



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: August 21, 2020
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads
Route To: District Registrars, District Homeless Liaisons, Principals, School Nurses and All District Staff with Enrollment Responsibilities
From: Peggy McDonald, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student Services

Enrollment Considerations for Unaccompanied Children and Youth

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (the McKinney-Vento Act), sets forth educational rights and supports for unaccompanied children and youth experiencing homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act is designed to facilitate the enrollment, attendance, and success of unaccompanied homeless children and youth in school.

If an unaccompanied child or youth is experiencing homelessness the child or youth may be eligible for protections and supports under the McKinney-Vento EHCY Program. To be eligible for protections and supports under the Act, the unaccompanied child must meet the Act's definition of homelessness. The Act defines "homeless children and youths" as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." This includes children and youth who share housing with other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as "doubled-up").

The Act requires schools to immediately enroll unaccompanied homeless children (including unaccompanied children who are awaiting immigration proceedings while residing in local communities with a family member, or other appropriate adult sponsor) even in the absence of records normally required for enrollment. Proof of guardianship is not necessary to immediately enroll an unaccompanied child or youth.

If a dispute arises over school selection or placement, the school district must admit a homeless child to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. If the district disputes the claims of homelessness, it must continue the student's enrollment for the duration of the dispute resolution process, as described in [N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.7](#).

Proof of Residency in the School District

Under state law, school officials may request proof that the adult enrolling the child lives within the boundaries of the school district. School districts typically accept a variety of documents for this purpose, such as copies of phone and water bills, lease agreements, affidavits, or other documents. A school district's requirements to establish residency must be applied in the same way for all children, including unaccompanied children. Moreover, a district cannot deny an unaccompanied child or youth enrollment because he or she cannot provide the required documents to establish residency.

For additional information, please visit the NJDOE's [McKinney-Vento webpage](#) or contact Pheobie Thomas, NJDOE state coordinator for McKinney-Vento Educational Programs, at McKinney.Vento@doe.nj.gov.

c: Members, State Board of Education
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