

SCHOOL DISTRICT HOMELESS LIAISON

Local homeless education liaisons are Local Educational Agency (LEA) staff responsible for ensuring the identification, school enrollment, attendance, and opportunities for academic success of students in homeless situations. Some of these activities may be performed by the local liaison, while others are accomplished by coordinating the efforts of other staff.

National evaluations have found that local liaisons are an important factor contributing to the success of a school district's homeless education program; therefore, the McKinney-Vento Act now requires every LEA to appoint a local homeless education liaison and specifies his or her legal responsibilities. By linking students and their families to school and community services, local liaisons play a critical role in stabilizing students and promoting academic achievement at the individual, school, and district level.

Key Provisions

- Every LEA, otherwise known as school district, must designate an appropriate staff person as a local homeless education liaison. This person may also be a coordinator for other federal programs.
- Local liaisons must ensure that:
 - Children and youth in homeless situations are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
 - Students experiencing homelessness enroll, and have full and equal opportunity to succeed, in school.
 - Families, children, and youth experiencing homelessness receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, and preschool programs administered by the LEA; and referrals to health, mental health, dental, and other appropriate services.
 - Parents or guardians of students experiencing homelessness 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.
 - Public notice of the educational rights of students in homeless situations is disseminated where children and youth receive services.
 - Enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the Enrollment Disputes section of the McKinney-Vento Act.
 - Parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness are fully informed of all transportation services provided under the McKinney-Vento Act, including transportation to the school of origin, and are assisted in accessing these services.
- Local liaisons must:
 - Assist homeless children and youth who do not have immunizations or medical records to obtain necessary immunizations or medical records.
 - Help unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youths' wishes, and provide youth with notice of their right to appeal an enrollment decision that is contrary to their wishes.

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- Ensure that unaccompanied youth are enrolled in school immediately pending the resolution of any dispute that may arise over school enrollment or placement.
- Collaborate and coordinate with State Coordinators for Homeless Education and community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to children and youth in homeless situations.

Strategies for Implementation

- LEA administrators should work with their State Coordinator for Homeless Education to identify an appropriate staff person to serve as the local homeless education liaison. Federal programs, such as Title I, Part A; Even Start; or Migrant Education, are good programs with which to collaborate in supporting the local liaison position. Perhaps most importantly, after reviewing the responsibilities of the local liaison position, the LEA should appoint the person who has the time ability to carry them out.
- LEAs and State Coordinators should create opportunities for local liaisons to receive training focused on homelessness awareness, key provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act, and the legal responsibilities of the local liaison. Training opportunities may be facilitated by State Coordinators for Homeless Education through attendance at local, state, and national conferences; through neighboring school districts that have established local liaison positions; and through materials such as NCHE's Local Homeless Education Liaison Toolkit. NCHE also hosts homeless education webinars regularly, where participants can train conveniently from their office; visit <http://www.serve.org/nche/webinars.php> to learn more.
- A directory of state and local homeless coalitions may be found on the NCHE website at http://www.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php
- Local liaisons should develop collaborative relationships with community social service providers, including shelters, soup kitchens, food banks, transitional living projects for youth, street outreach teams, youth drop-in centers, community action agencies, welfare departments, housing departments, public health departments, and faith-based organizations. They should inform these agencies of the duties of the local liaison and the responsibilities of the school district in enrolling and serving homeless children and youth.
- Local liaisons should develop relationships with key school district personnel, including administrators, principals, secretaries, registrars, counselors, social workers, transportation staff, food services staff, school nurses, truancy officers, and teachers. They should inform these personnel about the causes and struggles of homelessness, common signs of homelessness, the duties of the local liaison, the responsibilities of the school district, and the rights of students and families in homeless situations.
- Local liaisons should develop relationships with local directors of other school programs, such as preschool; Special Education; Child Nutrition; Title I, Part A; Migrant Education; Neglected and Delinquent; and Even Start to ensure that students in homeless situations can access these services as needed.
- Local liaisons should appoint a school-level point of contact at each school in the LEA. This person can assist the local liaison with school-level tasks and refer issues that need further attention to the local liaison.

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- Local liaisons should disseminate posters, brochures, and other awareness materials explaining educational rights, programs, and related services in schools and other locations where homeless children and youth receive services (such as soup kitchens, health clinics, shelters, transitional living projects for youth, street outreach teams, youth drop-in centers, motels, campgrounds, public laundries, and faith-based organizations). Educational rights posters may be ordered free of charge from the NCHE website at <http://www.serve.org/nche/products.php>
- Local liaisons should seek program support from Title I programs, other education programs, and public and private community organizations.
- LEA staff should communicate with parents, guardians, caregivers, and youth in a manner and language that they can understand.

In Gilchrist County, the local school district Homeless Liaison is:

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