

## DEFINING HOMELESSNESS FACT SHEET

### Per the Indiana Department of Education

As parents raising children while trying to manage the difficulties of homelessness, the last thing you want to worry about is your children's education. The McKinney-Vento Act was created to give your children some rights as you navigate your way to a permanent housing situation.

#### Your children's rights include:

- **The right to enroll immediately, even if you don't have all the required paperwork.** Schools normally require parents to have birth certificates, proof of residency, school records, and medical records with them when they enroll their children. If you are experiencing one of the housing situations covered by the McKinney-Vento Act, then you can enroll your children without these documents, although you may need to get some of them later.
- **The right to school placement** at the school in their best interest. Your children may go to the school they attended when they were permanently housed, also called their school of origin, even if you are not staying in that district. Alternatively, your children may attend the school where you are temporarily staying. This right lasts the entire duration of your homelessness or until the end of the school year after you achieve permanent housing.
- **The right to transportation services.** Schools must provide your children with transportation to their school, if feasible until you get permanent housing. Parents who need this service for their children should request it from the McKinney-Vento Liaison.
- **The right to other services.** The fees for breakfast and lunch provided by the school, as well as the fees for textbooks, should be waived for your children. They also are automatically eligible for Title I services which may include before- and after-school programs, tutoring programs, or other assistance such as graphing calculators required for math classes.
- **The right to appeal decisions regarding enrollment and services.** If the school district makes a decision about your child's school enrollment or the services that your child receives (such as transportation) that you disagree with, you have the right to appeal that decision. The school's McKinney-Vento Liaison should be contacted immediately to assist you with the appeal. While the dispute with the school district is being resolved, your child has the right to attend the school or receive the services in question.
- **The right to attend school and school activities without the fear of being singled out.** Children in unstable housing situations cannot be separated from their peers just because of their housing situation. They have the right to attend school and participate in extracurricular activities just like any other student.

If you have questions about your child's McKinney-Vento rights, please contact Chelsea Fountain at 317-346-8684 or [fountainc@franklinschools.org](mailto:fountainc@franklinschools.org).

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This is not an exhaustive list; it includes the most common situations that may arise:

#### **1. Doubled Up/Shared Housing** (can be any one of the below definitions)

- Economic hardship –
  - Student/parent/caregiver/family move into someone's home because they can not afford to live on their own
- Loss of housing –
  - Student has no personal housing available because of one or more of the below reasons
    - Eviction, fire, destruction or damage of previous home, natural disaster, unhealthy living conditions (bug infestation)
    - Domestic violence
    - Physical abuse, neglect or sexual abuse
    - Substance abuse
    - Parent/caregiver abandoned child or become incarcerated

#### **2. Hotel/Motel/Campground**

- Student/parent/caregiver/family do not have alternative adequate accommodations or finances for permanent housing (apartment, house, mobile home)
- Includes temporary stays in hotel/motel due to a fire, natural disaster or unhealthy living/inadequate living situations

#### **3. Sheltered**

- Emergency or transitional shelter, includes domestic violence shelter
- Example: Franklin Township Trustee transitional housing program

#### **4. Unsheltered**

- Abandoned in Hospital
- Abandoned or Living in:
  - Car, park, abandoned building, office
  - Public restroom/rest stop, unfinished basement or attic
  - Anywhere that is unfit for human habitation

#### **5. Unaccompanied Youth**

- Children and youth experiencing homelessness who are **NOT** in the physical custody of a parent or **legal** guardian

If unsure, please contact Chelsea Fountain at 317-346-8684 or [fountainc@franklinschools.org](mailto:fountainc@franklinschools.org) for final determination. Additional questions may need to be asked to determine eligibility.