

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

Supporting McKinney-Vento Students During Inclement Weather and Disasters

Inclement weather and natural disasters, such as hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, snowstorms, and wildfires, are marked by severe and abnormal climatic conditions that can lead to significant property damage, serious risk of injury, and displacement. During such events, families may be forced to evacuate their homes or places of residence either due to direct impact or in anticipation of an imminent and foreseeable threat.

These disruptions often create uncertainty and instability that can profoundly affect students' emotional, physical, and psychological well-being. In many cases, disasters also result in new or increased instances of homelessness, making additional students and families eligible for support under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

In response to these challenges, the Texas Education for Homeless Children and Youth (TEHCY) Program at Texas Education Agency (TEA) has compiled answers to frequently asked questions to better support school systems (i.e., districts and open-enrollment charter schools) and McKinney-Vento Liaisons in identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness during and after disasters.

For further guidance and up-to-date resources, stakeholders are encouraged to visit the TEA [Weather and Disaster Information](#) webpage.

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 night-time residence; and are:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons.
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds, due to the lack of adequate alternative 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. Are students displaced by a disaster considered homeless?

Yes, students displaced by disasters may be considered homeless under the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#), but not automatically. Determinations must be made case by case, based on whether the students' living arrangements meet the Act's definition of homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act defines students experiencing homelessness to include children and youth who are living in shelters, motels, cars, parks, public spaces, or temporarily with others due to loss of housing or economic hardship. These students are entitled to the same protections and services

as other students experiencing homelessness. Students who qualify under this definition must be provided with comparable services as outlined in subsection (g)(4) of the McKinney-Vento Act, including transportation services, educational services, and meals through school federal nutrition programs.

3. 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.

4. What can school systems 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.

5. Are school systems required to identify all homeless students, including those who became homeless, due to inclement weather and/or disaster?

Yes. By federal law, every school system (i.e., school district, open enrollment charter school) must identify students living in homeless situations 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 for 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.

6. 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 events) might not meet the definition of homelessness 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.

7. 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 the services provided for students who are designated as homeless and McKinney-Vento eligible. To honor the request of the family, in these circumstances, school systems 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.

8. **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.

9. **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.

Enrollment, Records, and Placement

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, [Texas Education Code \(TEC\) §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. **Can Texas students enroll elsewhere if their home district is closed?**

Yes, Texas students displaced by a disaster can enroll in another school district if their home district is closed, under both federal and state law. Students who are experiencing homelessness due to displacement by disasters and qualify under the federal [McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act](#) are protected under its provisions. Students experiencing homelessness have the right to immediate enrollment in school, even if they lack typical documentation such as proof of residency or immunization records. School districts are required to provide transportation to and from the school of origin upon request.

Students experiencing homelessness are also entitled to receive free school meals, academic support, special education services, and other comparable services available to their peers. In Texas, in accordance with [TEC §25.001\(b\)\(5\)](#), students experiencing homelessness may enroll in any school district in the state, regardless of where they are temporarily residing, ensuring continued access to education during times of crisis. A child who is not experiencing homelessness can enroll in another district if their home school district is closed but will reopen under an adjusted calendar. However, if the child returns to his/her home district when it reopens, he or she will follow the district's adjusted calendar and may ultimately go to school for longer than 180 days. This situation is no different than when a child moves from one district to another during a normal family move.

4. **How can schools obtain missing records to ensure proper placement and programming needs?**

School systems enrolling displaced students should submit a records request through Texas Records Exchange (TREx) System to the school system where the student previously attended or should have been enrolled as soon as possible regardless of the operational status of the school system.

5. 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), school systems 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 school systems 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.

6. Can incoming homeless students be served separately from resident students?

No, homeless students may not be served separately from the general student population. Federal law under the [McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act](#) strictly prohibits the segregation of homeless students in separate schools or programs based solely on their housing status. School districts are not permitted to create separate "shelter schools" or isolated classrooms for homeless students, except in very limited and temporary circumstances. The Act allows for certain services to be provided separately only "for short periods of time", and only when necessary to address health and safety emergencies or to offer "temporary, special, and supplementary services that meet the unique needs of homeless children and youth". Even in these cases, the services must not result in long-term separation or unequal access to educational opportunities. The overarching goal of McKinney-Vento is to ensure that students experiencing homelessness are fully integrated into the school community and have equal access to the same academic programs, extracurricular activities, and support services as their housed peers.

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 have 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 meet 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 school system 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 school system is required to designate a Homeless Liaison to identify and support students experiencing homelessness. School system Homeless Liaisons should be included in local disaster relief efforts and school system planning concerning inclement weather and/or disaster. School system 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 a school system's McKinney-Vento Liaison?**
School systems, families, students, relief organizations and others can locate a school system'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

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

To further assist stakeholders in understanding how to use the AskTED directory in locating their local liaisons by the school, district, and/or region, visit our [AskTED How-To Guidance](#).

- 3. If school system's 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. What transportation requirements apply to homeless students?

During disaster displacement, McKinney-Vento eligible students are entitled to transportation services under both federal and Texas state law, with specific provisions to ensure their uninterrupted access to education ([42 U.S.C. §11432\(g\)\(1\)\(J\)\(iii\)](#); TEC §42.155(d)). This transportation must be arranged immediately upon enrollment, even if the student lacks documentation, and must be provided at the request of a parent, guardian, or the local homeless liaison in the case of an unaccompanied youth.

In Texas, school districts are funded for transportation based on the prior year's data. However, if a district transports eligible homeless students during the school year, it will receive reimbursement for those additional services during the final funding reconciliation, which occurs in the fall following the close of the school year. To qualify for this funding, the student's temporary residence at the time of classification must be two or more miles from the campus or located within a district board-designated hazardous traffic area if under two miles. Districts must also provide comparable transportation services to those offered to housed students and coordinate with other districts when students cross district lines. The law requires that transportation arrangements do not create barriers to enrollment, attendance, or participation in school activities. Flexible transportation solutions, such as school buses, public transit, or contracted services, may be used to meet these requirements.

5. 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.

6. 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 nutritional 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.

7. Will school districts and charter schools receive additional lunch program support for homeless students?

Yes, school districts and charter schools in Texas may receive additional lunch program support for homeless students during times of disaster. If a district experiences a significant influx of students experiencing homelessness due to a disaster, it may automatically increase its entitlement under the federal Free and Reduced-Price Lunch Program. This means that schools do not need to wait for a new funding cycle to receive support, and they can adjust their program participation and

funding levels based on the increased need. For additional information regarding child nutrition, [visit the Square Meals website](#). Additionally, under federal law, homeless students are categorically eligible for free school meals. These provisions ensure that displaced and students experiencing homelessness continue to receive nutritious meals.

8. How does student homelessness due to a natural disaster affect my district's requirement under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)?

During a natural disaster, student homelessness does not remove a district's obligations under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA). However, FERPA does include specific provisions that allow for limited disclosure of student information in emergency situations. Under FERPA, schools generally cannot release personally identifiable information (PII) from a student's education records without written consent from a parent or eligible student. However, in the event of a health or safety emergency, such as a natural disaster, schools may disclose PII without consent to appropriate parties if the information is necessary to protect the health or safety of the student or others.

Additional information is available in this [FERPA and the Disclosure of Student Information Related to Emergencies and Disasters](#) on disclosures related to emergencies and disasters. School districts and charter schools may not release the names of students affected by a disaster to the media or to individuals who do not have a legitimate need to know. Any disclosure must be limited to those who require the information for health or safety reasons. Additionally, schools should consult with legal counsel before releasing any student information to ensure compliance with FERPA and to protect student privacy.

Grants and Funding

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

Yes. School systems 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. Please visit [TEA's Grants Opportunities](#) page.

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

Yes. School systems may use their Title I, Part A, Homeless Reservation. Title I, Part A funds reserved by the school system for services to support homeless students may occur on all campuses regardless of their Title I status. School systems 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.

3. If my non-Title I campus qualifies for Title I funding after enrolling homeless students, can the district amend its ESSA Consolidated federal grant application?

Yes, if the original ESSA Consolidated Federal Grant Application has been approved and a Notice of Grant Award (NOGA) has been issued, the district may submit an amendment. If your district has not yet received a NOGA, you should contact the Division of Grants Administration, grants@tea.texas.gov.

4. If my district has additional enrollments of homeless students, can the district amend its ESSA Consolidated federal grant application to increase its Title I homeless reservation?

Yes, if your district experiences an increase in the number of students identified as homeless, you can amend your ESSA Consolidated Federal Grant Application to increase the Title I, Part A

homeless reservation. Federal law requires districts receiving Title I funds to reserve a portion specifically to support homeless students, in addition to the regular campus allocations. This reserved funding helps ensure that students experiencing homelessness have access to the services they need, such as academic support, transportation, school supplies, and other essential resources. If the original reservation amount is no longer sufficient due to rising enrollment, your district should work with its ESSA Consolidated Application negotiator in the Grants Administration Division to submit an amendment and ensure continued compliance and support for these students.

5. What services can my district provide to homeless students using federal ESSA funds?

Under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), school districts can provide a wide range of services to support students experiencing homelessness, especially when those needs arise from disasters such as fires, floods, or hurricanes. These services may be funded through Title I, Part A, which requires districts to reserve funds specifically for homeless students, regardless of whether they attend a Title I school. Allowable services include both educational and non-traditional support that help students overcome barriers to learning. These services must be reasonable, necessary, and not be available from other public or private sources (e.g., food banks, public clinics, or PTA funds). Additionally, McKinney-Vento funds may also be used to support immediate enrollment, transportation, and school stability, and to ensure access to comparable educational opportunities.

Title I, Part A: All homeless students are eligible to be served with Title I, Part A funds regardless of the campus they attend. The students can receive any traditional instructional services as well as non-traditional types of Title I services.

Title I, Part C—Migrant: A student who moves across school district lines in the state due to a disaster evacuation is not considered a migratory student. Migratory Education Program (MEP) eligibility is based on a child's moves with or as an agricultural or fishing worker across school district lines due to economic necessity. If the student was previously identified as migratory in his/her home district, the parents may reach out to the current school district regarding MEP services.

6. What types of non-traditional Title I services are allowable to the students in homeless situations caused by the evacuation due to a fire, flooding, hurricane, or other disaster?

Districts may use Title I, Part A funds to provide non-traditional services to students experiencing homelessness due to disasters such as fires, floods, hurricanes, or other emergencies, but only if those services are not reasonably available from other public or private sources. Allowable uses of Title I fund in these cases may include purchasing school supplies and materials, eyeglasses, clothing required to meet school dress codes or uniform policies, medical and dental services, immunizations, and referrals to health and social service providers. However, it's important to note that both Title I, Part A and McKinney-Vento funds have clear restrictions. These funds may not be used for expenses such as rent, utilities, hotel or motel stays, medical costs for parents, clothing for parents, physical exams for athletic participation, or athletic uniforms. These limitations are in place to ensure that federal funds are used specifically to support the educational needs of the student.