



McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance & Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care

Plymouth Public Schools

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance & Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care

The regulations are similar, yet there some distinctions between the two.

Regarding this presentation:

- Slides 4 – 10 apply to McKinney-Vento students
- Slides 12 -20 apply to Foster Care students
- Slide 21 provides a brief comparison between the two

McKinney-Vento

Homeless Assistance



The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

- The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) ensures homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths. It has most recently been reauthorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA).
- The McKinney-Vento Act mandates a state coordinator in every state, a homeless education liaison in every school district, outlines the rights of homeless children and youth, defines homelessness, and requires collaboration and coordination across agencies and service providers.
- The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (ESE) assists school districts, homeless families, unaccompanied homeless youth, and homeless service providers in the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act.

Definitions

The following terms are defined in the McKinney-Vento Act:

Homeless children and youths: individuals who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**. It includes:

1. Children and youths 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; or are abandoned in hospitals.
2. Children and youths 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.
3. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
4. Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

Definitions

- **Enroll** and **enrollment**: attending classes and participating fully in school activities.
- **School of origin**: the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled, including a preschool. When a child or youth completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the school of origin includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools.
- **Unaccompanied youth**: a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

School Placement, Transportation and Enrollment

Homeless students have the right to remain enrolled in their school of origin and receive transportation or immediately enroll in the school district where they are temporarily residing.

School Placement

School placement determinations must be based on the best interest of the homeless student. In making decisions regarding best interests, school districts must:

- Presume keeping the student in the school of origin until the end of the year in which the student obtains permanent housing is in the student's best interest except when doing so is contrary to the request of the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth;
- Consider student-centered factors related to the student's best interest including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless students, school placement of siblings, giving priority to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.

For homeless students who meet the relevant eligibility criteria, districts must remove barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet schools, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, on-line learning, and charter school programs.

School districts must adopt policies and practices to ensure that transportation is provided, at the request of the parent or guardian (or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison), up to one hour to and from the school of origin. Furthermore:

- if the homeless student continues to live in the area served by the district in which the school of origin is located, that district must provide or arrange transportation if needed;
- if the homeless student moves to an area served by another district, though continuing his or her education at the school of origin, the district of origin and the district in which the student resides must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and costs for transportation to the school of origin; and
- if the districts cannot agree upon such a method, the responsibility and costs must be shared equally.

Enrollment

School districts must immediately enroll homeless students in school to provide educational stability and avoid separation from school for days or weeks while documents are located. Therefore, homeless education liaisons must ensure that:

- students who chose to enroll in school where they are temporarily residing must be enrolled immediately, even if they do not bring the records usually required for enrollment with them;
- if a homeless student arrives without records, the previously attended school district is contacted and the required records requested;
- that homeless students are attending school while the records are being requested;
- districts remove barriers to homeless students receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school; and
- information about a homeless student's living situation shall be treated as a student education record and not be deemed to be directory information and therefore cannot be shared with the public including landlords.

Enrollment

- ESE is aware that this requirement may constitute a departure with respect to school districts' enrollment policies. The **immunization statute**, G.L. c. 76§ 15, generally requires students to provide proof of immunization prior to enrollment. Since McKinney-Vento is a federal law, its requirements override the state immunization law. However, it should be noted that the immunization law allows, in the absence of a Department of Health declared epidemic or emergency, the enrollment of students who have not been immunized if they have religious objections to immunization. Moreover, the Department has consulted with the Department of Public Health (DPH) regarding this issue and DPH agrees that, in the absence of an emergency or epidemic of disease, the health risk of enrolling homeless students prior to receiving proof of immunization is minimal.

Educational Stability for Students in
Foster Care



Educational Stability for Students in Foster Care

- Required by the federal (2015) Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)
- Complements the 2008 Fostering Connections Act
- Promotes Educational Stability
- Promotes Collaboration and Coordination among ESE, Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Districts

Guidance

(found at www.doe.mass.edu/sfs/foster/)

Developed jointly by the Department of Elementary & Secondary education (DESE) and the Department of Children & Families (DCF)

- **Educational Rights of Students in Foster Care**
 - School of Origin
 - Transportation
 - Best Interest Determination
 - Immediate Enrollment
- **Foster Care Points of Contact (POCs)– Roles and Responsibilities**
 - DESE
 - DCF
 - Districts

ESSA Definition – Students in Foster Care

- Students who are in:
 - 24-hour substitute care, placed away from their parents or guardians, and for whom the Department of Children and Families (DCF) has placement and care responsibilities.
 - Includes students previously identified as “awaiting foster care” (in emergency, short term placements) under McKinney-Vento.
 - Foster homes include, but are not limited to:
 - Group homes, foster homes, kinship foster homes, STARR, Transitional care units (TCUs).

School of Origin

- School the student was attending when placed in foster care, or at the time of a subsequent change in foster care placement.
- To promote educational stability, students should remain enrolled in and continue to attend their school of origin, *unless*, after a best interest determination, it is decided to be in their best interest not to.
- Students in foster care have a right to remain in their school of origin for the duration of their time in foster care or until all grades in the school are completed.

Best Interest Determination

- Decisions about which school a student will attend should be made **collaboratively**, and consider a wide variety of factors.
- Should include those in the best position to understand the student's unique needs, including:
DCF, the student (as appropriate), the student's family and/or foster family (and if different, the person authorized to make educational decisions on behalf of the student), the school and district of origin, and (when different) the local district where the student is placed.
- Best interest determinations should focus on the needs of each individual student and take into account a variety of factors. Every effort should be made to reach agreement regarding the appropriate school placement of a student in foster care. However, if there is disagreement regarding school placement for a student in foster care, DCF will finalize the best interest determination.
- When DCF and the involved district(s) cannot agree about whether it is in the student's best interest to remain in the school of origin or to enroll and attend locally, and DCF makes a final decision that the district cannot accept, the district can seek review of DCF's decision by utilizing a Foster Care School Selection Dispute Resolution Process established by ESE and DCF.

Transportation

- Districts and DCF must collaborate to establish policies and procedures to ensure that students who need transportation *to remain in their school of origin* get it.
- Absent another agreement, **districts of origin** are responsible for providing transportation up to one hour to and from the school of origin (districts should document all costs associated with this transportation).

Immediate Enrollment

- If determined to be in a student's best interest to attend school locally (where placed in foster care), the local school district must enroll immediately*
- With or without documentation, including:
 - Academic, health, discipline and/or special education records
- Notice to LEA (from DCF), includes:
 - Emergency contact, residence, social worker, record release, transportation needs, etc.
- District POCs should initiate records transfer, help facilitate transition

**Note: If there is no change in the school the student is attending, there should be no change in enrollment.*

Foster Care Points of Contact (POC)

- State
 - DESE has a POC
- School Districts
 - All districts have a foster care POC
 - Update ESE Directory Profiles through district Directory Administrator
 - *Note: This defaults to list the Superintendent.*
- DCF
 - Area Office Director will serve as local POCs

Local Foster Care Points of Contact – Roles and Responsibilities

To help ensure that students in foster care:

- Are identified and supported through coordination between districts and DCF;
- Are enrolled in and regularly attending school; and
- Have full and equal opportunity to succeed in school and to meet the same challenging state academic standards as other students, and to receive educational services for which they are eligible.

Summary: Removing Barriers

McKinney-Vento/Homelessness

- School Placement: Best Interest
 - Parent/Guardian: final decision
 - DESE: Dispute Resolution Process
- Immediate Enrollment
- Transportation to and from school
- When a child or youth completes the final grade level served by the school of origin, the school of origin includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools


Foster Care

- School Placement: Best Interest
 - DCF: final decision
 - DESE: Dispute Resolution Process
- Immediate Enrollment
- Transportation to and from school
- Can remain in their school of origin for the duration of their time in foster care or until all grades in the school are completed

Reporting Form

(found at the Plymouth Public Schools, Student Support Services website)

Sean X. Halpin, Ed.D.
Director of Student Support Services
shalpin@plymouth.k12.ma.us
Lauren M. Cohen
Secretary
lcohen@plymouth.k12.ma.us


PLYMOUTH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Student Support Services
Plymouth Public Schools
11 Lincoln Street
Plymouth, MA 02360
508-234-5886 TEL.
508-430-4485 FAX

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act & Foster Care Student Reporting Form
This form should be filed to Student Support Services (Homeless Education Liaison) immediately upon becoming aware that a child/family is displaced or a youth is unaccompanied as defined by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act or if a child is placed, or known to be, in foster care. A copy of this form should be filed in the student's permanent file.

Student Information
Name of Student: _____ Age: _____ Grade: _____
SASID: _____ DOB: _____
Name of Parent/Guardian: _____ School Now Attending: _____
Telephone # of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date of Homelessness or Foster Care: _____

Known School-aged Family Members:

Name	School	Age	Grade
_____	_____	_____	_____
_____	_____	_____	_____

Nature of Displacement (*required)
☐ Shelter
☐ Doubled-up (sharing the housing of others due to a loss of housing, economic hardship)
☐ Unsheltered (cars, buses, campgrounds, abandoned buildings, substandard/inadequate housing)
☐ Hotel/motel
*Unaccompanied Youth (not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian) ☐ Yes ☐ No
☐ Foster Care
☐ Unknown: (explain): _____

Residence
Current primary nighttime residence: _____
Last residence prior to being displaced: _____
Last school attended prior to being displaced: _____

Special Education
Does this child receive special education services? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If "yes", please explain: _____

Transportation
Does this child require transportation to/from school? ☐ Yes ☐ No
If "yes", please explain: _____

Name of Person Completing This Form: _____
Relationship to Student: _____
Signature of Person Completing this Form: _____ Date: _____
(Date Permanent Address Located: _____ Address: _____)

The Plymouth Public Schools does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religious creed, national origin, sex, gender identity, sexual orientation, genetic information, ancestry, status as a veteran or U.S. uniformed military service member, disability, or age in admission to, treatment in, or employment in its services, programs, and activities.
Page 1 of 2

School personnel must:

- Complete the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act & Foster Care Student Reporting Form* for any student who is found to be homeless or in foster care at any time during the school year.
- Send completed form to the Student Support Services Department.
- Student Support Services will assist with answering questions and providing services and/or school transportation.
- A new form is required each school year for each student (even if the student was homeless or in foster care the prior year).

Questions?

Please contact Student Support Services
508-224-5086 TEL
508-830-4485 FAX

Sean Halpin, Ed.D.
Director of Student Support Services

- Homeless Education Liaison
- Foster Care Point of Contact

Thank you

