



DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
OFFICE OF THE STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF

EDUCATION

HOMELESS EDUCATION PROGRAM: EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS OF PARENTS & STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Did you know it's your child's right to attend school? Families experiencing homelessness are protected by a federal law called the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. It's important to know the rights of your child to access education.

What are the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness?

Students experiencing homelessness have the right to:

- Enroll, attend classes, and participate in all school activities immediately, even if they do not have their school records, medical records, or any other documents schools ask for during the enrollment process.
- Stay in their school of origin, or the school in which they were last enrolled before becoming homeless, if it is in their best interest to do so for them be successful in school.
- Attend the local school closest to the place where the family currently lives if it is in the best interest of the child or youth.
- Receive transportation assistance to and from school, if needed.
- Receive uniform assistance if wearing uniforms is a requirement of the school.
- Request help from the local homeless liaison for other supports, such as medical, dental, mental, and other health-related services.



What kinds of educational supports are available for children and youth experiencing homelessness?

Every school has a school-based homeless liaison to help families with enrollment, make educational decisions, and provide support to families experiencing homelessness. Some of the supports include school supplies; assistance with medical, dental and other services; and free school meals. The homeless liaison also can set up transportation to and from the school. A list of homeless liaisons is available at <https://osse.dc.gov/service/homeless-education-program-district-columbia-homeless-liaisons-contact-list>.

What is the parent's responsibility?

It is your responsibility, and local law requires you, to ensure that your children ages 5 to 17 are enrolled in and are attending school. If you have trouble identifying the school-based homeless liaison at your child's school or getting your child enrolled, contact OSSE immediately at HEP.OSSE@dc.gov or (202) 654-6123.

What if a dispute arises over school selection or placement?

If a dispute arises over school selection or placement, a school must:

- Admit children or youth experiencing homelessness to the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, until the dispute is resolved.
- Provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written statement of the school placement decision and the appeal rights. The written notice will outline the specific reasons for the school's decision.
- Refer the unaccompanied youth, parent, or guardian to the school liaison, who must carry out the dispute resolution process in a timely manner.
- Ensure disputes that cannot be resolved at the local level are referred to OSSE immediately by email to HEP.OSSE@dc.gov or fax to (202) 299-2136. For additional assistance, call (202) 654-6123.

More about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: The McKinney-Vento (MKV) Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law that protects the educational rights of homeless students. Most recently, MKV was reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA) to ensure that every homeless child receives services of support to eliminate barriers and meet the changing needs in education.

Homelessness Defined:

MKV defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed (permanent), regular, and adequate (acceptable) nighttime residence." The act gives examples of children who would fall under this definition:

- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic (financial) hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds because they do not have any other choices at the present time; are living in emergency or temporary shelter (including DC transitional housing); or are abandoned in hospitals;
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, private or public places not meant for human beings, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or places that are not safe;
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above; and
- Unaccompanied youth, including youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, who qualify as homeless because they live in circumstances described above.

OSSE's Homeless Education Program (HEP) Mission: The mission of the Office of the State Superintendent of Education's (OSSE) Homeless Education Program (HEP) is to make sure that every child and youth experiencing homelessness receives free, appropriate, public educational opportunities; to provide training and support to schools, shelters and the community; and to increase awareness about the issues experienced by families experiencing homelessness. To ensure that families experiencing homelessness are well supported and that appropriate funds are provided to support students, OSSE regularly shares information regarding student status with schools in accordance with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). Web: <https://osse.dc.gov/service/homeless-education-program>

For guidance regarding McKinney-Vento federal guidelines and policies, please contact:

Ms. Nicole Lee-Mwandha, Homeless Education State Coordinator
Nicole.Lee-Mwandha@dc.gov or (202) 654-6123

For assistance with enrollment, transportation, trainings and community outreach, please contact:

Mr. Tasheen Stallings, Homeless Education Program Analyst
Tasheen.Stallings@dc.gov or (202) 478-5927

For assistance with McKinney-Vento grant funding and compliance, please contact:

Ms. Danielle Rollins, Homeless Education Program Analyst
Danielle.Rollins@dc.gov or (202) 741-0255