

**Indiana Education for Homeless Children & Youth (INEHCY)**  
**McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program**

## **Hurricane Resources—Student Rights**

Many students from the East Coast and the Bahamas displaced by hurricane Dorian are seeking refuge in other states. State departments of education and local school districts are faced with enrolling these students and providing services. This process will be critical to children and youth whose lives have been disrupted by the hurricane. Attending school will restore a sense of normalcy while offering a critical source of stability and support. However, educating these students is a developing process and our partners in homeless education (National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, National Center on Homeless Education, National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty and School House Connection) will be continuing to provide you with updates and information. The purpose of this memo is to provide initial guidance about serving the educational needs of storm victims. [Educational Needs of Students Displaced by Disasters-INEHCY.pdf](#)

### **Defining “Homelessness” Under the McKinney-Vento Act**

Storm victims generally fit the definition of “homeless” under the McKinney-Vento Act, which includes those who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The Act further specifies that the following students should be considered homeless if they are in one of the following living situations:

- sharing the housing of others due to a loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative accommodations;
- emergency or transitional shelters;
- abandoned in hospitals;
- 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;
- cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar setting.

**Enrolling New Students:** Children and youth meeting the above criteria should be immediately enrolled in the school district where they currently reside. They do not need to provide birth

certificates, school records, immunization records, proof of guardianship, or proof of residency to enroll in school. Given the lack of telephone services at their former schools and the potential permanent loss of school records, schools should begin new student files and seek to make appropriate placements based on information gathered from parents and students.

States that have imposed time limits on the collection of records should make exceptions for storm victims. It could be weeks and perhaps months before governmental agencies possessing birth certificates, proof of guardianship, and academic records are fully functioning and able to respond to request for documents. Further, when they do resume business, they will be overwhelmed with requests and possibly distracted by the need to rebuild their internal infrastructures. Therefore, school districts and states should be vigilant in ensuring that their state-established records timelines do not lead to barriers to enrollment and attendance that are prohibited under the McKinney-Vento Act (record request timeline: 30-45days).

Finally, schools and districts should be aware that the responsibility for obtaining records does not solely fall on families. McKinney-Vento requires new schools to request academic records while old schools must transfer those records. The law further states that school district homeless liaisons must assist families in obtaining necessary immunizations.

**Monitoring Residential Movement:** Some storm victims may move frequently before finally finding a place to call home. Some may bounce between the homes of family members and friends. Others may be living in shelters provided by storm assistance efforts. As a result, their placements may continue to change as organizers are able to make incrementally better arrangements. The McKinney-Vento Act provides school stability by allowing homeless students to continue attending the same school, despite residential moves, if it is feasible for them to do so and desired by their parents or guardians. School transfers are detrimental to academic, social, and emotional well-being, and should be avoided to the greatest extent possible.

**Transportation:** If the district provides transportation for non-homeless students, it must also provide transportation for homeless students. If children and youth move within an area, they should receive school bus service to their schools of origin.

**School Meals:** Under the Child Nutrition and WIC Reauthorization Act of 2004, if student is identified as homeless by the districts homeless liaison, you are automatically eligible for free school meals.

**Crisis-Related Services:** Students may demonstrate great needs for mental health counseling. They may also require essential material items such as clothing, school supplies, books, and back packs. Although it is permissible to use McKinney-Vento funds for these purposes, more substantial resources may be available from other sources. Homeless

Education liaisons should contact government relief agencies and charitable organizations to learn if they have available funds or resources.

## Other School Services

Homeless students are eligible for normal protocol to receive bilingual education services and special education, or any other programs offered by the local school district for which the homeless child or youth is otherwise eligible. Homeless children also should receive priority in pre-school placement.

**Segregation:** Young people affected by the storm live with constant reminders of tragedy that they are still in the process of enduring. They may be waking up on cots in temporary shelters and remaining in those same spaces all day long. School is a time to escape these situations and be a normal kid. Shelter classrooms would deprive them of this vital component in improving their mental health. Thus, it is important for school districts to remember McKinney-Vento's prohibition against segregated educational facilities—such provisions are of great importance to those students affected by Hurricane Harvey & Irma.

**Funding:** Title 1 has a particular responsibility to serve homeless students in both Title 1 and non-Title 1 schools. Title 1 Directors in districts integrating large numbers of displaced students may need to increase the amount of their district's homeless Title I set-aside. Additional efforts are being made to secure additional federal resources such as—NCHE, NAEHCY, and School House Connection will post updates on their websites.

**Sharing Information:** Please share this information with relevant parties, including state Department of Homeland security -- emergency management, Department of Child Services, Mental Health services, Family & Social Services Administration, Department of Transportation, School District Personnel, FEMA and relief organizations, service workers, and affected families.

**State and School District Policies:** Indiana Education for Homeless Children & Youth has provided guidance to school districts with resources through memo & resources posted on INEHCY website in relation to hurricane Harvey & Irma's victims. Indiana Education for Homeless Children & Youth and school districts have been making commendable efforts to reach beyond federal requirements. Policies have addressed issues such as grief counseling, additional trainings for school staff members, and cross-state teacher certification courses by providing access to McKinney-Vento Academy. Samples of those policies are posted on INEHCY website: <https://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/indiana-education-homeless-children-youth-inehcy>

## Resource Information

### Indiana Education for Homeless Children & Youth

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### US Student Records:

#### State Websites for Student Record Requests – Student Location List

- Florida Department of Education  
<http://www.fldoe.org/> - (850) 245-0505
- Georgia Department of Education  
<https://www.gadoe.org> - (800) 311-3627
- North Carolina Department of Education  
<http://www.ncpublicschools.org/> - (919) 807-3300
- South Carolina Department of Education  
<https://ed.sc.gov/> - (803) 734-8500
- Virginia Department of Education  
<http://www.doe.virginia.gov/> - (800) 292-3820

School Safety: Stephen Balko [sbalko@doe.in.gov](mailto:sbalko@doe.in.gov) (317)-232-4914

School Transportation: Michael A. LaRocco [mlarocco@doe.in.gov](mailto:mlarocco@doe.in.gov) (317)-232-0891

School Health: Jolene Bracale [jbracale@doe.in.gov](mailto:jbracale@doe.in.gov) (317)-232-0541

EL & Migrant: Valerie Beard [vbeard@doe.in.gov](mailto:vbeard@doe.in.gov) (317)-232-0558

School Nutrition: Julie Sutton [jsutton@doe.in.gov](mailto:jsutton@doe.in.gov) (317)-232-0845

**National Resources: NCHE, NAEHCY, NLCHP and School House Connection will continue to keep you updated on any developments. To learn more, please refer to the following:**

- National Center on Homeless Education (NCHE)
  - 1-800-308-2145 [www.serve.org/nche](http://www.serve.org/nche)
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth (NAEHCY)
  - 202-364-7 [www.naehcy.org](http://www.naehcy.org)
- School House Connection
  - 202-364-7392 [www.schoolhouseconnection.org](http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org)