

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



The McKinney-Vento Act defines “homeless children and youths” as any student who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

## The following signs of homelessness can help teachers identify and support students in temporary housing:

### Social and Behavioral Cues

- A marked change in behavior
- Poor/short attention span
- Extreme shyness
- Difficulty socializing at recess
- Clinging behavior
- Developmental delays
- Difficulty or avoidance of building relationships with peers and/or teachers
- “Old” beyond years
- Aggression

### Unprepared for Class

- Lack of basic school supplies
- Consistent loss of books/other supplies
- Inability to complete special projects
- Strong concern for safety of belongings
- Incomplete or missing homework
- Inability to concentrate

### Lack of Continuity in Education

- Attendance at many different schools
- Inability to contact parents
- Numerous absences
- Lack of participation in class/field trips
- Lack of participation in afterschool activities

### Poor Nutrition, Health and Hygiene

- Chronic hunger
- Fatigue (may fall asleep in class)
- Wearing the same clothing for several days
- Unmet medical/dental needs
- Inconsistent or inadequate grooming
- Lack of immunization/medical records
- Often sick

### Transportation/Attendance Problems

- Erratic attendance or tardiness
- Inability to contact parents
- Numerous absences
- Lack of participation in afterschool activities

### Reaction/Statements by Parent, Guardian, Child

- Anger/embarrassment when asked about current address
- Mention of staying with relatives, friends, or in a motel/hotel
- Comments such as:
  - “I don’t remember the name of my previous school.”
  - “I can’t remember our new address.”
  - “We are going through a bad time right now.”
  - “We are staying with relatives until we get settled.”



## NYS-TEACHS

Toll-Free Hotline: (800) 388-2014

Email: [info@nysteachs.org](mailto:info@nysteachs.org)

Visit our website: [www.nysteachs.org](http://www.nysteachs.org)

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.

## After you have identified a student you believe may be living in temporary housing:

### Support the Student

- Make the student feel welcome. For example, select a student to be his/her "buddy" on the first day of class, and make sure the new student is familiar with the classroom routines.
- Refer the student to the on-site tutoring program for educational assistance if needed and available. Explore whether Title I set-aside funding could be used to pay for the tutoring.
- Coordinate an educational plan for the student with the relevant school staff.
- Give the student a clipboard to take home and use as a portable desk for doing homework.
- Provide any tools or supplies necessary to complete any required task. Supplies may not be readily available to the student (e.g. student may not have access to a computer or the internet).
- Keep a supply of nutritional snacks in your room.
- Help the student make plans for transportation for after-school activities or other special events.
- Keep needed toiletry items on hand to assist the student in maintaining proper hygiene.
- Be sensitive to the stigma attached to words like "homeless" and "shelter" and avoid using them in reference to students in temporary housing.

### Talk to the Student

- Be discreet. If appropriate, talk to the student privately to get more information about his/her living situation. Assure the student that you are not asking questions to get them or their parents into trouble, but that you want to help. If another staff member in the school has a stronger relationship with the student, ask that person to speak with the student.
- Contact your district's McKinney-Vento liaison and tell them you think the student may be in temporary housing. If you are not sure who to contact, call NYS-TEACHS at 800-388-2014.

### Know the Student's Educational Rights

- **Choice of Schools:** A student in temporary housing has the right to stay enrolled in the school of origin (the school attended when last permanently housed or the school last attended) or transfer to the local area where the student is temporarily living. It is usually in the student's best interest to stay enrolled in the same school. If the student transfers, she is entitled to immediate enrollment in the new school, even if she doesn't have the documents normally needed.
- **Transportation:** The student has the right to transportation to/from the school of origin.
- **Free Meals and Title I:** The student is entitled to receive free school meals, without filling out any paperwork regarding his family's finances, and is entitled to receive Title I services.