

ILLINOIS MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Every Homeless Child Should Be in School

A Guide for Shelter Staff About School Enrollment and Services



Illinois State Board of Education
**ILLINOIS MCKINNEY-VENTO
HOMELESS EDUCATION
HOTLINE:**

1-800-215-6379

www.homelessed.net

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Shelter Staff Can Help2

Choosing a School: The School of Origin.....3

Choosing a School: Attendance Area School.....4

School Services for Students & Families5

School Fee Waivers..... 6

Early Childhood Programs..... 7

Problem Solving.....8

Shelter Staff Can Help

All homeless children and youth, including unaccompanied youth, should be in school!

As a shelter staff member, you are in a critical and unique position to help children, youth and their families [parent(s), legal guardian or caretaker] learn about their right to immediate school enrollment and other support services for which they are eligible under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education program in Illinois. Shelter staff can encourage unaccompanied youth to stay in school.

The information you share with families not only helps them when they are living in your shelter, but also when they leave to move into another homeless situation (e.g., doubled-up housing, living in a motel, a campground, car or other temporary shelter).

This quick reference guide is a tool you can use to assist families so they can enroll and keep their children in school. You can find additional information about the Homeless Education program through these and other sources:

Illinois State Board of Education/McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program

100 North First Street - C-215
Springfield, Illinois 62777-0001

ILLINOIS MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION HOTLINE: **1-800-215-6379**

Helpful Websites

IN ILLINOIS:

Illinois Homeless Education Program: www.isbe.net/homeless.

Opening Doors: Homeless Education Technical Assistance Project:
www.homelessed.net.

NATIONAL:

The National Center for Homeless Education: www.serve.org/nche.

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth:
www.naehcy.org.

Choosing a School: The School of Origin

STAYING AT THE SCHOOL OF ORIGIN

Which school should a child staying in a shelter attend?

Families have two choices when enrolling children in school:

- 1 enroll in the school they are presently attending, *school of origin*, or
- 2 enroll in the shelter's attendance area school.

Why is it preferable for the child to continue at his/her school of origin?

School stability helps a child continue academic progress and maintain current friendships. Because the shelter situation is temporary, children who do not continue at their school of origin may be faced with changing schools several times. This can have serious consequences for a child's learning. Each time children change schools, they lose three to six months of academic progress. Therefore, whenever possible, it is better if the child continues at his or her school of origin.

How long may the child remain at his/her school of origin?

A child may remain at the school of origin until the end of the school year in which the family becomes permanently housed. For instance, if a child begins school in September at the school of origin and moves in January to a permanent residence, he or she still may stay at the school of origin until the school year concludes in June. With the school district's approval, the child may stay at the school of origin even longer.

How does a child return to the school of origin if the family does not have a car or any money for a taxi or public transportation?

The school district **must** provide and pay for transportation to the school of origin if the family decides to have the child continue there.

What if the school the child was attending transfers that child out of school because the family moves out of the school's attendance area?

- A school is not to transfer a homeless child without the consent of a parent, guardian, or caretaker. If a homeless child is transferred, the family has the right to re-enroll the student at that same school.
- When the student re-enrolls, the school should immediately refer the student and family for appropriate services through the school district's Homeless Education Program.

Choosing a School: Attendance Area School

Which school should a child staying in a shelter attend?

Families have two choices when enrolling children in school:

- 1 enroll in the school they are presently attending, *school of origin*, or
- 2 enroll in the shelter's attendance area school.

ENROLLING IN THE ATTENDANCE AREA SCHOOL

What if the family wants to enroll a child in the shelter's attendance area school?

The student has the right to immediate enrollment if the family chooses this option of enrolling the child in the shelter's attendance area school.

What records or documents does the family have to bring for immediate enrollment?

None. No documents or records are necessary to enroll a student staying in a shelter in school. This means that the birth certificate, proof of address, immunization and medical records, the Individualized Education Plan (IEP) for a student receiving special education services, and/or other school records are not required for immediate enrollment.

If families have their children's documents or records, they may take them to the school when enrolling their children.

What happens if the school does not allow the student to enroll?

It should be reported immediately. Shelter staff should give the family the name and phone number of the school district's Homeless Education Program Liaison or have the family call the Illinois State Board of Education Homeless Hotline toll-free number (1-800-215-6379) for help.

To find the school district Homeless Liaison, call the school where the child is enrolling and ask to be connected to the school district Homeless Liaison or ask for the phone number. A list of Homeless Liaisons by their school districts is also available on the Illinois State Board of Education's website at <http://webapps.isbe.net/homelesschildliaison>.

Is transportation available for the homeless student to the attendance area school?

If transportation is provided to other students living in the attendance area, the student at the shelter is also eligible for transportation under the same guidelines.

School Services for Students & Families

What services are available to homeless students at school?

- Help with school supplies, school and gym uniforms
- Free breakfast (if offered) and lunch at the school
- A waiver of all school fees
- Services that any other students at the school are eligible to receive, such as tutoring and before-school or after-school programs
- The same transportation services provided by the district to any other students in the district
- Help with obtaining school records and other documents, such as a child's birth certificate

Families must enroll their children in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program where their children attend school to receive these services

What other services are available to the family?

Homeless families in need of additional services can be referred by the school to those agencies and organizations providing such services (i.e., housing authority, health department, community action agencies, and the Illinois Department of Human Services).



School Fee Waivers

What school fees are waived for homeless students?

School fees that are waived include, but are not limited to:

- charges for textbooks and instructional materials
- charges and deposits for use of school property such as locks, towels, lab equipment
- charges for field trips made during or after school hours if the trip is a required or customary part of a class or extracurricular activity
- charges for uniforms or equipment related to sports or fine arts programs
- charges for supplies related to a particular class such as shop, home economics, labs, art
- graduation fees such as caps and gowns
- school records fees
- school health services fees
- driver's education fees

What school fees are not waived?

School fees that are not waived include:

- library fines
- charges for class rings
- yearbooks
- pictures
- diploma covers or similar items
- charges for optional travel undertaken by a school club or group of students outside of school hours
- admission charges for dances, athletic events or other social events

PLEASE NOTE: School records **may not** be withheld due to a homeless student having outstanding fees.



Early Childhood Programs

Why is early childhood care/education important?

The early years are learning years. Early care and learning experiences for children, birth to five years, support the intellectual, social, and emotional development that children need to succeed.

What programs are available for children birth to three years?

- Children, birth to three (0-3) years, can participate in community infant-toddler programs. Early Head Start and Prevention Initiative programs are free to eligible families. Early Intervention uses a sliding-fee scale for eligible families.
- To find infant-toddler programs in a community, contact the Illinois Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R) office at 877-202-4453, or visit their website, www.inccrra.org, and click on [Find Your Local CCR&R](#).

What programs are available for children three to five years?

- Children three to five (3-5) years old can participate in community child care, preschool, early childhood special education, public school, Head Start or faith-based programs, if available. Families eligible for Preschool for All or Head Start programs **will not** have to pay a fee.
- To find preschool programs in a community, contact:
 - the Illinois State Board of Education at 866-262-6663 and ask about Preschool for All programs.
 - the Illinois CCR&R at 877-202-4453 or visit their website, www.inccrra.org, and click on [Find Your Local CCR&R](#).

What about young children with special needs?

Young children with delays or disabilities that interfere with their learning and development also benefit from quality early care and learning experiences.

- For children birth to 3 years, contact:
 - the Illinois Department of Human Services at 800-323-4769 to find a local Early Intervention Child and Family Connections office.
 - the CCR&R office at 877-202-4453.
- For children 3 to 5 years, contact the local school district or neighborhood school to learn about free screening and other services that the children may be entitled to receive.

Problem Solving

What if there is a problem at the school with enrollment, transportation, the waiver of school fees, or other issues?

Contact the school district Homeless Liaison who will make sure that the student is immediately enrolled in school. If necessary, the Liaison will let the parent/guardian/caretaker know about formal dispute procedures to alleviate problems.

To find the school district Homeless Liaison, call the school where the child is enrolling and ask to be connected to the school district Homeless Liaison or ask for the phone number. A list of Homeless Liaisons by their school districts is also available on the Illinois State Board of Education's website at <http://webapps.isbe.net/homelesschildliaison>.

If the Liaison is not available, or there continues to be an issue with the student's enrollment, call the Illinois State Board of Education Homeless Education Hotline for help at: 1-800-215-6379.

The following information is important for shelter staff to have readily available in order to help families with their children's school enrollment and other support services.

**NAME OF SCHOOL DISTRICT
HOMELESS LIAISON:**

ADDRESS:

PHONE NUMBER:

**SHELTER'S ATTENDANCE
AREA SCHOOL:**

ADDRESS:

PHONE NUMBER:

PRINCIPAL'S NAME:

OTHER SCHOOL CONTACT:

OTHER RESOURCES

NAME	PHONE #
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NAME	PHONE #
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