

Homeless Education Program

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) is federal legislation that ensures the educational rights and protection of children and youths experiencing homelessness. It requires all local educational agencies (LEAs) to ensure that students experiencing homelessness have access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschools, as provided to other children and youths.

Palmdale School District provides assistance to students and families experiencing homelessness in compliance with the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, an integral part of Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Program personnel work in collaboration with school personnel and community service agencies in an effort to maximize access to various educational, social and enrichment programs which promote academic success and student achievement.

How is homelessness defined?

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless students or students experiencing homelessness to mean students who **lack** a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes students 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 adequate accommodations;
- Are living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Are abandoned in hospitals
- Have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings
- Are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Are abandoned, runaway, or pushed-out youth or migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in conditions described above.

What does “fixed”, “regular”, and “adequate” mean?

A **fixed** residence is one that is stationary, permanent, and not subject to change. A **regular** residence is one that is used on a normal, standard, and consistent basis (*i.e.*, nightly). An **adequate** residence is one that is sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.

How does the District identify students experiencing homelessness?

The law requires that each school identifies all students experiencing homelessness and unaccompanied youths that are enrolled at the school. The District looks at the following circumstances, indicators, and strategies to identify such students:

- At the time of school enrollment
- Records showing frequent transfer of schools
- Administration of a housing questionnaire on an annual basis
- Staff notices changes in grades, appearance, attendance, behavior (*e.g.*, withdrawn, quiet), and other red flags

What are the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness?

Once identified as a student experiencing homelessness...

- The student may enroll at the school of residence or the school of origin. The school of origin can be the school the student attended when permanently housed, the last school of enrollment, or a school that the student has a connection to and attended in the last 15 months.
- The school of residence or the school of origin must immediately enroll the student even if the student does not have all the documents necessary for enrollment. This can include school records, health records, proof of residency, guardianship, or other documents.
- The student will be provided transportation to and from the student's school of origin, as well as access to the same special programs and services, if needed, as provided to all other children.
- The District will ensure that students are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their homeless status.

How can parents and other family members contribute to the academic success of students experiencing homelessness?

- Ensure the student attends school daily and on time
- Meet and talk with teachers regularly to discuss the student's progress
- Attend school meetings and participate in school events
- Meet with the school support staff to help the student deal with changes and challenges
- Request for the student to get additional help, if needed (*e.g.*, tutoring, counseling)

Who is the District's homeless liaison and how can they help?

As required by law, the Superintendent has designated the following individual to serve as the District's homeless liaison:

Pablo Leños
Director of Mental Health Services
39139 10th St E
Palmdale, CA 93550
(661) 789-6783
homelessyouth@palmdalesd.org

The District's homeless liaison can:

- Facilitate school enrollment, helping families decide which school placement is in the student's best interest
- Help students get basic school supplies, supplemental services, and free school meals
- Set up transportation to and from the school of origin (if eligible)
- Provide students and their family members referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services
- Assist, facilitate, and represent a student experiencing homelessness who is undergoing a disciplinary proceeding that could result in the student's expulsion

If you are experiencing homelessness at any time during the school year, please contact the District's homeless liaison or any of the following staff members at your child's school:

- Principal and/or Assistant Principal
- Secretary
- Health Aide
- Attendance Clerk

- Student's Teacher(s)
- Social Emotional Learning Specialist
- Counselor
- Parent Community Liaison