

MCKINNEY-VENTO POLICY (FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS)

Legal Reference: 42 USC §11431 et seq.

It is the policy of UAFA to ensure that homeless children and youth are provided with equal access to its educational programs, have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state of Georgia academic standards, are not segregated based on their status as homeless and to establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination based on their homelessness.

Notification

Families shall be notified of their rights under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §11434a et seq. (the Act) and directed to contact the Homeless Education Liaison at Utopian Academy for the Arts to request additional information or assistance. Notification of these rights shall be included in the Parent/Student Handbook and in any other manner deemed appropriate by the school.

The answers to this questionnaire help determine eligibility for services under the federal McKinney-Vento Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11435. For more information, please get in touch with The Homeless Education Project at 941-255-7480. Your children have the right to:

1. Continue to attend school in the school they attended before you became homeless (school of origin).
2. Receive transportation to the school of origin.
3. Enroll in school without giving a permanent address and attend classes while the school arranges for a school transfer, immunization records, or other documents required for enrollment.
4. Receive the same special programs and services, if needed, as provided to all other children served in these programs.
5. Have enrollment disputes quickly addressed.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act ensures the educational rights above for scholars who are homeless. If you wish to have a copy of this document, please contact the Main Office. Presently, are you and or your family living in any of the following situations?

Identification

In accordance with the Act, the term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence due to economic hardship. This includes:

- a) Children and youth who are forced to share the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; live in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- b) Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
- c) Children and youth who live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; or,
- d) Migratory children who are living in circumstances set forth in items a, b, and c.

Unaccompanied youth are students who are not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian and may be considered homeless if they meet the above definition. Homeless status is determined in cooperation with the

parents/guardians, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the Homeless Education Liaison.

In collaboration with school personnel and community organizations, the Homeless Education Liaison will identify children and youth in transition, both in and out of school. Additionally, ELL and Homeless students will also be identified in a school-wide screening under IDEA Child Find Query (CFQ) during enrollment.

School Selection

Homeless children and unaccompanied youth have the right to attend school with other children or youths who are not homeless. A student identified as homeless may select to attend school at their school of origin or in the attendance area where the family currently resides, if it is in their best interest.

The student may continue to attend the “school of origin”, which is the school he or she attended when permanently housed; the school in which he or she was last enrolled; or the designated receiving school at the next grade level if he or she has completed the grade levels at the school of origin. If attending their school of origin, he or she may continue attending for the duration of homelessness or for the remainder of the current academic year if he or she becomes permanently housed during the academic year.

If not attending school of origin, they may enroll in any public school where a non-homeless student who lives in the attendance area where he or she is living is eligible to attend.

Enrollment

Identified students shall immediately be enrolled in school to attend classes and participate fully in school activities, including, if the child or youth is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, including but not limited to previous academic records, immunization or other health records, proof of residency, or other documents. The school shall immediately contact the student’s previous school to obtain available school records. Records ordinarily kept by the school will be maintained so that they are available in a timely fashion when the student enters a new school or school district.

If (a) the grade level for which a homeless child or youth has applied has more applicants than spaces available and results in a lottery during the designated time on an annual basis, or (b) if a homeless student applies for admission after the time of the annual lottery, the student will be designated as residing within the school attendance zone and will be immediately enrolled pending, if necessary, the outcome of the Enrollment Dispute Resolution Process discussed below.

Comparable Services

Homeless children and youth shall be provided services comparable to those offered to other students at this School, including but not limited to transportation, educational services, meals through school meal programs, special education services, career and technical education, and gifted education.

Transportation

Where feasible, applicable, and requested by the parent/guardian, homeless students shall be provided with transportation if it is determined to be in the best interest of the child.

The Homeless Education Liaison is authorized to use a portion of Title I funds for this purpose. Transportation strategies may include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Develop formal or informal agreements with school districts where homeless children cross district lines
- Use public transit where feasible
- Use approved carpools,¹ van or taxi services, including Uber and Lyft
- Reimburse parents and youth for gas²
- Pursue inter-agency solutions

Homeless Education Liaison

The school will appoint a homeless education liaison who shall ensure homeless children and youth, or their parent/guardian, and unaccompanied youths are:

1. Identified by school personnel;
2. Enrolled, have an equal opportunity to succeed in school, and receive the educational services for which they are eligible;
3. Provided referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;
4. Informed of the educational and related opportunities available and provided meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education;
5. Informed of all transportation services, including to the school of origin; and
6. Provided written notice of rights under the Act

The Liaison's duties shall also include ensuring:

1. Public notices of the educational rights of homeless children and youth are disseminated in locations frequented by the parents/guardians or unaccompanied youths, including but not limited to schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens.
2. School personnel receive training on the possible indicators of homelessness, sensitivity in identifying families and youth as in transition, and procedures for forwarding information indicating homelessness to the Liaison.
3. Coordination of services with local service agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to homeless children and youths and their families, to minimize educational disruption for homeless children and youths who become homeless.
4. That a residency inquiry is included in the initial enrollment information and instruct the school registrar and secretary to inquire about possible homelessness upon the enrollment and withdrawal of every student and to forward information indicating homelessness to the Homeless Liaison.
5. Eligible students are appropriately reported to the Georgia Department of Education.

Dispute Resolution

If there is a dispute under the Act over eligibility, school selection, or enrollment in UAFA, it shall be resolved using the following process.

Step 1:

The parent/guardian or unaccompanied minor must file a written request for dispute resolution with the Homeless Education Liaison to initiate the dispute resolution process. The homeless child or unaccompanied youth shall be immediately enrolled in the school until the dispute is resolved. The Liaison shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible for homeless children and unaccompanied youths.

Within five (5) business days of receipt of the letter, a written explanation shall be provided to the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth for any enrollment decision, along with a copy of their rights to appeal against the decision.

Step 2:

A parent or unaccompanied youth must notify the Homeless Education Liaison of his or her intent to appeal the decision to the Governing Board within 10 school days of receiving the explanation of this School. The Liaison shall forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the Board. The Board will review the information and provide a written decision within fifteen (15) school days of receipt.

Step 3:

If the dispute remains unresolved or is appealed following the final decision by the Board, the Homeless Liaison will forward all written documentation and related paperwork to the Georgia Department of Education's Homeless Program Consultant for charter schools for final disposition of this matter.