

# WHO IS HOMELESS

The McKinney-Vento Act defines the term “homeless children and youths” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:

1. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
2. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodations;
3. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
4. migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living circumstances described in clauses (1)-(3).

For more information, download Determining Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Rights and Services at <https://nche.ed.gov/briefs.php>.



**Jared Fitzwater**  
Homeless Liaison  
Clay County Schools  
P.O. Box 120  
285 Church Street  
Clay, WV 25043  
304 587-4266  
jfitzwat@k12.wv.us  
[www.claycountyschools.org](http://www.claycountyschools.org)



## Educational Rights

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, homeless children and youth have the right to

- ▶ receive a free, appropriate public education.
- ▶ enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment.
- ▶ enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.
- ▶ enroll in the local school; or continue attending the school of origin (the school they attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled), according to each student's best interest.

If the school district believes that the school selected is not in the student's best interest, the district must provide a written explanation of its position and inform the parent, guardian, or youth of the right to appeal its decision.

- ▶ receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested.
- ▶ receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to each student's needs.



## Supporting the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homeless

### West Virginia Department of Education

**Rebecca Derenge**  
Homeless Education Coordinator  
Bldg. 6, Rm. 328,  
1900 Kanawha Blvd., East  
Charleston, WV 25305  
(304) 558-7805,  
rderenge@k12.wv.us  
Website: <http://wvde.state.wv.us>



**You can still enroll in school!**

## By the Numbers

- Public schools report that over 1.5 million Homeless children and youth—All time record
- Since the 2006-07 school year, the number of homeless children and youths enrolled in public schools has nearly doubled.
- The number of unaccompanied homeless youths (not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) identified by schools has more than doubled to nearly 100,000 students. Youths of color and LGBTQ youths are disproportionately represented in this population.

## Homelessness Has Significant, Lasting Impacts

Research indicates that homelessness can have significant negative impacts on children academically, socially, and emotionally.

- Homeless students experience greater school mobility than their non-homeless peers. School mobility can cause interruptions to a child's education and is associated with lower school achievement and increased risk of dropping out of school.
- Homeless students are at a greater risk of being chronically absent than their non-homeless peers. Chronic absenteeism is associated with lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates.
- Homeless students face significant gaps in high school graduation rates compared to their peers..

## Enrollment Forms

If you live in one of these situations, as for all students enrolling in West Virginia schools, you may enroll in school without the following documents in hand; however, your full cooperation is needed with county and school personnel in trying to obtain these documents as soon as possible.

- Proof of residency
- School records
- Certified birth certificate
- Legal guardianship papers
- Immunization records and/or a TB skin test result (in-state students only)

However, if you are coming from out of state without proof of at least the first series of immunizations and a TB skin test result, you will be enrolled, but homebound instruction will immediately be provided until appropriate immunizations and TB test results can be obtained.

When you move, the following should be done:

- Contact the school district's liaison for help in enrolling in a new school or arranging to continue in the school you have been attending.
- Contact the new school and provide any information necessary to assist the teachers in helping you adjust to new circumstances.
- Ask the local liaison, shelter staff, or a social worker for assistance with clothing and supplies, if needed.

## Helpful questions to ask the school so that you may receive all needed services:

- What transportation is available to stay in the same school?
- If I have to change schools, can someone help transfer records quickly?
- Are any tutoring services available?
- If special education services are needed, how long is the wait for testing?
- Are there special classes to benefit a talent I have?
- Are there sports, music or other activities available to me?
- How can I receive free meals at school?
- Are school supplies available?
- Will I be able to go on class field trips if unable to pay?

