

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act is a federal law that protects the educational rights of students in temporary housing.

It defines "**homeless** children and youths" as any student who **lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**.



Because of the one-on-one relationship that school nurses often have with students, you may see signs of homelessness before others do. You have an important role to play in connecting the student to specific supports under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act.

1. **SUPPORT:** The first step in supporting students in temporary housing is to identify them. Signs of unstable housing may include poor hygiene, chronic health complaints such as headaches or stomach aches, incomplete or missing immunization records, outdated prescriptions for eye glasses, untreated illness, etc.

If you learn that a student is temporarily housed, use these trauma-sensitive strategies:

- Show that you care about the student. Be available, accessible and compassionate to the concerns, needs, and feelings of the student and family. Be an active and empathetic listener.
- Ask about glasses, inhalers, and other commonly needed medical supplies. The student may need them, but not have access to regular health care.
- Make the student/family feel welcome by being available to help parents/caregivers with the completion of any necessary medical records.
- Develop a reliable and accessible source of medical and dental care for families in temporary housing. Share your discoveries with the school district's McKinney-Vento liaison.

2. **ACT:** Once a student is determined to be temporarily housed, you should follow these steps to make sure that you are in compliance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act:

- Contact the school district's McKinney-Vento homeless liaison so that other services (*i.e. free meals, transportation, tutoring, etc.*) may be arranged as soon as possible. If you don't know who that person is, **call NYS-TEACHS at 800-388-2014**.
- Make sure the school knows that students in temporary housing can immediately enroll in school even without the immunization records typically needed for enrollment.
- Verify immunization records and, if necessary, contact the student's previous school to help obtain immunization and medical records.
- Refer the student to the local health department for any needed immunizations.
- Discreetly make principals and teachers aware of any serious medical condition the student may have.



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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.