

Sarasota County Schools

Schoolhouse Link Homeless Education Literacy Program 2009-2010



Educator's Toolkit

Triad Campus
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Sarasota, FL 34233
(941) 923-6100

www.sarasota-ymca.org/schoolouselink

“What homeless children need most of all is a home. But while they are experiencing homelessness, what they need most is to remain in school. School is one of the few stable, secure places in the lives of homeless children and youth a place where they can acquire the skills they need to help them escape poverty.”

-National Association for the Education of Homeless Students

Table of Contents

Sarasota Homeless Student Quotes	2
Introduction to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	3
– McKinney-Vento Brief	
Schoolhouse Link	9
– Role of Homeless Liaison	
Enrollment	11
– Enrollment Brief	
– Student Residency Questionnaire	
– Data Elements (Coding Information)	
Dispute Resolution	21
– Sarasota Dispute Resolution Form	
10 Things School Secretaries and Enrollment Personnel Can Do for Students Experiencing Homelessness	23
10 Things Teachers Can Do For Students Experiencing Homelessness	24
10 Things Administrators Can Do For Students Experiencing Homelessness	24
Helpful Online Resources	25

Comments from Homeless Students in Sarasota County

"I miss having my own bed and having good food. I know going to school is important because education is the base of all things."
- Nicole, age 15

"I missed a lot of school when we had to move, so it is had to catch up now."
-Billy, age 8

"The hardest thing is trying to get over your challenges in life and move on. But going to school is very important because your education determines what you are going to do in life." - DC, age 18

"I miss going to my regular school and seeing my friends."
- Nick, age 13

"My life has been full of problems. Going to school is the greatest thing that has ever happened to me."
- Hillary, age 17

"The hardest thing is being focused."
- Ebony, age 14

"One day I want to be a teacher."
- Logan, age 16

"I feel sad that I can't be with my mom and family"
- Cathy, age 10

"Going to school builds not only knowledge but power, because I was taught knowledge is power"
- Brittney, age 18

"I think that everyone should have a home to live in."
- Jay, age 6

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is the primary piece of federal legislation designed to address the problems that homeless children and youth have faced in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. It was originally authorized in 1987 and most recently reauthorized by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act includes a definition of who is considered homeless and ensures that all eligible students receive special protections.

The term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a “*fixed, regular, and adequate*” nighttime residence and includes –

- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as *doubled-up*);
- Children and youth who are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Children and youth living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Children and youth abandoned in hospitals;
- Children and youth awaiting foster care placement;
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;

Also:

- Migratory children living in these conditions
- Unaccompanied youth not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian and living in any of the above situations

McKinney-Vento Key Provisions & Student Rights

The McKinney-Vento guarantees homeless children and youth the following:

- The right to immediate enrollment in school, even if lacking paperwork normally required for enrollment.
- The right to attend school in his/her school of origin (if this is requested by the parent and feasible) or in the attendance area where the family or youth is currently residing.
- The right to receive transportation to his/her school of origin, if this is 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 posting of homeless students rights in all schools and other places around the community.

The McKinney-Vento Act also requires that:

The U.S. Department of Education must periodically collect and disseminate data and information on the number and location of children and youth in homeless situations, the educational services they receive, the extent to which their educational needs are being met, and such other data and information as is determined to be relevant.

- State Education Agencies and Local Education Agencies must develop, review, and revise their policies to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of children and youth in homeless situations.
- Every State Education Agency must designate an appropriate person to serve as a coordinator of the state's homeless education program.
- Every Local Education Agency must designate an appropriate person to serve as a local homeless education liaison.
- Each State and Local Education Agency must establish procedures to resolve disputes regarding the placement of homeless students promptly (See Dispute Resolution Section).

The State Homeless Education Coordinator at FL DOE is:

Ms. Lorraine Husum Allen, K-12 Bureau of Student Assistance, (850) 245-0414

The Local Homeless Education Liaison for Sarasota County is:

Sherri Reynolds, Pupil Support Services, (941) 927-9000 ext. 34765

Schoolhouse Link (Sarasota Family YMCA)

Ellen McLaughlin & Milli Stepanek, (941) 923-6100

Schoolhouse Link Homeless Education Literacy Program



Schoolhouse Link is a partnership between the School Board of Sarasota County and the Sarasota Family YMCA. The program serves as the District's Official McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison and strives to ensure that homeless children are able to enroll attend and succeed in school.

Schoolhouse Link Services Include:

- Free school supplies and backpacks
- Free school uniforms and emergency clothing
- Enrollment assistance
- Help obtaining school required documentation
- Automatic eligibility for free school meals
- Transportation assistance
- Tutoring at select sites
- VPK information and referrals
- Case management
- Scholarship information and assistance
- Connection to YMCA services and programs
- Referrals to community health, shelter and social service providers
- McKinney-Vento presentations and awareness materials

Role of Homeless Liaison

The local liaison serves as one of the primary contacts between homeless families and school staff, district personnel, shelter workers, and other social service providers. The liaison coordinates services to ensure that homeless children and youth enroll in school and have the opportunity to succeed academically.

Local Homeless Liaisons must:

- Ensure that the educational rights of homeless children are publicly posted.
 - Ensure that homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and, through coordination activities, with other entities and agencies.
 - Ensure that homeless students are immediately enrolled in school and have full and equal opportunity to succeed
 - Inform parents, school personnel and others of the rights of homeless children and youth.
 - Assist unaccompanied youth with enrollment, transportation, and disagreements.
 - Make sure that students receive appropriate services, including transportation and free meals.
 - Secure school supplies and emergency clothing for students.
 - Make referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services or other care providers.
 - Make sure that disagreements between students and schools are resolved.
 - Network with community agencies.
 - Provide resources to families and school staff.
 - Ensure compliance with State and Federal law.
 - Collect and submit reports to Florida Department of Education regarding students experiencing homelessness.
 - Provide McKinney-Vento training.
 - Advocate for students.
- In Sarasota, all requests for “school of origin” transportation and free meals for homeless students must go through the homeless liaison.

Enrollment

- The school enrollment and retention barriers that homeless children and youth most frequently face are the following: transportation, immunization requirements, residency requirements, providing birth certificates, and legal guardianship requirements.
- The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires all public schools to immediately enroll homeless children and youth, even if they do not have the documents normally required for enrollment, such as previous school records, medical or immunization records, proof of residency, birth certificates, proof of guardianship or other documents. The term “enroll” is defined as “attending classes and participating fully in school.”
- Enrolling schools must obtain school records from the previous school, and students must be enrolled while records are being obtained (this includes students with a missing IEP).
- If a student does not have immunizations or immunization or medical records, the homeless liaison must immediately assist in obtaining them, and the student must be enrolled in school in the interim.
- Any barrier to immediate student enrollment must be removed.
- Schools may not require homeless families to provide proof of residency. Schools can use affidavits of residence or other forms to replace typical proof of residency if unavailable. Such forms should be carefully crafted, so they do not create further barriers or delay enrollment. For example, forms should not require notarization.
- Schools may not require the caregiver of an unaccompanied youth to provide (or obtain) proof of guardianship.
- Students that are identified as “homeless” at any time during the school year remain eligible for McKinney-Vento services for the entire school year.
- Students eligible for McKinney-Vento services are to be identified in the district database. Student codes are to remain in place for the entire school year, even if a student moves into permanent housing.
- Homeless children and youth frequently move, and maintaining a stable school environment is critical to their success in school.
- To the extent feasible, homeless students have the right to remain in their “*school of origin*” (defined as the school the student attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled), unless it is against the parent’s or guardian’s wishes.
- The use of “Student Residency Questionnaires” is recommended as a “best practice” tool in the identification of homeless students.
- Completed “Student Residency Questionnaires” for students experiencing homelessness should be faxed to the district’s homeless liaison.
- The district’s homeless liaison can help make determinations on a student’s eligibility for McKinney-Vento services.

Sarasota, FL
Student Residency Questionnaire

Name of School: _____

Name of Student: _____
Last First Middle

Birth Date: ____/____/____ Age: _____ Sex: Male
Month Day Year Female

This questionnaire is intended to address the McKinney-Vento Act. The answers to this residency information help determine the services the student may be eligible to receive.

1. Is your current address a temporary living arrangement? ____ Yes ____ No
2. Is this temporary living arrangement due to loss of housing or economic hardship? ____ Yes ____ No

If you answered YES to the above question, please complete the remainder of this form.
If you answered NO, you may stop here.

Where is the student presently living? (Check one box.)

- In a motel
- In an emergency or transitional shelter
- With more than one family in a house or apartment
- Moving from place to place
- In a place not designed for ordinary sleeping accommodations such as in a vehicle, park, abandoned building or "on the streets"
- Awaiting foster care placement

If you marked "yes" to any of the above temporary residences your child has the following rights:

- ✓ Child must be immediately enrolled in school even if you lack a permanent residence.
- ✓ Child's enrollment may not be delayed due to lack of proof of residency or other documents.
- ✓ Continued enrollment in the child's school that he/she attended before becoming homeless, or the school for which you are currently zoned.
- ✓ Child can attend classes while the new school secures previous school records.
- ✓ If enrollment dispute is made, child can continue to attend classes while dispute is being heard and resolved.
- ✓ Parent can request assistance with transportation to school.
- ✓ Child can participate in school programs with children who are not homeless.
- ✓ Child is eligible to receive free lunch.
- ✓ Schoolhouse Link can provide you with detailed information on your child's rights and assist you in accessing school and community services.

Name of Parent(s)/Legal Guardian(s) _____

Address _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

My signature below indicates that I have read this information and all answers I have given are correct.

Signature of Parent/Guardian _____ Date _____

SCHOOL STAFF: PLEASE FAX THIS FORM TO SCHOOLHOUSE LINK OFFICE IMMEDIATELY AT 941-923-6112

CHECK MISSING DOCUMENTATION: PHYSICAL IMMUNIZATION BIRTH CERTIFICATE
CHECK IF THESE MATERIALS WERE PROVIDED: PROGRAM BROCHURE BACKPACK

Sarasota, FL
Cuestionario de Residencia para Estudiantes

Nombre de la escuela : _____

Nombre del estudiante: _____

Apellido Nombre Segundo Nombre
Sexo: Masculino
 Femenino

Fecha de Nacimiento: ____/____/____ Edad: _____
 Mes Dia Año

El proposito de este cuestionario es presentar los objetivos del Acta McKinney-Vento . Las respuestas a estas preguntas ayudaran a determinar los servicios que el estudiante debe recibir.

1. Es su domicilio actual un arreglo de vivienda temporal ? ___Si ___No
2. Es este arreglo de vivienda temporal debido a la perdida de su casa, vivienda o habitacion, debido a algun problema economico (desempleo) ___Si ___No

Si usted contesto SI a estas preguntas, por favor complete el resto de este formulario. Si usted contesto NO a estas preguntas, para aqui.

Donde se encuentra viviendo el estudiante actualmente? (Marque una opcion)

- En un motel
- En un albergue o lugar de refugio
- Con mas de una familia en una casa o apartamento
- Moviendose de un lugar a otro
- En un lugar generalmente no designado para dormir (ejemplo: carro, parque o campamento)
- Esperando por un hogar temporal (foster)

Si Ud. Contesto “Si” a alguna de las preguntas de residencia su hijo/a tiene el derecho de :

- ✓ Registrarse inmediatamente en la escuela aun si no tiene una residencia permanente.
- ✓ La registracion de su hijo/a no puede demorarse aun si no tiene prueba de residencia o otros documentos.
- ✓ Continuar estar registrado en la escuela que atendio antes de quedarse desamparado, o la escuela del distrito.
- ✓ Su hijo/a puede asistir a clases mientras la escuela transfiere records de la escuela previamente atendida.
- ✓ Padres pueden solicitar transportacion escolar.
- ✓ Su hijo/a puede participar en actividades con otros ninos que no estan desamparados.
- ✓ Nuestro Program (Schoolhouse Link) puede darle informacion detallada de los derechos educacionales de su hijo/a y de los servicios en la comunidad.

Nombre del Padre/Madre/Guardian _____

Direccion _____ Zona postal _____ Telefono _____

Mi firma abajo indica que he leído la informacion y todas las respuestas que he dado son correctas.

Firma del padre o Guardian _____ Fecha _____

**SCHOOL STAFF: PLEASE FAX THIS FORM TO SCHOOLHOUSE LINK OFFICE IMMEDIATELY AT
941-923-6112**

**CHECK MISSING DOCUMENTATION: PHYSICAL IMMUNIZATION BIRTH CERTIFICATE
CHECK IF THESE MATERIALS WERE PROVIDED: PROGRAM BROCHURE BACKPACK**

FDOE Information Data Base Requirements Volume I: Automated Student Information System Automated Student Data Elements

ELEMENT NAME: HOMELESS STUDENT, PK-12

DEFINITION/DOMAIN

Code students who are/were homeless or eligible to continue to receive homeless services using the following primary nighttime residence codes (based on the student's residence at the time of the student's initial identification by the district as homeless this school year).

CODE DEFINITION

- A** Living in emergency or transitional shelters, FEMA Trailers, abandoned in hospitals or awaiting foster care
- B** Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; doubled-up
- D** Living in cars, parks, campgrounds, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- E** Living in hotels or motels

Terms Panel 316

FDOE INFORMATION DATA BASE REQUIREMENTS VOLUME I: AUTOMATED STUDENT INFORMATION SYSTEM AUTOMATED STUDENT DATA ELEMENTS

ELEMENT NAME: HOMELESS UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH

DEFINITION/DOMAIN

A code indicating whether or not a homeless student (or student eligible for homeless services) is also an unaccompanied youth. Section 725 of the 2001 McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Improvement Act defines unaccompanied youth as a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

CODE DEFINITION

Y Yes, this student is a homeless youth (or student eligible for homeless services) who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

N No. This student is homeless (or student eligible for homeless services) but does not meet the definition of an unaccompanied youth.

Z Not applicable. This student does not meet the definition of a homeless youth (or student eligible for homeless services).

Terms Panel 316

Florida Department of Education

Education of Homeless Children and Youth

Dispute Resolution Process

- Disputes and disagreements are to be settled as close to the point of conflict as possible. Each Local Educational Agency (LEA) homeless education liaison, hereafter referred to as local homeless liaison, shall assist the family and school to ensure compliance with federal and state legislation and policy governing the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The local homeless liaison shall work with appropriate local school division representatives to address any policies or procedures that are identified as barriers in the access to and success within a free appropriate public education. The Florida Department of Education (FDOE) State Homeless Education Coordinator may be consulted at any time for technical assistance.
- If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the LEA must immediately enroll the homeless student in either the school of origin or the school of residency, whichever is sought by the parent, guardian, or homeless youth, pending resolution of the dispute. The LEA must also provide transportation to the selected school for the duration of the dispute resolution process. In cases of an inter-district dispute, the LEA of origin and the LEA in which the homeless child or youth is living must agree upon a method to apportion the responsibility and costs for providing the child with transportation to and from the school of origin. If the LEAs cannot agree upon a method, the responsibility and costs for transportation are to be shared equally.
- With the help of the local homeless liaison, the parent, guardian, or homeless youth shall work through the expedited Dispute Resolution Process established by the LEA. The LEA shall provide the parent, guardian, or homeless youth with a written notice of the LEA's decision regarding school selection or enrollment and their right to appeal, and copy the local homeless liaison. If the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth is dissatisfied with the resolution, he or she may appeal the decision to the FDOE, with the assistance of the local homeless liaison.
- The state-level dispute resolution process is available for appeals from district-level decisions and inter-district disputes. Parents, guardians, unaccompanied youths, or public local educational agencies may file appeals. The local homeless liaison is responsible for ensuring that information describing the state-level dispute resolution process and the appropriate forms are available to all parties wanting to file an appeal. To initiate the state-level appeals process, within ten (10) working days after receiving written notification of the district-level or inter-district decision, the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth may file an appeal with the local homeless liaison, who must provide it to the FDOE. The local homeless liaison is required to notify the FDOE of the state-level appeal by providing the appeal. The liaison also must log incidents of state-level appeals in the FDOE Online Dispute Resolution Tracking System at <https://data.fldoe.org/homelessdispute>.
- Upon receipt of a notice of appeal, the State Homeless Education Coordinator must, within ten working days, convene a FDOE panel, comprised of the Coordinator, the Director of the Title I Programs, and the Chief of the Bureau of Student Assistance. This panel shall review the entire record of the dispute, including any written statements submitted, and make a determination based on the child's or youth's best interest. Within ten working days of the date the panel convenes, the panel shall provide its recommendation to the Commissioner of Education. Within ten working days of receipt of the recommendation, the Commissioner shall make the final determination. For educational purposes, the decision of the Commissioner in such cases is final. The FDOE will provide a written decision regarding the appeal to all parties involved, including the LEA homeless liaison.

10 things Secretaries and Enrollment Personnel Can Do for Students Experiencing Homelessness

1. Post McKinney-Vento Definition and Student Rights Fliers in visible location.
2. Utilize Residency Questionnaire. Immediately fax completed Residency Questionnaires to Schoolhouse Link for eligible students.
3. Learn to identify tell-tale signs of homelessness:
 - Erratic attendance at school
 - Attendance at multiple schools
 - Poor grooming or clothing that draws attention
 - Lack of records such as birth certificate, immunization record, preschool physical, school records, social security number or records are incomplete
 - Parent that seems confused when asked about the last school they attended
 - Low-income motel address on enrollment form
 - Statements from family when enrolling, such as:
 - "We have been having a hard time lately"*
 - "It's a new address, I can't remember it"*
 - "We move a lot and are staying with friends until we find a place"*
 - "I don't have any bills or lease in my name"*
4. Assure families that children can enroll if you think that they are experiencing homelessness. (This is mandated by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, P.L. 107-110.)
5. Encourage family to complete forms while at school. Take the family to a private place to help fill out enrollment forms if necessary.
6. Arrange for brief tour of your school. Inform parent of student's teacher name and classroom location.
7. Enroll the child immediately (even without records). Ask for the name and city of the last school attended. Call that school and ask to have the records sent.
8. Provide a welcome packet with school address and telephone number, student handbook, paper, pencil, pen, and crayons (younger grades).
9. Privately and confidentially alert the child's teacher and guidance counselor of the student's living situation.
10. Provide Schoolhouse Link brochure and video.

Be sensitive, patient, calm and reassuring. You can make a difference!

10 Things That Teachers Can Do for Students Experiencing Homelessness

1. Make student feel welcome.
2. Allow personal possessions or space and encourage rights to them.
3. Have backup supplies or snack available.
4. Assign a classroom buddy or mentor.
5. Assign projects that can be broken into small components to ensure at least some successes.
6. Make positive comments on students papers.
7. Allow time during class for homework.
8. Expedite any testing for special needs.
9. Refer the student to the on-site tutoring program for educational assistance, if needed and available.
10. Be well informed on homelessness issues.

10 Things That Administrators Can Do for Students Experiencing Homelessness

1. Welcome students.
2. Make sure parents feel comfortable and welcome in your school.
3. Make sure McKinney-Vento fliers are posted in central location.
4. Make sure homeless students are referred to district's homeless liaison.
5. Appoint a staff person to do a brief educational assessment.
6. Support use of "Student Residency Questionnaires".
7. Provide McKinney-Vento in-service training for all school staff.
8. Participate district-wide or community-based activities to promote awareness of homeless students.
9. Advocate to keep homeless students in their school of origin (unless this is contrary to parent/guardian's wishes)
10. Arrange for special activity fees to be waived when possible.

Helpful Online Resources

Schoolhouse Link

www.sarasota-ymca.org/schoolhousetlink

- McKinney-Vento Fliers (English & Spanish)
- Schoolhouse Link Brochures (English, Spanish, Ukrainian, and Russian)
- List of Community Resources including local shelter list
- Links to helpful websites and training materials
- Parent information video

Florida Department of Education, Homeless Education

www.fldoe.org/bsa/title1/titlex.asp

- FDOE Homeless Education Brochure (English and Spanish)
- Technical Assistance Paper 2007-2008 Title X, Part C Education for Homeless Children and Youth

National Center for Homeless Education

www.serve.org/nche

- Support for Students Whose Families Have Lost Their Home Due to Foreclosure Fliers (English and Spanish)
- Support for Students Whose Families Have Lost Their Home Due to Foreclosure Brochure (English and Spanish)
- Information by topic
- Online training video for enrolling homeless students (servepres.serve.org/p68021561/)

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

www.naehcy.org/dl/faq.pdf

- The 100 most frequently asked questions on the education rights of children and youth in homeless situations

National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty

www.nlchp.org/program_reportspubs.cfm?TAB=3&FA=2&prog=2

- Fact sheets on many homeless education issues including students with special needs

National Center for Children in Poverty

www.nccp.org/publications/fact_sheets.html

- Fact sheets on poverty, homelessness

National Student Campaign Against Hunger & Poverty

www.studentsagainsthunger.org

National Runaway Switchboard

www.1800runaway.org

1-800-RUNAWAY

Local Resources:

First Call for Help, 211

www.irissoft.com/sara/

211, or (941) 308-4357

DCF ACCESS (Medicaid, Food Stamps, and Cash)

www.myflorida.com/accessflorida

1-866-76-ACCESS

Florida Housing Search

www.floridahousingsearch.org

1-877-428-8844



YMCA

We build strong kids,
strong families, strong communities.



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