

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act

Definition of “Homeless”

Both Illinois and federal law define “homeless.” Homeless students include, but are not limited to, children or youth who are: sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (commonly referred to as being “doubled up”); 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; are awaiting foster care placement; are staying in public or private places not ordinarily used as sleeping accommodations; are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings; or are otherwise not residing in a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. There is no specific time limit on how long a child or youth can be considered homeless. Whether a child or youth meets the definition of homeless depends on the living situation and the individual circumstances.

Primary Duties of School Districts

All Illinois school districts are LEA’s within the meaning of McKinney-Vento and must comply with its provisions. Among the most important responsibilities for LEA’s are the following:

- to allow and promote access of homeless children, youth and families in all programs and activities offered by the school (including preschool, kindergarten, after school programs, etc.) and to refrain from any segregation, discrimination or stigmatization of such students;
- wherever possible, and consistent with the wishes of the parent or guardian, to keep a homeless child or youth at his or her “school of origin” as defined in state and federal law;
- to adopt a policy and practice for providing appropriate transportation services to enable homeless children and youth to attend the school of origin; and
- to immediately enroll all homeless students in free breakfast and lunch programs and to waive any of the fees or charges that are subject to waiver under the Illinois fee-waiver rules.

Who to Contact for More Information

If you have questions about enrolling homeless children or providing services, please contact the following:

- Hillsboro CUSD #3 Homeless Liaison Kyle Hacke at 217-532-2942 or khacke@hillsboroschools.net
- Christian-Montgomery County Regional Office of Education at 217-532-9591
- Illinois State Board of Education Information Hotline at 1-800-215-6379
- www.homelessed.net