

Students who are homeless have educational rights under the McKinney-Vento Act, an important federal law. If you think a student might be eligible for support under the McKinney-Vento Act, speak with your district [Liaison](#) (see reverse).

Many children and families who are eligible for help do not consider themselves homeless.

When are students considered homeless?

The McKinney-Vento Act protects the educational rights of homeless children and youth. The definition of homelessness under the Act includes, but is not limited to, children or youth in these circumstances or settings:

- Children or youth in shelters or transitional housing.
- Children or youth living in parks, public spaces, vehicles, abandoned buildings, or other places not meant for people to live.
- Children or youth sharing housing (doubled up or couch-surfing) due to loss of housing or economic hardship.
- Children or youth living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds due to lack of alternative accommodations.
- Unaccompanied children or youth (i.e. not in the physical custody of their parents or guardians).

Homeless students' rights include:

- To remain enrolled in, and be transported to a student's School of Origin when feasible, even if a student moves across or outside the district. ('School of Origin' means the school last attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.)
- To be enrolled immediately (even without medical or school records) in the neighborhood school.
- To receive FREE breakfast and lunch in schools that serve both.
- To have barriers addressed so that they can participate in athletics, field trips, and afterschool activities (this could include having certain school fees waived). Parents or guardians should contact school staff for help.
- To get help with basic school supplies, including uniforms, shoes, textbooks, and notebooks. If a student's family cannot afford required supplies, parents or guardians should contact school staff for help.
- To ask for more academic support if a student is struggling with classwork. Parents or guardians should contact school staff for assistance.
- To use the school district's Dispute Resolution Process to appeal a school's decision when there is a disagreement about school selection or enrollment (attending class and participating fully in school activities).

Resources

The **Education for Homeless Children and Youth** program is part of the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Staff provide trainings for Homeless Education Liaisons and help resolve problems that cannot be resolved within the district.

<http://bit.ly/wahomelessed>; (360) 725-6505; HomelessEd@k12.wa.us

The **National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)** operates the Homeless Education Helpline for parents, shelter staff, and school personnel who need help and information about enrollment, transportation, and access to appropriate educational opportunities. Assistance is available in English and Spanish. *Ayuda está disponible en inglés y español.*

<http://nche.ed.gov/>; 1-800-308-2145 (ext. 3); homeless@serve.org

Washington State Governor's Office of the Education Ombuds (OEO) is a free, confidential resource for students and families. Staff can help resolve complaints, disputes, and problems between families and public schools or districts in matters that affect student learning. Interpretation available. *Interpretación disponible.*

<http://www.oeo.wa.gov>; Toll-free: (866) 297-2597; OEOinfo@gov.wa.gov

Schoolhouse Washington, a project of Building Changes, improves housing stability and academic outcomes for the more than 40,000 students in our state who experience homelessness. Find student homelessness data, policy analysis, promising practices, and a "Know Your Rights" toolkit for students experiencing homelessness at <https://schoolhousewa.org>.

This resource is prepared by the Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness. Visit www.homelessinfo.org for the most recent information and to download.

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Homeless Liaisons for King County School Districts (2020-21)

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We want to hear from you! Please tell us about your experience as a student, parent, or a staff person working to support homeless students' success in school. Write to speakup@homelessinfo.org or call the Coalition: **(206) 204-8350**.