

## Indiana Education for Homeless Children & Youth (INEHCY)

### McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program

#### Determining Best Interest School of Origin

#### A Checklist for Local Education Agency Liaison

Local liaisons can play an instrumental role in assisting homeless parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth in selecting the school that will best meet the student's needs. The local liaison should:

- Ensure that homeless parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth understand the school selection options;
- Reinforce the importance of school stability and educational continuity; and
- Discuss with the homeless parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth their unique circumstances, and assist them in making the most appropriate choice.

**Consider the following questions when determining the best interest of each student:**

1. How permanent does the family's current living arrangement appear to be?
2. How many schools has the student attended over the past few years? This year? How have past school transfers impacted the student?
3. How deep are the child's or youth's ties to his or her current school?
4. How anxious is the child or youth about an upcoming or recent move?
5. How strong is the child academically?
6. Describe the nature, quality, and duration of the student's relationships in the current school. Specifically consider whether the student has a meaningful and supportive relationship with an adult at the school of origin. Consider where the student's sibling(s) attend school, if applicable.
7. How do the programs and activities at the local school compare to those at the school of origin?
8. Does one school have programs and activities that address the unique needs or interests of the student that the other school does not have?

9. Would the timing of the school transfer coincide with a logical juncture, such as after testing, after an event significant to the child or youth, or at the end of the school year?
10. How would the length of the commute to and from the school of origin impact the child's or youth's education?
11. Are there any safety issues to consider?
12. What other factors did the team consider when making the best interest decision?

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Once the local liaison and the parents, guardians, or youth discuss these questions, they should determine which school would be in the student's best interest. Local liaisons may wish to use the checklist entitled *School Selection: A Checklist for Decision-making*, available on page 3, to help guide the conversation.

**LOCAL EDUCATIONAL AGENCY REQUIREMENTS (42 U.S.C. 11432) -**

- A. **IN GENERAL-** The local educational agency serving each child or youth to be assisted under this subtitle shall, according to the child's or youth's best interest--
  - (i) Continue the child's or youth's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness--
    - 1) in any case in which a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; and during summer;
    - 2) For the remainder of the academic year, if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year; or during summer.
  - (ii) enroll the child or youth in any public school that nonhomeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.
- B. **BEST INTEREST--** In determining the best interest of the child or youth under subparagraph (A), the local educational agency shall—
  - i. presume that keeping the child or youth in the school of origin is in the child's or youth's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth;
  - ii. consider student-centered factors related to the child's or youth's best interest, including factors related to the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety of homeless children and youth, giving priority to the request of the child's or youth's parent or guardian or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth;
  - iii. if, after conducting the best interest determination based on consideration of the presumption in clause (i) and the student-centered factors in clause (ii), the local educational agency determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth, provide the child's or youth's parent or guardian or the unaccompanied youth with a

written explanation of the reasons for its determination, in a manner and form understandable to such parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth, including information regarding the right to appeal under subparagraph (E); and

- iv. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, ensure that the local educational agency liaison designated under paragraph (1)(J)(ii) assists in placement or enrollment decisions under this subparagraph, gives priority to the views of such unaccompanied youth.

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## **Every Student Succeed Act Guidance**

**ENROLLMENT:** By law, Indiana schools **must immediately enroll** homeless students in school. Enrollment is defined by law as attending classes and participating fully in school activities. Therefore, students without housing must be allowed – without any delay – to attend classes and to participate in activities, including sports.

**Transportation:**

To eliminate barriers to the retention of students, districts must provide transportation to and from the school of origin. The transportation provision is now required to be upheld even when the family secures permanent housing during the year. If the student is staying in the same district, that district must provide or arrange transportation to the school of origin. If crossing district lines, both districts will determine how to divide the responsibility and share the cost, or they will share the cost equally. Districts must also provide students in a homeless situation with transportation services for extracurricular activities comparable to those provided to other students.

**School of Origin ESSA Transportation Guidance:**

- Transportation must be provided to and from the school of origin at the request of the parent or guardian, or, in the case of an unaccompanied youth, at the request of the local liaison
- Based on the amended definition of *school of origin* under ESSA, school of origin transportation rights extend to public preschools and receiving schools

ESSA removed the word “homeless” from references to school of origin transportation, resulting in transportation for the remainder of the academic year for formerly homeless students who have become permanently housed.



Remaining in the Same School (School of Origin) Considerations		Local School Consideration (transferring to a New School)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Continuity of instruction</b> The student would be served best at the school of origin due to circumstances that look to his or her past.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Continuity of instruction</b> The student would be served best due to circumstances that look to his or her future.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Age and grade placement of the student</b> Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has been in this environment for an extended period of time.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Age and grade placement of the student</b> Maintaining friends and contacts with peers in the school of origin is not particularly critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has attended the school of origin for only a brief time.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Academic strength</b> The student's academic performance is weak, and the student would fall further behind if he/she transferred to another school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Academic strength</b> The student's academic performance is strong and at grade level, and the student likely would recover academically from a school transfer.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Social and emotional state</b> The child is suffering from the effects of mobility, has developed strong ties to the current school, does not want to leave, or involved in school related or extra-curricular activities.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Social and emotional state</b> The child seems to be coping adequately with mobility, does not feel strong ties to the current school, does not mind transferring to another school, or is not involved in school related or extra-curricular activities.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education</b> The advantages of continuing to attend the school of origin outweigh any potential disadvantages presented by the length of the commute.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education</b> A shorter commute may help the student's concentration, attitude, or readiness for school. The local school can meet all of the necessary educational and special needs of the student.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Personal safety of the student</b> The school of origin has advantages for the safety of the student.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Personal safety of the student</b> The local school has advantages for the safety of the student.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Student's need for special instruction</b> The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the school of origin.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Student's need for special instruction</b> The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services, can be met better at the local attendance area school.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location</b> The student's current living situation is outside of the school of origin's attendance zone, but his/her living situation or location continues to be uncertain. The student will benefit from the continuity offered by continuing to attend the school of origin.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location</b> The student's current living situation appears stable and unlikely to change suddenly; the student will benefit from developing relationships with school peers who live in his or her local community.
<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Academic Performance Ranking</b> The school is in program improvement, but the student is connected (academically or socially) to the school, which outweighs transferring to a new school or higher performing school.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<b>Academic Performance Ranking</b> The school of origin is in Program Improvement and the new potential school will meet the educational needs of the student. The new school can provide more academic support services and greater opportunities than the school of origin.



## Best Interest Determination Worksheet

### Transportation Plan

Student Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Identify key factors relevant to the team’s decision: \_\_\_\_\_

<input type="checkbox"/> <b>The student will remain in the school of origin.</b>	<p>Transportation will be provided by:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p> <p>Responsible party or parties for additional transportation costs:</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>
<input type="checkbox"/> <b>The student will be enrolled in the resident school.</b>	<p>Enrollment in the resident school must take place without interruption.</p> <p>The above-named student will be enrolled in _____ school in the _____ school district on _____.(Date)</p> <p>The person responsible for enrolling the student in the resident school is _____</p> <p>_____</p>



Indiana Education for Homeless Children & Youth ESSA Point of Contact is Deepali Jani. Deepali Jani is the Indiana Department of Education’s state homeless education coordinator. She is available to assist with homeless student issues throughout the year. **Deepali can be reached at [djani@doe.in.gov](mailto:djani@doe.in.gov) or Office-(317) 233-3372 Cell-(317)460-1340 text/direct.**

By affixing their signatures below, the homeless liaison for each Local Education Agency (LEA) agree they have collaborated and reviewed the above bulleted information to determine the best interests of Homeless Children & Youth, \_\_\_\_\_ (DOB \_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_/\_\_\_\_), on the \_\_\_\_ day of \_\_\_\_\_, 20\_\_\_\_.

The youth will be enrolled in \_\_\_\_\_  
School Corporation with transportation provided per ESSA and/or Indiana Code 20-27-12.

<b>Printed Name of Liaison:</b> _____
<b>Signature of Liaison:</b> _____ <b>Date:</b> _____
<b>School Corporation Name, Address &amp; Phone Number:</b>

**Deepali Jani**

*McKinney-Vento Homeless Education State Coordinator*

**Indiana Department of Education**

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