

Thomasville City Schools
Homeless, Unaccompanied
Youth, Migratory & Immigrant
Plan
Pre-K to 12
2022-2023

Homeless students, unaccompanied youth in Pre-K - 12 will have equal access to the same education as their peers and receive services comparable to those offered to non-homeless students, including special education, gifted and talented programs, school nutrition, public preschool, programs for students with limited English proficiency, career and technical education, before and after school programs and transportation. Such children will be provided with the opportunity to meet the same state student performance standards as all other children without being isolated or stigmatized. There will be no barriers to immediate enrollment or educational services. Pre-K students will be placed in pre-k class immediately. If no spot is available, they will be placed on the waiting list for the next available spot.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program is funded under the McKinney –Vento Homeless Assistance Act to ensure that homeless children and youth have access to the same free, appropriate public education that is provided to all children. It further requires that attendance laws not be used to keep homeless children and youth from attending school.

Who is Homeless?

The McKinney-Vento Act (Section 725) defines “homeless children and youth” (school-age and younger) as:

A. Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth who are:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (i.e. “doubled-up”).
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters (i.e., Penelope House, Salvation Army, etc).
- Abandoned in hospitals.

B. Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.

C. Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

D. Migrant/ESL/ELL children who qualify as homeless **if** they are living in circumstances described above.

E. The term ***unaccompanied youth*** includes a young person **not** in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This would include runaways living in runaway shelters, abandoned buildings, cars, on the streets, or in other inadequate housing; children and youth denied housing by their families (sometimes referred to as “throwaway children and youth”); and school-age unwed mothers living in homes for unwed mothers because they have no other housing available.

Determinations of homelessness will be made on a case-by-case basis by the Homeless Liaison.

Enrollment Records

The enrollment of homeless children and youth shall **NOT** be denied or delayed due to any barriers including the lack of the following enrollment requirements:

- Legal guardianship/custody requirements.
- Parent/Guardian’s photo ID.
- Birth certificate.
- School records and/or transcripts.
- Immunization or health records.
- Proofs of residence.
- Transportation.
- Second Party Residence Documentation Form.

If a homeless student or unaccompanied youth does NOT have a student identification number please call the Central Office at 334-636-9955 and one will be assigned. If you have any additional questions about enrolling a homeless child or youth, please call the Homeless Education Liaison at 334-636-9955 ext. 8615. The Homeless Education Liaison will assist with securing documentation needed for the student’s record. ***However, the student MUST be enrolled immediately and attend classes while awaiting documentation/records. There will be no barriers.***

Withdrawal of Homeless Students

Before withdrawing a homeless student from a school, contact the system’s Homeless Liaison for assistance. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires the district to maintain the student in his/her “school of origin” (i.e., the school the student attended when homelessness began) to the extent that it is feasible. Feasibility is to be determined by the Homeless Liaison in collaboration with the Transportation Coordinator.

Child Nutrition Program - Free Meal Eligibility for Homeless Children

Homeless children are entitled to free meals (breakfast and lunch). To expedite the delivery of these services, school officials may accept documentation that children are homeless from the Homeless Liaison. Documentation to substantiate free meal eligibility must consist of the child's name or a list of names, effective date(s) and the signature of the Homeless Liaison. **This documentation is acceptable in lieu of a free/reduced price meal application.** If the household does not complete an application for the child, school officials are authorized to complete an application on behalf of the homeless student. If you have any questions regarding free meal eligibility, you may call the Homeless Liaison at 334-636-9955.

Parents/Guardians/Students Rights

Homeless children have the right to:

- A. Enroll immediately without providing transcripts/school records, immunization/health records, proofs of residence, guardianship/custody requirements, birth certificates, and/or social security cards/numbers.
- B. Attend school, no matter where they live or how long they have lived there. The student must be given access to the same public education, including preschool education and special education services provided to other children.
- C. Remain in the school in which they were enrolled prior to becoming temporarily housed OR enroll in the school that serves the address of the temporary housing. The school choice decision is based upon parental choice and/or feasibility as determined by the district.
- D. Request a written explanation of school placement and the right to appeal an enrollment decision if system personnel attempt to send the student to a school other than the one the parent requests.
- E. Request a written dispute resolution process. During this process, the student has the right to remain in his/her current school.
- F. Receive transportation to school and to school-related programs.
- G. Attend school and participate in school programs with children who are not homeless. Children cannot be separated from the regular school program because they are homeless.
- H. Enroll in school without giving a permanent address. Schools cannot require proof of residence that might prevent or delay school enrollment.
- I. Enroll and attend classes while the school arranges for the transfer of school and immunization records, or any other documents required for enrollment.
- J. Receive free meal eligibility through the Child Nutrition Program (CNP).

K. Obtain a student identification number by calling the Central Office if the student's social security card/number is unavailable.

Services Provided to Homeless Students

The Homeless Education Liaison can be reached at 334-636-9955 ext. 8615 to access the following referral services for homeless students and their parent/guardians:

- Uniforms and school supplies
- Medical, dental or mental health services
- School nutrition programs
- Title I Services
- Educational services for which the student meets eligibility, including special education and related services and programs for English Learners
- Domestic violence prevention information and/or crisis telephone numbers to access domestic violence counselors and/or shelters
- Transportation assistance
- Referral to school-based services and community agencies as determined by Homeless Education Staff.

Posting of Homeless Information

Homeless Education posters must be **visibly** posted in the vicinity of the main office. The two posters contain the *Rights of Parents* and *Rights of Students* who are homeless as well as information on how to access services provided to homeless children and youth. Contact the Homeless Education Liaison if posters are needed.

McKinney-Vento (Homeless Education) Dispute Resolution Procedure

The dispute resolution process begins at the time a school/district challenges the right of either a parent/guardian to enroll a child or to continue a child's enrollment in school. This also applies to an unaccompanied youth and his/her right to enroll or continue enrollment. If there is a dispute regarding a student's homeless status, school selection/enrollment and/or request for transportation, **the student must be immediately enrolled in the school where enrollment is sought and provided with transportation services (if requested).**

The district then must follow the procedures it has established to resolve disputes. However, the district's procedures must provide the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth with an opportunity to submit information before it makes a **final** determination regarding the student's homeless status. If the district makes a final determination that a student is not homeless, it must provide the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth with written notice that the student is not entitled to attend the requested school. This written notice must also:

- 1) state the rationale/basis for the district's determination;
- 2) state the date as of which the student will be withdrawn from the requested school;
- 3) advise that the district's final determination may be appealed to the Alabama State Department of Education;
- 4) provide the name and contact information for the district's homeless liaison;
- 5) inform the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth that the district's homeless liaison is required to assist him/her in filing such an appeal; and
- 6) include the appropriate form needed to file an appeal to the Alabama State Department of Education.

The student must remain enrolled and provided with transportation (if requested) until the district makes a final determination and for a maximum of **30 days** after the determination to give the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth the opportunity to appeal to the Alabama State Department of Education. **The Homeless Liaison is available to assist the parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth with the appeal's process and may be contacted at 334-636-9955 ext. 8615.**

Migrant/Immigrant Students

Services for migrant or immigrant students are provided through Title I allocation in needed. Migrant students are children of families that move with intent of working directly in agricultural employment. These students frequently fall behind grade level because of their mobility. Migrant funding provides additional staff to help these students catch up and achieve at a more rapid pace.

Homeless, migrant, immigrant and limited English proficient students will be provided appropriate, coordinated efficient services that address their specific needs. In addition these students will be afforded opportunities to meet district and state academics content and achievement services.