



McKinney-Vento and Refugee and Other Newcomer Students: Identification and Enrollment

McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons are responsible for identifying refugee and other newcomer children and youth who are experiencing homelessness. Refugee and other newcomer students who are experiencing homelessness must be immediately enrolled in school. This resource provides requirements and strategies for identifying and enrolling these students.

Identification Requirements Under McKinney-Vento:

- Children and youth experiencing homelessness must be identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other entities and agencies¹.
- Liaisons must ensure that children and youth who are identified are informed of their rights under McKinney-Vento².

Cultural Considerations for Identifying Doubled-Up³ Living Situations:

- Circumstance supported by cultural norms: Values such as family, hospitality, and generosity may be cultural norms or values, but homelessness is not. In many cultures, family members or friends will allow other family members or friends to move in with them to avoid being unsheltered.
 - Ask questions to learn more about the living situation:
 - Who is included on the lease?
 - Who is contributing to household costs?
 - Where does everyone sleep?
 - Is the living arrangement for everyone's mutual benefit?
 - Are any members of the household looking for their own place to live?
 - Was one family already living in the space and another family moved in?
- Multigenerational families may be cultural, homeless liaisons still must evaluate each situation individually.
- Remember that many families, especially those without previous knowledge of McKinney-Vento may not consider these living situations as homeless. Liaisons must ensure that McKinney-Vento rights are provided in a manner and form understandable to families and youth⁴.

¹ 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(6)(A)(i)

² 42 U.S.C. §§11432(g)(6)(A)(i), (v), (vi), (viii)

³ Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason [42 U.S.C. § 11434A(2)(B)(i)]

⁴ 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(6)(A)(vi)



Enrollment Requirements Under McKinney-Vento:

- Local education agencies (LEAs) must ensure that homeless children and youths (HCY) are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, schools of that LEA⁵.
- Children and youth experiencing homelessness have the right to remain in their school of origin for the duration of their homelessness and until the end of the academic year in which they become permanently housed.
 - McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons must make best interest determinations, presuming that staying in the school of origin is in the best interest of the child or youth⁶.
 - School of origin includes both the designated receiving school at the next grade level (if there is a feeder school pattern) and preschools⁷.
 - Enrollment must be immediate, even if they lack documents typically required for enrollment⁸.
 - Enroll means permitting the student to attend classes and participate fully in school activities⁹.

Enrollment Requirements for Refugee and Other Newcomer Students:

- Schools and LEA-administered preschool programs cannot ask about a student's or family's immigration status or take other actions that could discourage students from seeking enrollment.
- School districts and LEAs cannot bar students from enrolling in public schools on the basis of citizenship or immigration status.

Immigration or documentation status does not affect McKinney-Vento eligibility. ALL refugee and other newcomer children and youth, regardless of immigration status are eligible for McKinney-Vento services if the student lacks fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Every situation should be evaluated individually.

⁵ 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(6)(A)

⁶ 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(B)(ii)

⁷ 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(I)

⁸ 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(C)

⁹ 42 U.S.C. §11434A(1)



Strategies for Identifying and Enrolling Refugee and Other Newcomer Students:

- Provide McKinney-Vento outreach and other materials in the native languages of children, youth, and families. Consider different modes of providing outreach materials (visual, verbal, and written).
- Consider culturally and linguistically competent ways to talk about homelessness, and the best way to express what homelessness means.
- Hire bilingual or multilingual enrollment office staff or partner with current staff members who are bilingual or multilingual and who have existing relationships with families. This could include family liaisons, parent engagement coordinators, paraprofessionals, bilingual resource specialists, and others.
- Support families and youth in completing enrollment documents, housing questionnaires, and other forms. Youth and families may need to go through the forms verbally, rather than completing them in writing. Be aware of literacy and language barriers.
- Collaborate with LEA Title III and Title I Part C (Migrant Education Program) staff.

Resources:

- [Arizona Department of Education Homeless Education Program webpage](#)
- [Arizona Department of Education Refugee Student Support webpage](#)
- [McKinney-Vento Act: Quick Reference](#)
- [Dear Colleague Letter: School Enrollment Procedures](#)
- [SchoolHouse Connection's Immigration Q&A page](#)