

Homeless Education 2006-2007

Identification and Verification Manual

Making the Call



**Region XIII Education Service Center
Homeless Education Project
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Making the Call

Dear Homeless Liaison:

This manual was developed to help you and others “make the call” to parents who may meet the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act definition of homelessness. May we suggest the following when working with your district colleagues or volunteers to accomplish your tasks:

- * be familiar with this manual.
- * insert *Finding the Way Home* homeless data summary sheet from the THEO Resource Packet.
- * insert your district’s English Student Residency Questionnaire
- * insert your district’s Spanish Student Residency Questionnaire
- * provide training, including practice.
- * have a process in place for action items such as acquiring free meals, delivering supplies and for Title I or other services.
- * ensure confidentiality of volunteer or person contacting parents.
- * check for understanding regarding this sensitive issue.

We hope this manual will be helpful to you in identifying students experiencing homelessness in your community and please feel free to modify any part to meet your needs. If you would like an electronic copy, please send an email to sandy.lawrence@esc13.txed.net. We welcome suggestions for improvement.

Region XIII Homeless Education Program

WHAT CAN I DO TO HELP?



Each district is responsible for appointing a homeless liaison responsible for ensuring the school is meeting the requirements of federal and state laws regarding the education of homeless children and youth as required by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. One of the requirements is to identify students experiencing homelessness in the district and ensure prompt enrollment and success of the student.

At the start of each school year, each student is asked to complete a Residency Questionnaire or form indicating the current living arrangement of the student. This questionnaire may vary slightly in each district, but it should resemble the example included in this packet. This is a form specifically designed to address eligibility for services and support under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. If the family indicates that their living situation is one that may meet the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homelessness, then it becomes the liaison's responsibility to verify through phone or personal interviews if the student is experiencing homelessness.

You can assist the district liaison by helping conduct phone interviews to verify the living situation of students. Making the phone calls is very time consuming and your assistance will make a real difference.

Because of your help, students may be eligible for free lunches, school supplies and more. You are an important part of this process, and the phone calls are extremely important to the liaison as well as the student and family.

The phone calls are also necessary because some parents may have misunderstood the Residency Questionnaire and indicated that they are living in a homeless situation when they, in fact, are not. Some may have changed living arrangements since completing the form and found permanent, adequate housing, while others will qualify for assistance under the McKinney-Vento Act because their current living arrangement meets the definition.

If there are times that you feel uncomfortable or uncertain about something, please feel free to ask the Homeless Liaison for assistance or clarification. The staff is grateful for your time and will be happy to answer any questions.

Thanks again for your support!

HELP US IDENTIFY OUR CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Children experiencing homelessness cannot be stereotyped. They experience a broad variety of circumstances and situations. According to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001 the term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes:

- Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
- Children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless for purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Children experiencing homelessness have certain rights afforded them under federal legislation in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. Children experiencing homelessness have the right to enroll in school even if they do not have a permanent address. They cannot be denied enrollment just because they do not have school records or other enrollment documents at the time of enrollment. In other words, they have the right to immediate enrollment, even without documentation typically required upon enrollment in the education system.

In addition, students experiencing homelessness have the right to remain in the school they attended before experiencing homelessness. Schools must give homeless children the opportunity to participate in extra-curricular activities and all federal, state, or local programs for which they are eligible.

In order to provide the services and ensure the rights of students experiencing homelessness, schools must identify the students. You can be of great assistance in this process by volunteering your time.

VOLUNTEER CONFIDENTIALITY

Respect for our clients' privacy and ensuring the confidentiality of information is a priority. A large part of the volunteer work you will do on behalf of the school district involves access to personal information about our clients. Any client information, either recorded or not, which is acquired in connection with any form of volunteer work in or for the district, is considered confidential.

Confidential information includes information about the clients' identity, living situation, and any information collected for or contained in the client records. All such information must be treated confidentially.

Information that comes to you as part of your work is not to be discussed with volunteers, parent, siblings, or anyone else, other than the program staff, which provides supervision of your placement.

Confidentiality is a very important issue when dealing with sensitive issues. Many families are reluctant to share information about their living arrangement for a number of reasons. By guaranteeing the confidentiality of each student/family regarding all information obtained, you can help alleviate the fears of many parents.

Modified from: A Family Connection Program Guide By: Rainbow Days, Inc.

CONFIDENTIALITY STATEMENT

As part of the Volunteers in a public school, I understand that I will have access to and receive information about students and families. I recognize and understand that student information is confidential under state and federal laws and regulations.

These laws and regulations allow me to use or discuss student information only for the purpose of carrying out my responsibilities in the program. I understand that any other use of student information is prohibited and that violation of this prohibition could result in criminal penalties.

I have read and I understand this confidentiality statement. I will keep student/family information confidential, and I will only use or discuss student information for the purpose of carrying out my responsibilities in the program.

Volunteer Signature

Date

Address _____ City _____ Zip _____

QUICK AND IMPORTANT TIPS AS YOU MAKE PHONE INTERVIEWS

- **Try using the term displaced** after introducing the Homeless Education Assistance Act. However in a tactful manner, let them know their child will be part of the district's Homeless Education Program. Many parents/guardians do not self-identify as experiencing homelessness, and they perceive it as a stigmatizing term.
- Try to offer the help as soon as you can so that they understand the benefits of being identified and part of the program.
- Take a minute to look over the Residency Questionnaire before calling the parent/guardian so you are familiar with the student, their grade and what school they attend, as well as their living situation at the time they completed the form.
- **Make sure to ask if the student has any siblings so that you can avoid calling the same parent three times about three siblings.**
- It is helpful to log each call you make on the right hand side of the script form so you know how many times you have tried to reach the family.
- You will probably not be able to follow the script exactly, but keep in mind two key points: Restate the two questions at the top of the Residency Questionnaire Form in order to verify the housing status and the reason why you are calling.
- Try to stay calm and sincere, particularly if you encounter a defensive attitude.

MAKING THE CALLS: WHAT SHOULD I SAY?



1. When making the calls, please refer to the following two forms: The Residency Questionnaire Form and the Interview Script Form. The Residency Questionnaire has been completed by the parent/guardian. The Interview Script Form provides you with information for the interview and also serves as the place to document the information gained during the course of the interview. You need one Script Form per call.
2. First, take some time to review the Residency Questionnaire Form to familiarize yourself with the student and parent/guardian's name, as well as living situation of the family. Fill out preliminary information on the Script Form, such as the student's name and grade.
3. Then, as you make the call, complete the information on the form. Verify the living arrangement of the student by restating the two questions that were answered yes from the top of the Residency Questionnaire Form:
 - Is your current address a temporary living arrangement?
 - Is this temporary living arrangement due to loss of housing or economic hardship?
4. Ask whether or not the student has any siblings, so that they may be included in this interview. Write down their information at the bottom of the Interview Script Form. If the living arrangement is one that falls under the McKinney-Vento guidelines, the student qualifies for services.
 - Please document with a large letter "Q" for qualifies in the box in the lower right hand corner and make a copy of both forms for each sibling.
 - If the student does not qualify, complete the interview cordially and document "DNQ" in the box in the lower right-hand corner.
5. If you determine a family/student is homeless, please share the reason for your call. Inform them that they qualify for the Homeless Program in your district, and the services and programs are available to their children.

Listed below are the services that students may be eligible for:

- **MEALS:** Meals are the most important need. If the student is experiencing homelessness and is not already receiving free breakfast and lunch, give the script and residency questionnaire to the liaison as soon as you completed the phone call so the meal request can be processed as quickly as possible.
- **SCHOOL SUPPLIES/BACKPACK:** If the student is in need of school supplies and/or a backpack, tell the parent that they will be available in the school counselor's office other designated place.
- **ASSISTANCE WITH READING:** All students identified as homeless are automatically eligible for additional assistance through Title I.
- **TRANSPORTATION:** Transportation is not usually a concern. However, if transportation services are needed, the homeless liaison will arrange this through the transportation department to transport the student to the school of origin.

If a student is experiencing homelessness and is not already receiving transportation, give the script and residency questionnaire to the liaison as soon as you complete the phone call so transportation requests can be processed.

Student Name: _____

Campus/Grade: _____

INTERVIEW SCRIPT FORM



Hello, my name is _____. I am calling on behalf of _____ ISD. I would like to speak with Mr. /Mrs. _____ or the parent or guardian of _____ (student name). I received the Title X form that you completed regarding your housing status. You indicated that your child is presently living:

- a. ____ In a motel
- b. ____ In a shelter
- c. ____ With more than one family in a house or apartment
- d. ____ Moving from place to place
- e. ____ In a place not designed for ordinary sleeping accommodations such as a car, park or campsite

On your form, you marked yes to the following two questions:

Is your current address a temporary living arrangement? YES

Is this temporary arrangement due to loss of housing or economic hardship? YES

Is that still your situation?

____ YES ____ NO

If yes, continue, if no, end the interview politely.

Your child/children qualifies/qualify to receive services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act, also referred to as Title X. I would like to share the services that we would be able to offer to your child if you are interested.

Please let me know if your child needs any of the following services:

Services	NEED? YES or NO
Free Meals	
School Supplies	
Transportation	
Tutoring	
Summer Enrichment	
Counseling	

Please ask the parent for the names of the siblings or school-aged children living in the home. If they are school-aged, please indicate the campus and grade where they are enrolled.

Siblings	Campus	Grade

Thank you for your time. If you have any questions or needs throughout the school year, please feel free and contact the school or district liaison, _____ (Liaison Name) at _____ (Telephone Number).

Please document below with a large letter “Q” if the child qualifies for services or “DNQ” if the child does not qualify.

Student Residency Questionnaire-English (use local form)

Student Residency Questionnaire-Spanish (use local form)



Thank You!

A very special thank you to the following who shared their time and expertise to develop this booklet.

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