

ELKHART INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT

SPECIAL PROGRAMS IN-SERVICE SUMMARY

HOMELESS EDUCATION PROGRAM

Homeless Students:

Over 1.3 million homeless children and youth are enrolled in public schools. Recognizing the need for students in homeless situations to be guaranteed equal access to educational opportunities, the federal government enacted the McKinney-Vento Act to remove barriers homeless children may face. This act was reauthorized in December of 2015 and it provides new protections for homeless youth which took effect October 1, 2016. In support of the McKinney-Vento Act, the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) has released guidance to states and school districts on new provisions that help to support homeless youth. These updated requirements focus on:

- Identification efforts
- Making sure that preschool-aged homeless children have access to and receive supportive services
- Ensuring coordination with other service providers
- Providing professional development and technical assistance for professionals working with homeless children
- Removing school enrollment barriers
- Providing school stability, including attendance at the school of origin (if reasonably feasible) and transportation to that school until the end of the school year even if the student becomes permanently housed
- Protecting privacy of student records, including information about a homeless child or youth's living situation
- Increased emphasis on college and career readiness
- New authority for local liaisons to verify eligibility of homeless children, youths, and families for HUD homeless assistance programs

Elkhart ISD takes pride in its efforts to provide high quality educational services and supports to all enrolled students. In order to aid in determining whether students meet homeless identification criteria, first-time enrolling students' parents or guardians are required to complete **Residency Questionnaires**. Responses on these forms are reviewed by the district Special Programs Director for identification, as well as for additional services related to each student's unique needs. However, children and youth in homeless situations can be difficult to identify and may go unnoticed by school personnel. Staff members are asked to inform counselors, principals, or the Homeless Liaison (ext. 1013) if they observe evidence that a student may be struggling with homelessness. The UT Dana Center provides additional information related to recruitment and identification of these students, as well as other services available to enhance homeless students' educational experiences at <http://www.utdanacenter.org/theo/>.