

Student Equity & Community Engagement
Jefferson County Public Schools
Lam Building 4309 Bishop Lane
Louisville, Kentucky 40218

31 August 2016

MEMORANDUM For JCPS Students, Families and, Staff

SUBJECT: Guidelines Regarding Students Experiencing Homelessness.

1. Overview. The Jefferson County Public School District is dedicated to ensuring all students experiencing homelessness (McKinney-Vento eligible students) have “equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths” in accordance with the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act (reauthorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act, December 10th 2015). It is the policy of JCPS that every homeless child and youth be sensitively identified, permitted admission in an immediate and sensitive manner, and enrolled in and attend school on a daily basis as required by federal law (42 U.S.C. 11431 & S1177 Sec. 9101).

2. Definitions.

a. Homeless. According to the McKinney Vento law a student experiencing homelessness is defined as a child or youth who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes a child or youth who is living:

- i. With a friend, relative, or someone else due to economic hardship, loss of housing, or a similar reason.
- ii. In a motel, hotel, trailer park, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations.
- iii. In an emergency or transitional shelter.
- iv. In a public or private space not ordinarily designed for or used as a sleeping accommodation.
- v. In a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, substandard housing, or similar setting.

Note: This is not an all-inclusive list. McKinney-Vento eligibility should be assessed on a case by case basis. The district Homeless Coordinator will make appropriate determination when needed.

b. Unaccompanied Youth. A youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, and meets the McKinney Vento definition of homelessness as listed above.

c. School or Origin. The school a child attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled.

- d. Reside School. The school/schools which other students living in the same cluster/area are eligible to attend.

3. Identification of Homeless Students.

- a. A digital copy of the JCPS residency form will be provided to each school prior to the beginning of each academic school year (Addendum 1). The residency form is available in multiple languages through the department of Student Equity and Community Engagement (SECE). Each residency form will include an information sheet that explains the McKinney Vento law and the rights of McKinney-Vento Eligible students. All JCPS schools shall maintain these residency forms in the main office. Residency forms will be distributed to all students at the beginning of the school year and returned to the Department of Student Equity and Community Engagement via courier no later than September 15th of each academic year. Throughout the academic year, schools shall ensure the parent/guardian of any newly enrolled student completes the residency form. Schools will send residency forms to the SECE via courier as students enroll.
- b. Each school will maintain a homeless liaison to assist in identifying students experiencing homelessness, provide support as needed, and communicate the needs of these families to SECE.
- c. Each Homeless Liaison will participate in district level training once a year.
- d. School staff who become aware of a student who is or may be McKinney-Vento eligible should inform their Homeless Liaison who will, provide support, notify Student Equity and Community Engagement, and communicate needs to SECE staff.
- e. Any student identified as McKinney-Vento eligible throughout the academic year will be entered into infinite campus for identification and tracking purposes. The District Homeless Coordinator and the SECE staff will make final determination regarding McKinney-Vento eligibility.
- f. In order to increase awareness, all JCPS schools will display, in a prominent location, posters that set forth the basic rights of homeless children and youth.

4. School Enrollment

- a. A student experiencing homelessness is eligible to attend one of two schools, the school of origin or the reside school.
- b. The choice about whether a student should remain in the school of origin or change schools shall be available each time a student moves to a temporary housing arrangement.
- c. The decision regarding whether a student will remain in their school of origin or change schools will be made based on the “best interest” of the student. Prevalence data has shown that each new move can set a student back four to six months academically (Miller, 2009). For this reason, to the extent feasible, a student shall be kept in the school of origin unless this is contrary to the wishes of the parent. Other factors that may impact the best interest of the student include: age of the student, distance the student will commute to school, safety issues, and special education needs.

Note: If a student who has moved out of the district returns to JCPS, they have the right of returning to the school of origin or the reside school.

- d. A student who becomes homeless has a right to transfer to and enroll in another public school within the area they are living. This is called the reside school. Should a JCPS student choose to enroll in the reside school they will submit a cluster application online or through the student assignments office. The cluster application will allow the parent or unaccompanied youth to select schools in their reside area in order of preference. This will provide homeless students the same rights as other students living in the reside/cluster area. The assignments office will provide the school selection based on space availability of schools in the reside area.
 - e. Whether the student chooses to attend (or remain in) the school of origin or a reside school, the student shall be immediately enrolled in school. Even if the student lacks records normally required for enrollment, such as birth certificate, previous academic records, medical records, proof of address, or other documentation.
 - f. JCPS schools should immediately contact the last school attended in order to obtain relevant academic records. If a student lacks immunization records, medical records, or a birth certificate the school should immediately contact the department of Student Equity and Community Engagement. The Homeless Coordinator and the SECE staff will assist in obtaining necessary documents.
 - g. Regular attendance is critical to the academic performance of all students and the stability of students experiencing homelessness. If a student has been identified as homeless and has sporadic attendance the school or pupil personnel should contact SECE in order to identify services that may support the needs of the student and family. This may include transportation, change of schools, school supplies, uniforms, coats, etc.
 - h. Students identified as homeless are eligible to continue in the school of origin for the remainder of the academic year even if the family becomes permanently housed during the year. Transportation services will continue to be provided for such students.
 - i. Students or families identified as McKinney-Vento eligible and requiring assistance in enrolling or attending schools should contact the department of Student Equity and Community Engagement immediately.
5. Transportation. Any student experiencing homelessness in grades Pre-K (early childhood) through twelve are eligible for free transportation if they are living outside their reside or living at a distance equal to or greater than other students normally eligible for transportation services.
- a. JCPS shall ensure all transportation services provided to students experiencing homelessness are comparable to those received by other students. Transportation methods for JCPS students McKinney-Vento eligible students may include: a school bus, TARC tickets, taxi cab, mileage reimbursement, etc. However, a district school bus will be the first priority. Transportation method will be determined by SECE based on the best interest of the student. Determination factors will include: age of the student, safety, travel distance, parent wishes, and special needs.

b. Upon receiving a request for transportation SECE will verify the student's eligibility. Then submit a request to transportation within one business day.

c. The JCPS Transportation Department will respond to all transportation request regarding McKinney-Vento Eligible students within two business days. If a bus is not available per the transportation department, an appropriate method of transportation will be offered if available. The family must agree to the use of an alternative method of transportation before services can be implemented.

Note: No child below the age of twelve will ride the TARC without a parent. Students will not ride a taxi without parent consent and an authorized accompanied adult.

d. If a child is denied comparable services for transportation or does not receive services in a timely manner, the family has the right to file a dispute with the Homeless Coordinator in the Department of Student Equity and Community Engagement.

6. Additional Services.

a. Clothing needs. Students in need of uniforms or clothing items may be scheduled for an appointment at the clothing closet by any school Family Resource Coordinator (FRC), Youth Service Coordinator (YSC), or an SECE staff member. Students may also receive these items directly through the SECE, FRC, or YSC based on availability.

b. Free and Reduced Lunch. All students determined McKinney Vento eligible (Homeless) are eligible for free and reduced lunch. A list of all McKinney Vento eligible students will be provided to Nutrition Services Certification once a month in order to ensure services are provided to eligible students.

c. School Supplies. School supplies may be obtained directly through the school's FRC, YSC, or the SECE. Coordination between these two offices will ensure non-duplication of services.

d. Housing. The department of Student Equity and Community Engagement cannot directly provide housing. Louisville has a single point of entry system in which Coalition for The Homeless manages all shelter space. Therefore, all housing needs will be referred directly to the Coalition for the Homeless. SECE will work with the Coalition for the Homeless to support student needs as mandated under federal law.

e. Extended Learning Opportunities. Extended learning opportunities will be provided based on needs and availability of funds.

f. Other Services. SECE strives to provide necessary services to meet the basic needs of students and families throughout the year, including the summer. This may include referrals to external organizations or soliciting donations from local businesses and cooperation's.

7. Segregation. Students experiencing homelessness will not be segregated or stigmatized in any way within JCPS district or schools.

8. Dispute Procedures. In the event the parent/guardian, unaccompanied youth, or school disagrees with a school assignment, McKinney-Vento eligibility status, or any service

including transportation a dispute may be filed in accordance with the Kentucky Department of Education Policy, Regulation, and Process for Dispute Resolutions listed below:

- a. Disputes arising between or among the school district of residency; another school district; or the parent, homeless youth, or person in parental relationship to the homeless student regarding the school that the child shall attend or the educational placement of the homeless student shall be resolved through the following procedures:
 - i. The school district's Homeless Education Coordinator or liaison shall inform the representative of the homeless student or the unaccompanied youth of their rights to an informal hearing with the school district(s) when a dispute arises about the placement of the homeless student. The coordinator or liaison shall assist the representative to complete a written request for the hearing, which shall be based on a placement that was initiated, or declined to be initiated, by the school district not more than two (2) weeks prior to the request.
 - ii. The informal hearing shall be scheduled within two (2) days of the written request and shall be convenient to the needs of the representative of the homeless student.
 - iii. During the hearing, the school district(s) shall discuss considerations that led to the placement decision which may include the ability of the school district to provide continuity in educational programs, the need of the homeless student for special instructional programs, the amount of time and arrangements required to transport the student to the original school district, the age of the homeless student and the school placement of siblings, and the time remaining until the end of the semester or the end of the school year.
 - iv. In cases where an agreement cannot be reached among all involved parties, either party may request the assistance of the state homeless children education coordinator. Upon written request, the coordinator shall meet with the involved parties to discuss available alternatives and seek to resolve the dispute.
 - v. In cases of such a request for the assistance of the state coordinator, the school district of residence shall inform the Kentucky Department of Education and shall provide sufficient information as required.
 - vi. The placement and services for the homeless student shall be continued pending the resolution of the dispute by the Department of Education.

9. Any questions regarding this policy or the McKinney Vento Law should be directed to the Department of Student Equity and Community Engagement at 502-485-3650 or Homelessmlbx@jefferson.kyschools.us

Addendum 1: Student Residency Form
Addendum 2: Dispute Resolution Form