

National Center for Homeless Education  
Supporting the Education of Children and  
Youth Experiencing Homelessness  
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McKINNEY-VENTO LAW INTO PRACTICE BRIEF SERIES

## Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness under Title I, Part A

*This brief explains how Title I, Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) and Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (reauthorized under Title X, Part C of NCLB; hereafter referred to as the McKinney-Vento Act) intersect and offers strategies for effective collaboration. Briefs on additional topics pertaining to homeless education and related laws may be found at <http://center.serve.org/nche/briefs.php>.*

### INTRODUCTION

The goal of Title I, Part A of NCLB (20 USC § 6301 et seq, 2001) is to ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and to reach proficiency on state standards and assessments of academic achievement. Title I, Part A is designed to meet the educational needs of low-achieving children in schools with the highest levels of poverty by aligning high-quality assessments, systems of accountability, teacher preparation, curriculum, and instructional materials with challenging state academic standards.

Similarly, the McKinney-Vento Act (42 USC 11433, 2001) ensures that children experiencing homelessness

#### Who is homeless?

(Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized under Title X, Part C of NCLB)

The term “homeless children and youth”—

- A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and
- B. includes —
  1. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or 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;
  2. 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...
  3. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
  4. migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

have access to the same free, appropriate public education and related services as their permanently housed peers so that they have an equal opportunity to meet the same challenging academic standards. The Act requires State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to remove any barriers that limit the ability of a student experiencing homelessness to enroll, attend, and succeed in school. The law also emphasizes collaborations and encourages parent participation as keys to the educational success of homeless students.

While many challenges faced by homeless students are addressed within the McKinney-Vento Act, Title I, Part A also plays a significant role in supporting the academic achievement of homeless children and youth. Requirements for coordination between the two programs are included in both statutes; additionally, both Title I, Part A and the McKinney-Vento Act include provisions for grant funds to be distributed by SEAs to LEAs for activities aligned with the goals of the legislation, including supporting the educational success of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

### AUTOMATIC ELIGIBILITY

Homeless students are part of Title I, Part A's target population of disadvantaged students; however, the high mobility, trauma, and poverty associated with homelessness create unique educational barriers and challenges that permanently housed Title I, Part A students may not face. Homelessness can be associated with lower standardized test scores in reading, spelling, and math (Obradovic et al., 2009; Rafferty, Shinn, & Weitzman, 2004). Homeless students also transfer schools more often, which requires them to adapt to new curricula, teachers, and peers, while increasing the risk of "broken bonds" that negatively impact learning (Cunningham, Harwood, & Hall, 2010; Obradovic et al., 2009). Thus, homeless students often require supports beyond what is typically

offered to achieve academic success.

For these reasons, children and youth who are homeless are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services, whether or not they attend a Title I, Part A school or meet the academic standards required of other students for eligibility (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2004). This automatic eligibility acknowledges that the experience of homelessness puts children and youth at significant risk of academic failure, regardless of their previous academic standing. Additionally, the provisions allow homeless students who are doing well academically to receive additional non-instructional education related support services needed to succeed in school.

### COORDINATION

To identify and address the needs of homeless students more effectively, both the McKinney-Vento Act and Title I, Part A require cross-program coordination. McKinney-Vento local liaisons are required to coordinate and collaborate with school personnel responsible for providing services to homeless students. Title I, Part A requires that programs operated under its authority coordinate at the state and local levels. All districts must also have an application that is approved by the SEA that addresses Title I, Part A coordination with McKinney-Vento. The plans implemented by Title I, Part A as a part of the LEA application must describe how services for students experiencing homelessness are coordinated and integrated with the McKinney-Vento program, ensuring program effectiveness, eliminating duplicate services, and reducing fragmentation of educational programming (20 USC § 6312(b)(1)(E)(ii), 2001).

The requirement for cross-program coordination is also an opportunity for optimizing resource allocation. While more than 90% of U.S. school districts receive Title I allocations (U.S. Government Accountability Office, 2011, p. 4), only approximately 22% of U.S. school districts

receive subgrants through the McKinney-Vento program (National Center for Homeless Education, 2012, p. 4). In order to meet the needs of all students, including students experiencing homelessness, it is critical that both programs leverage resources to the greatest extent possible.

In addition to direct education services, homeless students and their families often need housing assistance, social services, and health care. Linking families with community resources can have a positive impact on education outcomes by meeting student needs that are beyond the school's capacity. Title I, Part A requires targeted assistance programs to coordinate with federal, state, and local services programs, including housing, nutrition, and violence prevention programs, as well as Head Start, adult education, vocational and technical education, and job training programs (20 USC 6315(c)(1)(H), 2001). The McKinney-Vento Act has similar requirements for State Coordinators (42 USC 11432(f)(4), 2001) and local liaisons (42 USC 11432(g)(5), 2001). Both programs can work together in establishing relationships

### SCOPE, INTENSITY, AND TYPE OF SERVICES

Due to the fact that the needs of many homeless students are so vast, services provided through Title I, Part A may need to be greater in scope and intensity for homeless students or simply different in type than those normally provided to non-homeless students by Title I, Part A. For example, a student who is participating in tutoring as a part of a targeted assistance program may also need counseling services due to exposure to domestic violence. Alternatively, a district may provide an article of clothing to a student experiencing homelessness in order to allow the student to meet the school dress code. The additional services are allowable due to the fact that they are supplemental to the regular school program but also ensure that the student may effectively take advantage of educational opportunities.

### IDENTIFYING STUDENT NEEDS

Educational barriers experienced by homeless students are often more complex and challenging than those experienced by other students. To ensure that resources are used effectively and have the greatest impact, when designing plans for Title I schoolwide or targeted assistant programs, the Title I director and McKinney-Vento liaison should work together to review data on homeless student academic performance and barriers to their academic success, and ensure that barriers are addressed through regular Title I, Part A programming, the Title I, Part A set-aside, or McKinney-Vento subgrant funds.

with outside agencies to facilitate connecting homeless families with these vital programs and services.

### SERVING HOMELESS STUDENTS IN NON-TITLE I, PART A SCHOOLS

According to Title I, Part A, each LEA must reserve funds as necessary to provide services to homeless children who are attending elementary, middle, or high schools that are not Title I, Part A schools (20 USC 6313(c)(3)(A), 2001). Services provided by the set-aside funds for homeless students may differ from those normally provided to other students receiving Title I, Part A services, but they must be comparable to services normally provided by the program. Districts may provide a wide variety of educationally related support services to students experiencing homelessness; the services may also be provided at shelters or other locations where the students live (20 USC 6313(c)(3)(A), 2001).

## SERVING HOMELESS STUDENTS IN TITLE I, PART A SCHOOLS

In addition to serving homeless students not attending Title I, Part A schools, U.S. Department of Education Guidance states that set-asides also can be used to provide services to homeless students who are attending Title I, Part A schools (ED, 2004). In determining the set-aside amount, LEAs should allow for the provision of services to meet the unique needs of homeless students who attend Title I, Part A schools that are above and beyond services provided through the regular Title I, Part A programs at those schools, in addition to the provision of services to homeless students who do not attend Title I, Part A schools. Two types of school programs are outlined under Part A of Title I. They include schoolwide programs and targeted assistance programs.

### Schoolwide Programs

Title I, Part A schoolwide schools are required to conduct a needs assessment and develop strategies to address the needs of all children in the school [20 USC 6314(b)(1)]. Subpopulations of children, such as homeless students, who attend these schools should have their unique needs addressed within schoolwide programs designed for all students.

### Targeted Assistance Schools

Targeted assistance schools are charged with using their programming resources to help children identified as failing or most at-risk of failing to meet state academic standards. Title I,

Part A specifically notes that homeless children are included within the population of students considered to have the greatest needs (20 USC 6315(b)(2)(E), 2001).

Homeless students who attend Title I, Part A schoolwide or targeted assistance schools may have unique challenges that are not addressed by the school's regular Title I, Part A program due to such issues as residential and school mobility, family disruption, and extreme poverty. These challenges may create barriers to full participation in Title I, Part A programs and defeat the overarching program goal of helping all students meet challenging state academic standards. For instance, students residing in shelters, motels, or other overcrowded conditions may not have a quiet place to study and may require extended after-school library time; or, a student who is dealing with the stress and anxiety associated with homelessness may not be able to focus on his or her studies and may benefit from counseling services.

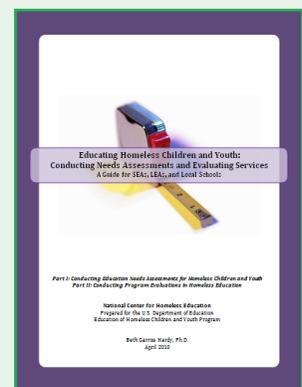
## DETERMINING TITLE I, PART A SET-ASIDE AMOUNTS

Determining an appropriate amount for a set-aside requires coordination between the LEA Title I, Part A and McKinney-Vento programs. LEAs must establish their own methods for setting aside Title I, Part A funds for homeless students while working with the state offices for

## NEEDS ASSESSMENTS AND PROGRAM EVALUATIONS

The NCHE publication, *Educating Homeless Children and Youth: Conducting Needs Assessments and Evaluating Services— a Guide for SEAs, LEAs, and Local Schools*, provides information on conducting comprehensive needs assessments and program evaluations to strengthen program design. It includes a complete set of tools that are useful not only in collecting state level data, but also in assisting LEAs and individual schools in collecting the data needed to inform program decisions at the local level.

Download the guide at [http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/na\\_eval.php](http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/na_eval.php).



Title I and McKinney-Vento, as appropriate. When determining the set-aside amount, the Title I director and the McKinney-Vento liaison should actively partner to provide and review relevant data in order to ensure that adequate Title I, Part A funds are reserved to meet the needs of homeless students. In order to bring a full range of data to the discussion, LEAs may want to conduct an annual needs assessment on homeless students.

Once a district has identified the needs of homeless students to be addressed, the amount of funds necessary to provide services should be determined. In addition to planning interventions based on the identified needs of students, planned services should be of sufficient time and intensity to impact students' academic outcomes. Strategies for calculating the set-aside amount may include:

- Determining a percentage of Title I, Part A funds for the homeless set-aside
- Multiplying the number of identified homeless students by the Title I, Part A per-pupil allocation.
- Matching the amount of McKinney-Vento subgrant dollars received by the LEA, if applicable
- Adjusting previous set-aside amounts based on past set-aside expenditures and trend data such as the number of homeless students identified, academic outcomes, and educationally related needs identified.

### EXPENDITURES FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

The intent of Title I, Part A is to supplement educational activities provided through the school with other local, state, and federal programs. Therefore, before using set-aside funds, LEAs should consider resources available through other means and leverage them accordingly. Set-aside activities should be designed to assist homeless students with

meeting state academic standards or to help them effectively take advantage of educational opportunities. ED Guidance (2009) issued on the American Reinvestment and Recovery Act provides a list of possible services Title I, Part A funds may support for homeless students. While this is not an exhaustive list, it does provide examples districts may find useful:

- Items of clothing, particularly if necessary to meet a school's dress or uniform requirement
- Clothing and shoes necessary to participate in physical education classes
- Student fees that are necessary to participate in the general education program
- Personal school supplies such as backpacks and notebooks
- Birth certificates necessary to enroll in school
- Immunizations
- Food
- Medical and dental services
- Eyeglasses and hearing aids
- Counseling services to address anxiety related to homelessness that is impeding learning
- Outreach services to students living in shelters, motels, and other temporary residences
- Extended learning time (before and after school, Saturday classes, summer school) to compensate for lack of quiet time for homework in shelters or other overcrowded living conditions
- Tutoring services, especially in shelters or other locations where homeless students live
- Parental involvement specifically oriented to reaching out to parents of homeless students
- Fees for AP and IB testing
- Fees for SAT/ACT testing

- GED testing for school-age students

Title I, Part A funds may not be used to provide services that other state and federal programs require LEAs to provide. For example, because the McKinney-Vento Act requires LEAs to provide transportation for homeless students to the school of origin, Title I, Part A funds may not be used for this purpose. However, Title I, Part A funds may be used to coordinate, supplement, or enhance required services (20 USC 6315(b)(3), 2001). As a result, Title I, Part A funds may be used for transportation needs other than to and from the school of origin, such as transportation to an after-school tutoring program or parent-teacher night, since these are considered supplemental to the regular school day. They also may be used to provide transportation to a formerly homeless student once the student becomes permanently housed in order to allow the student to remain in the school of origin for the remainder of the school year.

Title I, Part A funds may be used to fund, in whole or in part, the position of the McKinney-Vento liaison if that person also carries out Title I, Part A duties. Although liaisons are required by the McKinney-Vento Act, Section 11432(g)(1)(J) also notes that the person serving as the McKinney-Vento liaison may be a coordinator for other federal programs. Therefore, Title I, Part A funds can be used to allow the local liaison to spend more time with homeless students, provide additional staff, or otherwise supplement the services and coordination provided under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Other school and community resources must be exhausted before LEAs use the reservation of funds for homeless students to meet an identified need (20 USC 6315(e)(2), 2001). For example, if a district that requires school uniforms collaborates with a community agency to provide uniforms for students based on economic need, the supply of uniforms provided through the community resource must be exhausted before purchasing uniforms with Title I, Part A funds.

## STRATEGIES FOR COLLABORATION TO IMPROVE STUDENT OUTCOMES

McKinney-Vento and Title I, Part A personnel should communicate and collaborate on an ongoing basis to identify the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness, review resources, and plan ways to address student needs. Continual cross-program interaction enables districts to respond to the emerging needs of students experiencing homelessness and implement interventions expediently to ensure their students' academic success. Several strategies to facilitate collaboration between Title I, Part A and McKinney-Vento programs are provided below.

### Strategies for Title I, Part A state and local directors

- Involve homeless education personnel in the creation of schoolwide Title I, Part A program plans, targeted assistance program plans, and plans for school improvement to ensure the educational needs of homeless students are addressed within those plans.
- Use data from Title I, Part A programming and other education interventions to determine appropriate set-aside activities and funding levels for homeless students.
- Include a requirement for a Title I, Part A set-aside in the Title I, Part A basic grants application issued by the state. Applications that either fail to provide a set-aside or fail to meet the minimum threshold set in the application should include a requirement to provide a justification for omitting or limiting the set-aside.
- Include homeless parents in Title I, Part A parent involvement policies and create opportunities for homeless parents to engage in their children's education.

### Strategies for McKinney-Vento State Coordinators and liaisons

- Work with Title I directors to establish a process for accessing set-aside funds

and addressing emerging needs. Clearly articulate the process to be undertaken in order for a McKinney-Vento liaison to expediently access Title I, Part A set-aside funds.

- Provide Title I directors with education and intervention-related data regarding the needs of homeless students in order to determine appropriate set-aside activities and funding.
- Provide input regarding plans to serve homeless students that may be included in Title I, Part A applications.
- Require a description of coordination activities with Title I, Part A in McKinney-Vento subgrant applications issued by the state.
- Provide information about Title I, Part A services offered by the district in homeless education materials provided to parents, guardians, and youth.

#### Strategies for Title I, Part A and McKinney-Vento programs

- Include McKinney-Vento State Coordinators and liaisons in coordinated systems for support, such as school support teams or a Committee of Practitioners for Title I.
- Locate Title I and homeless education program offices in close proximity to facilitate cross-program communication.
- Establish cross-program collaborations for the development of state and local McKinney-Vento and Title I plans.
- Provide Title I, Part A and McKinney-Vento personnel with cross-program trainings and materials.
- Share handbooks for Title I, Part A and homeless education programs, along with other resources related to serving students experiencing high poverty and mobility with

program staff serving homeless and Title I, Part A students.

## CONCLUSION

While homeless students often have substantial needs and face barriers to their educations, Title I, Part A and McKinney-Vento programs complement each other by ensuring a basic right to an education, identifying needs, and supplementing educational services. Partnerships between the programs not only meet requirements for collaboration found in the law, but have the potential to significantly improve the academic outcomes of students experiencing homelessness.

## REFERENCES

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**M-4. What types of services may an LEA provide to homeless students with funds reserved under Section 1113(c)(3) of Title I?**

An LEA may use funds reserved under this section to provide services to eligible homeless students in both Title I and non-Title I schools that are comparable to services provided to non-homeless students in Title I schools. Services provided should assist such children in meeting the State’s challenging academic content and academic achievement standards.

An LEA has the discretion to use reserved funds to provide a homeless student with services that are not ordinarily provided to other Title I students and that are not available from other sources. For example, where appropriate, an LEA at its discretion may provide a student with an item of clothing to meet a school’s dress or uniform requirement so that student may effectively take advantage of educational opportunities.

U.S. Department of Education, Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Non-Regulatory Guidance (July 2004)

The full text and non-regulatory guidance for the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Assistance Act may be found on the NCHE website at <http://center.serve.org/nche/m-v.php>.

RELATED LEGISLATIVE EXCERPTS

**“STATE PLANS.**

**(a) PLANS REQUIRED.—**

(1) **IN GENERAL.—**For any State desiring to receive a grant under this part, the State educational agency shall submit to the Secretary a plan, developed by the State educational agency, in consultation with local educational agencies, teachers, principals, pupil services personnel, administrators (including administrators of programs described in other parts of this title), other staff, and parents, that satisfies the requirements of this section and that is coordinated with other programs under this Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998, the Head Start Act, the Adult Education and Family Literacy Act, and the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.”

20 USC 6311(a)(1)

**“LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY PLANS.**

**(a) PLANS REQUIRED.—**

(1) **SUBGRANTS.—**A local educational agency may receive a subgrant under this part for any fiscal year only if such agency has on file with the State educational agency a plan, approved by the State educational agency, that is coordinated with other programs under this Act, the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Technical Education Act of 1998, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and other Acts, as appropriate...

**(b) PLAN PROVISIONS.—**

(1) **IN GENERAL.—**In order to help low-achieving children meet challenging achievement academic standards, each local educational agency plan shall include—...

(E) a description of how the local educational agency will coordinate and integrate services provided under this part with other educational services at the local educational agency or individual school level, such as—...

- (ii) services for children with limited English proficiency, children with disabilities, migratory children, neglected or delinquent youth, Indian children served under part A of title VII, homeless children, and immigrant children in order to increase program effectiveness, eliminate duplication, and reduce fragmentation of the instructional program;...
- (O) a description of the services the local educational agency will provide homeless children, including services provided with funds reserved under section 1113(c)(3)(A);”

20 USC 6312

“RESERVATION.—A local educational agency shall reserve such funds as are necessary under this part to provide services comparable to those provided to children in schools funded under this part to serve—

- (A) homeless children who do not attend participating schools, including providing educationally related support services to children in shelters and other locations where children may live;”

20 USC 6313(c)(3)

#### “(b) COMPONENTS OF A SCHOOLWIDE PROGRAM.—

(1) IN GENERAL.—A schoolwide program shall include the following components:

- (A) A comprehensive needs assessment of the entire school (including taking into account the needs of migratory children as defined in section 1309(2)) that is based on information which includes the achievement of children in relation to the State academic content standards and the State student academic achievement standards described in section 1111(b)(1).

(B) Schoolwide reform strategies that—

- (i) provide opportunities for all children to meet the State’s proficient and advanced levels of student academic achievement described in section 1111(b)(1)(D);
- (iii) (I) include strategies to address the needs of all children in the school, but particularly the needs of low-achieving children and those at risk of not meeting the State student academic achievement standards who are members of the target population of any program that is included in the schoolwide program, which may include—
  - (aa) counseling, pupil services, and mentoring services;
  - (bb) college and career awareness and preparation, such as college and career guidance, personal finance education, and innovative teaching methods, which may include applied learning and team-teaching strategies; and
  - (cc) the integration of vocational and technical education programs;...”

20 USC 6314(b)(1)

#### “TARGETED ASSISTANCE SCHOOLS.

(b) ELIGIBLE CHILDREN FROM ELIGIBLE POPULATION

(2) CHILDREN INCLUDED.—

- (A) IN GENERAL.—Children who are economically disadvantaged, children with disabilities, migrant children or limited English proficient children, are eligible for services under this part on the same basis as other children selected to receive services under this part ....
- (E) HOMELESS CHILDREN.—A child who is homeless and attending any school served by the local educational agency is eligible for services under this part.

(3) SPECIAL RULE.—Funds received under this part may not be used to provide services that are otherwise required by law to be made available to children described in paragraph (2) but may be used to coordinate or supplement such services.”

20 USC 6315(b)

“(2) COMPREHENSIVE SERVICES.—If—

- (A) health, nutrition, and other social services are not otherwise available to eligible children in a targeted assistance school and such school, if appropriate, has engaged in a comprehensive needs assessment and established a collaborative partnership with local service providers; and
- (B) funds are not reasonably available from other public or private sources to provide such services, then a portion of the funds provided under this part may be used as a last resort to provide such services, including—
  - (i) the provision of basic medical equipment, such as eyeglasses and hearing aids;
  - (ii) compensation of a coordinator; and
  - (iii) professional development necessary to assist teachers, pupil services personnel, other staff, and parents in identifying and meeting the comprehensive needs of eligible children.”

20 USC 6315(e)

The full text of Title I, Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act may be found online at: <http://www2.ed.gov/programs/titleiparta/legislation.html>.

**This brief was developed by:**

**National Center for Homeless Education**

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Every state is required to have a State Coordinator for Homeless Education, and every school district is required to have a local homeless education liaison. These individuals will assist you with the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. To find out who your State Coordinator is, visit the NCHE website at *[http://www.serve.org/nche/states/state\\_resources.php](http://www.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php)*.



For more information on the McKinney-Vento Act and resources for implementation, call the NCHE Helpline at 800-308-2145 or e-mail *[homeless@serve.org](mailto:homeless@serve.org)*.

**Local Contact Information:**