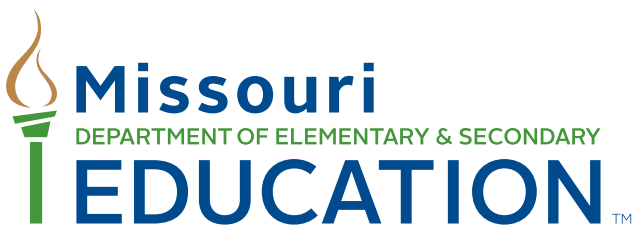




Educating Missouri's Homeless Children

The McKinney-Vento Act, part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, guarantees homeless children and youths an education equal to what they would receive if not homeless.



Who is Homeless?

(Adapted from the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001 – Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, Sec. 725)

The term *homeless children and youths* –

- means individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.
- includes:
 - 1) children and youths who are sharing the housing of others due to a loss of housing, an economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or campgrounds due to a lack of alternative 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, regular sleeping accommodations 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.
 - 4) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this definition because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses 1 through 3.

If the residence is not fixed, regular and adequate, it is considered a homeless situation.

Educational Rights

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, children in homeless situations have:

- the right to immediate enrollment in school even if they lack the paperwork normally required for enrollment.
 - the right to attend school at their school of origin (if feasible and requested by the parent) or at the school in the attendance area where the family or youth is currently residing.
 - the right to receive transportation to the school of origin if requested by the parent.
 - the right to services comparable to those received by housed schoolmates including transportation and supplemental educational services.
 - the right to attend school along with children not experiencing homelessness. Segregation based on a student's status as homeless is strictly prohibited.
 - the right to have their rights posted in all schools and in other places in the community.
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Homeless Coordinator

In accordance with the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act of 2001, every school district must designate a board-approved homeless coordinator. Homeless coordinators shall ensure that:

- homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
- homeless children and youths enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, schools of that local educational agency.
- homeless families, children and youths receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start and Even Start programs and preschool programs administered by the local educational agency, as well as referrals to health-care services, dental services, mental health services and other appropriate services.
- parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful ways to participate in the education of their children.

- public notices of the educational rights of homeless children and youths are disseminated where such children and youths receive services under this act (schools, family shelters, soup kitchens and other appropriate places).
 - enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with all guidelines set forth in the act.
 - parents or guardians of homeless children or youths, and any unaccompanied youths, are fully informed of all transportation services (including transportation to the school of origin) as described in the act, and are assisted in accessing transportation to the school that is selected in accordance with the act.
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Dispute Resolution

If a student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by a parent or guardian, the school district must provide a written explanation of both its decision and the right to appeal (whether the parent or guardian does or does not dispute the placement).

If a conflict arises between the parent or guardian and the school district about the enrollment or placement of a homeless child or youth, a written explanation of the district's decision must be provided to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth. A written explanation of the district's decision must also be provided if a parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth disputes a school placement or enrollment decision.

Whenever a dispute occurs, the student must be admitted immediately to the school of choice while the dispute is being resolved. The school must refer the student, parent or guardian to the homeless coordinator to carry out the dispute-resolution process as expeditiously as possible. Homeless coordinators must ensure that the dispute-resolution process is followed for unaccompanied youths.

A copy of the Standard Complaint Resolution Process can be found online at <http://dese.mo.gov/divimprove/fedprog/discretionarygrants/homeless/Complaint%20Procedure.pdf>.

Services & Opportunities

Children and youths in homeless situations are entitled to services comparable to those offered to other students. These include, but are not limited to, services for children and youths with disabilities, programs for students with limited English proficiency, vocational and technical education programs, and programs for gifted and talented students. Children and youths who are homeless are also eligible for school nutrition programs sponsored by the U.S. Department of Agriculture and for services under Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that target students most at risk of failing in school.

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Call Missouri's Homeless Coordinator at (573) 522-8763