

Public Notice: McKinney-Vento

9/1/2023

What is the McKinney-Vento Act?

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (“Act”), 42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq., is a federal law that is designed to ensure that homeless children and youth have the same access as other children to public education, including public preschool programs.

Westwood Public Schools complies with the McKinney Vento Act, for students who may find themselves temporarily homeless. Parents and guardians should inform the principal or district homeless liaison of their child’s status so that the school can ensure continued access to education and access appropriate supports such as transportation, nutritional access and screening for eligible programs. The district’s Homeless Coordinator is Sue Maselli, Director of Student Services

Homeless children and youths: individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. It includes:

1. Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals.
2. Children and youths who have 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.
3. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
4. Migratory children (as defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended) who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

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The Westwood Public School system does not and shall not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion (creed), gender, gender expression, gender identity, transgender status, gender transitioning, age, national origin (ancestry), disability, pregnancy/parenting status, marital status, sexual orientation, homelessness, or military status, in any of its programs, activities or operations. These include, but are not limited to, admissions, equal access to programs and activities, hiring and firing of staff, provision of and access to programs and services, as well as selection of volunteers, vendors and employers recruiting at the Westwood Public Schools. We are committed to providing an inclusive and welcoming environment for all members of our staff, students, volunteers, subcontractors, and vendors.

KEY ISSUES TO KNOW:

- Under McKinney-Vento, a homeless student, even if the student does not have documents normally required for enrollment, is eligible to enroll in school. Once enrolled, the Homeless Education Liaison of the school must help the family obtain the necessary records and/or immunizations.
- Students have the right to continue attending their “school of origin”. The “school of origin” is the school where the child or youth was last enrolled or the school the child or youth was attending when s/he became homeless. The school district shall keep a student in the “school of origin” unless it goes against the wishes of the parent. The student also has the option of enrolling in school where he is currently living.
- If the school district sends a student to a school other than the school of origin or a school requested by the parent, the district must provide the parent with a written explanation of the decision, which includes the right to appeal the decision to the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE).
- The school district must make placement decisions based on the best interests of the student.
- If a student obtains permanent housing during the school year, the student has the right to stay in their current school until the end of the school year.
- The parent or guardian (or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the school homeless liaison) of a homeless student may request that transportation be provided to and from school
- The right to participate in the same programs and activities as other students.
- Homeless students have the same rights as all other students to participate in School Nutrition, after school and special education programs.
- Homeless students who qualify for special education services must be provided appropriate services based on the information that is available to the school.

DISPUTE Resolution: If a dispute arises between the district and parent, guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth, the homeless education liaison must ensure that:

A. the student be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought pending a final resolution of the dispute, including all available appeals;

B. the parent, guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth is provided with a written explanation of any enrollment decisions made by the district and be informed of the right of the parent, guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth to appeal the decision to ESE.

The dispute resolution process begins at the time a district denies the continued enrollment or right to enroll a homeless student in the school selected by the parent, guardian or unaccompanied homeless youth.

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A student must be allowed to attend the school in which enrollment is sought and transportation provided (if needed) pending the resolution of the dispute.

If you are caring for a child ages 3-21 years of age who you believe has a suspected being homeless, in foster care or from a military family, and believe they may benefit from supports and or services under McKinney-Vento, you can contact the Homeless Liaison at Westwood Public Schools: Office of Student Services 781 326-7500 x 1345 (p) or Sue Maselli at smaselli@westwood.k12.ma.us.

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