

# Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness

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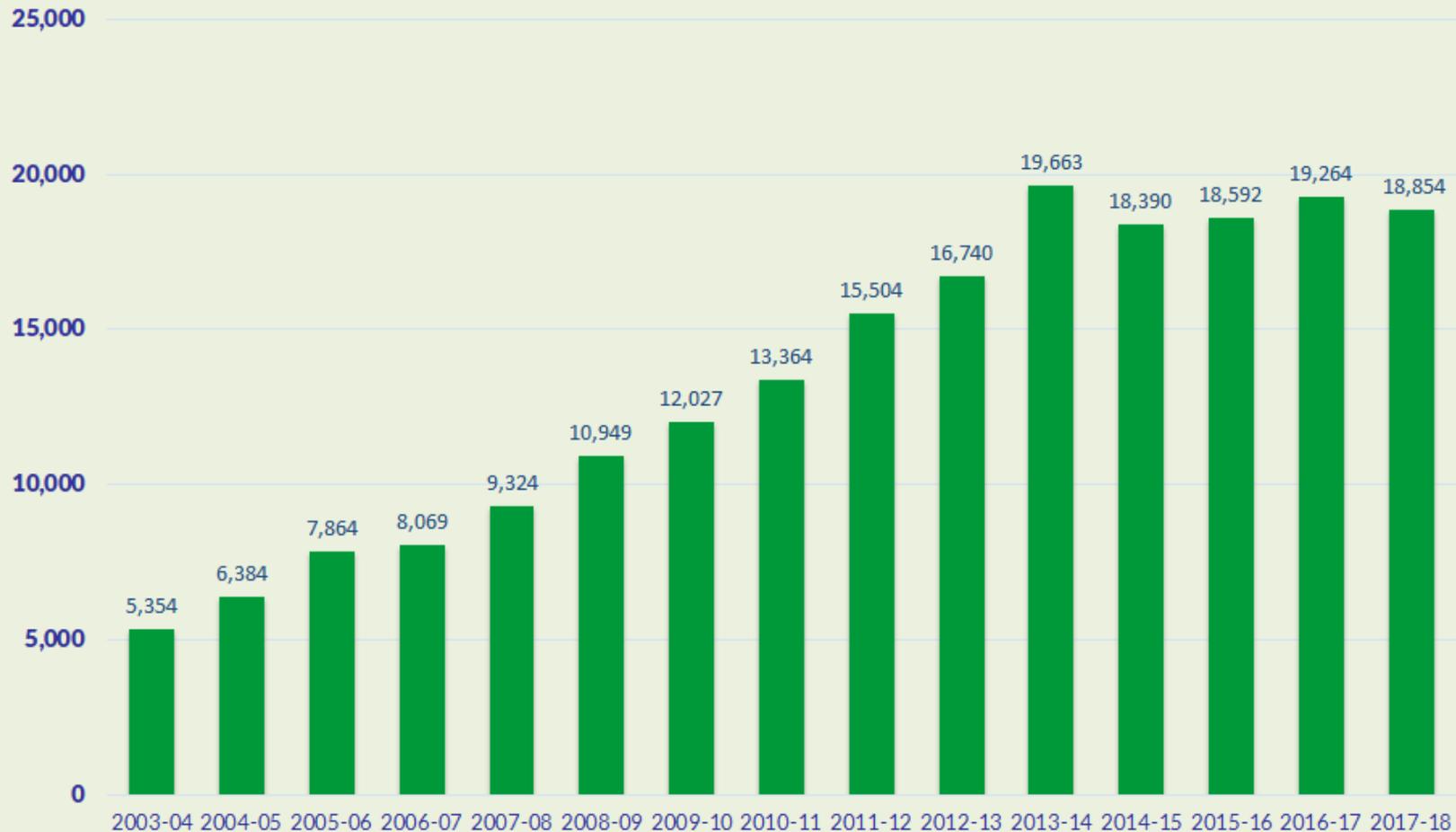
*DPI EHCY State Coordinators*

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WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**  
Carolyn Stanford Taylor, State Superintendent

## Homeless Student Enrollment in Wisconsin 2003-2018



## Homeless Student Nighttime Residence Data 2012-2018



## Total Unaccompanied Youth Enrollment 2012-2018



# Impact of Homelessness on Children and Youth

- Higher incidences of acute and chronic illnesses, depression and anxiety
- Homelessness at any time in early childhood is associated with poor classroom engagement and poor social skills in early elementary school.
- The achievement gap between homeless and low-income elementary students tend to persist, and may even worsen over time.
- A youth who experiences homelessness is 87 percent more likely to dropout of school.



# History of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

- Originally passed in 1987
- Reauthorized in 2015 by ESSA
- Works hand-in-hand with IDEA, Title I-A, and other federal education programs



# McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

## Main themes:

- Identification
- School stability
- School enrollment
- Support for academic success
- Child-centered, best interest decision making



# Homelessness Defined

The term “homeless” children and youth means:

**“Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence—”**

What exactly is a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence?

Please note that this definition applies to students experiencing homelessness in schools but other federal programs may have differing definitions.



# Fixed, Regular, and Adequate

- **Fixed:**
  - Stationary, permanent, not subject to change
- **Regular:**
  - Used on a predictable, routine, consistent basis
  - Consider the relative permanence
- **Adequate:**
  - Lawfully and reasonably sufficient
  - Sufficient for meeting the physical and psychological needs typically met in a home environment

Can the student go to the **SAME PLACE** (fixed) **EVERY NIGHT** (regular) to sleep in a **SAFE AND SUFFICIENT SPACE** (adequate)?



# IDEA and McKinney-Vento

- Provisions of McKinney-Vento and IDEA are compatible
- IDEA does not supersede McKinney-Vento
- Students with disabilities who are homeless have the same rights under McKinney-Vento as non-disabled students
- There are additional requirements under IDEA regarding identification, evaluation, programming, and placement



# Eligibility

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up)
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Living in a public or private place not designed for ordinary use as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans (cars, parks, bus or train stations, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, etc.)
- Children from migratory families who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above
- Unaccompanied youth living in the above circumstances



# Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

## Definition:

Youth who meet the definition of homeless **AND** are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian (i.e., youth living with relatives on an emergency basis, youth living with a friend or runaway).



# School of Origin and Residence

Each school district is responsible to:

- Continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, and until the end of the academic year in which the student becomes permanently housed; OR
- Immediately enroll a student experiencing homelessness in the resident public school.

**School of origin:** the school the child or youth attended when last permanently housed or the school the student was last enrolled and attending.



# School of Origin Decisions

- When a student with a disability who is homeless relocates, the new resident school district must either:
  - continue the student's education in the school of origin, or
  - enroll the student in the attendance area school where permanently housed students are eligible to attend.
- A student's disability may be a determining factor regarding school of origin decisions, however, a school district cannot deny enrollment solely based on the student's disability.



# Free Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) Responsibility

- In general, the school district where the student is currently living is responsible for implementing the IEP and insuring FAPE.
- However, when the student remains in the school of origin in a non-resident district, the two districts may agree the district that was previously responsible for FAPE may remain the responsible school district.



# School Enrollment

When remaining in the school of origin is not in the student's best interest, or what the parent, guardian, or youth requests, students have the right to immediately enroll in their resident school, even if:

- Students do not have required documents, such as school records, records of immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, guardianship, or other documents; or
- Students have missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.



# Enrollment in Preschool

- States must ensure that children experiencing homelessness have access to public preschool programs administered by the State Education Agency (SEA) or the school district.
- Preschools are included in the school of origin definition.
- Liaisons must ensure access to Head Start, early intervention (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C), and other preschool programs administered by the school district.



# Transportation

- School districts must provide transportation to and from the school of origin, including until the end of the year when the student obtains permanent housing.
- School districts must provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students.
- School districts must eliminate barriers to the identification, enrollment, and retention of students experiencing homelessness (including transportation barriers).



# Transportation and IEP Services

- The need for transportation as a related service is a separate issue from the school district's obligation to provide transportation under McKinney-Vento.
- The student's IEP team considers if specially designed transportation may be needed because of the student's disability.
- IDEA funds may be used to pay for transportation as a related service.



# Dispute Resolution

**If a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection or enrollment in a school:**

- The student must be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute (including all available appeals).
- The parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth must be provided a written explanation of decisions made by the school and how to appeal the decisions.
- The parent, guardian or youth must be referred to the district's homeless liaison, who must carry out the dispute resolution process.



# Disagreements about School of Origin for Students with Disabilities

- A student's disability may be a factor in determining if the student remains in the school of origin.
- If, after following the school district's usual process for addressing McKinney-Vento requirements, the decision is made that remaining in the school of origin is not in the student's best interest, the parents or unaccompanied youth are informed of the decision and the student transfers unless the parent appeals the decision.



# Disagreements about School of Origin for Students with Disabilities

- If the parent believes the student's special education needs cannot be met in the selected school, an IEP team meeting should be held to review the IEP and determine placement.
- If the parent disagrees with the IEP team placement decision, the parent may use the dispute resolution options available under IDEA.
  - Mediation, Complaint, Due Process



# Support for Academic Success: National School Lunch Act

- Students eligible under McKinney-Vento are automatically eligible for free school meals.
- U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) policy permits liaisons and shelter directors to obtain free school meals for students immediately by providing a list of names of students experiencing homelessness with effective dates.
- <http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/food>
- <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/nutrition.pdf>



# Support for Academic Success: Coordination with Other Laws/Programs

- LEAs must coordinate McKinney-Vento and special education services within the LEA and with other involved LEAs.
- Information about a student eligible under McKinney-Vento's living situation is a student education record subject to Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).



# Role of the Homeless Liaison

**Assist** unaccompanied youth/parents with placement, enrollment, and knowing their rights.

**Disseminate** public notices of educational rights.

**Inform and assist** with accessing transportation.

**Mediate** enrollment disputes.



# Role of the Homeless Liaison

- Every public school district must designate a McKinney-Vento homeless liaison able to carry out their legal duties.
- Ensure that:
  - Children and youth in homeless situations are identified; enrolled in and have full opportunity to succeed in school; receive educational services, including preschool; and are referred to healthcare, dental, and mental health services; and
  - Parents and guardians are informed of McKinney-Vento rights and can participate in their children's education.

Directory: <https://dpi.wi.gov/homeless/liaisons>



# Role of the Homeless Liaison (continued)

Ensure that:

- Public notice of educational rights is posted;
- Enrollment disputes are mediated;
- Parents, guardians, and unaccompanied homeless youth are informed of transportation services and assisted with transportation arrangements to the school of origin; and
- School personnel providing McKinney-Vento services receive professional development and other support.



# Grant Funded Districts

- Appleton Area School District
- Ashwaubenon School District
- School District of Beloit
- CESA 4
- CESA 11
- Clintonville Public School District
- Eau Claire Area School District
- Fond Du Lac School District
- Green Bay Area Public School District
- School District of Janesville
- Kenosha Unified School District
- Madison Metropolitan School District
- Marinette School District
- Milwaukee Public Schools
- Racine Unified School District
- Sheboygan Area School District
- West Allis-West Milwaukee School District
- Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools



# Resources

- Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction Education for Homeless Children and Youth  
<https://dpi.wi.gov/homeless>
- SchoolHouse Connection  
<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/>
- National Center for Homeless Education  
<https://nche.ed.gov/>
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
<http://www.naehcy.org/>



# Questions?

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