

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Supporting McKinney-Vento Students During Inclement Weather and Disasters

Inclement weather and natural disasters are characterized by the existence of severe and abnormal climatic conditions (e.g., hurricanes, tornados, flooding, snowstorms, fires, etc.) that can result in property damage, serious risk of injury, and/or displacement. During which, families may be forced to leave their homes or places of residence because of a disaster or to avoid the impact of an immediate and foreseeable natural hazard. Disasters can cause uncertainty that impacts students' emotional, physical, and psychological well-being. Moreover, disasters create circumstances where additional students and families may qualify to be served under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

In response to inclement weather conditions and/or disasters, the TEA Texas Education for Homeless Children and Youth (TEHCY) Program has provided answers to some commonly asked questions to better support local education agencies (LEAs) and McKinney-Vento Liaisons in identifying and serving students experiencing homelessness, during times of disaster.

### Enrollment and Records

- 1. Are schools required to immediately enroll McKinney-Vento eligible students?**

Yes. The federal McKinney-Vento Act entitles students to enroll immediately in the public school which serves the attendance area where the student is staying temporarily. Additionally, state law, [Educ. Code § 25.001\(b\)\(5\)](#), allows a homeless student to enroll in any school district in Texas regardless of where they are staying. Families and students experiencing a disaster may need more time and guidance to assess their circumstances to make an informed school selection.
- 2. Can schools delay enrollment of McKinney-Vento eligible students due to missing records?**

No. Students must be enrolled without delay and without the usual required documents, including immunizations records, previous school records, proof of residency, or legal guardianship. In most instances, these records may be obtained from the previously attended school district.
- 3. How can schools obtain missing records to ensure proper placement and programming needs?**

LEAs enrolling displaced students should submit a records request through Texas Records Exchange (TREx) System to the LEA where the student previously attended or should have been enrolled as soon possible regardless of the operational status of the LEA.
- 4. Are there special considerations for students with disabilities or students who are emergent bilingual?**

Yes. For students with disabilities (i.e., 504 or Individualized Education Program (IEP) plans), LEAs are required to immediately provide a free and appropriate public education (FAPE). When students enroll without records or with incomplete records, districts must use whatever information is available to them, including parent and student interviews etc., to ensure that the students are provided with FAPE. Adjustments to individual educational programs can be made when more complete records have arrived.

When LEAs enroll students who are identified as Emergent Bilinguals (EBs) with incomplete or missing records, districts should use whatever information is available to them, including parent and student interviews etc., to ensure that program placement is as consistent as possible with what was being provided in the student's previous district.

## TSDS PEIMS Coding and Identification

### 1. How does the McKinney-Vento Act define homelessness?

The McKinney-Vento 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 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.
- Migratory children living in the above circumstances.

See PEIMS TSDS Data Standards for more information: ([E1082](#);[C189](#))

### 2. Does a family need to complete a Student Residency Questionnaire (SRQ) to be identified as homeless for enrollment into schools?

No. A [Student Residency Questionnaire \(SRQ\)](#) is a recommended best practice to support identification of McKinney-Vento eligible students. A student can be identified as homeless even if an SRQ intake form, or other documents, were not completed or signed by a parent or guardian.

### 3. What can an LEA use in place of a Student Residency Questionnaire (SRQ) to determine if a family would qualify for McKinney-Vento services during inclement weather and/or disaster?

Listed below are several examples of acceptable documentation that can be used in a time of crisis or disaster to assess a student's housing status other than an SRQ:

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

### 4. Are LEAs required to identify all homeless students, including those who became homeless, due to inclement weather and/or disaster?

Yes. By federal law, every LEA (i.e., school district, open enrollment charter school) must identify students living in homeless situation and have a means of identifying the living situation of all students entering and/or returning to their schools, including students displaced by inclement weather and/or disaster.

Districts must have policies and procedures in place for identifying homeless students at enrollment and throughout the school year. It is imperative that training is provided to district staff. Due to the impact of inclement weather and/or disaster in certain communities, schools should make certain that all staff are trained and there is appropriate capacity to support the district with identifying newly designated homeless students, because of the inclement weather and/or disaster.

**5. Should all students who were displaced because of inclement weather and disaster be identified and coded as homeless?**

In many instances, students who are displaced by inclement weather and/or disaster are McKinney-Vento eligible and considered 'homeless' under federal law. Each scenario should be reviewed expeditiously on a case-by-case basis based on the circumstances of each student.

Only students who meet the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless should be coded as homeless. Some students whose housing is displaced by the storm (or other event) might not meet the definition of homeless if they have other permanent housing (e.g., own another property or secured a lease on their own). Those families receiving emergency assistance from [FEMA](#) or other third parties are considered homeless.

**6. What if a family meets the definition of homeless under McKinney-Vento and does not want to be designated as homeless?**

In some instances, a family may not want to be identified as homeless. In these instances, the district is required to identify the student as homeless for data collection purposes. The family has the right to refuse services provided for students who are designated as homeless and McKinney-Vento eligible.

To honor the request of the family, in these circumstances, LEAs should have a process in place to ensure that students and families that were identified as homeless but have refused services are not included in follow-up district communications or outreach concerning McKinney-Vento programs or support services.

**7. If a student was coded as homeless in TSDS PEIMS, but previously refused McKinney-Vento support services, such as, school of origin transportation, do they have an option to receive services at any time during the school year?**

Yes. If a student was identified and coded as homeless, but refused services earlier during the school year, they can access and utilize McKinney-Vento support services at any time during the school year.

**8. How long is a student identified and coded as homeless in TSDS PEIMS?**

All students identified as homeless at any point in the school year, including due to inclement weather and/or disaster, must be coded in PEIMS ([E1082;C189](#)). A student's eligibility is assessed annually. Identification and coding lasts for the current school year and does not carry over from year-to-year.

## Family Situations and Living Conditions

**1. Does a family's income affect whether they are considered homeless?**

No. The McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homelessness focuses on the student's living arrangement. There are no specific income requirements in the definition. Due to inclement weather and/or disaster, many more families may be eligible for the McKinney-Vento program services.

**2. If a student's home becomes damaged due to inclement weather and/or disaster, is the student coded as homeless?**

Students and families residing in housing that has been so damaged by the inclement weather and/or disaster (e.g., no heat, running water, electricity, infestation with mold, etc.) are considered substandard living situation, and therefore McKinney-Vento eligible. Situations where a family is living in the second story of their home, because the first floor is flooded and they cannot use their kitchen, would generally be considered substandard and meets the McKinney-Vento definition. Assess each student and family living situation on a case-by-case basis.

**3. What criteria should be used to determine if housing is “substandard”?**

Listed below are several factors to consider in determining whether housing is “substandard”:

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

**4. What if a student’s home was so damaged due to inclement weather and/or disaster, that the family is living in a travel trailer that is parked in their driveway while repairs are underway at their home? Would this student be coded as homeless?**

Yes. Residing in a travel trailer because a family lacks alternative accommodation due to the damage of their home would be considered substandard housing, and therefore, McKinney-Vento eligible. The LEA would need to consider the adequacy of the trailer home, including:

- the number of people living in the trailer,
- the condition of the trailer, and
- the availability of running water, electricity, and other fundamental utilities.

## Resources, Assistance, and Support

**1. If local leadership (e.g., campus administration or district leaders) need support during disasters in identification, serving, and supporting McKinney-Vento eligible students, who can they reach out to?**

Every LEA is required to designate a Homeless Liaison to identify and support students experiencing homelessness. LEA Homeless Liaisons should be included in local disaster relief efforts and LEA planning concerning inclement weather and/or disaster. LEA McKinney-Vento Liaisons are responsible for identifying McKinney-Vento eligible students on a case-by-case basis.

**2. Where can I locate the contact information for an LEA McKinney-Vento Liaison?**

LEAs, families, students, relief organizations and others can locate an LEA's McKinney-Vento Liaison information by visiting the publicly available [AskTED](#) (Texas Education Directory) resource.

Under 'Search by' tab, select preferred search method (i.e., school, district, county, region, Texas). For Information Type, select 'Personnel'; check the 'Include Other District Roles' box; then use the drop-down menu to select 'Homeless Liaison' for the role.

**Information Type:**       Organization       Personnel

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**Include School Principal(s):**     

**Include District Superintendent(s):**     

**Include Other District Roles:**            **Select Roles:**

CURRICULUM

CYBERSECURITY COORDINATOR

DYSLEXIA DESIGNEE

ESSA/FEDERAL PROGRAMS

FOSTER CARE LIAISON

**HOMELESS LIAISON**

HUMAN RESOURCES

PEIMS COORDINATOR

**3. If LEA Homeless Liaisons need additional support and guidance to support inclement weather and/or disaster situations that are impacting students experiencing homelessness, who can they reach out to?**

Local Homeless Liaisons are encouraged to reach out to their [Regional McKinney-Vento Liaisons](#) at the Education Service Centers (ESCs) for additional support and assistance. TEA collaborates with all 20 regional liaisons to provide updated and aligned information and guidance. Many of the key duties of the regional McKinney-Vento Liaison include, but are not limited to, providing technical assistance in the areas of:

- Identifying students experiencing homelessness in collaboration with school personnel and other organizations and agencies.
- Ensuring students experiencing homelessness and families have access to educational services for which they are eligible.
- Ensuring students experiencing homelessness are enrolled and provided with equitable access to succeed in school.
- Providing referrals for medical, housing, and other appropriate services for students experiencing homelessness.

**4. Are school districts obligated to provide transportation for displaced students who are no longer staying in the same attendance zone as prior to inclement weather or disaster?**

The McKinney-Vento federal law allows families and students living in homeless situations to remain in the school of origin (where the student attended when he/she became homeless or the last school he/she attended) and receive transportation to the school of origin or enroll in the local school where the student is temporarily staying.

Texas state law also allows students to enroll in any Texas district; however, with this latter option, the district selects the campus and there is no obligation on the part of the district to provide transportation.

**5. What is the process for providing nutrition and referrals McKinney Vento eligible students during the impacts of inclement weather and/or disaster?**

All homeless students must receive free school meals without delay and are categorically eligible for nutrition benefits. Additionally, students must have their needs assessed and be referred to appropriate support and services, including health, mental health, housing, and other community resources.

## Grants and Funding

**1. Are there TEHCY funding resources available to support identified students experiencing homelessness?**

Yes. LEAs awarded TEHCY Grants can utilize their grant funds to support both currently identified and newly identified McKinney-Vento Students who were impacted by the inclement weather and/or disaster with emergency grocery items, personal hygiene items, clothing items, and other allowable use of funds that may be helpful during this time. Please review the respective Program Guidelines of the awarded grant for further details.

**2. Are there other funding resources available to support identified students experiencing homelessness?**

Yes. LEAs may use 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 inclement weather and/or disasters.