



OUR HOME

Opening Doors: Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth
ILLINOIS MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION PROGRAM

January 2012

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Homeless Education Has Moved

The Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) Homeless Education Program has moved. Now under the auspices of the Special Education Division, Co-State Coordinators Sharon Neely and Vicki Hodges will continue to oversee the program, assuring a continuity of services. For more information please go to: <http://isbe.net/homeless/default.htm>

ISBE Homeless Assistance Hotline 800/215-6379

Sharon Neely or Vicki Hodges,
Co-State Coordinators
Special Education Division
Illinois State Board of Education
100 North 1st Street - N-253
Springfield, IL 62777-0001
Phone 217/782-5589
Fax 217/782-0372

Homeless Data In SIS

ISBE requests that school districts continue to provide more detailed information on homeless children and youth through the use of Student Information System (SIS). Information on the homeless data elements in SIS can be found at: <http://www.isbe.net/sis/pdf/homeless.pdf>
Please work with your district staff to identify and report.

To receive an electronic copy of **OUR HOME**, please send your request to: mworthin@roe26.net. This current issue of **OUR HOME** and back issues are available at <http://homelessed.net/resource/newsletters.htm>



Understanding the Intersection of Title I and McKinney-Vento

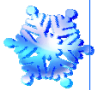
Eileen Worthington, Director Optional Education Programs, ROE #26 - Hancock/McDonough

Districts which receive Title I funds are mandated to set aside funds for serving homeless children and youth including funds for homeless students who are not attending Title I schools. That said, there is not a formula for establishing the amount to be set aside. As a result, district administrators often find themselves scratching their heads . . . struggling to be in compliance but not exactly understanding McKinney-Vento, how to meet the requirements as laid out under the legislation, or how to implement an effective program.

Perhaps the key is to remember that both are federal programs and therefore should work collaboratively to ensure the educational rights and protections for homeless children and youth. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle B-Education for Homeless Children and Youth), reauthorized under No Child Left Behind (NCLB), ensures these rights. By working with Title I, Part A, of NCLB effective strategies and collaborations can be developed. The end result is that all parties involved achieve a positive outcome for the student!

For more information on these programs as well as information on determining a district set-aside for serving homeless children and youth, consider the following resources. This information should help alleviate at least some of the head scratching.

- ◆ Four Methods For Determining New Mandatory Title I, Part A Set-Aside <http://www.homelessed.net/schools/setasidearticle%20for%20formula.pdf>
- ◆ Homeless Education and Title I: Collaboration and Compliance http://center.serve.org/nche/web/s_p.php
- ◆ Title I and Homelessness www.serve.org/nche/briefs.php
- ◆ Identifying Children In Homeless Situations <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/identification.pdf>
- ◆ Summary of McKinney-Vento and Title I Provisions <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/summary.pdf>
- ◆ McKinney-Vento 101: Law and Implementation http://naehcy.org/dl/ppt/mv_101.ppt



My Journey Into McKinney-Vento

Erin Locke, Area 1 Lead Liaison, ROE #56 - Will

When I started as the Area 1 Lead back in July, I was nervous. Shortly nerves turned into overwhelmed craziness as I began my journey learning the McKinney-Vento Act. As a teacher going through my masters program, I was always afraid of the school law class; reading law can be confusing. When I began reading all of the homeless laws, it was no different. Thankfully, everyone who works in this state is gracious and helpful. Besides reading and learning how even homeless children deserve the same educational rights as housed children, I found that there were many resources available to me: Illinois State Board of Education <http://isbe.net/homeless/default.htm>, the National Center for Homeless Education <http://center.serve.org/nche/>, and the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth <http://naehcy.org/>. With these resources and my colleagues around me, I dove right in to helping families in need in Area 1. For more information about your role as a school district liaison, be sure to access Local Homeless Education Liaisons <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/liaisons.pdf>.

Upcoming Events

ESEA/NCLB CONFERENCE

Chicago, Illinois
Sheraton Chicago
Hotel and Towers

February 7-9, 2012

<http://www.thecenterweb.org/irc/pdf/esea-nclb-2012-brochure.pdf>

Illinois TESOL-BE 38th Annual Convention

Lisle, IL

Wyndham Lisle-Chicago Hotel

February 24-25, 2012

<http://www.itbe.org/convention.php>

IACEA 33rd Annual Statewide Conference

Springfield, Illinois
Hilton Hotel

March 7 - 9, 2012

<http://www.iacea.net/>

2012 ICEARY Conference

Bloomington, IL
Doubletree Hotel

March 8-9, 2012

<http://iceary.org/>

Illinois School Counselors Conference

Springfield, IL
Northfield Inn Suites
and Conference Center
April 13, 2012

<http://www.ilschoolcounselor.org/>

Illinois School Counselors Conference

Skokie, IL
Double Tree
April 20, 2012

<http://www.ilschoolcounselor.org/>

NAEHYC 24th Annual Conference

Albuquerque, NM
October 27-30, 2012

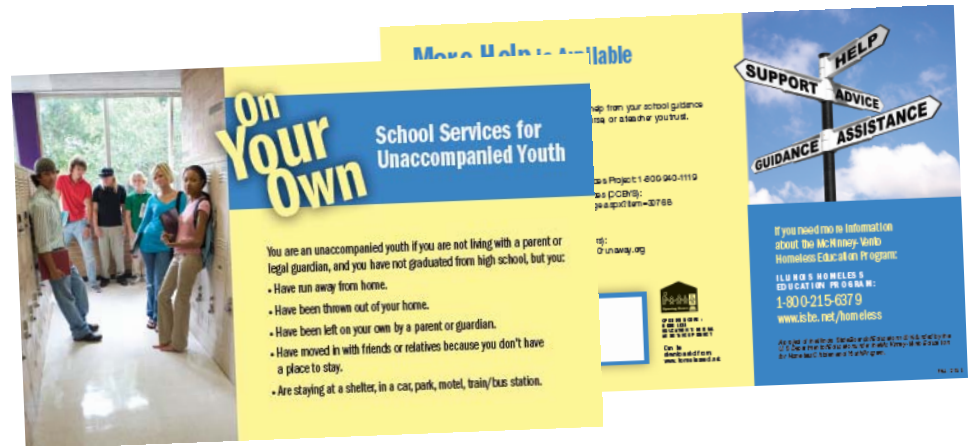
<http://naehcy.org>

The 23rd Annual NAEHCY Conference was held in Pittsburg in November. Materials and handouts from that conference can be downloaded at: http://naehcy.org/conf/2011_mat.html

New From Opening Doors

The unaccompanied youth brochure, *On Your Own*, developed by Opening Doors, is to increase awareness among youth, especially youth experiencing homelessness or at risk of experiencing homelessness, about school services that can help them stay in school or re-enroll in school if they have dropped out. A key purpose of the brochure is to connect youth experiencing homelessness with the Homeless Education Program Liaison in their school district.

The brochures can be printed in black and white or in color at <http://homelessed.net/Publications/Publications%20Default.htm>. The brochure has two boxes where contact information for the local Homeless Education Program Liaison and information about local resources can be added to labels before distribution. Brochures can be provided to youth at school as well as other locations where youth congregate in the community.



This Surfer Needs No Water

Colleen Broderick, Coordinator, Students in Temporary Living Situations
Chicago Public Schools

While walking through the halls of a high school one morning, I heard a student mention that her friend was allowing her to “couch surf” for a few days. I made sure to speak with the liaison, to ensure that she reached out to this young lady to see what her living situation was. This girl falls into a growing number of students needing to be identified, the unaccompanied youth.

In Chicago, this group is generally made up of high school age students, who have been displaced from their homes for various reasons. Some of our teenagers find themselves without a home because of addiction or mental health issues (either theirs or that of another family member). The death of family members, abuse (physical, emotional, or sexual), incarceration of guardian, or foreclosure force some students to fend for themselves. It can sometimes be a challenge finding these students because they don't necessarily want people to know about the situation.

These students need our advocacy because, in many cases, they may not have anyone else advocating for them. It is important to identify them so that they can be given the proper supports to help them continue with their education. To start with, we can provide transportation to and from school, to ensure the student has the ability to get to school. Title 1 Funds can be used to pay for school fees, uniforms, class trips, school supplies and graduation fees. These students will be able to participate in the free meals programs, ensuring that they get at least one healthy meal a day. Last but certainly not least, we need to help these teens connect with community agencies that can offer shelter, counseling, and family reunification programs.

For tips on working with this population, please visit the National Center for Homeless Education at **SERVE** <http://center.serve.org/nche/>. You will find many helpful resources there including the homeless education issue brief **Unaccompanied Homeless Youth** at <http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/youth.pdf>.

Are You in Compliance?

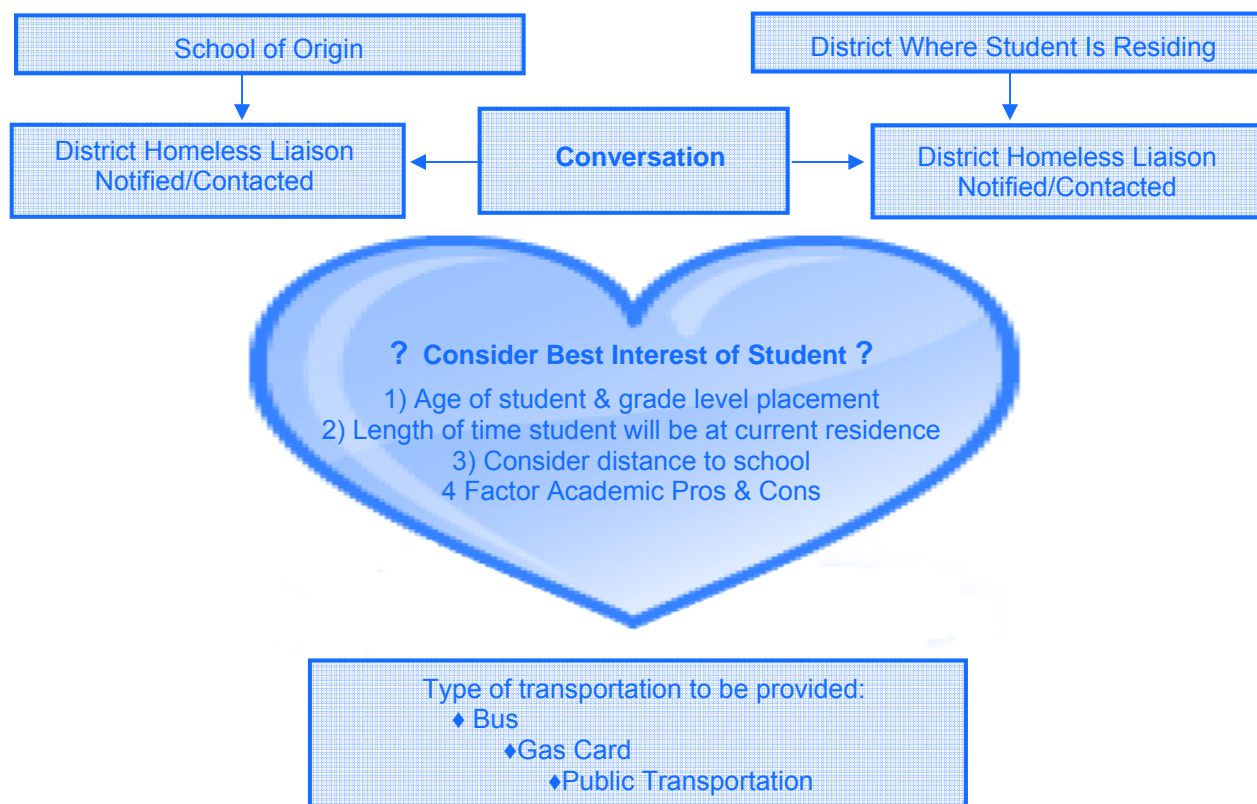
Each year Illinois school districts are monitored by their respective Regional Offices of Education. These compliance reviews are intended to ensure that each district is meeting the minimum state and federal standards as they relate to curriculum, personnel and health/life/safety. Often referred to as the “probe document,” items 13 thru 16 of the compliance review pertain in part, or in whole, to district compliance with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Items include: ensuring enrollment and waiver of fees, as applicable, along with enrollment regardless of residency documents, lack of legal guardianship or student records; district policy regarding enrollment of homeless students; designation of an appropriate staff member to act as a local education liaison for homeless children and youth; non exclusion or segregation of students; as well as a ‘visible public notice’ regarding the educational rights of homeless children and youth. For more information please visit the Illinois State Board of Education at: http://www.isbe.net/career/pdf/school_evaluation_form.pdf.

Making Transportation Services Flow

Mickey Sullivan, Area 6 Lead Liaison, ROE # 21 - Franklin/Williamson

In the [September 2011 issue of OUR HOME](#) the article, [Transportation Services for Students Experiencing Homelessness](#), laid out the legal responsibility of districts to provide transportation for homeless children and youth. In developing a transportation plan for serving homeless students, the district should determine the transportation needs of the individual student following the guidelines provided by the U.S. Department of Education. These guidelines list factors that families and districts can consider to determine the student’s best interest, including the student’s age; commuting distance to the school of origin; the length of time the family expects to stay in temporary housing; and the time remaining in the school year. The cost factor must not interfere with a student’s right to be transported under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Usually transporting homeless students within a district (intra-district) is not difficult to arrange, but transporting homeless students between two different districts (inter-district) is when most issues occur. The two school districts must share in the cost of transporting the homeless student. Therefore, the district liaison from the school of origin or the district liaison in first contact with the homeless situation should contact the district liaison from the other district immediately to work out a transportation arrangement. The administrators from the two districts will need to discuss how transportation will be arranged and how the transportation costs will be shared. Transportation options may include re-routing buses, public transportation, reimbursement for gas/mileage, and taxis or van services. Both districts need to agree. (The flow chart below can be used as a tool when arranging inter-district transportation.)





STATE COORDINATOR'S CORNER

The Change - It Comes In All Walks Of Life

Sharon Neely & Vicki Hodges, Co-State Coordinators of Illinois McKinney-Vento Programs

As many children and their families in homeless situations face the fear and anxiety of change in their lives, homeless liaisons at the local, regional and state levels attempt to embrace that change. Our goal is to keep the children in the most stable educational setting as possible so that they have one structured, positive aspect remaining in their everyday life. However, change can happen to everyone. Here at ISBE, we have encountered change in the last several weeks. Our McKinney-Vento program which has been located in Curriculum and Instruction has now moved to Special Education Support Services. Even though change is taking place at this level, it is our ultimate goal to keep our focus on the children, youth and their families who are in such desperate need of our help to keep them in school.

As we enter a New Year, change will continue to occur and it is important that we stay positive and focused in these ever changing times. We must keep in mind that we are here to assist less fortunate children and families who are experiencing homelessness. As education advocates, we must provide a well-structured educational experience for all McKinney-Vento eligible children and youth.



Understanding The New Definition of Homelessness: A Guide For School District Homeless Liaisons and Head Start Staff

The definition of homelessness used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Homeless Assistance Programs was amended by the HEARTH Act in May 2009. However, the amended definition did not go into effect at that time because HUD needed to establish regulations to implement the definition. The final rule establishing regulations for this definition was published in the Federal Register on December 5. This rule, and the changes in the HUD definition, will go into effect on January 4, 2012. It may be found in its entirety at <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2011-12-05/pdf/2011-30942.pdf>

NAEHCY provides summaries of laws and policies to assist education and early care stakeholders to understand the landscape of homelessness as addressed by other agencies. This document explains the changes to the HUD definition of homelessness that are of greatest relevance to children, youth, and families. This document also describes new recordkeeping and documentation requirements for HUD homeless assistance programs.

It is important to remember that 1) school districts, Head Start programs, child nutrition programs, higher education programs, and special education programs use the Department of Education's (ED) definition of homelessness, not HUD's definition; and 2) the changes to the HUD definition of homelessness do not alter, limit, or in any way change the ED definition of homelessness, or the responsibilities of public schools, Head Start programs, or colleges and universities to meet their obligations to all children and youth who meet the ED definition of homelessness. For more information on the education definition of homelessness, please see the National Center for Homeless Education's "Determining Eligibility for Rights and Services Under the McKinney-Vento Act", available at http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/det_elig.pdf. The new HUD definition changes the eligibility requirements only for HUD Homeless Assistance Programs.

BEST PRACTICES

The 5 Cs Of Homeless Education Training

Ann Schwarm, Area 5 Lead Liaison, ROE #3 - Bond/Fayette/Effingham

Competence – You must know what you are talking about. Know the *Tool Kit* (available from the National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/liaison_toolkit.php)

Character (Integrity) – You must have the strength of character to do the "right thing" in the "right way" for the "right reason."

Courage – You must have the courage to stand up to those who want to disagree with you and persuade you to act or think differently, especially when you know you are doing the right thing for homeless students.

Commitment – You must be committed to this work. It is too difficult to do without a passion for the cause.

Compassion – You must treat everyone you encounter in this job with kindness and compassion - whether you are dealing with homeless families or overburdened administrators.



Note: This is my philosophy of how to approach the work of serving schools and families. It provides a framework for how I conduct trainings and provide technical assistance. Ann Schwarm, LAL, Area V