

Title VII, Subtitle B: Education for Homeless Children and Youth

A. Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B

1. Student Identification (722(g) (1) (B) of the McKinney-Vento Act): Describe the procedures the SEA will use to identify homeless children and youth in the State and to assess their needs.

The Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) has established these identification practices:

- Every school district is required to have a McKinney-Vento liaison that is actively working to identify, work with and advocate for homeless or highly mobile (H/HM) students.
 - Liaisons are trained by the state educational agency (SEA) (i.e., Minnesota Department of Education), and must receive continued training at minimum every three years. Included in this training is information on protocols for the identification of and the needs assessment for H/HM students. Training also includes information on the expectations of consistent and accurate reporting, as well as how to assess the needs of the student.
 - Liaisons, if contacted by a family or being privy to information that a family may be H/HM, utilizes a housing questionnaire to assess the night time residence of the student and/or the family. The liaison also conducts an interview, in person or via phone, to confirm that the family meets eligibility requirements.
 - Once a student is determined to be McKinney-Vento eligible, the liaison then conducts a needs assessment in order to be able to provide the student and family with the appropriate services as required by law. In many cases the services provided go above and beyond the requirements of the act.
2. Dispute Resolution (722(g)(1)(C) of the McKinney-Vento Act): Describe procedures for the prompt resolution of disputes regarding the educational placement of homeless children and youth.

Each school district must create a dispute resolution process. If the dispute is not resolved at the local educational agencies (LEAs)—districts, charters, intermediate districts, education cooperatives—level, the dispute is then under the jurisdiction of the SEA described below:

- The McKinney-Vento liaison, the H/HM youth or parent, or a school district representative other than the liaison completes the dispute resolution form, available on the MDE website.
- The form is transmitted to the SEA McKinney-Vento state coordinator.
- SEA coordinator consults with appropriate systems at the SEA to assess the facts of the case and determine if the initial finding in the status of the student is appropriate. MDE will resolve disputes within 14 days of receiving the dispute resolution form.
- The SEA notifies the LEA and H/HM youth, parent, and/or liaison of the outcome of the dispute resolution process within 14 days of receipt of the dispute resolution form.

3. Support for School Personnel (722(g)(1)(D) of the McKinney-Vento Act): Describe programs for school personnel (including the LEA liaisons for homeless children and youth, principals and other school leaders, attendance officers, teachers, enrollment personnel, and specialized instructional support personnel) to heighten the awareness of such school personnel of the specific needs of homeless children and youth, including runaway and homeless children and youth.

In order to ensure that H/HM and runaway students are receiving appropriate Title I services, the SEA provides a variety of training and technical assistance to LEA staff and administration, as well as technical assistance on an ongoing basis:

- Presentations and written materials provided at annual association conferences for administrators, teachers, school staff and other personnel, early education programs and more.
 - Technical assistance provided to LEAs, and programs such as early childhood as requested as well as at the recommendation of SEA Title I monitors.
 - Recommendations from the working group on education access for homeless children ages 0-4 provided to the 2016-17 Minnesota Legislature encouraging the creation of specific legislation and funding streams for H/HM students and families.
 - Wide dissemination of the *Minnesota Statewide Homeless Study*, conducted every three years (beginning in 2012) by the Wilder Foundation.
 - Ensuring that school staff and administration are familiar with Minnesota statutes that pertain to H/HM students, such as Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.15, under which requires H/HM students are categorically eligible for school readiness programs.
 - A portion of the state's early learning scholarships set aside specifically for H/HM students.
 - Specific training for staff and administration in LEA Early Childhood Family Education to identify and work with H/HM and runaway families and students to remove barriers to enrollment.
 - Local School District Homeless Liaisons are trained to ensure that homeless and runaway youth posters and procedures are available throughout the school community with the updated name and contact information of the district homeless liaison.
4. Responding to youth who run away from foster care, MDE has worked with the Minnesota Association of Runaway Youth Services (MARYS) in order coordinate youth, individuals and youth services provider from around the state to provide training, advocacy, support and technical assistance that increases and enhances the services to youth, families and communities. Community Based Organization youth workers working with their local education agency assist in re-engaging youth with the K-12 system and supports. Access to Services (722(g)(1)(F) of the McKinney-Vento Act): Describe procedures that ensure that:
 - i. Homeless children have access to public preschool programs, administered by the SEA or LEA, as provided to other children in the State;

Coordination of services is a requirement for voluntary prekindergarten programs, per Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.15. Coordination of services efforts ensure that H/HM students and their families have access to comprehensive services. These services include all relevant school district programs, including early childhood special education services and programs serving homeless students and English learners.

In addition, the SEA has instituted a variety of strategies to support young H/HM students and their families:

- School readiness (H/HM students categorically eligible).
- Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE).
- Early learning scholarships set-aside.
- Head Start.
- Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE).
- Early learning scholarships.
- Regional administrators of early learning scholarships.
- Approximately 5 percent slots set aside for families who are experiencing homelessness.
- Application revised to include McKinney-Vento definition to more effectively identify families experiencing homelessness.
- Training provided on McKinney-Vento and importance of increasing outreach in communities to find children and offer services.

- ii. Homeless youth and youth separated from public schools are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services, including by identifying and removing barriers that prevent youth described in this clause from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with State, local, and school policies; and

To ensure that homeless youth who are separated from public schools are identified and accorded equal access, without barriers to full or partial credit, outreach by District Homeless Liaisons is a critical element in trainings at the local, regional and state levels. Outreach procedures are included in the monitoring of McKinney-Vento programs.

Alternative education is designed for students who are at-risk of educational failure, and includes the State-Approved Alternative Programs (SAAP), which are classified as area learning centers (ALC), alternative learning programs (ALP), contracted alternatives, and targeted services for students in kindergarten through grade eight. Alternative programs are year-round and may be offered during the day and after school. They are characterized by having smaller class sizes and using a hands-on/experiential approach to learning.

- iii. Homeless children and youth who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs, if such programs are available at the State and local levels.

McKinney-Vento Liaisons at LEAs are trained to be hypervigilant in assessing all school policies procedures that may pose barriers to McKinney-Vento Act eligible students' participation in all academic and extracurricular activities and programs including magnet schools, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs. The McKinney-Vento Act state coordinator provides technical assistance for districts that have barriers in place when determined by the local educational agency homeless liaison. This remains an ongoing process, as liaisons, LEA staff and administration, and SEA staff continue to work to assess school policies and procedures, both existing and newly enacted, to ensure that they do not pose barriers to H/HM students in accessing academic and extracurricular activities. Following intensive technical assistance to LEAs, monitoring of local programs includes a review of LEAs policies, practices,

procedures and practices to ensure homeless students have access to services/programs comparable to those received by other students.

5. Strategies to Address Other Problems (722(g)(1)(H) of the McKinney-Vento Act): Provide strategies to address other problems with respect to the education of homeless children and youth, including problems resulting from enrollment delays that are caused by—

- i. requirements of immunization and other required health records;

H/HM children are allowed to immediately enroll in school even if they are unable to produce health records, such as immunization records, normally required by the LEA.

- ii. residency requirements;

The SEA ensures that LEA liaisons are trained to understand and follow policy that requires H/HM students be immediately enrolled based primarily on the best interests of the student. Determining the best interests of the student, in general, presumes the school of origin is the best education setting, unless that finding goes against the wishes of the student, guardian or family.

- iii. lack of birth certificates, school records, or other documentation;

The SEA provides training and policy guidance to H/HM liaisons, and other administration and staff at LEAs to ensure that federal law is followed requiring H/HM students be immediately enrolled even if they are unable to provide documentation required for enrollment, including birth certificates, school records or other documentation.

- iv. guardianship issues; or

The SEA trains LEA liaisons to focus on the immediate needs of the student, including enrollment, attendance, participation and transportation, even if guardianship cannot be immediately established.

- v. uniform or dress code requirements.

H/HM liaisons in LEAs, as well as additional staff as necessary, are trained on the appropriate use of Title I, A set-aside funds and general education funds, which includes expenditures for the purchase of clothing items for a H/HM student to meet the school's requirements.

6. Policies to Remove Barriers (722(g)(1)(I) of the McKinney-Vento Act): Demonstrate that the SEA and LEAs in the State have developed, and shall review and revise, policies to remove barriers to the identification of homeless children and youth, and the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth in schools in the State, including barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.

The SEA trains LEA personnel to review policies and procedures to remove barriers to receiving a free and public education on a regular basis, including when new policies/procedures are being developed. A variety of staff receive this training, including pupil accounting secretaries, school district enrollment staff, transportation staff and the H/HM liaison. MDE ensures that that barriers related to outstanding fees, fines or absences are specifically addressed.

7. Assistance from Counselors (722(g)(1)(K)): A description of how youths described in section 725(2) will receive assistance from counselors to advise such youths, and prepare and improve the readiness of such youths for college.

All students in Minnesota, including H/HM students, work with LEA staff to develop a comprehensive plan to prepare for career and/or college after the completion of their secondary education, with the plan development beginning no later than the ninth-grade year. The plan, called a personal learning plan (PLP), provides a comprehensive plan developed to:

- Assist students with meeting all curriculum requirements.
- Emphasizes academic rigor and high expectations.
- Help students identify interests, aptitudes, aspirations and personal learning styles, all which may impact career and/or college choices.
- Set appropriate career and college goals and timelines for meeting the goals.
- Integrate strong academic content and career-focused content.
- Help identify and access appropriate counseling and other supports to ensure students are appropriately prepared for career or college post-graduation.

The PLP must be revised annually at minimum. Additional supports are provided to H/HM students who are unaccompanied to determine if they are eligible to be considered independent for the purposes of postsecondary education, and assisted with college preparation activities such as completing the *Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FASFA)* and providing certification of independent status.