McKinney-Vento Procedures

**2024-2025**

# Purpose

The McKinney-Vento-Vento program is designed to address the problems that homeless children and youth face in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. Under this program, State educational agencies (SEAs or school district's) must ensure that each homeless child and youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education - including a public preschool education - as other children and youth.

Homeless children and youth should have access to the educational and other services that they need to enable them to meet the same challenging State student academic achievement standards to which all students are held.

In addition, homeless students may not be separated from the mainstream school environment.

States and districts are required to review and undertake steps to revise laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youth.

# Enrollment/Identiﬁcation

The McKinney-Vento-Vento Act requires that homeless children and youth are identiﬁed by school personnel and through coordination with other entities and agencies. The purpose of identiﬁcation is to oﬀer appropriate services to the family, child or youth.

## How we identify:

* Coordination with schools and community agencies is an essential identiﬁcation strategy.
* Self identiﬁcation
* School Registration is on-line and asks every family about their current living situation.
* If the family marks any of the situations that might indicate McKinney-Vento, the registrar at each school site will send the information to the McKinney-Vento contact who will then follow up with the family or student.
* Educator to McKinney-Vento-Contact Referral System

If the family or student qualiﬁes for McKinney-Vento, the school McKinney-Vento contact sends a McKinney-Vento enrollment form the District Liaison who then veriﬁes their status and enters the student into the database. Once a student qualiﬁes they will automatically be eligible for free meals, all fees waived and Title I services and supports.

The school contact will continue building a relationship with the student and family to assess educational barriers and provide families/students with the resources and referrals they need.

* Schools must *immediately* enroll children and youth in homeless situations, even when records normally required for enrollment are not available (ie, immunizations, previous school records, proof of residency).
* If a student does not have health records, the school will immediately enroll them and then the McKinney-Vento Contact will work with the family to obtain the necessary documents.
* It is illegal to require proof of residency that will delay immediate enrollment. If the family meets the deﬁnition of homeless, they lack a ﬁxed residence and cannot be required to produce a proof of residency.
* **Immediate enrollment is deﬁned** as “attending classes and participating fully in school activities”.
* In the case that the main registrar is out of the oﬃce, the school needs to have multiple people educated and able to enroll students to ensure ‘immediate enrollment’ happens.
* Changing schools signiﬁcantly impedes students’ academic and social progress by 4-6 months. Students may stay in their school or origin, if feasible and in their best interest.
  + **Deﬁnition of school of origin:** the school the student attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the student was last enrolled.
  + Students have the right to remain in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, even if the child’s homelessness extends over multiple school years. In addition, if a student moves into permanent housing during the school year, the student can ﬁnish that academic year in the school of origin.

§ If a student receives permanent housing during the school year outside of their school of origin’s neighborhood, the school of origin becomes schools of choice for the following year. The student will need to apply for school of choice OR go to their local school. It is *best practic*e to let the student stay at the same school after receiving stable housing. The student will need to ﬁll out the school of choice application and be approved by the principal.

* **Exception to this polic**y: if a student that was homeless their junior year of high school or 7th grade year etc, and then received permanent housing during the school year- that student can ﬁnish out their last year at the same school.
* If a student becomes homeless, enrolls in a new school near temporary housing, and then moves again to a third location the school of origin can be *either* the school the student originally attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled.

# Timeframe

There is no time limit for how long a family can be homeless. Homelessness can last a short period or an extended period. Once a family is identiﬁed as McKinney-Vento, they will remain McKinney-Vento for the remainder of the school year even if they receive housing. The reason for this is we know that it takes a family a lot more than housing to completely stabilize. The only reason a student would be dropped from McKinney-Vento is if they moved out of the school district.

At the beginning of every new school year, the McKinney-Vento contact at each school will connect with the previous year’s McKinney-Vento families and review the students’ eligibility status and factors to see if circumstances have changed. The previous McKinney-Vento students will remain on the Free lunch list for the ﬁrst 30 days of school.

* The Law requires school districts to keep homeless students in their schools of origin to the extent feasible, unless it is against the parent or guardian’s wishes.
* Students are also permitted to remain in their schools of origin for the *duration* of their homelessness and until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing. **This means that if a family is still going to be in the same situation over the summer, they do not have to school of choice.** The McKinney-Vento contact will put in a request for carry-over transportation. See transportation section for details.

# Transportation

* + If a McKinney-Vento student has moved from their school of origin, the school district is obligated to provide transportation to keep the student in the same school for the academic year or for the duration of their homelessness, **if it is in the best interest of the student *and* feasible for the district.** It is not a guarantee, but the school district will make their best eﬀort after examining all options.
  + A transportation request can take up to a week and a half to set up, therefore please conﬁrm that the family will be at the address for at least 3 weeks at the time of the request. Requests submitted before Wednesday at 12pm on any given week will be routed to start the following Monday. Requests submitted after Wednesday at 12 will be routed the following Monday (12 days out).
  + Before you submit bus requests please remember to update addresses in the database for student and siblings.
  + There is no need to submit the names of siblings who do not need busing. Please only submit names/IDS for students that need McKinney-Vento busing setup.
  + If an existing bus stop exists, a Bus Pass can be issued out, so that students can start riding sooner. If you're aware of an existing bus stop that services the neighborhood that your request is in, be sure to mention that in your request so that we can expedite routing.
  + Youth/families need to be able to provide transportation while waiting for a school district bus route to be implemented. When feasible, the school district will provide other methods of transportation while waiting.
  + Integrated Services trumps McKinney-Vento-Vento, and McKinney-Vento trumps English Language Acquisition in terms of transportation considerations.

## For non Bus Pass eligible routes:

* + Bus routes and details are available on designated computer system on XXdays after the system updates. Run the Secondary or Elementary bus roster report with the student ID. The report will give you the route # and pick up/drop oﬀ details and times for the student.
  + All McKinney-Vento Contacts should also have professional access to the database, where you can also check working routes to see if a bus has been scheduled for the following week.
  + Transportation also sends out bus route info via XX for all new routes that are set up each week – so families and students should be getting that info via those channels as well. They can also use the designated bus App to check on scheduled routes and get real time data about their student’s bus!

## Other Options:

* + Gas vouchers may be available. Limited supply. The McKinney-Vento Contact must submit the ‘Assistance Request’ form to the Program Specialist for approval.
  + Mileage Reimbursement - Guardian needs to ﬁll out the reimbursement form, the McKinney-Vento Contact will attach the student's attendance and submit it to the Program Specialist for approval. Funds are limited, so this is always the last option.
    - School districts will only reimburse the family for the days the student attended school.
    - School districts will reimburse the family at the district rate.

## Additional Information:

* + If McKinney-Vento district staﬀ has deemed it not in the best interest of the child or not feasible to provide transportation to the student’s school of origin, the guardian(s) will receive a written explanation with the State Coordinators contact information in the event they choose to appeal.
  + If there is a Domestic Violence situation and for protection, the family’s address needs to be hidden from the database, the family can list the school's address as their home address in that system. Transportation will need to know the real address so they can pick the students up but will know why it is not listed in the database and will not give the real address out to anyone.
  + If the students need to be picked up or dropped oﬀ at a babysitter’s home instead of their home address, we can give transportation the address and say it’s a babysitter’s address instead of their home address. That way the address in the database can remain their home address but will be a diﬀerent address from where the students are getting picked up/dropped oﬀ via the school district transportation system.
  + A family can apply for district transportation once they have moved after the ﬁrst day of the school year. They must be attending a district school and then moved out of the school of origin’s neighborhood zone. The family can choose to go to their new local school or their school of origin. If they choose to stay at their neighborhood school, district transportation department and McKinney-Vento staﬀ will make their best eﬀort to provide transportation. If it is feasible, AND in the best interest of the student, transportation will be provided within our usual transportation policy.

# Assistance Requests

\*We process assistance requests on Tuesdays and Thursdays

* A McKinney-Vento Assistance Request form will be ﬁlled out by the McKinney-Vento Contact at the school and submitted to the school's Program Specialist.
* The Program Specialist will review the request, ﬁrst checking into resources in the community. If there are no community resources available for the request, the Program Specialist will approve the request and send it forward to Director LCE for approval.
* The McKinney-Vento Contact will be notiﬁed on how they will receive the funds.

## If you are applying for King Soopers or Walmart Voucher :

* + We will provide you with a Language, Culture and Equity (LCE) voucher acceptance form that we need signed by the person receiving the voucher as well as signed by you. This is veriﬁcation that they indeed received the voucher. This will need to be returned to your program specialist via email, in person or through district mail.
  + In addition to the LCE voucher acceptance form, we will provide you with a self-addressed stamped envelope for the recipient to return the original receipt (for either the King Soopers gas voucher or Walmart voucher) to our oﬃce and or cell phone number to text the receipt to.
  + The self-addressed envelope needs to be given to the person who is receiving the voucher. They will need to put a receipt in the envelope and put it in the mail.
  + You will need to verbally communicate with whomever is receiving the voucher that in order to receive any future services they will need to provide a receipt.
  + You will also need to communicate with them that it is not appropriate to use this voucher for things such as junk food, bullets, cigarettes, video games, alcohol, etc.

\*For any referrals or communication with an agency or person outside of the school district, you must ﬁll out with the family or UHY a district third party release form.

# McBackPacks (weekend food packs)

## Please submit referrals for 2023-2024 by clicking on this link and following the instructions:

**There will only be one type of McBackpack bag.** This bag typically feeds 3-4 people. It weighs about 8 pounds.

## Required Referral Form:

The **NEW** link for 2023-2024 referral form is above. A referral is required for each food bag requested. Example: One food bag for a family with 2 young children requires one referral. For a larger family, you may want to request 2 bags. This requires 2 referrals (one for each of two students). Our contact will respond to your referral generally within 24 hours.

**Referral Form Deadlines:** Food bags will be delivered to schools on Monday afternoons. Referrals must be received by 5:00 P.M. Friday to receive a bag the following week.

**Canceling an order for a speciﬁc bag:** Bag cancellations or holds are also due by 5:00 P.M. on the Friday prior to delivery. Write our contact stating that you are canceling a food bag or putting all or part of your bags on hold for a period of time. Please include how many bags you are expecting to receive the following week to ensure our records match yours.

## Additional Information:

**Behaviors and/or physical attributes that may indicate chronic hunger and/or food insecurity include, but are not limited to:** Extreme hunger on Monday mornings; quickly eating all of the food served and asking for more; asking when the next meal/snack will be served; regularly asking teacher for food; saving/hoarding/stealing food to take home or asking students for food they don’t want; commenting about not having enough food at home; frequent absences and/or tardiness; anxiousness and lack of concentration; low energy or sleeping in class; chronic sickness; chronically dry/itchy eyes; headaches; puffy/swollen skin, spoon-shaped fingernails.

**Our partners at the Food Bank X need to be able to provide information for funding sources and grants** in order to effectively support the McBackpack Program. This is why it is critical that a referral form be completed for **each** food bag. The process is confidential; names will be kept **only** at the schools. **Please do not include any names on the referral**.

# Early Childhood

School District Families are welcome to register for preschool at X. The student must be 3 years or older by September 15th. Families that are McKinney-Vento need to apply for the no- cost preschool and state that they are homeless. McKinney-Vento students will have priority. The family may

also call xxx-xxx-xxxx and state they are McKinney-Vento and would like to ﬁnd out about enrolling in the no-cost preschool.

## \*\*\* The Family must go through Early Childhood to receive district transportation.

**\*\*\*School of origin does apply to students enrolled in Early Childhood.**

**Insert early childhood link here.**

# Unaccompanied youth

**Unaccompanied homeless youth are youth experiencing homelessness while not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.** Being both homeless and unaccompanied leaves youth fending for themselves in a world where they are vulnerable to a myriad of potentially life-threatening dangers and temptations. Most of these young people have left home due to severe family dysfunction, including abuse and neglect.

## Please Note:

* + McKinney-Vento-Vento eligibility determinations are based on the youth's current living situation, not the circumstances that caused the student to leave home.
  + An unaccompanied homeless youth is eligible for services regardless of whether the student was asked to leave the home or *chose to leave* due to conditions at home.
  + While it can be easy to consider the reason a youth left home frivolous—that the youth has a

perfectly good home or that the youth simply needs to abide by the rules set by the student’s parents – there may be other circumstances we are unaware of that warrant the youth being out of the home at this time.

* + Sometimes the “rest of the story” is never known by school staﬀ as the youth may not be willing to disclose, is uncomfortable or there are embarrassing details.
  + Ultimately, regardless of your understanding of all the details that led to a student being unaccompanied and homeless, your responsibility under the McKinney-Vento-Vento Act is to ensure the student has an equal opportunity to attend and succeed in school.

In addition to the provisions that apply to all homeless students, the McKinney-Vento-Vento Act includes the following provisions speciﬁcally for unaccompanied homeless youth:

* + Unaccompanied homeless youth **shall be immediately enrolled without proof of guardianship**
  + During a dispute over school selection or enrollment, unaccompanied homeless youth shall receive a written statement explaining the school’s decision, the youth’s right to appeal the decision, and a referral to the local liaison.
  + Local liaisons shall assist unaccompanied homeless youth in
    - selecting a school of attendance and enrolling in school
    - requesting transportation to and from the school of origin
    - enrolling in school immediately while disputes are resolved.
  + Schools can often be the one place of stability, safety and support in the tumultuous lives of these students.

## Disciplinary Situations for Unaccompanied Youth:

The McKinney-Vento-Vento Act does not provide immunity from normal school disciplinary guidelines. Homeless students are subject to the same rules as their housed peers. However, when behaviors are directly related to a student’s homelessness (such as, in some instances, being tardy or absent), the youth should not be penalized, as the law states that homeless students cannot be stigmatized on the basis of their homelessness. Work with your program specialist if a situation should arise.

**When you have identiﬁed a youth at your school who is living in this type of situation, you can contact your site's McKinney-Vento District Support Person to have them come meet one-on-one with the student to discuss their barriers, resources, and education.**

# Caregiver Form

There are times children and youth may not be living with their parents or legal guardians and they are enrolling in school or want to participate in after-school programs or other activities. Examples of this would be when a child or youth is sent to live with a relative or friends temporarily due to a homeless living situation, or maybe a youth has been forced to leave home due to abuse or is on their own for other reasons. These child/youth may qualify as an unaccompanied homeless youth under McKinney-Vento-Vento.

The deﬁnition of an unaccompanied homeless youth is a youth not in physical custody of a parent or guardian AND who meets the deﬁnition of homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act.

## A few important things that the law states:

* + School districts are required to enroll students experiencing homelessness immediately, even if they lack required documents.
  + Enrollment is deﬁned as attending classes and participating fully in school activities, including extracurricular.
  + Schools must remove any barriers to enrollment, including proof of guardianship.
  + Unaccompanied youth who are on their own must be enrolled in school immediately, even if there is not a power of attorney (POA) or caregiver form on ﬁle.
  + There is not an age restriction for a child/youth to qualify as an unaccompanied homeless youth.

A caregiver form may be used when you have a student who qualiﬁes as an unaccompanied homeless youth who has an adult in their life that cares for them, and where a POA is not an option. Sometimes, parents are not available for any number of reasons, such as jail, abuse, MIA, etc. The caregiver form will allow the person who assumes this role to have educational decision making. For example, if a grandparent has their 5 year old grandchild living with them and parents have left town, by signing the Caregiver Form, the grandparent then legally has education decision making.

\*\*If a POA is an option, please always do that over the Caregiver form. The POA form can be attached as well. In order to get a Power of Attorney, the parent/legal guardian must be available.

\*\*It's important to note that there are some students who do not have someone that would ﬁll this role and that is okay. A student in this situation would be protected under the McKinney-Vento-Vento Act as an unaccompanied homeless youth. It is not a requirement for a UHY to provide a caregiver.

\*\*When identifying a caregiver for a student this form must be ﬁlled out and sent to your district support person. Please also keep the original copy in their ﬁle.

\*\*If the UHY and the caregiver have a “falling out”, it may be appropriate to remove the caregiver if the UHY wishes to do so.

There is a category in designated database in the Parent/Guardian tab, under Relation, that you may mark Caregiver after the form has been completed. If this form needs to be ﬁlled out over the phone, please write that you did so next to the signature.

# Access to Higher Education:

*Higher education oﬀers students experiencing homelessness the best hope for escaping poverty and homelessness as adults.*

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA) stipulates that unaccompanied youth determined to be homeless by a local liaison; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act; funded shelter; Housing and Urban Development program; or college ﬁnancial aid administrator may apply for federal ﬁnancial aid as independent students.

Unaccompanied homeless youth can complete the FAFSA without a parent or guardian’s signature, and the parent or guardian’s income is not considered when determining an independent student’s need for ﬁnancial aid.

Student's must have a letter verifying their unaccompanied and homeless status signed by the School District McKinney-Vento Liaison. In order to receive this letter, the McKinney-Vento contact at the student's high school will request it from the District's Homeless Liaison (Director of LCE).

After the student receives the letter, they will need to sign it, check the appropriate box and send it to the ﬁnancial aid oﬃce of each of the schools to which they are applying.

# Caps, Gowns and Tassels:

Any McKinney-Vento student that is in need of a cap and gown should be able to receive one regardless of whether they cannot aﬀord it.

The school counselor or the McKinney-Vento Contact will assess the need of ALL graduating McKinney-Vento seniors (not just unaccompanied).

The McKinney-Vento contact at each high school will then contact the graduation contact and give them the name of each student, along with their weight, height and cap size.

# Conﬁdentiality

1. **FERPA protects the privacy of student education records.** A separate federal law, called the [Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment](https://studentprivacy.ed.gov/topic/protection-pupil-rights-amendment-ppra), contains additional restrictions on public schools administering surveys to students.
2. **FERPA always must be interpreted in light of the McKinney-Vento-Vento Act when considering privacy for students experiencing homelessness.** Schools must remove barriers to identiﬁcation, enrollment, and retention of McKinney-Vento-Vento students.[i] Students and families may avoid sharing information about their homelessness if they fear the information will be shared with other school staﬀ or outside agencies. Therefore, the McKinney-Vento-Vento Act requires heightened protection of information about homelessness. *When in doubt, do not share. Always reach out to your district support person for guidance.*

## Information about a McKinney-Vento-Vento student’s living situation is fully protected as an education record under FERPA.[ii]

Disclosing students’ homelessness makes their personal information public and can expose them to stigma. It also can put their safety at risk, particularly in situations of domestic violence.

Relatedly, schools cannot disclose information about students’ homelessness, including that they may be staying with other people in violation of lease terms or occupancy limits, to landlords, public housing agencies, or law enforcement.

“By-Name” Lists [iii] of students experiencing homelessness cannot be shared with any outside agencies without signed, dated consent from each parent (or student age 18 or older). The consent must specify exactly what information will be shared, with whom, and for what speciﬁc purpose. [iv] The agency receiving the information must ensure the information is shared *only* with the individual speciﬁed on the consent form, and *only* for the speciﬁc purpose described on the consent form. Schools are cautioned against requesting permission to share By-Name Lists of McKinney-Vento-Vento students, due to the likelihood that sharing such information will lead families and students to hide their homelessness from the school, as well as potential stigma and other negative consequences.

1. **Under FERPA, “privacy” generally means that schools must have speciﬁc, written consent to release any information from a student’s education record.[v]** There are 16 exceptions to the requirement for written consent to release records. The most relevant exceptions for students experiencing homelessness include releases to a school (including post-secondary) where a student seeks to enroll or has transferred, and releases in connection with ﬁnancial aid applications. [vi] More information about the exceptions can be found here. Interagency agreements or MOUs cannot supersede FERPA’s consent requirements.
2. **Schools can share education records, including a student’s homelessness, with other school oﬃcials within the local educational agency or school who have a “legitimate educational interest” in the information, including teachers.** To avoid erecting a barrier to identiﬁcation or increasing the likelihood of stigma for students experiencing homelessness, schools should interpret “legitimate educational interest” narrowly and avoid broad, categorical sharing of homeless information school- or district-wide. In addition, schools should consult parents/students prior to sharing this sensitive, personal information. Some schools choose to share knowledge of a student’s housing situation with a limited, core group of school staﬀ that includes only the homeless education liaison, school counselor/social worker, and classroom teacher. If a need to discuss student concerns with other staﬀ arises, support can be provided without disclosing housing status by using sensitive language: “This student has a number of challenges outside of school right now.”

## It is important for unaccompanied homeless youth to be able to access and disclose their own records.

* + Schools may give FERPA rights to unaccompanied youth under age 18, although this cannot supersede the rights of their parents. [vii]
  + Providing unaccompanied youth access to their own records is an important strategy to remove barriers to enrollment and retention. It allows unaccompanied youth to share their records with outside tutors, mentors, attorneys assisting in legal matters, or others as a way to support their academic progress and meet their basic needs.
  + FERPA also gives rights to “an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or a guardian,” although again, those rights cannot supersede the rights of parents.[viii]
  + Once students turn 18 years old, all FERPA rights transfer to them.

## Encrypted Emails

Anytime you send an email with sensitive and/or personably identiﬁable information (PII) to someone with a non-district email, send utilizing the established **School District Encrypt Email process**. NOTE: internal emails between school district staﬀ (@xschools.org) only are automatically encrypted and no special action is required. The Records Center successfully sends out 100's of encrypted emails each month. The process is quite simple to send and receive encrypted emails.

***See the following documentation for additional instructions:***

# Disputes

If a student is sent to a school other than the school of origin or the school requested by a parent/guardian, the school District must provide a written explanation of its decision, and the right to appeal, whether or not the parent/guardian disputes the placement.

* + A written explanation of the school’s decision must also be provided if a parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth disputes a school placement or enrollment decision.
  + Whenever a dispute arises, the student must be immediately admitted to the school of choice while the dispute is being resolved.
  + The school must refer the student, parent, or guardian to the local liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.
  + The Director of LCE must ensure that the dispute resolution process is followed for

unaccompanied youth.

## Considerations:

Families and youth in homeless situations may be unaware of their right to dispute placement and enrollment decisions. When disputes are raised, too often, students are kept out of school during the dispute resolution process. This interruption in education can severely damage students’ academic progress and disrupt their classmates and teachers.

To avoid such disruptions, families and youth experiencing homelessness, as well as schools, need an established process for resolving disputes. Permitting students to enroll immediately in the school of choice during disputes ensures that students will be able to remain in school. Without such a provision, parents, guardians, and youth may be discouraged from pursuing their rights for fear of protracted denials of education while disputes are resolved.

Written notice protects both students and schools by outlining the speciﬁc reasons for the school’s decision. It facilitates resolution of disputes by providing decision-makers with documents to guide their determinations.

## Implementation:

* + Connect with your district support person if there is a dispute that needs resolved.
  + When inter-district issues arise, representatives from all involved districts should be present to resolve the dispute.
  + Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth should be able to initiate the dispute resolution process directly at the school they choose, or at the school district.
  + Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth should be informed that they can provide written or oral documentation to support their position.
  + Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth should be informed that they can seek the assistance of advocates or attorneys.
  + Students should be provided with all services for which they are eligible while disputes are resolved, consistent with the deﬁnition of “enrollment.” Enrollment is deﬁned as attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

**Written notice** should be complete, as brief as possible, simply stated, and provided in a language the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth can understand.

## Written notice will include:

* + - Contact information for the Homeless Liaison and State Coordinator, with a brief description of their roles
    - A simple, detachable form that parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth can complete and turn into the school to initiate the dispute process (the school should copy the form and return the copy to the parent, guardian, or youth for their records when it is submitted)
    - A step-by-step description of how to dispute the school’s decision
    - Notice of the right to enroll immediately in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute
    - Notice that “immediate enrollment” includes full participation in all school activities
    - Notice of the right to obtain the assistance of advocates or attorneys
    - Notice of the right to appeal to the state if the district-level resolution is not satisfactory