

Madison County Schools

Policy and Procedures for Serving Homeless Students and Unaccompanied Youth Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Madison County Schools (MCS) has adopted the following policy and procedures for identifying, enrolling, and providing service for homeless students and unaccompanied youth (students in transition) in Madison County Schools.

For the purpose of this policy, the term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence as further defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as amended by The No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, and includes:

- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals.
- 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.
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless by above conditions.

The term “unaccompanied youth” includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Identification of Students

1. Educational Rights of Homeless Children and Youth must be posted in a prominent place in the front office in each school in the district.
2. MCS must have a designated McKinney-Vento liaison (district contact).
3. Each school administrator must designate a McKinney-Vento liaison as the building-level (school contact).
4. The district liaison will coordinate training annually for school liaisons to ensure district compliance with the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act.
5. The school liaisons will document training for school personnel within the first four weeks of the academic school year on indicators for identifying students in transition within the school and procedures for forwarding information to the school liaison.
6. School liaisons will lead and coordinate their school’s compliance with this policy.
7. The school liaison will forward enrollment forms and any information on students identified as homeless (in transition) to the district liaison.
8. The district liaison and school liaisons will maintain ongoing collaboration to assist and provide services to students in transition.

School Selection

The term “school of origin” refers to the school the student attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including preschool and a designated receiving school at the next grade level for a feeder school. To the extent feasible, MCS is committed to keeping homeless students and unaccompanied youth in their schools of origin, or students may attend any grade-appropriate school in attendance zone of MCS in which they are actually living. Students may remain in their schools of origin the entire time they are in transition or until the end of any academic year. The same applies if a child or youth loses his or her housing during the school year or between academic years.

Students have the right to remain in the school of origin for the duration of their homelessness, if it is their best interest, even if the child's homelessness extends over multiple school years. If a student moves into permanent housing during the school year, the student can finish that academic year in the school of origin. In addition, homeless students who become permanently housed during the school year continue to be eligible for Title I services and free meals for the remainder of the school year.

The decision about which school a student should attend is based on the student's best interest and should be re-evaluated at the beginning of each school year.

Enrollment

Neither this policy nor the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act is intended to circumvent other district policies:

1. School personnel's first effort to enroll students in MCS is to follow regular registration procedures and to use the district-wide registration material. However, **at the time of registration**, if a parent/guardian or youth **claims "homeless status," or if questions arise or information is provided** regarding inability to meet regular district registration requirements **due to the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless student and unaccompanied youth** referenced in this policy, **the school's designated McKinney-Vento liaison should be called in to complete the registration process.**
2. Homeless students and unaccompanied youth must be *enrolled immediately, allowing them to attend classes and participate fully in school activities.
3. The school liaison must provide parents/guardian or unaccompanied youth a completed Madison County Schools Enrollment Status Form and inform them of services that are available under the McKinney-Vento Act (See Services).
4. The school liaison must ensure the student's homeless status in the district's Student Administration Management (SAM) system is labeled upon enrollment and unlabeled upon withdrawal.

**Enrolled is defined as attending classes and participating fully in school activities, even when required documentation is not provided or deadlines have been missed.*

Disputes

1. If a dispute arises over enrollment, the student(s) will be admitted immediately to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending final resolution of the dispute.
2. The school where the dispute arises will provide the parent or unaccompanied youth a completed MCS Enrollment Status Form, which documents the school's decision, the right to appeal, and the referral process.
3. All disputes, whether over services or enrollment, which are not resolved at the school level must be referred to the district liaison for resolution.
4. The district liaison will resolve the dispute as expeditiously as possible. The parent or unaccompanied youth will be given every opportunity to participate meaningfully in the resolution of the dispute.
5. The school district will provide the parent or unaccompanied youth a written explanation of the decision.
6. The district liaison will keep records of all disputes and resolutions.
7. The parent or unaccompanied youth may appeal the school district's decision as outlined in the state's dispute resolution process.

Services

Students in transition will be provided all services for which they are eligible, comparable to services offered to other students in the selected school, including the following:

- Special education and related services
- Gifted and talented programs
- Before-and after-school programs
- Vocational and technical education programs
- Programs and services for English learners
- Preschool education
- Title I, Part A services (regardless of which school attended)
- Participation in the USDA Lunch Program (free meals)
- Participation in state- and district-wide assessments and accountability systems
- Coordination of services (district, state, and local agencies)
- Transportation: MCS will work cooperatively with parents to provide and/or coordinate transportation for students in transition.

Legal References

McKinney-Vento Assistance Act

Date Adopted: 11-2-2020