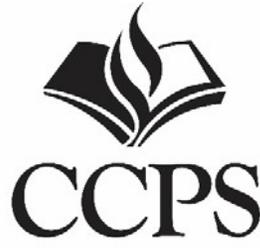


# Homeless Education/Families in Transition

## POLICY AND PROCEDURES MANUAL



Collier County Public Schools  
Exceptional Education/Student Support Services



Collier County Public Schools

[www.collierschools.com](http://www.collierschools.com)

Dr. Kamela Patton  
Superintendent of Schools

### THE DISTRICT SCHOOL BOARD OF COLLIER COUNTY

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This report has been prepared by The District School Board of Collier County.  
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**Report Number:**

05072018- #1

**Coordinated by:**

Mr. Richard Duggan  
Mr. Hemlal Kafle

## VISION STATEMENT

*All students will complete school prepared for ongoing learning as well as community and global responsibilities.*

*The District School Board of Collier County does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, or age in the provision of educational opportunities or employment opportunities and benefits. The District School Board does not discriminate on the basis of sex or disability in the education programs and activities that it operates, pursuant to the requirements of Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990, respectively. The right not to be discriminated against extends to both employees and students of the District and shall include equal access to designated youth organizations in conformity with the Boy Scouts of America Equal Access Act. The following personnel should be contacted for inquiries about their rights or to learn how to file a complaint regarding discrimination.*

*Employees: Educational Equity Act, Title IX, Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act) or the Americans with Disabilities Act, contact Valerie Wenrich, Executive Director, Human Resources and Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Employees, (239) 377-0351, The District School Board of Collier County, 5775 Osceola Trail, Naples, Florida 34109.*

*Students: Educational Equity Act, Title IX, or the Age Discrimination Act of 1975, contact Stephen McFadden, Coordinator, School Counseling K-8, and Deputy Title IX Coordinator for Students, (239) 377-0517, The District School Board of Collier County, 5775 Osceola Trail, Naples, Florida 34109*

*Section 504 (Rehabilitation Act) and the Americans with Disabilities Act, contact Dr. Dena Landry, Coordinator, Psychological Services, (239) 377-0521, The District School Board of Collier County, 5775 Osceola Trail, Naples, Florida, 34109.*

**Collier County Public Schools  
The Homeless Education/Families in Transition  
Policy and Procedures Manual**

**Table of Contents**

1. Introduction
2. The Educational Rights of Students in Homeless Situations:
3. What Schools Need to Know
4. Enrollment Procedures for Students in Homeless Situations Ways to Identify Students Who Are Experiencing Homelessness Determining Homelessness by the Definition
5. When Legal Guardians Are Not Present: Unaccompanied Youth
6. Prekindergarten Programs
7. Homeless Unaccompanied Youth
8. Community Resources and Supports to Homeless & Runaway Youth Federal Resources for Feeding Homeless Children and Youth Transportation
9. Dispute Resolution Policy/Procedure  
Important Hotline and Shelter Numbers  
Appendix A: Needs Assessment form  
(K-12) Appendix B: Housing  
Resources List

## **Introduction**

The Stewart B. McKinney-Bruce Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act), reauthorized in December 2015 by the Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), establishes the following policy for the education for homeless children and youth:

*“Each State educational agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths.”*

Collier County Public Schools, through the Office of Exceptional Education and Student Support Services’ Homeless Education/Families in Transition (HEFIT) Program, assists schools with the identification, enrollment and attendance of students who are homeless. The Collier County Public School Board Policy 5111.01 (see District website, [www.collierschools.com](http://www.collierschools.com)) addresses the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act.

The HEFIT Program seeks to ensure a successful educational experience for children and youth identified as homeless in Collier County by collaborating with parents, schools and community through opening the doors to academic opportunities, removing barriers and promoting a healthy sense of self.

### **Objectives:**

**HEFIT’s goals include the following:**

- All children and youth who are homeless fully realize their legal rights in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act.
- All students identified as homeless will make annual learning gains sufficient to acquire the knowledge, skills and competencies needed to master state standards in the areas of reading and mathematics.
- The negative impact of homelessness will be offset, so that students identified as homeless will continue to develop and thrive.

### **Services:**

**HEFIT ensures the following:**

- All children and youth who are homeless are enrolled in school even if the necessary documentation is not provided.
- Free lunch is provided even if the necessary documentation is not completed or signed.
- The student is provided with transportation upon parental request.
- Students who are homeless are provided with school supplies and educational materials.
- Students who are homeless are provided with uniforms, shoes and hygiene supplies as needed.
- Tutoring is provided at local homeless shelters, schools or designated place.
- Referrals for needed services in the community are made.
- Students who are homeless participate in extracurricular activities

## **The Educational Rights of Students in Homeless Situations: What Schools Need to Know**

### **School District Homeless Student Liaison**

The Collier County Public School District Liaison for Homeless Education is a staff member who is responsible for ensuring the identification, school enrollment, attendance, and opportunities for academic success of students in homeless situations. Some of these activities may be accomplished by the District Liaison for Homeless Education himself or herself, while others are accomplished through coordinated efforts of other staff or community partners. By linking students and their families to school and community services, the District Liaison for Homeless Education plays a critical role in stabilizing students and promoting academic achievement at the individual, school and district level. Additionally, every school has assigned a homeless student liaison to assist in obtaining school and immunization health records, identification, enrollment, attendance and all other needs a student or family may have. The school liaison works collaboratively with the District Liaison for Homeless Education. To obtain the name of the school liaison consult your school principal.

The Collier County Public School District Liaison for Homeless Education is Hemlal Kafle in the office of Exceptional Education and Student Support Services and can be reached at (239)377-0544 or [kafleh@collierschools.com](mailto:kafleh@collierschools.com)

### **Homeless Student Identification**

Homeless children and youth are difficult to identify for many reasons, and thus often go unnoticed by school personnel. In order to identify homeless children both in and out of school, the District Liaison for Homeless Education coordinates with **community service agencies, local shelters, street outreach teams, and faith based organizations**. In addition, the District Liaison for Homeless Education provides awareness trainings to all school registrars, school counselors and other targeted staff. Students who are homeless are identified by the following procedures:

- a) **Self-report**. A family or student may notify school counselor or teacher and report their living situation; or upon enrollment they may report their situation to the school registrar.
- b) **Shelter Referral**: The local shelters send monthly reports of all the school-aged children they have living in their shelters.
- c) **Food Service**: When students/families complete the free and reduced lunch application there is a box on the top that is checked if the student is an unaccompanied minor or homeless. The Department of Nutrition Services notifies the District Liaison for Homeless Education if a student is homeless or unaccompanied.
- d) **Referrals from other school districts**.
- e) **Referrals from school counselors and/or school staff who may conduct home visits for other family issues**. During these visits, school personnel may identify more than one family at the same address (referred to as doubled-up).

- f) **Referrals from the Department of Student Relations, Truancy Intervention.**(Unaccompanied minors are often identified by the Student Relations Specialists.)
- g) Others

### **Enrollment**

School stability and continuity in school enrollment are associated with school success including achievement, promotion, and graduation. Research studies have indicated that a child may lose 4-6 months of academic progress with each move to a new school. The importance of a child attending one school and attending consistently (in one school or in several schools without gaps during a transition) cannot be underestimated. Therefore, it is the policy of Collier County Public Schools to continue a students' placement in their school of origin for the duration of homelessness. This is particularly evident when a family becomes homeless between or during academic years. If this situation occurs, the student should be allowed to finish the academic year or attend the last school enrolled at the time they became homeless.

### **Segregation**

It is the policy of the Congress as well as Collier County Public Schools that homelessness alone is not a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment. Schools are prohibited from segregating students who are homeless in separate schools, separate programs within schools, or separate settings within schools.

### **Parent /Student Poster Distribution**

A poster was designed to provide information to homeless including information on the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Posters are placed in schools, shelters and public offices within the community. This poster is also geared to generate public awareness support. School counselors receive the posters during each school year's initial counselor's meeting and ensure that they are posted in strategic locations within the school. Tutors receive posters to place in shelters. The District Liaison for Homeless Education and community outreach personnel place posters in local businesses and offices such as local Laundromats, supermarkets, churches and hotels.

### **Parental Participation**

Parents are encouraged to take an active role in their child's academic life. School counselors provide information on parenting classes and workshops to parents in the community as well as information on such topics include:

- Tutoring
- Counseling/medical information
- Housing/rental assistance
- Food distribution
- Community resources
- Homeless Education brochure
- What is the McKinney-Vento Act: Understanding your child's educational rights

## **Enrollment Procedures for Students in Homeless Situations**

Children and youth who are identified as homeless often do not have the documents ordinarily required for school enrollment. Enrolling children in school immediately provides these students the needed stability and is also a Federal requirement under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Enrollment procedures for students who are homeless are outlined below.

1. A school selected on the basis of a “best interest determination” must immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce the records normally required for enrollment (e.g. prior academic records, medical records, proof of residency, birth certificate, or other documentation).
2. The enrolling school must immediately contact the school last attended by the student to obtain educational records.
3. If a child or youth needs to obtain immunization or medical records, the enrolling school must immediately enroll the student and then refer the parent or guardian to the local health department or the District Liaison for Homeless Education. If the child or youth is an unaccompanied minor refer to the school homeless liaison or District Liaison for Homeless Education.
4. The enrolling school must use the address the parent provides. Utility bills, leases, etc. do not apply when a parent discloses they are in a homeless situation.
5. Complete the Homeless Student Needs Assessment form (Appendix A) after enrollment and email it to the District Liaison for Homeless Education, Hemlal Kafle at [kafleh@collierschools.com](mailto:kafleh@collierschools.com)
6. If the student requires transportation, contact the District Liaison for Homeless Education, **Hemlal Kafle at (239) 377-0544**. Special transportation requests can only be granted through the HEFIT Program.

## **Ways to Identify Students Who Are Experiencing Homelessness**

*As school employees, we must be aware of the silent signals our students bring. These characteristics could be attributed to students with other issues as well as those students/families experiencing homelessness:*

- Attendance at several schools
- More than one family at the same address
- Poor hygiene and grooming
- Hunger and hoarding food
- Vague when asked about proof of residency
- Some common statements used by students who are homeless/families may include: "We've moved a lot." "We're staying with relatives/friends while looking for a place." "We're going through a bad time right now."

## Determining Homelessness by the Definition<sup>1</sup>

**It cannot be emphasized enough that determining whether a particular child or youth fits the definition of homeless is a case-specific inquiry.** General answers based on incomplete or perceived information or hypothetical situations will often be incorrect.

### **STEP 1**

Is the child or youth covered by subparagraph (B)(i) of the McKinney-Vento Act in the definition below?

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Abandoned in hospitals; or

**If yes**, then the McKinney-Vento Act applies to this child.

**If no**, go to step 2.

**If unclear**, see if Step 4 can help, and/or seek advice from your Liaison for Homeless Education. **To further define** “awaiting foster care placement”, collaborate with child welfare officials to obtain this information.

### **STEP 2**

Is the child or youth covered by subparagraph (B)(ii) of the McKinney-Vento Act in the definition below?

- Residing at a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings

**If yes**, then the McKinney-Vento Act applies to this child.

**If no**, go to Step 3.

**If unclear**, see if Step 4 can help, and/or seek advice from your Liaison for Homeless Education.

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<sup>1</sup>Drafted by the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty, March 2003. Address questions/comments to Patricia Julianelle, at [julianelle@nlchp.org](mailto:julianelle@nlchp.org). This information is not offered as legal advice and should not be used as a substitute for seeking professional legal advice. It does not create an attorney-client relationship with you.

### **STEP 3**

Is the child or youth covered by subparagraph (B)(iii) of the McKinney-Vento Act in the definition below?

- Living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting

**If yes**, then the McKinney-Vento Act applies to this child.

**If no**, go to step 4.

**If unclear**, see if the definitions below can help, and/or seek advice from your Liaison for Homeless Education.

**To further define** “substandard housing”; collaborate with child welfare officials, attorneys and other community members to establish guidelines.

### **STEP 4**

Does the child or youth lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence?

**If yes**, then the McKinney-Vento Act applies to this child.

**If no**, then the McKinney-Vento Act does not apply to this child.

**If unclear**, see if the definitions below can help, and/or seek advice from your Liaison for Homeless Education.

a) Definition of FIXED<sup>2</sup>

- Securely placed or fastened
- Not subject to change or fluctuation
- A fixed resident is one that is stationary, permanent and not subject to change

b) Definition of REGULAR<sup>3</sup>

- Normal, standard
- Constituted, conducted or done in conformity with established or prescribed usages
- Recurring, attending or functioning at fixed or uniform intervals

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<sup>2</sup> Other informative definitions include:

**Inhabitant**- One who although he may not be a citizen, dwells or resides in a place permanently, or has a fixed residence therein, as distinguished from an occasional lodger or visitor.

**Dwell**-To inhabits, to reside; to have a fixed place of residence.

**Domicile**-The place where a person has his true fixed permanent home and principal establishment, and to which place he has, whenever he is absent, the intention of returning, and from which he has no present intention of moving. Ballentine's Law Dictionary, 3rd Edition (emphases added)

<sup>3</sup> Other alternative definitions include: Habitual- By habit; constant; customary, accustomed, usual; common; ordinary; regular; Familiar. Ballentine's Law Dictionary, 3rd Edition (emphases added)

## **When Legal Guardians Are Not Present: Unaccompanied Youth**

In a number of instances children and youth who are enrolling in a school may not be living with their parents or legal guardians. Frequently, children in families experiencing homelessness are sent to live temporarily with friends or relatives. This type of living arrangement has been especially prevalent in families displaced by the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes. In other situations, youth have been forced to leave home due to abusive environments or are on their own for other reasons. These children and youth, in most cases, fit the definition of homeless, unaccompanied youth in the McKinney-Vento Act: a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian [42 U.S.C. §11434A(6)] and eligible for immediate school enrollment.

The McKinney-Vento Act requires school districts to enroll homeless children and youth in school immediately, even if they lack required enrollment documents [42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(3)(C), (g)(1)(H)(iv), (g)(1)(F)(ii)]. ("Enroll" and "enrollment" are defined as "attending classes and participating fully in school activities" [42 U.S.C. §11434A(1)].) The Act further requires states to review and revise any policy that may act as a barrier to the enrollment of homeless children and youth and requires states to give particular attention to guardianship issues [42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(7)].

Therefore, schools may not condition school enrollment upon the receipt of proof of legal guardianship by caregivers of homeless, unaccompanied youth; nor may they require caregivers to become legal guardians within a certain period of time after the child enrolls in school. The decision to seek legal guardianship is a serious decision that affects significantly the legal rights of the parent and caregiver well beyond the education arena. Although that step may be appropriate in some cases, it will not be in others.

In addition, it is important to note that the absence of an available caregiver must not impede enrollment.

The District Liaison for Homeless Education plays a key role in identifying and supporting youth who are homeless and is required to help them choose and enroll in school after considering their wishes; inform them of their right to transportation; assist them in accessing transportation; provide them with notice of their right to appeal school or school-district decisions; and ensure that they are enrolled in school immediately, pending resolution of disputes [42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(6)(A)].

## **Prekindergarten Programs**

### **Identification of Preschool Students Who Are Homeless**

The District Liaison for Homeless Education identifies preschool-aged homeless children by working closely with shelters and social service agencies in the area and the Head Start Program.

School registrars are trained to inquire the housing situation at the time they are enrolling homeless children and youth in school. The school can make a referral to HEFIT or can provide the family with the number to the local Head Start office.

### **Head Start**

The Collier County Public Schools Head Start program provides comprehensive, developmental services for low-income pre-school children and social services for their families. Head Start promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of health, educational, nutritional, social and other services.

Elizabeth McBride  
Director of Early Learning Programs  
5775 Osceola Trail  
Naples, FL 34109  
(239) 377-0123  
Fax (239) 377-0567  
Email [McBridEl@collierschools.com](mailto:McBridEl@collierschools.com)

### **Voluntary Pre-K (VPK)**

If homeless families need assistance with pre-school children under the age of 4 refer them to the following office to find a voluntary Pre-K program closest to where they are residing. The Collier County VPK Program can be reached at (239) 377-0092.

### **Exceptional Student Education**

Children ages 3-5 years with developmental disabilities may qualify for an evaluation and Pre-K services. For more information contact the Florida Development Learning Resource System (FDLRS) at (239) 337-8199.

## **Homeless Unaccompanied Youth**

Homeless unaccompanied youth often face unique barriers in enrolling and succeeding in school. These barriers include school attendance policies, credit accrual, and legal guardianship requirements. Without a parent or guardian to advocate for them and exercise parental rights, they may be denied enrollment and remain out of school for extended periods of time. Unaccompanied youth also may not understand their educational rights, or know how to acquire this information.

The District Liaison for Homeless Education assists unaccompanied youth in accessing educational service through the following activities:

- Helping unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youth's best academic interests;
- Providing unaccompanied youth with notice of their appeal rights in a language they can understand or in an accessible format;
- Informing youth of their right to transportation to and from the school of origin, and assisting unaccompanied youth in accessing transportation; and
- Ensuring that unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled in school pending the resolution of disputes.

Unaccompanied youth include young people who have run away from home, been thrown out of their homes, and/or been abandoned by parents or guardians. These young people are separated from their parents for a variety of reasons. Over half report being physically abused at home and over one-third report sexual abuse. Over two-thirds report that at least one of their parents' abuses drugs or alcohol. For many of these young people, leaving home is a survival issue. Other youth are thrown out of their homes because they are pregnant, gay or lesbian, or because their parents believe they are old enough to take care of themselves. Over half of youth living in shelters report that their parents either told them to leave or knew they were leaving and did not care. Once out of the home, unaccompanied youth are frequently victimized. As many as half have been assaulted or robbed; and one in ten runaways reports being raped.

School may be the only safe and stable environment available to unaccompanied youth. Yet unaccompanied youth often face unique barriers to enrolling and succeeding in school. Without a parent or guardian to advocate for them and exercise parental rights, they are sometimes denied enrollment and remain out of school for extended periods of time. Unaccompanied youth also may not understand their educational rights or know how to acquire this information.

### **The Role of the McKinney-Vento Act**

The education provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act, which are now incorporated within No Child Left Behind, ensure educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. The law directly applies to homeless unaccompanied youth who receive some special attention within the Act.

## **Key Provisions**

- The term "unaccompanied youth" includes youth in homeless situations who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- Unaccompanied youth have the same rights as other students experiencing homelessness. Specifically, they have the right to:
  - Remain in their school of origin (to the extent feasible)
  - Transportation to and from the school of origin
  - Immediately enroll in a new school serving the area in which they are currently living even if they don't have typically required documents (e.g. proof of guardianship)
  - Equal access to programs and services such as gifted and talented education, special education, vocational education, and English Language Learner services.
- Each local education agency (LEA), otherwise known as school district, must appoint a homeless liaison, whose duties include:
  - Helping unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youth's wishes.
  - Informing unaccompanied youth of their rights to transportation and assisting youth in accessing transportation.
  - Providing unaccompanied youth with notice of their right to appeal school or school district decisions and ensuring that youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes.
- School personnel must be made aware of the specific needs of runaway and homeless youth.
- McKinney-Vento state plans must:
  - address problems caused by enrollment delays due to guardianship issues.
  - describe how homeless youth and youth separated from the public schools are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services.
- McKinney-Vento sub grants can be used for services and assistance to attract, engage, and retain unaccompanied youth in public school programs and services.

## **Community Resources and Supports to Homeless & Runaway Youth**

### Covenant House

National Network for Youth Runaway Hotline: 1(800) 999-9999 (24 hrs.)

[www.covenanthouse.org](http://www.covenanthouse.org) [www.nn4youth.org](http://www.nn4youth.org)

### National Runaway Switchboard

Runaway Hotline: 1(800) 621-4000 (24 hrs.)

[www.nrscrisisline.org](http://www.nrscrisisline.org)

### Youth Haven

239-774-2904

[www.youthhavenswfl.org](http://www.youthhavenswfl.org)

### National Network for Youth

738-7949

[www.nn4youth.org](http://www.nn4youth.org)

### Stand Up for Kids (202)

1(800) 365-4KID

[www.standupforkids.org](http://www.standupforkids.org)

## **Federal Resources for Feeding Children and Youth Who Are Homeless**

The Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004 (*P.L. 108-265*) expands federal child nutrition programs in several ways to assist children and youth who are homeless by providing:

- Automatic eligibility for free school meals to homeless and runaway children
- Streamlined procedures to document such eligibility
- Full school year eligibility for free school meals
- Federal nutrition funds for shelters that serve children and youth up to age 18

### **Automatic Eligibility for Free School Meals**

Before the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act was passed, administrative guidance made homeless children, as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, automatically eligible for free school meals. The Reauthorization Act establishes in law this categorical eligibility for homeless children, meaning that all children who are defined as homeless are eligible for free school meals.

The Reauthorization Act also confers automatic eligibility for free school meals on migrant children served through the Migrant Education Program and runaway children and youth served through the three grant programs established under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA): Basic Center Program, Transitional Living Program for Older Homeless Youth, and Street Outreach Program.

Please see USDA Memo SP 4 ([www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/policy/Reauthorization\\_04/2004-07-19.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/policy/Reauthorization_04/2004-07-19.pdf)) and FRAC's school meals brochure for homeless families ([www.frac.org/html/publications/homelesseducpamphletgovt.PDF](http://www.frac.org/html/publications/homelesseducpamphletgovt.PDF)) for more details.

### **Documentation of Free Meal Eligibility**

1. Upon enrollment registrar will code students appropriately as homeless
2. Contact the District Liaison for Homeless Education and inform of enrollment of new student at (239) 377-0544.
3. The District Liaison for Homeless Education will confirm coding which generates free meals request.
3. Food Services manager at school and the Department of Nutrition Services at (239) 377-0281.

### **Full School Year Eligibility**

Once a student has been certified as eligible for free meals the eligibility remains effective for the remainder of the school year. This policy holds even if children or youth move into permanent housing and are no longer homeless or served by Runaway & Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs. In such instances, a new eligibility determination shall be made in the subsequent school year. Schools are allowed to continue a student's eligibility from the previous school year for 30 operating days into the subsequent school year, or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever occurs first.

Please see *USDA Memo SP 3* ([www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/policy/Reauthorization\\_04/2004-07-07.pdf](http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/policy/Reauthorization_04/2004-07-07.pdf)) for more details.

## Transportation

*The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle B—Education for Homeless Children and Youth), reauthorized in January 2002, ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. This brief explains the legislation and offers strategies for implementing it in a school district. Additional briefs on various topics in the law may be found on the websites of the organizations listed below.*

### Key Provisions

- School Districts must provide students experiencing homelessness with transportation to and from their school of origin, at a parent or guardian's request.
- For unaccompanied youth, transportation must be provided to and from the school of origin at the District Liaison for Homeless Education's request.
- "School of origin" is defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.
- If a student is attending their school of origin in one school district and comes to reside in another school district; the two districts must share the responsibility and cost of transporting the student equally.
- In addition to providing transportation to the school of origin, the District Liaison for Homeless Education must provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students.

Changing schools greatly impedes students' academic and social growth. A "rule of thumb" is that it takes a child four to six months to recover academically after changing schools. Highly mobile students have also been found to have lower test scores and overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools. This diminished achievement hurts students and schools.

Although the McKinney-Vento Act permits students in homeless situations to remain in their schools of origin despite their residential instability, lack of transportation commonly prevents them from continuing in their schools of origin. Therefore, school districts are now required to provide transportation to the school of origin. The resulting educational stability will enhance students' academic and social growth, while permitting schools to benefit from the increased test scores and achievement shown to result from student continuity.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **1. Under what circumstances must a school district provide transportation to school for students experiencing homelessness?**

- A. The McKinney-Vento Act requires school districts to provide transportation for students experiencing homelessness in three situations. First, school districts must provide transportation to the school of origin upon the request of a parent or guardian, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, upon the request of the District Liaison for Homeless Education. *42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)*. That is true regardless of whether the district provides transportation for other students or in other circumstances. Second, for other transportation (as opposed to the school of origin), the McKinney-Vento Act requires districts to provide transportation comparable to that provided to housed students. *42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(4)(A)*. Therefore, if the district transports housed students to the local school or to a summer program, it must also transport students experiencing homelessness. Finally, school districts must eliminate barriers to the school enrollment and retention of students experiencing homelessness. For example, if a student is living on or near an extremely busy intersection, in a very dangerous neighborhood, or is otherwise unable to attend school without transportation, the district must eliminate lack of transportation as a barrier to the child attending school. *42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(l)(l), (g)(7)*.

### **2. How far is too far to travel to the school of origin? What if my state has established a general limit on all school transportation of one hour or 30 miles?**

- A. The McKinney-Vento Act does not specify any mileage or time limit for travel to the school of origin. The Act requires school districts to provide transportation to the school of origin at the request of a parent or guardian or, for unaccompanied youth, at the liaison's request. *42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)*. Therefore, whenever a student is attending the school of origin, transportation is required. A commute so lengthy as to be harmful to the child's educational achievement will weigh against placement in the school of origin. This determination will depend on the student's circumstances. For example, a lengthy commute that may be harmful to a young child may be feasible for an older youth. Similarly, in many rural areas, lengthy commutes to school are common; the commute of a child experiencing homelessness in such an area would need to be evaluated in that context. Therefore, transportation services must rest on the individualized feasibility determination, not blanket limits. State or school district policies that establish blanket limits on transportation violate the McKinney-Vento Act. The federal law supersedes these contrary state or local policies.

### **3. Is transportation required if the school of origin is in another school district?**

- A. Yes. As long as attendance at the school of origin is feasible, transportation is required, even if it requires students to cross district lines. If two districts are involved, they must agree upon a method to apportion the cost and responsibility of transportation, or split it equally. *42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)*.

States should develop a system to assist with inter-district transportation issues, including disputes between districts regarding apportioning costs and responsibility. The state attorney general's office may also be able to assist. States may have policies about shared fiscal responsibilities. The possibility of nonpayment does not affect districts' obligation to provide transportation. Inter-district disputes cannot delay the immediate enrollment (defined as attending classes and participating fully in school activities) of children in the school selected. *U.S.C. §§11432(g)(3)(C), 11434A(1)*. Establishing inter-district transportation procedures will be essential to ensure that transportation is arranged quickly for students.

**4. If a student is crossing district lines to remain at the school of origin, which district has primary responsibility to arrange and fund the transportation?**

- A. The McKinney-Vento Act first gives school districts and states the ability to agree upon a method to apportion cost and responsibility. The Act further states that in the absence of agreement, the two districts must apportion cost and responsibility equally. *42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)*. However responsibility is divided, students must be provided with transportation without delay. In practice, states may wish to designate either the district of origin or the district of residence as the lead agency, to avoid any delays in initiating services while such disagreements are resolved. Any such delays would violate the McKinney-Vento Act's requirement that students be immediately enrolled in the selected school.

**5. When two states are involved in a dispute regarding provision of transportation and either state absolutely refuses to pay any of the cost, is there a provision for a federally-enforced resolution.**

- A. The states may call the USDE for technical assistance in resolving the dispute. The state attorney general's office also may be able to assist. States may have policies about shared fiscal responsibilities. The possibility of nonpayment does not affect districts' obligations to provide transportation. Inter-state disputes cannot delay the immediate enrollment (defined as attending classes and participating fully in school activities) of children in the school selected. *42 U.S.C. §§ 11432(g)(3)(C), 11434A(1)*. Establishing inter-state transportation procedures will be essential to ensure that transportation is arranged quickly for students. Communication among the involved State Coordinators and liaisons can facilitate the provision of services.

**6. Can a school district pay parents to transport their children?**

- A. Yes. School districts may reimburse parents or youth who have cars and are able to provide transportation, as a cost-effective means to meet the district's obligation.

**7. Does providing or arranging for transportation mean door-to-door transportation, similar to transportation for students receiving special education services.**

- A. Generally, no. The McKinney-Vento Act does not require door-to-door transportation, unless that is the only appropriate arrangement for a particular student. For example, if a student is living on or near an extremely busy intersection, it may not be appropriate to expect the child to cross the intersection. The mode and details of transportation cannot present a barrier to the child's attendance in school. *42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(I), (g)(7).*

**8. Does providing access to public transportation qualify as providing transportation?**

- A. Yes, if the public transportation is appropriate. For example, young children cannot be expected to use public transportation alone. In such cases, school districts should provide transit passes for an adult caregiver to escort the child, or provide another form of transportation. Similarly, if traveling to a school of origin on public transit requires an unreasonable length of time, another mode of transportation may be required. The mode and details of transportation cannot present a barrier to the child's attendance in school. *2003 Guidance, p. 16; 42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(I), (g)(7).*

**9. If a district doesn't offer transportation to summer school for any students, does it have to provide summer school transportation for students in homeless situations?**

- A. Generally, no. The McKinney-Vento Act requires schools to provide comparable transportation services for students in homeless situations. If the school does not provide transportation to summer school for housed students, then it is generally not required to provide transportation to students who are homeless. However, if attendance in summer school is required for the student to pass to the next grade and lack of transportation will prevent the child from participating that presents a barrier to the student's academic success. The district must remove that barrier, so the student can avoid being retained in the same grade. *42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(I), (g)(7).*

**10. Is transportation required while a dispute is being resolved?**

- A. Yes, to the extent it would be required if there were no dispute. While disputes are pending, students must be enrolled in the school in which they are seeking enrollment. If that school is the school of origin, the school district(s) involved must provide transportation. *2003 Guidance, p 18; 42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(J)(iii).* If that school is the local school, transportation must be provided to the extent it is provided to housed students, and to the extent necessary to ensure it is not a barrier to attendance. *42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(1)(I), (g)(4), (g)(7).* These provisions apply whether the dispute is about school enrollment, school selection, or whether the child or youth is homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act.

**11. If a student's temporary housing is across state lines from the school of origin, is transportation still required?**

- A. Yes. Since the McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law, it applies as in any other situation. Therefore, if the student is attending the school of origin, transportation must be provided at the parent's/guardian's request or at the District Liaison for Homeless Education's request, in the case of an unaccompanied youth. Communication among the involved State Coordinators, liaisons and transportation directors can facilitate the provision of transportation.

**12. Our state legislature is considering a bill that would require school districts to transport students only in official school vehicles. How would this interact with McKinney-Vento's transportation requirements?**

- A. Such a state law would not violate the McKinney-Vento Act. School districts would still have to continue to provide transportation to the school of origin at the request of parents, guardians, or District Liaison for Homeless Education (in the case of unaccompanied youth), while complying with the new state transportation law.

## **Dispute Resolution Policy/ Procedure**

Families and youth in homeless situations may be unaware of their right to dispute placement and enrollment decisions. When disputes are raised, too often, students are kept out of school during the dispute resolution process. To avoid such disruptions, a policy has been established for resolving disputes. Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized by Title X, Part C, of the No Child Left Behind Act, ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

- In order for students to remain in school they are permitted to enroll in the school of choice during dispute procedures.
- The family will meet with the District Liaison for Homeless Education and complete a Dispute Resolution Form.
- The school will complete their portion of the form and fax it over to the District Liaison for Homeless Education.
- The District Liaison for Homeless Education will arrange a resolution meeting within seven days with school administration and the family. A resolution will try to be obtained at his meeting.
- Once the District Liaison for Homeless Education reviews the request based upon the schools dispute, the District Liaison for Homeless Education will provide a resolution. In the case of no resolution, an appeal can be filed at the state level by sending the dispute resolution to the attention of the Florida Department of Education, Lorraine Husum Allen, MPA, Director, Homeless Education Program, 325 West Gaines Street, Room 352, Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400.

The timeline for this process should be completed with 30 days.

### **Student Rights during Dispute Procedure**

School enrollment of a homeless child or youth will be determined by the parent in the best interest of the child or youth. To the extent feasible, the child or youth will be enrolled in either the school of origin:

- the school last attended by the student when permanently housed; or
- the last school in which the child was enrolled; or
- the school serving the location where the student currently resides

See Collier County Public Schools Dispute Resolution Policy 5111.01 at the District website, [www.collierschools.com](http://www.collierschools.com).

### Important Hotline Numbers

Collier County Information Hotline (211) or (239) 263-411	Parent Home 1(888) 41FAMILY 1(888) 413-2645
Runaway Hotline (Florida) 1 (800) RUNAWAY 1 (888) 786-2929	
Missing Children Information Clearinghouse 1 (888) FLMISSING 1 (800) 621-4000 1 (888) 356-4774	National Runaway Switchboard 1 (800) 621-4000

### Shelters

St. Matthews House 2001 Airport Rd. Naples, FL 34112 239-774-0500	Shelter for Abused Women and Children (239) 775-3862
Immokalee Friendship House 602 West Main St. Immokalee, FL 34142 239-657-4090	Youth Haven (Youth homeless shelter) 239-774-2904

### **COLLIER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS**

Dr. Kamela Patton, Superintendent  
5775 Osceola Trail  
Naples, FL 34109

Karen Stelmacki  
Executive Director, Exceptional Education  
and Student Support Services  
5775 Osceola Trail  
Naples, FL 34109

### **FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

Mr. Skip Forsyth, Director, Homeless  
Education Program  
325 West Gaines Street, Room 352  
Tallahassee, FL 32399-0400  
850-245-0089

Needs Assessment for Students In Transition							
Student Name:		ID#		Age		Grade	
School		Referred by		School contact name			
*If not in FOCUS, student currently lives with:							
Current Status (To be completed by school)							
	Unaccompanied youth		Unstable living situation		Truancy Issues		
	Teen Parent/Pregnant		Parent Guardian issues		Receives Mental Health Services		
	On Probation/DJJ		Siblings attending other schools		Foster Care placement		
	Resides in Shelter		Low Grades		Student in homeless situation		
	Doubled-up living situation		Behavior Issues				
Briefly describe additional pertinent information and <b><i>home language spoken:</i></b>							
Date:							

Current Needs					
	Shelter		School Supplies		Medical Care
	Stable Housing		Tutoring		Dental Care
	Meals		Clothing Voucher/Shoe Voucher		Counseling (Individual)
	Enrollment Forms		Hygiene Items		Counseling (Family)
Assistance with college/financial application process					
Welfare Benefits: SSI, Medical Insurance, Food stamps					
School / ESE Related Issues					
Transportation: To: From:					
Other:					

Liaison Comments upon referral closure
Referral completed by: _____ Date: _____

Return completed form to Hemlal Kafle, Liaison for Homeless Education  
email (pdf) at [kafleh@collierschools.com](mailto:kafleh@collierschools.com)

## HPRP HOUSING RESOURCES LIST

### HOMELESS EMERGENCY SHELTERS

St. Matthew's House:	(239) 774-0500
Shelter for Abused Women & Children	(239) 775-1101 (Naples) (239) 657-5700 (Immokalee)
Immokalee Friendship House	(239) 657-4090
School Board Liaison for Homeless Children	(239) 377-0544 (Caroline Brennan)

### RENT, FOOD, UTILITIES & ASSISSTANCE

Department of Children & Families (Rent & Food Stamps)	(866) 762-2237 (All Collier County)
Catholic Charities (Rent, food & Utilities)	(239) 793-0059 (Naples)
Housing & Human Services	(239) 252-2273
St. Vincent De Paul (Rent, food & Utilities)	(239) 775-1667 (Naples)
Housing Development Corp. (Foreclosure Assistance)	(239) 434-2397 (Naples)
Grace Place (Fo0d Only)	(239) 234-2400 (Golden Gate City)
The Salvation Army (Rent, food & Utilities)	(239) 210-4009 (Naples) (239) 657-2199 (Immokalee)
Youth Haven (Rent)	(239) 774-2904 Ext. 304 (Naples & Immokalee)
Guadalupe Social Services (Rent, food & Utilities)	(239) 657-6242 (Immokalee)
Coalition of Florida Farm Worker Organization	(239) 657-7272 (Immokalee)
Empowerment Alliance (Foreclosure Assistance)	(239) 658-3315 (Immokalee)
Tree of Life (Food Assistance)	(239) 530-2200
New Hope Ministries (Rent, food & Utilities)	(239) 348-0122
Vanderbilt Presbyterian Church (Rent, food & Utilities)	(239) 597-5410
DCF Emergency Financial Asst. for Housing Program	(877) 891-6445
Macedonia Baptist Church (Payment of FPL Final Notice)	(239) 262-4877
Cancer Alliance of Naples (Marianne Rent, Mortgage & Utilities)	(239) 643-4673
Collier County HOPPLA (Rent & Utilities)	(239) 252-5313 (HIV & AIDS Residents only)
FREE Cell phone Service (Any Low income)	(800) SAFELINK or <a href="http://www.safelinkwireless.com">www.safelinkwireless.com</a>

### MEDICAL CARE

Health Department	(239) 252-8200 (Naples) (239) 252-7300 (Immokalee)
Neighborhood Health Clinic	(239) 261-6600
Marion E. Feather Medical Clinic	(239) 658-3000 (Immokalee)
Collier Health Services	(239) 658-3000 (Immokalee)
Physician Led Access Network (PLAN)	(239) 776-3016
Veteran's Office	(239) 252-8448
HIV & AIDS Hotline	(800) 352-2437 (800) 545-7432 (Espanola) (800) 243-7101 (Creole)

### MENTAL HEALTH COUNSELING

Mental Health Association of Southwest Florida	(239) 261-5405
David Lawrence Center (Undocumented patients are treated)	(239) 455-8500
NAMI of Collier County	(239) 431-6824

### EMPLOYMENT

Career & Service Center of SW Florida	(239) 436-4301 (Naples) (239) 658-3300 (Immokalee) (866) 352-2345 (Toll Free State Wide) <a href="http://www.employflorida.com">www.employflorida.com</a>
Collier County Library (Internet & Employment)	(239) 539-0334 (Naples) (239) 657-2882 (Immokalee)
Legal Aid Services	(239) 775-4555