

Resources for and Rights of Children and Families Who Experience Homelessness

Are you or someone you know experiencing homelessness?

The federal definition of homelessness is an individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

But not all homelessness looks the same.

Examples of Homelessness

Living unsheltered: Staying in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings

Staying with other people: Staying with other people due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason

Staying in hotels/motels: Staying in motels/hotels due to lack of adequate alternatives, regardless of who pays for the motel/hotel room

Residing in shelters/transitional housing: Domestic violence shelters, homeless shelters, youth shelters, trailers provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), housing paid for by programs such as transitional housing, etc.

Source: bit.ly/McKinney-Vento-Act-QR

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, every local educational agency (LEA) is required to designate a liaison for children and youth who experience homelessness. The LEA coordinates services to ensure that children and youth that experience homelessness enroll in school and have the opportunity to succeed academically.

If you know a child or youth who is experiencing homelessness, they may be eligible to receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act. To be eligible for services, the student must meet the Act's definition of homeless: "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." Lacking any one of these three conditions would make a child eligible.

Source:

doe.sd.gov/title/documents/EligRights.pdf

In Tennessee: McKinney-Vento & Family Engagement Coordinator

Federal Programs & Oversight

Andrew Johnson Tower

12th Floor, 710 James Robertson Parkway
Nashville, TN 37243

Phone: (615) 253-3101 Cell: (615) 917-3750

Email: vanessa.waters@tn.gov



Parent Involvement

The parents or legal guardians of a child with a disability have the right to participate in educational decisions concerning their child. Accommodations must be offered by the school district to ensure all families can participate. This could include providing interpreters for families whose first language is not English or coordinating meeting locations and other supports for parents of homeless, migrant, and/or immigrant students.

Education for Children and Youth

Children and youth who experience homelessness should have access to necessary educational services to enable them to meet the same State student academic achievement standards to which all students are held. Additionally, these students may not be separated from the mainstream school environment.

If you are staying temporarily with someone else because you have lost your housing, or staying in a motel, campground, shelter, or in an outside or inadequate place, you and your children have special rights at school.

Those rights include:

- Staying in the same school even if you move, and receiving transportation to that school, as long as it is in the student's best interest
- Enrolling in school immediately without the documents schools typically require
- Receiving free school meals
- Getting help with school supplies and other needs
- Extra support for youth who are on their own
- Help connecting young children with early childhood services

Source: U.S. Department of Education

Additional Resources

Housing and Urban Development:

[hud.gov/homelessness_resources](https://www.hud.gov/homelessness_resources)

Health and Human Services:

[hhs.gov/programs/social-services/homelessness](https://www.hhs.gov/programs/social-services/homelessness)

National Alliance to End Homelessness—Tennessee Chapter:

endhomelessness.org

National Center for Homeless Education:

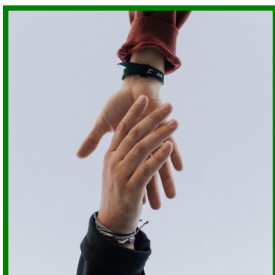
[nche.ed.gov/resources/](https://www.nche.ed.gov/resources/)

Tennessee Valley Coalition for the Homeless:

[tvchomeless.org](https://www.tvchomeless.org)

Help with Paying Bills:

[needhelppayingbills.com](https://www.needhelppayingbills.com)



If you are in crisis, get immediate help.

Call 911

Disaster Distress Helpline: call or text 1-800-985-5990

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Lifeline Crisis Chat

National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-7233 and TTY 1-800-787-3224