



BURKE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Building HOPE for the Future

Homeless Children and Youth

GENERAL INFORMATION

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was reauthorized under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) to ensure the educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. ESEA made significant changes in the way local educational agencies (LEAs) address the needs of homeless students. Among these changes are requirements for:

- The Georgia Department of Education (GaDOE) and LEAs to review and revise laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youth.
- LEAs to use the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act definition of homeless when identifying and determining which students are eligible for services.
- LEAs to designate a local liaison to coordinate services to ensure that homeless children and youth enroll in school and have the opportunity to succeed academically.
- LEAs to coordinate the local plan required under Title I with the needs of homeless children and youth, including making a mandatory set-aside of funds under Title I, Part A to serve homeless children.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act guarantees to homeless children the following:

The right to immediate enrollment in school.

- The right to attend school in school of origin or in the attendance area where family currently resides.
- The right to receive transportation to school of origin if requested by parents and is in the best interest of the child.
- The right to comparable services as other schoolmates including transportation and supplemental services.
- The right to attend school along with children not experiencing homelessness.
- The posting of homeless students' rights in all schools and other places around the community that low-income families and high-risk families may visit.

HOMELESS LIAISON RESPONSIBILITIES

The Burke County homeless liaison is the heart of the LEA homeless program. It is important that the homeless liaison have some knowledge and experience in dealing with Federal programs, social worker responsibilities, and counseling responsibilities. It is important that the LEA homeless liaison has knowledge of the district, understands the community, has great communication skills, and has a commitment to the homeless program.

Burke County's homeless liaison, Mrs. Cynthia Brogan, Director of Federal Programs, meets, at minimum, yearly with school personnel to discuss the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act. Burke County's Homeless plan has the following components addressed,

- Describe the process for the identification and enrollment of homeless children and youth.
- Describe the services to be provided to homeless children and youth.
- Reserve Title I, Part A funds to provide comparable services for homeless children and youth that attend non-Title I schools and provide educationally related support services to children in shelters and other locations where they live.
- Designate an appropriate school based homeless liaison staff person as an LEA homeless liaison.
- Develop, review, and revise LEA policies to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of children and youth in homeless situations.
- Describe the process for ensuring that transportation is provided to homeless children and youth.
- Ensure that accurate data is collected on enrolled homeless children and youth.

Among other duties, the LEA homeless liaison must ensure that:

- Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies. (Communities In Schools, DFACS, Headstart, Early Headstart)
- Homeless students enroll in, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in school.
- Homeless children and youth and their families, including unaccompanied youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, preschool programs administered by the LEA, referrals to health, mental health, dental, and other appropriate services.
- Parents or guardians of homeless children and youth, and unaccompanied youth are informed of educational and related opportunities available to their children, and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- Parents or guardians of a homeless child or youth, and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing transportation services to their selected school.
- Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless students is disseminated in all schools and other places around the community.

PUBLIC NOTICE REQUIREMENTS

Posters, brochures, and other awareness materials explaining educational rights, programs, and other related services for those families experiencing homelessness are required to be posted in

the registration area of all schools and other locations that low-income and high risk families receive services.

The district and school-level homeless liaison supervises and works very closely with the school guidance counselors, school-based homeless liaison, social workers, and transportation director to assure students receive the services they need. She provides new or additional posters and assures these are placed where parents can readily see them. A committee recently reviewed and revised Burke's policy and procedures for homeless students.