

HOMELESS AND UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH

Definition of Homeless:

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as reauthorized by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), defines “homeless children and youth” (school age and younger) as:

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth who are residing in the following situations due to a loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.

- Double up with relatives, friends, or strangers
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds or other inadequate accommodations
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, bus or train stations, or abandoned buildings
- A primary nighttime residence that is not usually used for sleeping
- Migratory children or youth living in circumstances described above
- Unaccompanied youth, meaning youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, such as runaways and youth denied housing by their families

Families experiencing Homelessness need to know:

- Children and youth have a right to attend school
- Do not need a permanent address to enroll your child in school
- Children and youth can stay in their school of origin or enroll in any public school that students living in the same attendance zone are eligible to attend, whichever circumstance proves to be in the student’s best interest.
- The Liaison must provide you with a written explanation of a placement or eligibility dispute occurs. Contact your local Homeless Liaison for assistance in handling a dispute.
- The child may have a right to transportation services to and from the school of origin if determined in their best interest. Scott County Public Schools will provide transportation assistance for students approved as McKinney-Vento-eligible so that the student may remain at his/her school of origin. This transportation is arranged through the McKinney-Vento liaison’s office. It may take three to five working days for transportation arrangements to be processed. Once transportation is arranged, the parent/guardian is called and advised of the state date and time of the transportation plan.
- The child has the right to participate in extracurricular activities and all federal, state, or local programs for which he/she is eligible.
- Unaccompanied youth have these same rights. (Contact your local homeless liaison).
- McKinney-Vento status provides stability at the school for at least the duration of the school year. If housing instability continues beyond that school year, you must apply for requalification the following school year.

Who are “Unaccompanied Youth”?

Unaccompanied youth are youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or court-appointed guardian, including:

- Young people who have run away from home
- Young people who have been forced to leave their homes
- Young people whose parents have left the area and left the student here.

Their possible living situations include:

- Living with friends (couch surfing)
- Living in shelters
- Living in cars, campgrounds, in abandoned buildings, or other public spaces or on the streets.
- Living with an adult who is not their parent and does not have legal custody of them.

School may be the only safe, stable environment for unaccompanied youth. Schools can provide the needed support to ensure continued academic success for these vulnerable students. In addition to academics, schools can offer adult and peer support, meals, referral to medical and mental health services, sports and other activities. Schools should also connect these young people to other resources and supports available in the community.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires immediate enrollment of these students and protects their right to attend school without parental involvement. Schools must immediately enroll “unaccompanied youth” even if they do not have the documents that are usually required, such as proof of residence, school records, medical records, or guardianship papers. Transportation assistance must be provided (when in the best interest of the student) if the student needs transportation to the school of origin.

Free and Reduced Lunch Procedures:

Homeless students are entitled to free standard breakfast and lunch meals at school and DO NOT need to fill out the Free and Reduced Meals application. The school counselor will submit the Notification of Homeless Child form to the Homeless Liaison for review and approval. Approved requests will be submitted by the liaison directly to the school nutrition services.

Scott County Public Schools Homeless Liaison

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