



## Bettendorf Community School District Homeless Students Identification and Support



Though homeless students and families face many challenges and potentially traumatic experiences, your role as a caring school staff member who can ensure students' rights are upheld and can connect them to supports can make a world of difference. Thank you for creating a welcoming environment and building trust by being sensitive and understanding.

It is important to remember that the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires the immediate enrollment (same day or next day whenever possible) of children and youth experiencing homelessness, even without records normally required for enrollment. This includes health records, residency records, the Notarized Statement of Residency (if doubled up), birth certificates, school records, proof of guardianship, the Transfer of Student Responsibility (if without a parent or guardian), and other documentation. If any of these documents are missing, refer to the appropriate staff member who will follow up to assist in obtaining them if necessary, such as the Secretary, Nurse, Outreach Worker, or Social Worker. When in doubt, enroll the student immediately and consult the Homeless Liaison Tammy Chelf at 563-529-7925 with questions.

### A Step-By-Step Process

**Every situation must be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, especially if the family is doubled up or sharing housing.**

#### **Step 1: Get the Facts**

Gather information about the child's situation. If a student or parent says anything that indicates they might be homeless or doubled up (see definition at right), or if they exhibit common signs of homelessness (see below right), contact the School Counselor or Administrator. Refrain from contacting anyone outside the school system to seek more information. This is considered part of the student's education record and is covered by privacy protections in FERPA.

#### **Step 2: Analyze the Facts**

Working with the School Counselor, determine whether the living arrangements meet the definition of homelessness (see right). Consider whether the living arrangement fits into one of the specific examples in the definition. If not, consider whether the living arrangement, although not mentioned explicitly in the law, would be considered homeless because it is not fixed, regular, and adequate.

#### **Step 3: Seek Additional Input As Needed**

If you are still not sure if the child should be considered homeless, consult with your school's Outreach Worker, Social Worker, and/or district Homeless Liaison Tammy Chelf.

#### **Step 4: Inform the Outreach Program to Offer Support**

Email Tammy Chelf with the student's name and housing status, and let the family know that you will ask your school's Outreach Worker or Social Worker to follow up to offer support and a homeless packet. If they decline, inform the Worker that support is not needed at this time. Tammy will notify the Technology Assistant Jen Gallagher who will mark the student's housing status in Infinite Campus and the Director of School Nutrition Kayla Leu who will waive the student's meal fees.

For more information, click on the links embedded in this document, which are indicated by underlined text.

[FAQs from NAEHCY](#)

### McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless

The term "homeless children and youth" –

- 1) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, *and* adequate nighttime residence...; and
- 2) includes –
  - a) "doubled up" students sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; students living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternate adequate housing; students are living in emergency or transitional shelters; students abandoned in hospitals
  - b) students whose primary nighttime residence is not designed for regular sleeping
  - c) students who live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations
  - d) migratory students who qualify as homeless because they are living in any of the above circumstances

The term "unaccompanied youth" is defined as "a homeless youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian". Depending on the child's age, they may or may not be living with a caregiver.

### Common Signs of Homelessness

- Lack of educational continuity
- Failure to complete work outside of school
- Poor health or nutrition
- Transportation and attendance problems
- Poor hygiene
- Lack of personal space after school
- Social and behavioral concerns, including fatigue

### Important Safety Reminders

- Remember confidentiality! Never share any information about a student with anyone who cannot prove the legal right to receive it.
- If you suspect a child has been abducted or reported missing, contact your school's Administrator or the Homeless Liaison. The safest place for the child in the meantime is in school.