

# **Students Experiencing Homelessness, Foster Care, and Other Educational Instability (CLSD Policy 251)**

## **What is McKinney Vento?**

Children and youth experiencing homelessness face unique challenges in accessing and succeeding in school. Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized in 2015 by Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.; hereafter the McKinney-Vento Act), establishes the definition of homeless used by U.S. public schools, and the educational rights to which children and youth experiencing homelessness are entitled (National Center for Homeless Education, 2021).

Under federal law (the McKinney-Vento Act), every local educational agency (LEA) is required to designate a liaison for children and youth experiencing homelessness. LEA homeless liaisons have specific duties under the law, one of which is to provide professional development and other support to school personnel. Training school staff is essential in order for children and youth experiencing homelessness to be identified and to receive the education that is their surest path out of homelessness and poverty. Effective training is especially important in light of the impact of the pandemic. Additional outreach and support will be necessary to ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness are identified, enrolled, re-engaged, and supported.

Cornwall-Lebanon School District Homeless Liaison

Dr. John Shaffer

Administrator of Educational Services

(717) 272-2031

[jshaffer@clsd.k12.pa.us](mailto:jshaffer@clsd.k12.pa.us)

Erin Callihan, LSW/HSV

District Social Worker

(717) 389-1871

[ecallihan@clsd.k12.pa.us](mailto:ecallihan@clsd.k12.pa.us)

## **Identifying students experiencing homelessness.**

Identifying students experiencing homelessness is a core duty of LEA homeless liaisons, outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act. The COVID-19 pandemic, in particular, has exacerbated homelessness for many students while also making it more difficult for liaisons to find and re-engage them. This document provides sample questions to ask if you are concerned about a student's living situation.

## **How to determine if a student is experiencing homelessness?**

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, children and youth experience homelessness when they lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

## **What can be done?**

If a student/family is experiencing homelessness, or may soon be, the liaison may be able to help connect them to resources and help to ensure the student can continue attending school. Here are some of the things your liaison can help with:

- Enroll in school, even if the student isn't living with their parents or if they are missing documents like a birth certificate or vaccination records
- Sign up for free and reduced lunch
- Coordinate transportation to and from school
- Access resources to help with school fees, school supplies, and basic needs
- Write a letter that will allow the student to apply for financial aid (FAFSA) even if they don't have parental information (Unaccompanied Homeless Youth)

If you are suspect a student is homeless, please contact the district Social Worker, Erin Callihan.

## **For more information about homeless children and youth:**

### **Websites**

Determining eligibility for McKinney-Vento rights and services, please visit:

[https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/det\\_elig.pdf](https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/det_elig.pdf)

SchoolHouse Connection: <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/>

Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program:

<https://ecyeh.center-school.org/>

PA Department of Education Basic Education Circular for Education of Homeless Youth:

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/uscode/Pages/EducationforHomelessYouth.aspx>

### **Videos**

<https://sites.google.com/berksiu.org/ecyeh/training-resources/ecyeh-training-videos>