



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

Guidance Related to COVID-19: Education for Homeless Children and Youths Frequently Asked Questions (Updated May 22, 2020)

Background

As a part of the District's response to coronavirus (COVID-19), the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE) is offering this policy guidance document regarding educational supports for students experiencing homelessness.

Scope

This document contains guidance on LEA responsibilities regarding students experiencing homelessness under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) (McKinney-Vento Act or MKV). This document generally constitutes informal guidance and does not impose any additional requirements beyond those included in applicable federal and local law and regulations.

Date Issued

This guidance was issued on April 1, 2020, and will remain in effect until further notice.

Policy Guidance

On March 16, 2020, local education agencies (LEA), including District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS), implemented distance learning for students in response to the Public Health Emergency and State of Emergency declared by Mayor Muriel Bowser on March 11, 2020. Since students will no longer be reporting to schools during this time, OSSE recognizes the potential impact on students experiencing homelessness.

Frequently Asked Questions

Q1. Are LEAs and schools still required to provide students experiencing homelessness with services and supports while schools are closed?

A. If a school or LEA is closed due to COVID-19 and is offering any educational opportunities including distance learning, the McKinney-Vento Act requires LEAs to ensure that students experiencing homelessness have equal access to such opportunities and remove barriers for these students in accessing academic activities. LEAs should utilize their LEA and school-based homeless liaisons to identify students who may be experiencing homelessness.

Q2. How can LEAs and schools support students and families experiencing homelessness during school closures related to COVID-19?

A. Each LEA and school in the District has a [homeless liaison](#). The LEA- and school-based homeless liaisons are responsible for ensuring that students and families experiencing homelessness are informed of educational opportunities, receive necessary educational supplies and services (e.g., transportation assistance, paper, pencils, learning packets, and electronic equipment for online distance learning, if applicable) and obtain

referrals for essential resources such as health, housing, mental health, substance abuse and other appropriate services. For the latest information regarding [food resources](#), [Metrobus routes to DC school meal locations](#), [school resources](#), and other updates from Mayor Bowser related to COVID-19, please visit coronavirus.dc.gov.

Q3. How can LEAs and schools determine which students may be experiencing homelessness to contact them during school closures related to COVID-19?

A. LEA and school homeless liaisons may utilize their LEA's student database system and OSSE's Comprehensive Homeless Student Data Qlik Sense Application to guide outreach to students identified as experiencing homelessness by their LEA and/or The Community Partnership for the Prevention of Homelessness (TCP). Liaisons may also work with designated TCP and Department of Human Services (DHS) staff who serve as educational points of contact for families residing in emergency shelters and transitional living sites.

LEAs should continue to identify students experiencing homelessness and update students' housing status in the LEA's student database system as necessary.

Q4. May LEAs use Title I, Part A funds to purchase necessary items for students experiencing homelessness?

A. Yes, LEAs may use Title I, Part A funds to provide services and supports to students experiencing homelessness, including those in Title I schools. For example, LEAs may choose to use funds to provide such items as school supplies, immunizations, food, medical services, counseling and outreach services. Services provided utilizing Title I, Part A funds must be reasonable and necessary to assist students experiencing homelessness access educational opportunities. Additionally, these funds must only be used when funds or services are not available from other public or private sources, such as the USDA's Seamless Summer Option (SSO) and the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), public health clinics, or local funds used to provide similar services.

Q5. May MKV funds be used to support students experiencing homelessness during the distance learning period?

A. Yes, LEAs and schools may use MKV funds to provide similar supports to students and parents experiencing homelessness that are required to be provided when schools are open. Examples include, but are not limited to:

- Purchasing educational supplies and materials to assist students experiencing homelessness with successfully completing distance learning academic work.
- Purchasing health-related supplies and materials, such as toiletries, feminine hygiene products, cleaning supplies, sanitizer, and other necessary items to promote health and safety.
- Purchasing SmarTrip cards or gas cards to assist students and parents of younger students to travel to:
 - designated food distribution locations;
 - pick up distance learning packets from schools; and
 - other necessary travel as needed on a case-by-case basis.

Any revision to the scope of services or budget is not officially effective until approved by OSSE, but OSSE is committed to expedited approvals whenever possible.

Q6. Will there be an opportunity for LEAs to apply for FY21 MKV grant funding?

A. Yes, a new MKV grant competition is currently scheduled for release as planned in the summer of 2020. OSSE will continue to provide updates on grant releases in the [OSSE Grants Forecast](#), LEA Look Forward, DC Register, and the Office of Partnerships and Grants Services.

Questions?

If you have questions related to this guidance, please contact Nicole Lee-Mwandha, Homeless Education State Coordinator, Homeless Education Program, at Nicole.Lee-Mwandha@dc.gov or (202) 654-6123.

Resources

For resources and additional information on the District of Columbia Government's response to coronavirus (COVID-19), please visit coronavirus.dc.gov.

For the most recent updates regarding DC Public Schools, please refer to the DC Public Schools COVID-19 page found [here](#).

For the most recent updates regarding DC public charter schools, please refer to the DC Public Charter School Board COVID-19 page found [here](#).

For information on the District's shelters, youth drop-in centers, and public benefits updates, please refer to the DC Department of Human Services COVID-19 page found [here](#).

For additional resources, please refer to the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness COVID-19 page found [here](#).