



Provisions Regarding Homeless Children and Youth

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Before I start my monthly articles, I always do some research and the statistics I learned while I was preparing for this one, well, let's say, I had NO idea just how many homeless students there were in the USA, much less Louisiana. According to a 2013-14 school year study by the Department of Education, more than 1.3 million homeless children and youth were enrolled in public schools. According to the Louisiana Department of Education during the 2011-2012 school year, there were 23,911 homeless children and youth enrolled in public schools in Louisiana. In the 2012-2013 it dropped to 22, 287. I am sure the

numbers are much higher being that the children and youth counted were ones that were enrolled in public schools. Thankfully, there are provisions in place to help protect these students to ensure they are getting the same education as their peers.

These students have rights and may qualify for certain rights and accommodations. The McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act is a federal law that was put in place to ensure immediate enrollment and educational stability for homeless children and youth. So, what classifies a student as homeless?

As stated by the Department of Education's website under the McKinney-Vento Act, the term

"homeless children and youths," is described as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and include children and youths who are sharing the housing of others 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; 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; who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and who are migratory children who live in one of the above circumstances."

The protections the McKinney-Vento Act requires for homeless children and youths are, briefly, to provide school stability, enrollment, and support for academic success.

The protections listed on the Department of Education's website are as follows:

"Homeless students who move have the right to remain in their schools of origin (i.e., the school the student attended when permanently housed or in which the student was last enrolled, which includes preschools) if that is in the student's best interest; or if it is in the student's best interest to change schools. Homeless students must be immediately enrolled in a new school, even if they do not have the records normally required for enrollment. Transportation must be provided to or from a student's school of origin, at the request of a parent, guardian, or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the local liaison. Homeless students must have access to all programs and services for which they are eligible, including special education services, preschool, school nutrition programs, language assistance for English learners, career and technical education, gifted and talented programs, magnet schools, charter schools, summer learning, online learning, and before and after-school care. Unaccompanied youths must be accorded specific protections, including immediate enrollment in school without proof of guardianship. And parents,

guardians, and unaccompanied youths have the right to dispute an eligibility, school selection, or enrollment decision."

The McKinney-Vento Act is also funded to make sure children, youth, and families receive referrals to health care, dental, mental health, substance abuse, housing, and other services. Each state education agency has a coordinator to oversee implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act and every school has a local liaison able to carry out these duties to ensure homeless students are identified and have a full opportunity to succeed in school.

If you would like more information, please visit the National Center for Homeless Education's website at <http://nche.ed.gov/index.php>.



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