



## McKinney-Vento Children and Youth

# NEWSLETTER

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### Liaison Pathways Training for New McKinney-Vento Liaisons

#### ***Are you a new McKinney-Vento liaison with less than two years of experience?***

Join me for a three-part virtual training series designed to help you build a strong foundation for your role. Sessions will be held via Teams on August 21st, September 18th, and October 16th, from 10:00 to 11:00 a.m. All recordings will be posted in the McKinney-Vento OneNote Notebook for liaisons.

Each session will cover key responsibilities and best practices aligned with the National Center for Homeless Education Liaison Toolkit, offering practical tools and strategies to support students experiencing homelessness. Participants will also have the opportunity to ask questions and engage in discussion with peers from other LEAs.

Whether you're just getting started or looking to strengthen your understanding, this series will help you feel more confident and prepared in your work.

Liaisons new to the role for the 2025–2026 school year have already been invited to all three sessions.

If you're a more experienced liaison and would like to join for networking purposes or as a refresher, please email [kristin.walter@k12.wv.us](mailto:kristin.walter@k12.wv.us) to request a calendar invitation.

### Identifying and Enrolling McKinney-Vento Students as They Return to School

As the 2025–2026 school year begins, schools play a critical role in ensuring that students experiencing homelessness are identified quickly and enrolled without delay. Under the McKinney Vento Act, students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence including those staying in shelters, motels, cars, public spaces, or temporarily with others due to loss of housing are entitled to immediate enrollment and support.

To support identification, schools should use housing questionnaires as part of enrollment and train front office staff to recognize signs of housing instability. Liaisons are key in coordinating efforts across school buildings and community partners to ensure eligible students do not fall through the cracks. Once identified, students must be enrolled immediately even if they do not have documents typically required, such as proof of residency, immunization records, or previous school records. Enrollment cannot be delayed due to missing paperwork. In these situations, schools should refer to the Educational Stability Guidance Document developed by the West Virginia Department of Education and Department of Human Services, which outlines procedures and points of contact to resolve documentation issues without disrupting the student's access to school.

Students experiencing homelessness have the right to remain enrolled in their school of origin or to enroll in their school of current residence based on what is in the student's best interest. The determination of best interest should be made promptly, consider the student's safety and well-being, and involve the parent or guardian when possible. If the student remains in the school of origin, the LEA must provide transportation to and from that school at no cost to the family. After enrollment, liaisons and school staff should conduct a needs assessment to identify areas where support is needed and make referrals to appropriate community partners and school-based services.

Now is the time for districts to review their procedures, ensure staff are trained, and remove any barriers to full participation. Early identification and immediate enrollment are not just legal obligations. They are vital steps in creating stability and supporting the success of students navigating homelessness.



August 2025

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### McKinney-Vento Mini Grant Opportunity

The Office of ESEA, Improvement, and Support is pleased to announce a new Mini Grant Opportunity designed to support the needs of McKinney-Vento students as they return to school for the 2025–2026 academic year.

LEAs may apply for a one-time grant of up to \$5,000 to help remove immediate barriers to school engagement and academic success for students experiencing homelessness.

Funding is limited and will be awarded on a first-come, first-served basis to applicants who meet all grant requirements. Liaisons are strongly encouraged to apply early to ensure consideration.

Eligible expenses may include (but are not limited to):

- School supplies and backpacks
- Academic registration or course fees
- Extracurricular activity costs (sports, music, clubs, etc.)
- Clothing or hygiene items essential for school participation
- Transportation costs related to school attendance or participation in activities

Deadline to obligate funds (after WVDE approval): September 30, 2025.

Apply here: [Mini Grant Application Form](#)

### Back to School Outreach Strategies

As the new school year begins, it's important for McKinney-Vento liaisons to proactively reconnect with students and families who may be experiencing homelessness. Many families move or face new housing challenges over the summer, making early outreach critical for timely identification and support.

#### Key Outreach Strategies:

- **Connect with Community Partners:** Work with shelters, food pantries, housing agencies, and local organizations to share information and reach families who may not yet be connected to school.
- **Leverage Enrollment Events:** Attend open houses or registration days when possible. Distribute materials and answer questions to raise awareness among both families and staff.
- **Use Clear and Visible Messaging:** Share McKinney-Vento information through websites, social media, robocalls, and printed materials. Visibility helps families recognize their rights.
- **Train School Staff:** Equip front office staff, teachers, counselors, and bus drivers with simple tools to help identify and refer students who may qualify.

Early connection means students can start the school year with the stability, services, and support they need to succeed.

### District Liaison Spotlight

#### Rachel Law and David Bowers - Mason County Schools

Mason County Schools liaisons play a crucial role in supporting youth experiencing homelessness by providing comprehensive assistance to address their unique needs. They help youth obtain vital benefits such as SNAP and medical coverage, secure identification and learner's permits, and connect at-risk seniors with graduation support and FAFSA completion to prepare for post-secondary opportunities. Their collaboration with community partners, including Southwestern Community Action Council, has enabled transportation solutions to school and after-school programs and access to rapid re-housing, mental health, medical, and utility assistance. Additionally, they deliver essential resources like clothing, furniture, and hygiene supplies directly to families in need, ensuring that students have the support necessary to overcome challenges and succeed academically and personally.