



Guidance for Ohio Schools Receiving Students Displaced by Tornadoes

Twenty tornadoes are confirmed to have touched down in Ohio on the evening of May 27 into the early hours of May 28, 2019. This document provides guidance and resources for districts and community schools enrolling students impacted by the Dayton tornadoes.

General Information

Districts should serve displaced students like any other students. A student coming into a district or community school because of a disaster such as a tornado may not have a permanent address, documents, records, paperwork and other items typically required for enrollment. A district must make a McKinney-Vento Homeless eligibility determination for each student on a case-by-case basis. **Any student experiencing homelessness must be enrolled immediately despite the lack of records and documents.** Districts and schools must provide any student experiencing homelessness with all services outlined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, a federal law that addresses the educational rights of students in temporary living situations. These supports should include nutrition, educational support (Title I) and transportation services, if applicable.

Districts should be proactive in providing services and supports for displaced students and families. It's important to have systems and procedures in place to ensure seamless collaboration within the district, between neighboring districts, and with community partners.

McKinney-Vento Act. A student displaced by the tornadoes may be protected under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. The definition of *homelessness* covers children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This includes those living with friends or family due to loss of housing, those living in motels or hotels, and those living in shelters, vehicles, substandard housing or other temporary arrangements.¹ Some children and youth may be unaccompanied, meaning they are not in the physical custody of their parents or legal guardians and are temporarily housed. Districts must make eligibility determinations for each of these students on a case-by-case basis. The McKinney-Vento Act allows students in temporary living situations to enroll immediately in schools in the districts where they are temporarily living, even if they have missed application or enrollment deadlines.²

¹ 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)

² 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C)(i)(i)

Additional resources:

- [Meeting the Educational Needs of Students Displaced by Disasters: Youth on Their Own](#)
- [What Relief Agencies Should Know About the Educational Rights of Children Displaced by Disasters](#)
- [What School District Administrators Should Know About the Educational Rights of Children Displaced by Disasters](#)
- [School Help for Homeless Children with Disabilities: Information for Parents](#)
- [Disaster Preparation and Response](#)

Determining Eligibility. A district determines eligibility when the student enrolls or at the beginning of the school year. The law allows for a homeless student to remain in the school of origin, where the student was enrolled and attending at the time of the disaster, or to be enrolled in the school where the student is living temporarily due to the disaster.³ Districts must advise parents of their rights under the law and provide an opportunity to engage in a best interest determination conversation.

When determining McKinney-Vento eligibility for a student affected by the tornadoes, the district should determine the date the student became homeless and, if applicable, the date the student secured housing.

Supporting Displaced Students

Coordination and Collaboration. The district homeless liaison and other district personnel (EMIS staff, Transportation staff, Student Services coordinator, Enrollment specialist, social worker) may convene a meeting with neighboring districts to create and share procedures, systems of accountability, a memorandum of understanding and templates that will facilitate providing services; especially in instances of inter-district transportation needs.

Title I Services. In addition to the immediate enrollment requirement, a homeless student is entitled to Title I services and supports. The district may use Title I Part A set-aside funds for services not ordinarily provided by Title I, including school supplies, school clothing, eyeglasses, fees associated with getting a copy of the birth certificate, and counseling to address issues, including those related to exposure to traumatic events that affect learning. A district also may use set-aside funds to pay for the liaison and excess costs related to transportation needs.

Nutrition Services. A child determined eligible for free meal benefits in school meal programs, including eligibility based on homeless status, receipt of Disaster – Supplemental Nutrition Program (D-SNAP), or temporary SNAP evacuee benefits, maintains that eligibility 30 operating days into the next school year (or until a new eligibility determination is made, whichever comes first) for the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs. A Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) participant remains eligible for free meal benefits for 12 months. Please refer to the following resources for more information about U.S. Department of Agriculture Child Nutrition Programs:

- [SP 05-2018, CACFP 05-2018, Providing Child Nutrition Program Benefits to Disaster Survivor Evacuees](#)
- [Food Assistance in Disaster Situations](#)

³ 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(A)

Transportation Services. A student in a temporary housing situation must be provided transportation services to the school of origin, meaning the school in which a child is enrolled at the time of the natural disaster. If more than one district is involved, the districts should agree to share the transportation costs and responsibility. If the districts are unable to agree on the method, each district will be responsible for 50 percent of the transportation costs.⁴ A family may find permanent housing during the school year. In this case, the student still is eligible for transportation services to and from the school he or she is attending for the remainder of the school year.

Community Agencies. Districts should reach out to faith-based organizations, local job and family services agencies, housing agencies and other community partners to be prepared to connect families to services and support the needs of any impacted students.

- [Greater Cincinnati and Dayton American Red Cross](#)
- [Dayton City Resources](#)
- [Montgomery County Current Relief Updates](#)

Social-Emotional Resources. As a result of the tornadoes, students may experience adverse effects such as difficulty with attention, memory and cognition. If any of these behaviors become a barrier to learning or coping, parents, teachers and counselors may want to provide appropriate services to support the needs of the whole child. Schools enrolling students in need of social and emotional support should consider using these resources:

- [Coping with a Disaster or Traumatic Event.](#)
- [The Impact of Trauma on Students](#)
- [Mental Health Supports through Project AWARE Ohio](#)
- [Talking to Children and Families about Disasters, Ohio Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics](#)

Placement of Displaced Students

[Ohio law](#) requires district policies for incoming students to include the requirement to accept the grade placement and credits the student already may have from any Ohio or out-of-state schools. The receiving school must determine where the student's learning falls in the local curriculum. It should award credit based on the student's demonstration of the learning.⁵ This may include adding courses or credit to a student's transcript that the student would have earned if he or she had been enrolled in that district. The Ohio Department of Education recommends the transcript indicate where the learning took place, even if that educational institution did not award the credit.

A district should follow its local policies for determining placement of an incoming student. This may include interpreting existing formal transcripts, diagnostic or placement testing or, lacking student records, interpreting report cards and communication provided by the previous school and the student and his or her family.

Please note: Currently, once the district establishes a graduation cohort for a student, it cannot be changed.

Meeting Graduation Requirements for In-State Transfer Students. A student who took a course before the corresponding end-of-course tests became available and received high school credit for the course on his or her transcript will receive graduation points based on the course grade. Find the guideline here. A student transferring between any two Ohio public or community schools must meet all requirements and follow all rules of Ohio's State Tests to graduate through this pathway.

⁴ 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)(II)

⁵ 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(F)(ii)

Accountability for Displaced Students. Ohio developed a series of [“Where Kids Count” business rules](#) to determine whether a student should be included at the building, district or state level for accountability purposes. In cases where two or more districts or schools share a student, the systemwide rules serve as filters to determine which building and district (if any) should be accountable for a student’s data.

EMIS Manual. The Department provides the EMIS Manual as a uniform and consistent source of reporting instructions for EMIS data in accordance with Ohio Revised Code Section 3301.0714. Included in the manual are data definitions, requirements and reporting procedures to assist districts with the submission, review, validation and correction of data. In addition, districts may want to create systems and additional data to track and record the status of those impacted by the tornadoes. This may include sharing systems with neighboring districts.

- [EMIS Manual](#)

Best Practice Tips

The National Center for Homeless Education promotes the following strategies, activities and good practices to use before, during and after disasters:

- Develop a disaster webpage, including a link in parent handbooks so parents know there is a centralized information portal after a disaster;
- Contact counselors and external agencies to provide trauma-informed care;
- Update the disaster webpage with information and resources for parents.

Please see *Appendix A* of [What School District Administrators Should Know About the Educational Rights of Children and Youth Displaced by Disasters](#) for additional resources.

Additional Resources

The National Center for Homeless Education offers resources and a [toolkit](#) for schools to help them comply with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requirements for students displaced by natural disasters. The act requires all public schools to enroll eligible students immediately, assess their needs, and provide or refer them to additional services as needed.⁶

For answers to questions, contact Susannah Wayland in the Ohio Department of Education at (614) 387-7725 or by email to Susannah.Wayland@education.ohio.gov.

⁶ 42 U.S.C. §11434A(1)