

## Supporting Homeless Students: Changes to McKinney-Vento

The newly passed Every Student Succeeds Act has created a renewed focus for states on measuring and reporting the academic performance of some of our most vulnerable students, those who are homeless. These new requirements will give states and districts detailed information to determine whether students are receiving the support necessary to be successful.

**Historically, the McKinney-Vento** Homeless Children and Youth Program has guided the work to ensure that homeless children have equal access to the same high-quality educational opportunities as non-homeless children and youth. States and local districts develop, review and revise policies to remove barriers to the enrollment, attendance and success in school that homeless children and youth may experience. Districts must also provide homeless children and youth with the opportunity to meet the same challenging state content and state student performance standards to which all students are held.

On **Oct. 1, 2016**, the reauthorized [McKinney-Vento law for homeless students](#) will take effect. As requirements move from basic compliance toward identification and comprehensive support for homeless students, the amendments to the law likely require immediate changes in your district. Some of these changes may include expanded duties of your homeless liaison and changes in the services your district provides to homeless students. These changes take effect for the current (2016-2017) school year and result from the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

### CHANGES IN THE DEFINITION OF HOMELESS

Homeless students are those who lack a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence. This means students who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals.

The definition includes migratory students who live in the aforementioned situations. Beginning Dec. 10, 2016, “those awaiting foster care placement” are not included in the definition.

### CHANGES IN THE DUTIES REQUIRED OF THE LOCAL LIAISON

ESSA expands the duties of your school district’s homeless liaison to better provide the support necessary for our homeless students.

- The liaison description highlights the importance that the person assigned to this role must have the time and authority to carry out his/her legal duties.
- The liaison must have opportunities to participate in professional development activities that support the needs of fulfilling this role with excellence.
- In addition to posting a public notice of the McKinney-Vento Rights within the district, the liaison also must post the public notice in places that homeless populations frequent, such as shelters, soup kitchens and libraries.
- The liaison must make sure:
  - 1) Families have access to early intervention services, including IDEA Part C (birth-age 3) and preschool programs;
  - 2) Families receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, substance abuse services, housing services and other appropriate services;
  - 3) Homeless youth receive credit for full or partial schoolwork; and
  - 4) Youth have information about higher education opportunities, including independent status for financial aid purposes.

- The liaison may obtain authorization to affirm that students meet Housing and Urban Development definition of homelessness. This means that these students can qualify for the HUD homeless assistance programs.

#### **CHANGES IN THE DEFINITION OF SCHOOL OF ORIGIN**

The definition of school of origin has been expanded to include preschool. This change means that children attending a public preschool will receive transportation to and from school. The school of origin also includes the designated receiving school at the next level for feeder school patterns, when the student completes the final grade level by the school of origin.

#### **NEW CONSIDERATIONS REGARDING ELIGIBILITY/STABILITY**

The district will focus on student-centered factors when making eligibility decisions. The district will give priority to the request of a parent, guardian/ or unaccompanied youth. The word feasibility has been removed from the law allowing for a more student-centered decision to be made.

#### **CHANGES IN TRANSPORTATION REQUIREMENTS**

Districts must provide transportation to and from the school of origin upon the request of the student's parent or guardian until the end of the school year. This includes the situation when the student obtains permanent housing.