

EDUCATION RIGHTS OF HOMELESS YOUTH AND CHILDREN: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

A federal law called the McKinney-Vento Act protects all children and youth in homeless situations. A homeless student is defined broadly as any child or youth without a fixed, regular and adequate residence. This includes students who are “doubled-up” with friends and relatives, pre-school age children, and runaway youth (even those whose families want them to come home).

Homeless students in schools and pre-schools have the right to:

- **Stay in their original school even if they move to another district**

Homeless students have the right to stay in the school they attended prior to loss of housing, or to remain at the school in which they were last enrolled, unless the parent or unaccompanied youth chooses otherwise. This is called the “school of origin.”

- **Get transportation to their original school**

School districts must provide or arrange transportation for students in homeless situations so that students can stay at their school of origin, even if students move to a different city, county or school district.

- **Immediately enroll in a new school**

Homeless students who move and wish to enroll in a new school where they are situated while homeless may attend classes immediately, without proof of residency, immunizations, school records or other papers, and without a uniform.

- **Automatically receive free breakfast and lunch at school**

A shelter worker or parent may contact the school to verify the child’s homelessness. The school must immediately begin providing meals based on this verification.

- **Receive all the educational and supplemental services they need (including pre-school)**

A district liaison must provide referrals to the parent or youth for other necessary and relevant services.

- If a disagreement with a school or pre-school arises, a homeless student has the right to:
- **Have the disagreement addressed by the school district liaison and settled quickly.**
- **Attend the school or pre-school that the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth chooses, until the dispute is resolved.**
- Receive the necessary transportation to the school of choice until the dispute is resolved.
- **Receive from the school or district a written explanation of rights and a written explanation of the final decision.**
- **Appeal the decision to the Arizona Department of Education**

Contact Information

Wilson School District’s McKinney-Vento Liaison
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