

## IF I AM HOMELESS, WHAT DOCUMENTS DO I NEED TO ENROLL MY CHILD?

Typically, you will need the documents listed below. If you do not have these documents, your child *cannot* be denied entry into school. The school must help you obtain any necessary documents for enrollment.

- Birth certificate
- Immunization records
- School records

## CAN MY CHILD RIDE THE SCHOOL BUS?

You cannot be denied access to the school that's in your child's best interest because of lack of transportation. The school must arrange transportation for your child.

## WHAT ABOUT SCHOOL LUNCH?

Students who are considered homeless automatically qualify to participate in the free breakfast and lunch programs.

## WHAT ELSE CAN I DO TO HELP MY CHILD DURING THIS TIME?

School districts often have special services available to all students that may benefit your child. Be sure to ask about tutoring and mentoring programs, pre-school, special education programs, before and after school programs, summer school, programs to help children learn English, and programs for gifted students. Your district may also be able to help with basic school supplies and other helpful resources.

## WHO CAN I CALL WITH QUESTIONS?

Each school district has a homeless education liaison. Contact your local district administration office or your school principal.

The South Dakota Department of Education also has a statewide coordinator. Call (605) 773-3134 and ask for the homeless education liaison.

[www.doe.sd.gov](http://www.doe.sd.gov)



# Know Your Rights

## McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act



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b e l i e v e



Office of Educational Services & Support  
700 Governors Drive Pierre, SD 57501  
605.773.3134

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Children who are considered homeless have the same rights as any other school children. This brochure answers some common questions that families who are in transition may have.

## HOW DO I KNOW IF I'M CONSIDERED HOMELESS?

Federal law guarantees school enrollment for any child who lacks permanent housing and lives in inadequate or temporary settings, including:

- Emergency or transitional shelters
- Motels, hotels or campgrounds
- Cars, parks, public places, bus or train stations or abandoned buildings
- Doubled up with relatives or friends
- In these conditions and is a migratory child or youth

## IF I AM HOMELESS, WHERE WILL MY CHILD GO TO SCHOOL?

As a homeless parent, you have the right to decide, along with your child's school, whether it is in your child's best interest to:

- Stay in the same school he or she attended before you became homeless (this is the "school of origin"); or
- Transfer to the school that is closest to your new location

## HOW IS "BEST INTEREST" DETERMINED?

The decision about which school your child attends should be based on several factors including:

- Any special needs your child may have
- Continuity of instruction
- Length of stay in your new location
- Time and distance to transport your child to and from school

## EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH LACKING FIXED, REGULAR AND ADEQUATE HOUSING

Your child has the same rights to school programs and services as all children, including:

- Go to school, no matter where you live or how long you have lived there. You must be given access to the same public education provided to other students.
- Enroll in school without giving a permanent address. Schools cannot require proof of residency that might prevent or delay school enrollment.
- Continue in the school attended before you became homeless, if that is your choice, it is feasible, and in the best interest of the child. The school district's education liaison must assist you, if needed, and offer you the right to appeal a decision regarding the choice of school should it go against your wishes.
- Enroll and attend classes while the school arranges for the transfer of school and immunization records or other documents required for enrollment.
- Enroll and attend classes in the school of your choice even while the school and you try to resolve a dispute over enrollment. The district must provide you with a written explanation if a placement dispute occurs and inform you that you have the right to appeal.

- Receive the same special programs and services, if needed, as provided to all other students. These programs could be before and after school programs, pre-school programs, special education, gifted and talented programs, career and technology education, etc.
- Automatically participate in free breakfast and lunch programs.
- Receive transportation to the school and school programs you attended before you became homeless (or the school you last attended).
- Attend a school and participate in school programs with students who are not homeless. Students cannot be separated from the regular school program because they are homeless.

\* Unaccompanied youth lacking fixed, regular, and adequate housing have these same rights.

