

The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law that protects the educational rights of homeless students.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines "homeless children and youths" as any student who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.



The following signs of homelessness can help teachers identify and support homeless students:

Social and Behavioral Cues

- A marked change in behavior
- Poor/short attention span
- Extreme shyness
- Difficulty socializing at recess
- Clinging behavior
- Developmental delays
- Difficulty or avoidance of building relationships with peers and/or teachers
- "Old" beyond years
- Aggression

Unprepared for Class

- Lack of basic school supplies
- Consistent loss of books/other supplies
- Inability to complete special projects
- Strong concern for safety of belongings
- Incomplete or missing homework
- Inability to concentrate

Lack of Continuity in Education

- Attendance at many different schools
- Inability to contact parents
- Numerous absences
- Lack of participation in class/field trips
- Lack of participation in afterschool activities

Poor Nutrition, Health and Hygiene

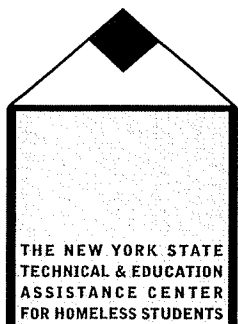
- Chronic hunger
- Fatigue (may fall asleep in class)
- Wearing the same clothing for several days
- Unmet medical/dental needs
- Inconsistent or inadequate grooming
- Lack of immunization/medical records
- Often sick

Transportation/Attendance Problems

- Erratic attendance or tardiness
- Inability to contact parents
- Numerous absences
- Lack of participation in afterschool activities

Reaction/Statements by Parent, Guardian, Child

- Anger/embarrassment when asked about current address
- Mention of staying with relatives, friends, or in a motel/hotel
- Comments such as:
 - "I don't remember the name of my previous school."
 - "I can't remember our new address."
 - "We are going through a bad time right now."
 - "We are staying with relatives until we get settled."



NYS-TEACHS

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Toll-Free Hotline: (800) 388-2014

Email: info@nysteachs.org

Visit our website: www.nysteachs.org

This tip sheet was adapted from materials from the Illinois, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia Departments of Education, and the National Center for Homeless Education.

After you have identified a student you believe may be homeless:**Support The Student**

- Make the student feel welcome. For example, select a student to be his/her "buddy" on the first day of class.
- Refer the student to the on-site tutoring program for educational assistance if needed and available
- Coordinate an educational plan for the student with the school counselor
- Give the student a clipboard to take home and use as a portable desk for doing homework
- Provide any tools or supplies necessary to complete any required task. Supplies may not be readily available to the student.
- Keep a supply of nutritional snacks in your room
- Help the student make plans for transportation for after-school activities or other special events
- Keep needed toiletry items on hand to assist the student in maintaining proper hygiene

Talk to the Student

- Be discreet. If appropriate, talk to the student privately to get more information about his/her living situation. Assure the student that you are not asking questions to get them or their parents into trouble, but that you want to help. If another staff member in the school has a stronger relationship with the student, ask that person to speak with the student.
- Contact your district's homeless liaison and tell them you think the student may be homeless. If you are not sure who to contact, call NYS-TEACHS at 800-388-2014.

Know The Student's Educational Rights

- **Choice of Schools:** A homeless student has the right to stay enrolled in the school they currently attend, to re-enroll in the school where they were last permanently housed, and to enroll in the local area where the family is temporarily living (if it is different than where they were last permanently housed). It is usually in the student's best interest to stay enrolled in the school they are currently attending.
- **Transportation:** The student has the right to transportation to/from the school they are currently attending, if other permanently housed students receive it OR if the family was last permanently housed in the same school district. The student is also entitled to transportation to the school he/she last attended or was last permanently housed.
- **Free Meals:** The student is entitled to receive free meals at their school, without filling out any paperwork regarding his/her family's finances.