

Keystone Education Center Charter School
Connie S. Timashenka, Homeless Liaison
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connie_timashenka@keystone.k12.pa.us

PENNSYLVANIA'S EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM (ECYEH)

Every child deserves school stability.

Children experiencing homelessness have the right to a stable education and we can help put them on the path to success.

The Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness program (ECYEH) is an initiative of the Pennsylvania Department of Education, and is based on the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. This federal legislation ensures that homeless children and youth have access to a free, appropriate, public, education.

Our team is committed to ensuring that all students experiencing homelessness have the opportunity to success in school. We eliminate barriers to education, educate the community about the nature of homelessness, and provide support to schools, families, and communities.

The McKinney-Vento Act

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, is the key piece of federal law related to the education of homeless children and youth. Visit <http://nche.ed.gov/legis/mv.php> for more information.

Definition of Homeless Children and Youth

The McKinney-Vento Act defines the term "homeless children and youth" as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including

1. Children and youth sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; living in motels, hotels, trailers parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; or abandoned in hospitals.
 2. Children and youth 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 youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard hours, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

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Definition of Enrollment

According to the McKinney-Vento Act, the terms “enroll” and “enrollment” include attending classes and participating fully in school activities. Visit http://nche.ed.gov/ibt/sc_enroll.php for more information.

Educational Barriers

Children experiencing homelessness face many educational barriers and challenges, including:

- Delayed enrollment;
- Frequent school transfers;
- Lack of school supplies and clothing; and
- Poor health, fatigue, and hunger.

To remove these barriers, the McKinney-Vento Act promotes:

- Immediate access to full school participation;
- School stability and support for success; and
- Child-centered, best-interest decision making.

“I knew I didn’t want to be homeless for the rest of my life, and I saw education as the sure path to a more secure futures.”

Formerly homeless student

Educational Rights under the McKinney-Vento Act

Children and youth experiencing homelessness have the right to ...

- Receive a free, appropriate public education.
- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment.
- Participate fully in school while the school gathers needed documents.
- Enroll in the local school; or continue attending the school of origin (the school they attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled), according to each student’s best interest.

“If the school district believes that the school selected by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth is not in the student’s best interest, the district must provide the parent, guardian, or youth with a written explanation of its position and the parent’s, guardian’s, or youth’s right to appeal the district’s decision.

- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested.
- Received educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to each young person’s needs.

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Best Interest

Changing schools can be disruptive and harmful to a student's education. Because of this, the McKinney-Vento Act requires schools to ...

- Presume that keeping students in their school of origin is in their best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.
- Consider student-centered factors, such as how a school change might impact the student's achievement, education, health, and/or safety.
- Give priority to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.

Provisions of the Act

- Homeless children have the right to attend either their original school or the school in the area in which they currently reside for the duration of their homelessness, or until the end of the school year if the family finds permanent housing.
- Schools are to immediately enroll homeless children and unaccompanied youth, even if they are unable to produce records normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, and any other required documentation.
- In the case where the educating district is different than the district where the student is temporarily residing, both school districts are responsible for the facilitation of transportation in the best interest of the student.
- Immediately upon enrollment, homeless students are entitled to receive a daily, free school breakfast and lunch.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

An unaccompanied homeless youth is a child or youth who meets the definition of homeless and who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The McKinney-Vento Act extends the same rights to students experiencing homelessness on their own as to students experiencing homelessness with their parent or guardian. Contact Keystone's Homeless Liaison, Connie S. Timashenka at the phone number or email listed at the top of the page for additional information on procedures and policies related to unaccompanied homeless youth.

"Through it all, school is probably the only thing that has kept me going. I know that every day that I walk in those doors, I can stop thinking about my problems for the next six hours and concentrate on what is most important to me."

Formerly homeless student

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The Education for Children & Youth Experiencing Homelessness areas of Region 5 are Butler, Clarion, Crawford, Erie, Forest, Lawrence, McKean, Mercer, Venango, and Warren counties. The contact information for Wendy Kinnear, Region 5 Coordinator and Jason Burcker, Region 5 Site Coordinator for Homeless and the Foster Care Program.

Wendy Kinnear

Region 5 Coordinator
wendy.kinnear@miu4.org
724-458-6700 ext. 1289

Jason Burcker

Site Coordinator for Homeless & the Foster Care Program
jason.burcker@miu4.org
724-458-6700, ext. 1282

Services Provided to Homeless Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in our Region:

There are resources to assist you. The Keystone Charter School Homeless Liaison can assist with accessing needed items. The following are

- Assistance with School enrollment
- Free breakfasts and lunches
- Agency referrals
- Personal hygiene products (i.e. shampoo, deodorant, Band-Aids, etc.)
- Clothing (including socks, underwear, sweats, jeans, shirts, coats, hats, gloves, scarves, sneakers, boots)
- A backpack and school supplies
- Increasing public awareness on the needs of our homeless and unaccompanied youth
- Consultative phone calls for homeless parents on preschool/school issues
- Assisting individuals by contacting various Mercer County Services and Agencies
- Coordination of services
- Interagency problem solving
- Articles on coping with being homeless, fantastic books written by individuals who were homeless
- Personal visits to shelters, agencies, schools
- Coordinating school related transportation
- Tracking and transferring school records
- Accessing educational programs (preschool, before & after, summer programs)

- Fee exemption waivers are available for tests
- Advanced Placement (AP) Exams
 - Most four-year U.S. colleges give students credit, advanced placement or both on the basis of AP Exam scores; however, each institution may set its own policy as to which tests it will accept for credit, how much credit it will give, and what score is required for credit.

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- AP exam fee waivers are available for eligible students with no limit on the number of waivers per student.
- AP exam fee waiver eligibility criteria include eligibility for free or reduced price lunch, providing categorical eligibility for homeless students.
- Additional information is available at <http://professionals.collegeboard.com/testing/waivers/guidelines/ap>
- College Entrance Exam: The ACT
 - To qualify for an ACT fee waiver, the student must:
 - Be enrolled in high school in the 11th or 12th grade
 - Meet one or more of the following indicators of economic need:
 - Student is receiving free/reduced lunch
 - Student lives in a foster home, is a ward of the state or is experiencing homelessness
 - Family lives in subsidized housing or receives public assistance
 - Family income is below the USDA reduced-price lunch level
 - Students can use the waiver to take the ACT up to two times
 - The waiver is sent to high schools each summer; students must access the waiver from the school counselor
 - The waiver covers the basic test fees, including sending the test score(s) to unlimited colleges (* new policy starting September 2018); does not cover late registration fees or change fees
 - Additional information is available at <https://www.act.org/content/dam/act/unsecured/documents/FeeWaiver.pdf>
- College Entrance Exam: The SAT
 - To qualify for an SAT fee waiver, the student must:
 - Be enrolled in high school in the 11th or 12th grade (SAT) or in grades 9 – 12 (SAT Subject Tests)
 - Meet one or more indicator(s) of economic need (same as for the ACT fee waiver)
 - The waiver must be obtained from the student's high school counselor or an authorized agency
 - The student can receive up to four waiver cards: two waivers for the SAT and two waivers for SAT Subject Tests (student may take up to three Subject Tests per test date)
 - The waiver covers basic test fees and sending test score(s) to unlimited colleges (* new policy starting April 2018); does not cover change fees, but covers late registration fees
 - Waivers also available for 11th graders taking the PSAT test
 - Additional information is available at <https://collegereadiness.collegeboard.org/sat/register/fees/fee-waivers>
- College Application Fees

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- Students who qualify for the College Board's SAT fee waiver also qualify to receive up to four Request for Waiver of College Application Fee forms
- Forms should be included with the students' college applications and sent to colleges included in the SAT Fee- Waiver Director of Colleges at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/applying-101/college-application-fee-waiver/participating-colleges>
- Additional information is available at <https://bigfuture.collegeboard.org/get-in/applying-101/college-application-fee-waivers>
- National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC) form
 - To be completed with the help of the high school counselor
 - For graduating high school seniors entering college in the fall
 - Same eligibility criteria as the ACT and SAT waivers
 - Can be based on income and/or the counselor's knowledge of the family's circumstances
 - Additional information is available at <https://www.nacacfacts.org/learn/fee-waiver/>
 - Most colleges accept the College Board or NACAC waiver forms; however,, individual institutions may have their own fee waiver policies that vary
 - Colleges that use *The Common Application* (<https://www.commonapp.org/>) accept the SAT college application fee waiver
 - Some colleges do not charge application fees for students that apply online

There are many resources to assist you in achieving your dreams. Talk to any of your teachers, Wolfie, TJ, our great secretaries, Miss Ann, Mr. Nelson, Mr. G., and let them know you need to talk and could use some help with a problem. We are all here to help you and want you to succeed.

When you are facing a mountain that seems impossible, get some team-members working to help can make the mountain manageable.

With a Keystone Cougar Roar,

Mrs. Connie S. Timashenka

Keystone's Homeless Liaison

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