

***McKinney-Vento Enrollment Implementation***

The McKinney-Vento Act requires immediate enrollment in school for students experiencing homelessness.[[1]](#footnote-1)

* Enrollment means “attending classes and participating fully in school activities.”[[2]](#footnote-2)
* Immediate means “at once” and “occurring, acting, or accomplished without loss or interval of time.”[[3]](#footnote-3)

Applying the term “immediate” to school enrollment indicates that McKinney-Vento students should be attending classes and participating fully in school activities at once, without any loss or interval of time between their attempt to enroll and their attendance in school. To meet this requirement, LEAs must implement streamlined procedures to ensure the challenges of homelessness do not prevent students from attending classes and participating fully in school activities immediately.

Guiding principles for immediate enrollment include:

1. Immediate enrollment must occur at once. Attendance and participation cannot be delayed waiting for parents, caregivers, or unaccompanied youth to sign or produce documents, for a particular staff member to “approve” enrollment, or for other elements of the enrollment procedure to unfold.
2. Immediate enrollment must occur at once at all times of the year. LEAs must implement procedures to accommodate the enrollment rush at the end of the summer and ensure that McKinney-Vento students seeking to enroll in August and September are able to attend school without any loss of time.
3. A parent’s, caregiver’s, or unaccompanied youth’s first enrollment attempt should be successful. Enrollment should not require multiple visits to an office, communication with multiple staff members, waiting to speak with a particular staff member, printing/scanning/returning documents, or other steps after an initial attempt to enroll.
4. Multiple enrollment platforms should be available. Procedures should allow for one-stop enrollment for parents, caregivers, and unaccompanied youth at any school building, district office, and online (if an online enrollment system exists in the LEA). For example, if the LEA requires all school enrollment to take place online, and a caregiver or unaccompanied youth presents to enroll at a school building, the school should have multiple, trained staff members and infrastructure to be able to help the caregiver or youth access a device and navigate the online enrollment system immediately at that school.

Procedures

Every LEA must implement a McKinney-Vento enrollment procedure that ensures immediate enrollment: that students are in the classroom the same or following day as the initial enrollment attempt. While procedures may vary based on LEA size and infrastructure, every procedure should follow these guidelines:

1. Start with filters to identify homelessness at all enrollment entry points

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| **Filters to Identify Homelessness Upon Enrollment** | |
| **At a School or District Office** | **Online Enrollment** |
| * Train multiple staff members about homelessness and immediate enrollment, including administrators, registrars, secretaries, and anyone who might assist with enrollment. * Use an [eligibility questionnaire](https://msdeps-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/pjulianelle_msdeps_org/EoLCJ3jbzidInjN_Hhs2RyMBrfrih-auN6qhS5weW-v46w?e=TFyUQ7) as a matter of course for all enrolling students, to identify McKinney-Vento students as soon as they attempt to enroll. * Display posters and fliers about the McKinney-Vento Act in the office in multiple languages * Include McKinney-Vento information in social media posts and other outreach to families and students. | * Display information about the McKinney-Vento program on the online enrollment home page, with the opportunity to click a link for more information (including the definition of homelessness and core McKinney-Vento protections). Avoid the word “homeless.” [MSDE’s website](https://marylandpublicschools.org/about/Pages/DSFSS/Homeless/index.aspx) has resources and sample language. * Integrate an [eligibility questionnaire](https://msdeps-my.sharepoint.com/:f:/g/personal/pjulianelle_msdeps_org/EoLCJ3jbzidInjN_Hhs2RyMBrfrih-auN6qhS5weW-v46w?e=TFyUQ7) into the online enrollment system as one of the first questions and filter students who indicate homelessness on the questionnaire into the McKinney-Vento procedure. * Design the system to filter students attempting to enroll themselves into a the McKinney-Vento procedure for unaccompanied youth. * Design the system to filter families attempting to enroll without proof of residency or other documents into the McKinney-Vento procedure. * Have the system recognize shelter and motel addresses for immediate filtering into the McKinney-Vento procedure. * Have the system recognize students being enrolled by different people from the same address for flagging and potential filtering into the McKinney-Vento procedure. |

1. Whenever homelessness is claimed or suspected, enroll immediately using the LEA’s carefully-designed McKinney-Vento enrollment procedure.

Every LEA must implement a McKinney-Vento enrollment procedure that is carefully-designed to ensure McKinney-Vento students are able to attend classes at once. Whether in-person or online, the procedure must:

* Ensure immediate enrollment without documents (proof of residency, health records, birth certificate, etc.)
* Ensure that immediate enrollment does not depend on any particular individual who may be out of the office or overwhelmed by the volume of requests.
* Ensure that immediate enrollment is not delayed by requiring parents, caregivers, or youth to sign, print, or return documents.
* Eliminate enrollment delays that might be caused by challenges related to homelessness, such as:
  + Lack of access to technology
  + Lack of transportation
  + Lack of documentation
  + Lack of uniforms, clothing, hygiene supplies, or school supplies
* Eliminate enrollment delays that might be caused by challenges related to language and comprehension.
* Ensure immediate enrollment of unaccompanied youth without a parent or guardian, whether the youth is under 18 years old or is legally an adult. LEAs may adopt one or more methods for unaccompanied youth to enroll in school, as long as the enrollment is immediate. Common methods include:
  + Caregivers: Unaccompanied youth who, in the absence of a parent or legal guardian, are in the care of an adult caregiver may be enrolled in school by that caregiver, whether or not a relative
  + Youth: Unaccompanied youth may enroll themselves in school and sign documents a parent typically would sign, as long as the youth is of sufficient age and maturity to make enrollment decisions.

To provide McKinney-Vento services beyond enrollment in school, a liaison, PPW, counselor, principal, social worker, or other staff person should follow up with the family or student in a timely manner. However, immediate enrollment cannot be delayed waiting for staff to be available to offer additional services.

1. As needed, confirm homelessness.

Neither federal nor state law requires LEAs to confirm a student’s homelessness when a school receives information indicating homelessness from a parent, caregiver, student, school staff member, or community agency. Indeed, confirming homelessness for every McKinney-Vento student would be unduly burdensome for schools and take resources away from students’ needs.

However, in cases when the LEA has objective reasons to question a student’s homelessness, the LEA can take sensitive steps to confirm homelessness. The National Center for Homeless Education has issued a brief outlining accepting methods of “[Confirming Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Rights and Services](https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/conf-elig.pdf),” which may include:

* Detailed conversations with parents, caregivers, and youth;
* Home visits by PPWs, social workers, and other non-threatening staff members;
* Asking bus drivers if students appear not to be residing where they are being picked up or dropped off; and
* Asking the liaison in the student’s prior school district if the student was experiencing homelessness there.

Efforts to confirm homelessness cannot delay enrollment. If a student enrolled under the McKinney-Vento later is discovered not to have been experiencing homelessness, the LEA may withdraw the student, providing the parent, caregiver, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the decision and the opportunity to appeal.

1. Arrange transportation as required.

Attending classes and participating fully in school requires the student to get to school. The McKinney-Vento Act requires LEAs to provide transportation to school when a student is attending the school of origin.[[4]](#footnote-4) “Transportation must be arranged promptly to ensure immediate enrollment and so as not to create barriers to homeless students’ attendance, retention, and success.”[[5]](#footnote-5) In most LEAs, school buses are the preferred form of transportation for all students, due to cost and safety. However, it can take time to adjust a school bus route to accommodate a McKinney-Vento student. While school buses or other, more permanent transportation arrangements are put in place, LEAs must offer students another form of transportation. In accordance with LEA policies, this may include public transportation, gas vouchers or reimbursement, school staff transporting students in alternative vehicles, taxis, rideshares with appropriate safeguards, or vans.

1. 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(C). [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. 42 U.S.C. §11434a(1). [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. See, e.g., Oxford’s Dictionary, Merriam-Webster Dictionary; Georgetown University Law Center (2017), [A Guide to Reading, Interpreting, and Applying Statutes](https://www.law.georgetown.edu/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/A-Guide-to-Reading-Interpreting-and-Applying-Statutes-1.pdf) (“Dictionaries can also be helpful in interpreting the meaning of statutory language. It will likely be more effective to compare and contrast definitions from multiple dictionaries to obtain a broader consensus on the meaning of words.”) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(J)(iii). [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. U.S. Department of Education (2018). Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance, section J-1. [↑](#footnote-ref-5)