



# **Independence Community School District**

## *Homeless Education Plan*

## Introduction

The 1987 Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act was enacted to confront the problems associated with homelessness in the United States. This program is authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. It was most recently reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The McKinney-Vento Act mandates state action to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education as their non-homeless counterparts.

The McKinney-Vento program is designed to address the problems that homeless children and youth have faced in enrolling, attending and succeeding in school. Homeless children and youth should have access to educational and other services that they need to enable them to meet the same challenging State academic achievement standards to which all students are held. In addition, homeless students may not be separated from the mainstream school environment. States and districts are required to review and undertake steps to revise laws, regulations, practices or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance or success in school of homeless children and youth.

For local schools to comply with legislation related to servicing students experiencing homelessness, they must identify eligible students. The McKinney-Vento Act defines *homeless children and youth* (twenty-one years of age and younger) as:

- Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are:
  - ✓ Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up);
  - ✓ Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
  - ✓ Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
  - ✓ Abandoned in hospitals; or
  - ✓ Awaiting foster care placement.
- 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.
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings.
- Migrant children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

The term *unaccompanied youth* includes a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This would include youth living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, cars, on the streets, or in other inadequate housing. This would also include 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, who have no other housing available.

If a child or youth's living situation does not clearly fall into the situations described above, the local school district should refer to the McKinney-Vento definition of "fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence" and consider the relative permanence of the living arrangements. Determinations of homelessness should be made on a case-by-case basis. In addition, the community and schools should work together to reach homeless families and unaccompanied youth and ensure they are aware of their educational rights. Developing local policies and procedures and reaching out to the community and educational staff who require information on homeless students, and the legal requirements, and supportive practices in servicing homeless students, is critical to successfully fulfill the intent of the McKinney-Vento Act.

## **Local Liaison**

Every school district is required to designate a local liaison for homeless children and youth. The local liaison serves as one of the primary contact between homeless families and school staff, district personnel, shelter workers and other service providers. The liaison coordinates services to ensure that homeless children and youth enroll in school and have the opportunity to succeed academically.

### **Responsibilities for the Local Homeless Education Liaison:**

#### **1. Policies and Procedures**

- Review local policies and procedures that may impact homeless children and youth: e.g., school enrollment, access to school programs.
- Revise local policies and procedures determined to be potential barriers for homeless children and youth.
- Ensure that homeless students are identified by school personnel through coordination with other entities and agencies.

#### **2. Enrollment and Access to Education Services**

- Ensure that homeless families, children and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and Preschool Programs administered by the local district, and referrals to health, mental health, dental and other appropriate services.
- Ensure that homeless students enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in, the schools of the local district.
- Assist children and youth who do not have immunizations or medical records to obtain the necessary immunizations, or immunization records.
- Ensure that parents or guardians are informed of educational and related opportunities that are available to their children and are provided meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education.
- Assist with enrollment dispute resolution cases and ensure they are mediated in accordance with the state's enrollment dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.

### **3. Outreach**

- Ensure that the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including to the school of origin, and that assistance to accessing transportation services is provided. (The school of origin is the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.)
- Post educational rights of homeless children and youth in all schools.
- Post educational rights of homeless children and youth in the community where homeless families and youth may receive services (e.g., shelters, public health offices, libraries, soup kitchens, etc.)
- Inform school personnel, service providers and advocates who work with homeless families of the duties of the liaison.
- Collaborate and coordinate with state coordinators, community service providers, and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youth.

### **4. Unaccompanied Youth**

- Assist unaccompanied youth in placement/enrollment decisions, including considering the youth's wishes in those decisions and providing notice to the youth of the right to appeal such decisions under the enrollment disputes provisions.
- Ensure that unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that might arise over school enrollment and placement.

### **5. Suggested Activities**

- Provide professional development for school district staff to build awareness of the educational needs of homeless students, legal responsibilities of the school and local policies and procedures.
- Provide outreach to community services providers through announcements and dissemination of relevant publications.
- Distribute materials, supplies, clothing, etc. to schools.
- Conduct a needs assessment.
- Conduct an evaluation of the local homeless education program.

## **Identifying Homeless Children and Youth: Best Practices**

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 local district's liaison can coordinate with community service agencies, such as shelters, soup kitchens, food banks, transitional living programs, street outreach teams, drop-in centers, community action agencies, welfare departments, housing departments, public health departments and faith-based organizations to begin to develop a relationship on issues such as the school enrollment process, transportation, and other student services.

The local liaison can work with the building principals and the district's Building Assistance Teams to recognize school absences that may be the result of homelessness. The local liaison can provide these people with information so that they may discreetly refer to eligible students to appropriate services.

The local liaison can use creative techniques to identify unaccompanied homeless youth while respecting their privacy and dignity, such as administering surveys to peers, using enrollment questionnaires or providing specific outreach to areas where eligible students who are out of school might congregate. The local liaison will work with the district's special education social worker to identify homeless preschool children and work to enroll them in our preschool program.

The local liaison will provide a district-wide residency questionnaire to all students upon enrollment. Questionnaires may suggest homelessness situations may be sent to the local liaison for a final determination of homeless status, and, if affirmative, lead to the provision of referrals and other assistance.

The local liaison should avoid using the word "homeless" in initial contacts with school personnel, families, or youth. For most people, the word "homeless" conjures up stereotypical images of adults, but not children or youth in classrooms. School personnel may be unlikely to recognize students who are homeless initially, but often respond affirmatively when asked if they know of students who are staying temporarily with relatives, are staying at campgrounds or in their car, are living in motels, are living with another family temporarily, or have moved several times a year.

## **Standards and Indicators of Quality: Program Evaluation**

Effective education programs for children and youth experiencing homelessness are essential to the closure of the achievement gap. While many programs exist, the effectiveness of these programs cannot be determined without appropriate evaluations. The results of a well-developed, well-implemented evaluation plan provide program personnel information supporting adequate program progress and/or information suggesting program modifications.

An appropriate evaluation plan compares the program to a set of standards and indicators characteristic of high quality programs for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Standards express general characteristics of high quality programs while indicators are subunits of the standards and describe more specific aspects of the program. Reflecting the McKinney-Vento legislation, five standards and their associated indicators were developed to enable local program personnel to evaluate their program with the results leading to effective programmatic decisions.

The following pages have the five standards and indicators listed in detail.

## **Standards and Indicators of Quality for the Evaluation of Local Education Programs for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

- Standard 1:** Within one full day of an attempt to enroll in a school, children and youth experiencing homelessness will be in attendance.
- Descriptor:** The school selected in accordance with this paragraph shall immediately enroll the homeless child or youth, even if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, proof of residency, or other documentation.  
[Sec. 722(g)(3)(I)]\*
- Standard 2:** Pre-K to 12 children and youth experience Homelessness will have stability in school.
- 2.1** Attendance rates will be at or above the relevant district average.
- 2.2** Students will remain in the school of origin for the period of homelessness or, if permanently housed, for the remainder of the school year, unless parents or unaccompanied youth requested transfer to another school.
- Descriptor:** The local education agency serving each child or youth to be assisted under this subtitle shall, according to the child's or youth's best interest continue the child's or youth's education in the school of origin for the duration of the homelessness in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic or during an academic year; or for the remainder of the academic year, if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year.  
[Sec 722(g)(3)(A)(I), 722(g)(3)(A)(I) and (II)]\*
- Standard 3:** Children and youth experiencing homelessness will receive specialized services when eligible.
- 3.1** Preschool children experiencing homelessness will participate in public preschool (Head Start, Even Start, State Pre-K, Special Education, Gifted/Talented, ESL and Title I Preschool Program).
- 3.2** Children and youth experiencing homelessness will receive special education and related services when eligible.
- 3.3** Children and youth experiencing homelessness will receive appropriate services, based on assessment of individual needs, through some combination of resources, including but not restricted to, Title I, McKinney or other funds.



<b>Descriptor:</b>	Each homeless child or youth to be assisted under this subtitle shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected, including the following: transportation services, educational services for which the child or youth meets the eligibility criteria, such as services provided under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965 or similar state or local programs, educational programs for children with disabilities, and educational programs for students with limited English proficiency; programs in vocational and technical education; programs for gifted and talented students, school nutrition programs. [Sec. 722(g)(4)]*
<b>Standard 4:</b>	Parents or persons acting as parents of children or youth experiencing homelessness will participate meaningfully in their children’s education
<b>4.1</b>	Parents or persons acting as parents will have a face-to-face conference with the teacher, guidance counselor, or social worker within 30 days of enrollment.
<b>4.2</b>	Parents or persons acting as parents are provided with individual student reports informing them of their child’s specific academic needs and achievement on academic assessments with state academic achievement standards.
<b>4.3</b>	Parents or persons acting as parents will report monitoring or facilitating homework assignments.
<b>4.4</b>	Parents or persons acting as parents share reading time with their children (i.e., parent reads to child or listens to child read).
<b>4.5</b>	Parents who want parent skills training will attend available programs.
<b>4.6</b>	Parents and guardians will demonstrate awareness of the McKinney rights.
<b>4.7</b>	Unaccompanied youth demonstrate awareness of the McKinney rights.
<b>Descriptor:</b>	Each local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths shall ensure that the parents or guardian of homeless children and youth are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children. [Sec. 722(g)(6)(A)(iv)]*

**Standard 5:** Children and youth in grades 7-12 who are experiencing homelessness will meet their state's academic standards.

**5.1** Performance on standards-based assessments in reading and math will be within or above the proficient range or will show a one-for-one gain.

**5.2** Rates of promotion to the next grade will be at or above the district average.

**5.3** Rates of high school graduation or equivalent will be at or above the district average.

**Descriptor:** Homeless children and youth should have access to the education and other services that such children and youth need to ensure that such children and youth have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State student achievement standard to which all students are held.  
[Sec. 722(4)]\*

**\*2001 McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title X of the No Child Left Behind Act**

# Standards and Indicators of Quality for the Evaluation of Local Education Programs for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Student's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Grade \_\_\_\_\_

Student's ID Number \_\_\_\_\_

1. Within one full day of an attempt to enroll in school, children and youth experiencing homelessness will be in attendance.

Date enrolled \_\_\_\_\_

Date of attendance \_\_\_\_\_

2. Pre-K to 12 children and youth experiencing homelessness will have stability in school.

Attendance Record:

3. Children and youth experiencing homelessness will receive specialized services when eligible.

Services provided:

Title I \_\_\_\_\_

Special Education \_\_\_\_\_

At Risk \_\_\_\_\_

Gifted/Talented \_\_\_\_\_

ESL \_\_\_\_\_

Free/Reduced Lunches \_\_\_\_\_

4. Parents or persons acting as parents of children and youth experiencing homelessness will participate meaningfully in their children's education.

Parent/Teacher Conference:

Dates Held: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Counselor Conference:

Dates Held: \_\_\_\_\_

5. Children and youth in grades 3-12 who are experiencing homelessness will meet their state's academic standards.

Iowa Assessments:

Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Math \_\_\_\_\_

Science \_\_\_\_\_

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Reading \_\_\_\_\_

Math \_\_\_\_\_

Science \_\_\_\_\_

Graduation Date: \_\_\_\_\_