McKinney-Vento Children and Youth

NEWSLETTER

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Enhancing Early Childhood Education and Head Start Programs

In September 2024, the Office of Head Start received a letter from members of Congress that urged them to enhance efforts to connect homeless children to Head Start programs, emphasizing the need for increased awareness, guidance, and partnerships to improve access to early learning and housing for these vulnerable families.

Local Educational Agencies and McKinney-Vento liaisons can support this initiative by:

- **Raising Awareness: Informing families experiencing homelessness about the automatic eligibility for Head Start programs and the benefits of early childhood education.**

- **Building Partnerships: Collaborating with Head Start providers, housing authorities, and community organizations to create integrated services that address both educational and housing needs.**

- **Providing Resources: Utilize available resources, including questionairres, to help identify and enroll homeless children in Head Start programs.**

- **Offering Training: Training staff to recognize and address the unique needs of homeless children and their families.**

- **Facilitating Access: Working to remove barriers such as transportation and documentation requirements that may prevent homeless families from accessing these programs.**

Eligibility Reminders - MV, Foster, Kinship

Many questions arise throughout the school year about eligibility under McKinney-Vento, Foster, or Kinship Care programs. Although every eligibility should be assessed on a case-by-case basis, here is a reminder about what makes a student eligible under each identifier.

McKinney-Vento Eligibility
The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ensures that children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to a free and appropriate public education. To be eligible under McKinney-Vento, a student must lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes children and youth who are:
- Sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Staying in emergency or transitional shelters
- Abandoned in hospitals
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings

Foster Care / Formal Kinship Care Eligibility
Foster care and formal kinship care provides temporary out-of-home care for children who cannot live with their birth parents due to neglect, abuse, or exploitation. This includes children and youth who are:
- Under the age of 18 and in need of a safe, stable, and nuturing environment due to abuse, neglect, and other family issues
- Placed in the legal custody of the DoHS through a court order, including those that are residing with their grandparents but in state custody

Informal Kinship Care Eligibility
Informal Kinship care involves children living with a relative when they are unable to live with their parents. This includes children and youth who are:
- Residing with their grandparents or another relative
- Could be in need of protection or services if they were to remain with their parent, but are not in the legal custody of the DoHS
- In temporary or unplanned living situations or lacking a fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime residence (which would also make them Mckinney-Vento eligible)

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STRIVE West Virginia

To impact student achievement, basic needs, attendance, discipline, and mental health must be addressed for all students.

STRIVE West Virginia focuses on interventions and available support to ensure the success of all students.

Key aspects of the initiative include strengthened behavior responses, providing targeted assistance, encouraging regular attendance, increasing student achievement, conducting valid data practices, and empowering support teams.

By implementing tiered systems of support with assistance from our state and community partners, students experiencing homelessness can fully participate and excel in school activities.

It is important to utilize available programs to support students as you STRIVE to increase achievement and support their well-being. These supports are especially crucial for students experiencing homelessness, as state data shows they experience lower levels of academic achievement, progress, attendance, and behavior rates compared to their housed peers.

Available programs and partnerships include:
- Communities in Schools
- June Harless Early Learning Center Technical Assistance
- Ready, Read, Write West Virginia!
- Math4Life Unite with Numeracy
- West Virginia Attendance Collaborative
- Cook Center for Human Connection / ParentGuidance.Org
- Mountain State Educational Services Cooperative
- WV Behavioral and Mental Health Technical Assistance Center

If you need contact information for any of these organizations, please feel free to reach out, and I will be happy to connect you with a stakeholder within the organization that can assist you with implementation.

SchoolHouse Connection Collaboration

In October 2024, the WVDE and SchoolHouse Connection hosted a two-day virtual conference to build a foundation of knowledge for McKinney-Vento programs. All of the recordings and slides from the two days of presentations are available for you in the OneNote Notebook for Liaisons.

Topics included The Role of the Liaison, McKinney-Vento 101, Eligibility and Identification, Reviewing and Revising Policies and Procedures, Identifying and Supporting Unaccompanied Youth, Supporting Children Under Age 6 Experiencing Homelessness, and Helping Homeless Youth Fill out the 25-26 FAFSA. A special thanks to Alysha Crawford, Hal Van Metre, and Terri Lynn Queen for their participation on the Role of the Liaison panel. It was a very impactful session!

The virtual conference materials are great tools to utilize in your LEA as you conduct professional development in your district and work to improve your McKinney-Vento program. If you have any questions about these sessions or need additional support, feel free to reach out to me at any time. Don't forget that you can request additional training for your district by completing the Training Request Form, shared with you recently in the October 10th conference summary e-mail.

Additionally, we have three more webinars from SchoolHouse Connection coming up on relevant subtopics. All sessions begin at 2:00 pm. Please plan to join us.

- **October 29th** - Supporting Attendance
- **November 14th** - Credit Recovery Options
- **December 3rd** - Higher Education

District Liaison Spotlight
Stacy Bradley - Kanawha County Schools

One barrier that liaisons often face is securing support for families in need of utility and deposits or rental assistance. Stacy Bradley, the current Kanawha County Liaison and former Communities in Schools facilitator, successfully secured community donations following a significant contribution from Ball Toyota. She has collaborated with multiple agencies to develop an emergency fund to support families in need of financial assistance that is not covered under the Title I Part A set-aside. By establishing this additional funding stream, the basic needs of students and their families have been met. bolstering success in school. Networking with community partners is crucial to ensure that students have what they need to succeed, and addressing utility and housing support is a critical issue for students experiencing homelessness.