

Homeless Students

The McKinney-Vento Education Assistance Act Provisions

The goal of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act is to ensure that each homeless child or youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths. The Belmont Public Schools' Homeless Education Policy addresses the following key components of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youth

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education adopted Section 752(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act regarding the definition of homeless children and youth.

Homeless children and youth are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or have a primary nighttime residence in a supervised, publicly or privately, operated shelter for temporary accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing), or a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

This definition includes children and youth living in the following situations:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- emergency or transitional shelters, or abandoned in hospitals;
- 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;
- car parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train station or similar settings;
- unaccompanied youth – a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This includes youth living in runaway shelters, in abandoned buildings, cars on the street or in inadequate housing, youth denied housing by their families, those who have left home voluntarily even when their parent/s want them to return home, youth doubled up with friends or relatives;
- migratory children living in any of the circumstances described above

The Belmont Public Schools will designate a staff person to serve as the Homeless Education Liaison whose role is to assist homeless students in enrolling in school and to ensure that they receive the educational services for which they are eligible

Enrollment and Dispute Resolution

The Belmont Public Schools will immediately enroll homeless students in school, even if they do not have the documents usually required for enrollment – such as school records, medical records or proof of residency. The Homeless Education Liaison will assist students who arrive without records by contacting the previously attended school system to obtain the required records.

Students identified as homeless have a right to remain in their school of origin or to attend the school where they are temporarily residing. School of origin includes both the current school placement, as well as the designated in-district receiving school if a student becomes homeless during a transition between grades and buildings. Students who choose to remain in their school of origin have the right to remain there, with transportation, until the end of the school year in which they become permanently housed. However, once permanently housed, transportation becomes the responsibility of the parents(s)/guardian(s).

Should a parent/guardian disagree with the school placement decision of the Homeless Education Liaison or other District staff, the parent/guardian has the right to appeal. The parent/guardian will be provided with written notification of the placement decision and the paperwork to complete the appeal process. While the placement decision is under appeal, the student will be allowed to attend the school of the parent/guardian's choice and receive transportation (according to the District Transportation Policy) while the dispute is under review by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education.

Transportation to School of Origin

The Belmont Public Schools will ensure that transportation is provided, at the request of the parent or guardian or unaccompanied youth, to and from the school of origin. The transportation services will be comparable to those received by other students. If the student moves to an area served by another school district and continues to remain homeless, transportation will be arranged to maintain enrollment at the school of origin as long as the distance between the school district of residence and the school of origin is reasonable.

Access to Comparable Services

The Belmont Public Schools will provide homeless students with services and education programs comparable to those received by other students and for which they meet eligibility criteria, such as services provided under Title I or similar state or local programs; programs for students with disabilities; programs for students with limited English proficiency; vocational or technical programs; gifted and talented programs; and school nutrition programs. The Homeless Education Liaison will expedite the delivery of nutritional benefits and eligibility for free lunch by working directly with the food services department.

Legal References:
42 USC 11431 et.seq.

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