



State of Arizona  
Department of Education

## **10 Day Unexcused Absences Student Drop from Enrollment Homeless Education Program AZ Best Interest Procedure**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, **Public Law 107-110, Title X, Part C, Sub-Title B, Section 722(g)(1)(I)** reads:

*"A demonstration that the State educational agency and local educational agencies in the State have developed, and **shall review and revise**, policies to remove barriers to the identification of homeless children and youths, and the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youths in schools in the State, **including barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.**" (emphasis added)*

The McKinney-Vento Act requires the revision or removal of policies or procedures that cause a barrier to a homeless student's retention in school. It is well documented that homeless students are at a greater risk of being chronically absent than their housed peers. The common causes of absenteeism from homeless individuals include illness, housing instability, and responsibilities that compete with school attendance. Health issues are identified as colds, flu, asthma, dental problems, and mental health challenges due to trauma and toxic stress as the highest causes of absences (Balfanz & Byrnes, 2012, p 30; Chang & Jordan, 2015pp 1-2). Also "Chronic absenteeism is associated with lower academic achievement and higher dropout rates." (i) In a time like a pandemic, absences can be caused by a lack of access to the internet, problems with connectivity and a lack of access to technology such as chrome books and telephones. Thus, it is recommended that LEAs and Charter schools do not drop or dis-enroll homeless education students from their districts if they have 10 or more days of unexcused absences.

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) produced a brief to review strategies for preventing and addressing chronic absenteeism. Best practices include the analysis of data collected annually to understand which students are struggling to keep a stable attendance and develop targeted interventions to meet those needs. Best practices also recommend to discuss establishing a policy to not unroll homeless students. Next best practice would be to establish a policy in which the homeless liaison is notified when a homeless student has 1 unexcused absences and immediate communication with the parents or caregivers to understand the cause of the absence and how to remove any barrier. Other suggestions include assigning students to mentors who encourage them to attend school on a daily basis; offer before and after school activities/programs to increase a reason to want to attend school; provide an incentive for school attendance and rewarding students with excellent attendance; provide medical and dental services in school for students that may have the ability to seek out these services outside of school and finally, revising policies that punish students for having excessive absences. To read the full memo visit:  
<https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/chron-absent.pdf>  
[http://www.naehcy.org/dl/elders\\_memo.pdf](http://www.naehcy.org/dl/elders_memo.pdf)

i See, for example, Herbers, J.E., Cutuli, J.J., Supkoff, L.M., Heistad, D., Chan, C., Hinz, E., & Masten, A.S. (2012) "Early reading skills and academic achievement trajectories of students facing poverty, homelessness, and high residential mobility." Educational researcher, (41)9, pages 366–374; and Engec, N. (2006). "Relationship between mobility and student performance and behavior." The journal of educational research, (99)3, pages 167-178.



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