Students may receive transportation to their school of origin.
- Students have a right to immediate enrollment, even if they don't have all of their paperwork - for example, medical/health records, proof of residency, former school records, immunization records.
- Students have a right to access to all of the school's programs and services on the same basis as all other students, including special education, migrant education, vocational education, school nutrition programs (school breakfast and lunch), and extracurricular activities.
- Students may receive tutoring services.
- Families may receive school supplies, clothing, and/or personal care items as the need presents itself.

SCHOOL DISTRICT'S SUPPLEMENTAL SERVICE PROGRAM (SSP)

Listed below are the most common supplemental services provided to School District's McKinney-Vento students and their families. Services are based on the unique needs of qualifying families.

- Provide students with in-school and after school tutoring services, homework assistance, and school supplies.
- Provide mentoring and additional opportunities for students to participate in sports programs offered at school and within the community.
- Provide afterschool activities for students and/or volunteer opportunities
- The Liaison may provide transportation at times for students if it is a barrier from participation in school or community activities, as well as assisting parents in accessing services which will address family needs.
- The McKinney Vento Liaison connects families to community resources, such as: HUD housing, clothing for school, monthly food boxes, utility support, and medical services.
- The McKinney Vento Liaison connects all families to holiday dinners and Christmas gifts for students who do not qualify for Angel Tree.

According to McKinney-Vento, homeless means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youths who are sharing 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; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement

Contact: Sherry Breckenridge
McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act Liaison
District Parent Center
1500 N. Lemons St. (P.O. Box 69)
Wynne, AR 72396
870-587-0350
Email: sbreckenridge@wynneschools.org
Fax: 870-238-5053