

The Homeless Student¹

Federal legislation provides protection for a student whose family is homeless. A homeless student is defined as one that lacks a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” It includes children and youth who are doubling up temporarily with family or friends; living in a shelter, motel, vehicle, campground, or temporary trailer; living “on the street” or living in another type of temporary or inadequate housing.

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, passed in 1987 and reauthorized several times since, was the first significant federal legislative response to homelessness. [Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance](#), developed in July 2004 and updated in 2016, was specifically designed to address the problems that homeless children and youth face in enrolling, attending and succeeding in school. All school districts must appoint a local homeless education liaison.

The provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act assure that eligible students have the right to:

- Go to school no matter where they live or how long they have lived there;
- Continue attending their same school (the school they attended before they became homeless) or to be enrolled in the local school where they are living (their choice);
- Enroll in the new local school immediately, even if missing records normally required for enrollment; and
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin at no cost to the parent or student.

The North Carolina Homeless Education Program ([NCHEP](#)) provides technical assistance to North Carolina’s local homeless education liaisons and provides information and awareness materials.

Immunization and Health Assessment Compliance

Students who meet the definition of homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act must be allowed to enroll in the new local school immediately, even if missing records normally required for enrollment. According to the Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance document linked above, “If a child or youth needs to obtain immunizations or other required health records, the enrolling school must immediately refer the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to the local liaison, who must assist in obtaining the immunizations, screenings, or immunization or other required health records” (p.24).

¹ This chapter reflects guidelines provided in the N.C. Homeless Education Program. Available at: <https://hepnc.uncg.edu/> (North Carolina specific) and <https://nche.ed.gov/> (national guidelines)