

In response to the February 2021 severe winter weather, the TEA Texas Education for Homeless Children and Youth (TEHCY) Program has answered some commonly asked questions to better support local education agencies (LEAs) and McKinney-Vento Liaisons to identify and serve students experiencing homelessness.

1. Should students who were displaced due to the severe winter weather be identified and coded as homeless?

Many of our families may be eligible for the McKinney-Vento program services due to the impact of the severe winter storm. Each situation should be assessed on case-by-case basis to address the unique needs of each student experiencing homelessness. Families receiving emergency assistance from [FEMA](#) or other third parties would be considered homeless.

LEAs in collaboration with their McKinney-Vento Liaison should facilitate the identification and enrollment of students who were displaced by the severe winter weather and meet the McKinney-Vento eligibility definition listed below.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act defines homeless children and youth as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and are:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds, due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters, or are abandoned in hospitals;
- Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory children living in the above circumstances.

2. Are LEAs required to identify students who are experiencing homelessness because of the severe winter weather?

Yes. All LEAs (districts and open-enrollment charter schools) are required to identify all students who are experiencing homelessness. LEAs must have policies and procedures in

place for identifying students experiencing homelessness upon enrollment and throughout the school year.

3. Are LEAs required to use a Student Residency Questionnaire (SRQ) to determine if unaccompanied youth or families are McKinney-Vento eligible?

No. An SRQ is a recommended best practice to support identification of McKinney-Vento eligible students. Listed below are several examples of audible documentation that can be used in a time of crisis or disaster to assess a student's housing status other than an [Student Residency Questionnaire](#) (SRQ):

- Google doc/survey
- Intake form
- Other written communication
- Documentation of a phone call or conversation with a school representative.

4. Are unaccompanied youth and families required to complete a Student Residency Questionnaire (SRQ) to be identified as homeless?

No, a student can be identified as homeless even if a [Student Residency Questionnaire](#), intake form, or other documents were not completed or signed by a parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.

5. If a student is identified and coded as homeless due to the severe winter weather, when would this identification and coding need to be reevaluated?

A student's McKinney-Vento identification and eligibility should be evaluated annually. Identification and TSDS PEIMS coding are for the current school year and does not carry over from year-to-year.

6. Are there TEHCY Program or other funding resources available to support identified students experiencing homelessness?

Yes. LEAs should first review their Title I Part A, Homeless Reservation. Title I Part A funds reserved by the LEA for services to support homeless students may occur on all campuses regardless of their Title I status. LEAs should review their current reservation to determine how these funds can support homeless students and families who were impacted due to the severe winter weather.

LEAs awarded the **2020-2021 TEHCY Grant** can utilize their grant funds to support both currently identified and newly identified McKinney-Vento students who were impacted by the severe winter weather with emergency grocery items, personal hygiene items, and clothing items in alignment with the [2020-2021 TEHCY Program Guidelines](#).

ESCs awarded the **2020-2021 ESC Capacity Building** grant can utilize their grant funds to assist LEAs that were not awarded the 2020-2021 TEHCY Grant to support both currently identified and newly identified McKinney-Vento students who were impacted by the severe winter weather with emergency grocery items, personal hygiene items, and clothing items in alignment with the [2020-2021 ESC Capacity Building Grant Program Guidelines](#).

7. If a student’s home was damaged due to severe winter weather, should the student be coded as homeless? What criteria should be used to determine if housing is considered “substandard?”

Students and families residing in housing that has been damaged by the severe winter storm (e.g., no heat, running water, electricity, infestation with mold, etc.) are considered to be living in a substandard living situation and are therefore McKinney-Vento eligible. Assess each student and family living situation on a case-by-case basis. Listed below are several factors to consider when determining whether housing is substandard for McKinney-Vento eligibility and services:

- a. Lacks one of the fundamental utilities such as water, electricity, or heat due to the severe winter weather
- b. Infestation of mold or vermin
- c. Lacks functional facilities, such as a working kitchen, working toilet, etc.; or
- d. Living conditions that may present unreasonable dangers to adults, children, or persons with disabilities

8. Does family income affect homeless status?

No. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act considers the student’s current living situation to determine eligibility for McKinney-Vento services. There is no specific income requirement. Due to the severe winter weather, many of our families may be eligible for the McKinney-Vento program services.

9. Who can LEAs contact for guidance about severe winter storm situations that are impacting students experiencing homelessness?

The TEHCY Technical Support team is available to answer questions. Please contact:

TEHCY Support Center - 1-800-446-3142, tehcy@esc13.net

Monday through Friday, from 8:00 AM to 8:00 PM CST

Please submit any questions, concerns, and/or feedback to:

disasterinfo@tea.texas.gov

Feedback will assist TEA with technical assistance and planning.