

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act is a federal law that protects the educational rights of students in temporary housing.

It defines “**homeless** children and youths” as any student who **lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.**



**School secretaries and enrollment personnel are often the first people whom students in temporary housing and their families come in contact with. As front-line staff, you have an important role to play in making the family feel safe and supported as well as taking immediate action in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act.**

- 1. SUPPORT:** The first step in supporting students in temporary housing is to identify them. Signs of unstable housing may include attendance at several schools, incomplete records, and/or parents who seem confused or uncomfortable when asked about a current address.

**If you suspect that a family is temporarily housed, use these trauma-sensitive strategies to learn more:**

- Make the student/family feel welcome by assuring them that they can be enrolled even if they do not have a permanent address or documents typically needed for enrollment in school.
- Be discreet and take the student/family to a private place to finish filling out enrollment forms. Assure them that any additional questions you are asking are not intended to get anyone into trouble, but rather, to make sure they are receiving the services that they are eligible for.
- Actively listen, avoid words like “homeless” and “shelter,” stress partnership, avoid blame, and be patient and clear about expectations.

- 2. ACT:** If you determine that a student is temporarily housed, you should follow these steps to make sure that you are in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, a federal law:

- Make sure that the parent knows that she can:
  - Keep her child enrolled in the same school and receive transportation to that school or
  - Immediately enroll her child in the local school, even if she doesn't have the documents normally required for enrollment (e.g., birth certificate, proof of immunization, proof of residency, school records).
- If the parent decides to transfer her child, immediately enroll the child, ask for the name/city of the last school attended, and call the school to have all academic records forwarded to your school.
- If academic documents are missing, arrange for the student to take a placement test. For more information, visit <http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/assessment.pdf>.

**Finally, you should also contact the school district's McKinney-Vento homeless liaison so that other services (i.e. free meals, transportation, tutoring, etc.) may be arranged as soon as possible.**