

6.028 Homeless Students

Consistent with federal law (McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act) and state requirements, Cooperative Educational Services (C.E.S.) will make a reasonable effort to identify homeless children attending its programs, and to collaborate with “nexus” local/regional school districts to ensure that any identified homeless student continues its enrollment free of any barriers that may exist in terms of agency policies/procedures (e.g., transfer of records, immunization records). Further, it is the policy of C.E.S. that no child or youth shall be discriminated against or stigmatized in its school-based programs because of homelessness.

Definition of Homeless – In accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act “homeless children and youth means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” and includes those:

- living with a friend, relative or somewhere else because they lost their home and whose family can’t access permanent housing due to financial constraints;
- who are staying in a motel or hotel due to a lack of adequate alternative accommodations;
- who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings; or
- living in an emergency or transitional shelter or domestic violence shelter.

Rights of Students in Homeless Situations – The McKinney-Vento Act protects the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness. In general its protections include the right to enroll in, attend and succeed in school. Specifically, the act ensures that children and youth:

- can go to school with children who are not homeless;
- stay in the school they went to before becoming homeless or whatever school/program they were enrolled in last (school of origin), if that placement is feasible*
- can choose to enroll in any public school program in the attendance area they are currently living in;
- receive transportation to their school of origin if their parent/guardian requests such transportation;
- can enroll in school without giving a permanent address;
- can enroll and attend classes while the school arranges for the transfer of school and immunization records or any other documents required for enrollment;
- receive the same special programs and services, if needed, as provided to all other children served in these programs; and
- can enroll and attend classes in the school program of choice even while the school and parent seek to resolve a dispute over enrolling the student.

*If a school district sends the child to a school program other than the one requested by the parent, the school district must provide a written explanation and offer the parent a right to appeal this decision.

C.E.S. Requirements – Consistent with federal and state requirements, C.E.S. will make a concerted effort to identify students who may be homeless. To this end it will:

- designate an appropriate staff person to serve as its educational liaison/contact for students in homeless situations;
- regularly notify parents/students of the educational rights of students in homeless situations, which will include an annual notice to parents/students in a published parent/student guide/handbook;
- post general information about rights of students in homeless situations. This will include general posting for parents/students in every program office area (e.g., general announcement bulletin boards);
- inform C.E.S. educational staff of rights of students who are homeless;
- assist parents and/or students identified as homeless in getting appropriate/eligible services;
- collaborate with the local (nexus) school district educational liaison for homeless education in helping parents and students to receive eligible/needed services;
- collaborate with state coordinator and community personnel responsible for the provision of services to children and youth in homeless situations; and
- work collaboratively with parents in resolving disputes/addressing barriers and securing information about available program/services (e.g., health, mental health, dental, etc.).

Adopted by the C.E.S. Representative Council on: October 7, 2004

Legal Reference: McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act