

State Coordinators' Handbook

Section L. When Disaster Strikes: What State Coordinators Need to Know and Do

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Section L. When Disaster Strikes: What State Coordinators Need to Know and Do

L.1 The Challenges

When disaster strikes a community, the profound impact on all of its citizens can be overwhelming and can create an urgent need for a variety of comprehensive support systems to spring into action. Relief agencies are typically focused on providing the emergency assistance needed to manage the immediate trauma, including food, clothing, shelter, and safety. In the wake of a disaster, relief agencies do not always recognize the benefits of the school setting for children of displaced families as a top priority, yet it is often the school that provides safety and stability.

Unfortunately, the challenges that schools face in their efforts to provide the much-needed safety and stability are numerous, often driven by circumstances outside of the control of school district personnel to address or alleviate. In many cases, local education agencies (LEAs) receiving large numbers of displaced students due to disaster do not have the capacity to identify, enroll, and serve eligible students. Physical damage to infrastructure may have destroyed internal technology capacity to access needed data. School transportation departments may be unprepared for large numbers of displaced children and youth. Families already identified as homeless may have moved to temporary housing outside of the school district, or roads may be obstructed such that transportation to school of origin may no longer be possible. In some cases, schools may be destroyed, or damaged to the degree that infrastructure cannot support a normal school experience. It is possible that LEA and/or school staff members may have experienced their own trauma or losses, leading to reduced human supports in the school setting.

During disaster, and in its immediate aftermath, displaced families may experience any number of difficulties, including serious injuries, loss of loved ones and loss of belongings, anxiety, and fear of separation. They may be traumatized by the event to the extent that they do not recognize the potential safety and stability that schools may be able to provide. Many displaced families may have never considered that they could become homeless and may be unaware of the McKinney-Vento Act and the services available to them. Families may not

realize that they fit the McKinney-Vento definition. Furthermore, some scenarios of temporary housing are complex; eligibility determinations may become difficult as families sometimes stay in hotels while their homes are being rebuilt. LEAs may resist providing services for an extended time period after the disaster even though families are still in temporary housing.

Another set of challenges relates to the pressing need for immediate collaboration and coordinated community activity during a disaster. Relationships with community-based relief agencies may not be strong enough to support the sharing of needed information. Even in school districts with active interagency networks, a disaster can interrupt or even completely disable the communication infrastructure needed for the sharing of critical information and the coordination of response activity. A most basic barrier may be the lack of reciprocal knowledge and understanding of agency roles, responsibilities, and services/resources provided. LEAs may not be familiar with emergency management agencies (EMAs) and resources they provide; EMA staff may not be familiar with McKinney-Vento rights. Unfortunately, a lack of mutual knowledge between LEAs and the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) and other relief agency resources may limit swift and effective communication between schools and relief agency staff. Additionally, EMAs may not prioritize educational continuity, and/or they may not be able to meet with homeless education staff while addressing basic needs during and immediately after a disaster.

Additional challenges may result from ongoing capacity issues unrelated to a disaster. For example, the local homeless education liaison (referred to subsequently as the *local liaison*) may be new to the position and lack a full understanding of McKinney-Vento requirements, or the local liaison may have insufficient time assigned to McKinney-Vento responsibilities, limiting time available for effective collaboration with community partners and relief agency staff. In some cases, LEA administrators may not have adequate knowledge or understanding of McKinney-Vento, which may result in confusion about what services/supports are allowed and what is required by the McKinney-Vento Act.

L.2 The Goals

Developed by a work group of State Coordinators with first-hand experience, this document is offered to provide State Coordinators with information and resources to engage in developing a statewide disaster response plan specific to educational continuity for children and youth displaced by disasters, and to support local liaisons in collaborative planning for effective response to the educational needs of children and youth in their school communities when disaster strikes. In order to optimize services and support, State Coordinators are encouraged to develop a comprehensive plan, along with specific tools and processes, to guide local liaisons and other stakeholders in each community in addressing the educational needs of students displaced by disaster. The plan should be developed collaboratively with representatives from key role groups, including other state educational agency (SEA) programs (e.g., student services, school health, and school transportation), state agencies, local liaisons, school principals, and district administrators, as well as community-based agencies that serve homeless families. The planning process should also include representatives from disaster relief agencies that are active in the community and/or state.

With a view toward continuity in the education of students impacted by disaster, the following goals are suggested for use in the development of an effective disaster response plan:

Goal 1 - Children and youth made homeless by disaster are able to return as soon as possible to the normalcy afforded by stable schooling.

- A. Families and youth made homeless by disaster are made aware of and understand their educational rights.
- B. Local school districts are prepared to address both the academic and the trauma needs of children and youth impacted by disaster.

Goal 2 - Local school districts are prepared to collaborate with other agencies to implement McKinney-Vento Act rights and services for children and youth impacted by disasters.

- A. Local liaisons have the information and resources they need to ensure appropriate connections and linkages with key agencies in support of educational stability for children and youth made homeless by disaster.
- B. School districts are prepared to play a role in linking families and youth made homeless by disaster with community services.
- C. Emergency management agencies support educational continuity for children and youth made homeless due to disaster.

Goal 3 - State agencies, SEAs, and LEAs have mechanisms in place to share appropriate data so that children and youth made homeless by disaster are appropriately coded, counted, and provided with immediate supports.

Goal 4 - Legislators, granting agencies, and other funders understand the need to provide financial support for the educational needs of children and youth made homeless by disaster.

State Coordinators are urged to use these goals in discussions with key stakeholders and partners toward the development of a comprehensive statewide approach to enabling local communities to plan for continuity in the education of students impacted by disaster. Appendix L.1 Goals and Strategies for State-Level Support for McKinney-Vento Services for Students Displaced by Disasters provides a detailed description of potential challenges relative to each of the preceding four goals, along with suggested strategies, activities, and good practices for consideration during the planning process. It should be noted that strong collaboration between school personnel and relief agency staff is imperative to ensure that the educational needs of displaced children and youth are considered essential in planning for disaster relief, and in assessing needs in the immediate aftermath of disaster.

Potential solutions to the challenges discussed earlier lie in effective and timely communication, cross-agency reciprocal education efforts, and collaborative efforts to develop a solid plan for disaster response. A comprehensive statewide plan can provide the framework for local community plans, in which McKinney-Vento experts play an active role.

L.3 Recommendations

In reference to the goals and potential challenges discussed above, the following recommendations are offered here to guide discussion and advance planning as State Coordinators work to prepare for a disaster in their school communities. Please note that these recommendations are in addition to, and in support of, the Strategies/Activities/Good Practices section of Appendix L.1 Goals and Strategies for State Level Support for McKinney-Vento Services for Students Displaced by Disasters.

1. Be prepared to provide quick training, critical information, and support to key role groups.
 - Establish a work group of local liaisons to engage in local planning; develop guidance and tools for distribution to all liaisons so that all LEAs are prepared in the event disaster strikes.
 - Ensure that schools are following the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act by reminding the local liaisons to work with schools regarding the enrollment of students made homeless due to disaster.
 - Explore ways that McKinney-Vento state level activity funds may be provided to LEAs to enroll and serve children and youth made homeless by a disaster.
 - Ensure students made homeless by disaster are coded in database systems as McKinney-Vento eligible and flagged as displaced by disaster.
 - Centralize communication, making sure that all key organizations are part of the communication plan.
 - Recruit and train volunteers to assist with enrolling large numbers of displaced students.
 - Use Appendix L.1 of this document to guide discussions with key role groups.
 - Bookmark the [disaster page](#) of the NCHE website for quick access to sample tools, documents, and other materials to support planning for disaster response.
 - Include the topic of disaster planning as part of all liaison training events.
 - Include information for parents in district's parent handbook to let them know of resources available to them in the event of disaster.

2. Build an interagency network for the purposes of sharing information and resources in planning for collaborative response to disaster.
 - The State Coordinator should be part of the advance planning team at the state level. If not already connected, reach out to leaders in statewide relief agencies to build important relationships.
 - Connect with the Red Cross, the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), Salvation Army, National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster (VOAD), and other disaster relief agencies with state and local presence.
 - Identify available mental health resources and provide liaisons with lists of agencies and contacts.
 - Identify and communicate with other state-level educational program partners (e.g., student services, school health, school transportation, etc.) and other state agencies; make sure they are aware of the McKinney-Vento Act, the supports that are available in schools, and the importance of school stability for students made homeless by disaster.
 - Ask other state leaders whether a disaster task force with focus on children has been developed. If so, join the task force; if not, begin discussions with others about establishing one.
 - Ensure that a communication protocol or system is in place so that in the event of a disaster, state leaders can quickly and collaboratively determine the scope of the problem, such as number of families impacted, number of schools destroyed, infrastructure damage, and facilities needed for temporary relocation.
 - Network with State Coordinators in states impacted by disasters to learn about their preparations, procedures, and lessons learned.
 - Identify/establish a webpage for purposes of immediate communications among key individuals, groups, agencies, organizations; update website daily.
 - Develop an interactive map with hot links to available resources as part of disaster website.

L.4 Examples of Best and Promising Practices

State, local, and national groups have developed a variety of strategies in response to disaster and its aftermath. A critical element common to the strategies and best practices most often cited is that of effective communication and collaborative planning. The development and maintenance of community partnerships are at the core of any effective response to disaster in a school community. It should be noted that one of the most important elements of strong disaster response is the existence of a robust McKinney-Vento program of services and supports already in place prior to the onset of disaster. In the end, strong and effective McKinney-Vento programs are much better able to respond to disaster than are local programs that find themselves without McKinney-Vento supports already in place.

L.4.1 State Examples

McKinney-Vento State Coordinators in a number of states have experienced the devastating effects of natural disasters, including hurricanes, tornadoes, floods, and fires. Examples of planning tools and other materials are described here to showcase promising practices and lessons learned through working collaboratively at all levels to provide supports for students made homeless by disaster. The examples described here, and others, are available for review and downloading from the [NCHE disaster webpage](#).

The Florida Department of Education (FLDOE) has a number of practices in places for implementation when disasters strike. Given the frequency of hurricanes and other disasters in the area, the FLDOE is often challenged to respond quickly and effectively to the immediate needs of school-aged children and youth made homeless by disaster. The McKinney-Vento State Coordinator at FLDOE has collected a variety of materials specifically related to the full implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act in times of disaster for inclusion in this document. The FLDOE disaster resources, available on the NCHE disaster webpage, contain samples of essential communications between and among key role groups, including

- Sample emails to local liaisons with information about disaster-related data elements needed for accurate coding of homeless students and other items related to McKinney-Vento requirements;

- Timeline and agenda for conference calls;
- The FLDOE Disaster Phone Contact Tree, designating FLDOE phone contacts for all school districts, community colleges, and universities as part of its role in providing outreach and assistance to them during hurricane disasters;
- Sample letters from FLDOE leadership to district school superintendents pertaining to enrollment of students affected by disasters, testing, etc.;
- Directives to LEAs regarding enrollment in private schools;
- Disaster-related press releases and news updates; and
- A letter to U.S. Department of Education (USED) Secretary Arne Duncan requesting waivers.

Links to other organizations for information, referral, technical assistance, and potential collaboration are included in the FLDOE disaster resources. Of special note is the [K-20 Summary of Hurricane Recovery Efforts: The Department's Role in Emergency Management and Recovery Efforts](#), a one-page bulleted list of Response Team activities.

In response to flooding in Colorado in 2013, the Colorado Department of Education (CDE) implemented many of the activities listed above, resulting in the development of valuable tools and processes to address the immediate needs of children and youth impacted by natural disaster. The State Coordinator took the lead in developing a variety of communications, guidance documents and other tools and processes to strengthen CDE's response to disaster.

A one-page memorandum, [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act Expediting Identification for Displaced Students](#), provided suggestions for quick and effective identification of McKinney-Vento students. Suggestions included training front-line staff members at schools who can become "initial identifiers" to help families with completing the necessary forms and expedite the process of identification. Initial identifiers used the [McKinney-Vento Identification Template](#) to expedite the process. The development of a CDE regional leadership team, in strong collaboration with the McKinney-Vento program, provided support for connecting families and students with much-needed resources. Two PowerPoint presentations, [Serving Displaced and Homeless Students Under Title IA](#) and [Transportation Collaboration Efforts on the Colorado Flood 2013](#), may be of particular interest to State Coordinators interested in the inclusion of Title IA program support in the advance planning phase of disaster response. CDE

developed a set of flood resources, including a McKinney-Vento Q&A. CDE distributed these resources to key stakeholders at SEA and LEA levels, clarifying what services and supports are available through schools. A one-page document, [*McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act: Expediting Identification for Displaced Students*](#), offers critical information in a concise format and suggests a number of ideas for quick and effective identification of McKinney-Vento students. CDE developed a Disaster Distress Helpline and a dedicated webpage providing information on educational resources and state agency links. As in Florida, a collaborative approach to advance training for key role groups in disaster response was an essential part of the statewide plan in Colorado. Sample communications from the State Coordinator to local liaisons, superintendents, community agency staff and other key stakeholders are available for review on the NCHE disaster webpage.

L.4.2 Examples of Local Efforts

A sampling of efforts by local school districts to ensure the continuity of education for children and youth made homeless by disaster includes a guide developed by the Wisconsin Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD). This document, [*A Madison Metropolitan School District: Guide on Enrollment and Service Provision for Students Displaced by Hurricane Katrina*](#), details plans for MMSD response to the needs of displaced students who might seek to attend school in this district after Hurricane Katrina. The guide, posted on the NCHE disaster webpage, covers issues such as immediate enrollment, free and reduced lunch, and post-trauma intervention services. Also included is guidance specific to special education, English as a Second Language (ESL), and bilingual education students.

Frequent tornadoes in Kansas have required local homeless liaisons and other program administrators to think creatively in addressing the educational needs of students impacted by disaster. With support from the State Coordinator, many districts assign a new local liaison to address the needs of students displaced by the disaster. For example, when one small town suffered from a tornado, but the rest of the district did not, the district assigned homeless liaison duties to the principal in that small town. The district made this decision because the

principal was in a better position to know about the displaced families and their needs than district level staff.

Following the occurrence of three tornadoes in rapid succession in Greensburg, Kansas, in 2007, over 95% of the students became homeless. District administrators were able to get permission from the state to end the school year officially at the time of the tornado. Similarly, other districts were able to grant certain students who they could not reasonably transport the option to end the school year at the time the disaster struck, if the family and school agreed.

In the preparation for a disaster, Kansas LEAs are encouraged to establish a small group at the district level to receive and disseminate all state level communications. This ensures consistency in all outgoing communications to all involved, including the local liaison, any temporary liaisons designated because of disaster, the food and nutrition director, the transportation director, the federal programs director, the superintendent, etc. Relief agencies are encouraged to refer questions regarding education to the local liaison to ensure accuracy of information.

L.4.3 Federal information and resources

When disaster strikes a community, whether a natural or man-made event, a series of responses take place through coordinated efforts of local, state, and federal government agencies. These emergency responses include implementation of established procedures relative to communication protocols, organizational structures, terminology, and key resources to engage appropriate agencies in effective response at all levels of government. The Stafford Act (section 401) requires that all requests for a declaration by the President that a major disaster has occurred must be made by the Governor of the affected State. This request from the Governor is made through the regional FEMA office, and is followed by a preliminary damage assessment (PDA) conducted by state and federal officials. Once a declaration has been made that a major disaster or emergency exists, an array of federal programs may be activated to assist in state and local response and recovery efforts. FEMA maintains a webpage with a listing of federally declared disasters [here](#).

State Coordinators are encouraged to be attuned to the process of declaration of disaster, and in the unfortunate event of major disaster, be poised to communicate with the appropriate state lead agency/department for disasters, typically the EMA, or the Police/Homeland Security Department. Once FEMA and the State sign the FEMA-State agreement, it is the state's lead emergency agency that administers the process and schedules the Applicants' Briefing. It is also recommended that McKinney-Vento State Coordinators connect with their public health emergency managers and human services departments for planning purposes. Further information can be found in [FEMA's Guide to the Disaster Declaration Process and Federal Disaster Assistance](#), which also includes contact information for FEMA's ten regional offices. A critical concern for emergency planning, support for the nutritional needs of homeless children post-disaster, is provided by USDA's Food and Nutrition Service (FNS). Go to the [USDA's Food and Nutrition Disaster Assistance webpage](#) for additional information to support planning for emergency response. State Coordinators are also encouraged to use the closest Disaster Recovery Center (DRC) as a location through which to disseminate information and to connect with displaced families. This is also the source from which many impacted individuals can learn about assistance from FEMA Individual Assistance. Locations for FEMA's DRCs can be found [here](#).

Federal response to several disasters, including Hurricanes Katrina, Rita, and Sandy, has included a series of efforts announced by the U.S. Department of Education to assist state and local governments in addressing the needs of children and youth made homeless by these disastrous events. For example, in the aftermath of several hurricanes occurring along the Gulf Coast, the [Homeless Education Disaster Assistance program](#) (HEDA) was established in 2008 to provide financial assistance to local educational agencies (LEAs) whose enrollment of homeless students increased as a result of the natural disaster. HEDA funds supported activities that addressed the educational and related needs of homeless students consistent with the requirements of section 723(d) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The [Aid to Institutions of Higher Education program](#) (HERA) provided assistance to students who attended institutions of higher education located in areas affected by Hurricane Katrina and Hurricane Rita in 2006. The program also provided emergency assistance to institutions that were

damaged and assistance to institutions to help them defray the cost of enrolling displaced students from schools at which operations were disrupted by the hurricanes. Federal efforts in response to disaster also include guidance, waivers and modifications of statutory requirements to other programs, such as the Federal Student Financial Aid Program. State Coordinators are urged to remain alert to any guidance from the U.S. Department of Education in the event of disaster declaration, to be apprised of any changes in regulations as the federal government reviews legislation, policies, rules and regulations, and whether waivers for such requirements may be an option.

Interagency collaboration has been the hallmark of several efforts for disaster response at the federal level. The Children’s Working Group (CWG) was established in 2009 to provide leadership in FEMA efforts to form partnerships with federal and non-governmental agencies to ensure that the needs of children are integrated into all disaster planning, preparedness, response and recovery efforts initiated at the federal level. Key focus areas of the CWG include

- Supporting state and local efforts in evacuation, tracking, and reunification of families;
- Addressing the needs of children with disabilities during disasters;
- Support for case management and crisis counseling for children and families through the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services;
- Increasing public awareness efforts to education youth and families about emergency preparedness;
- Restoration and reimbursement of child care facilities;
- Integrating needs of children into planning and sheltering guidance, emergency management grants, and overall emergency planning; and
- Improving coordination across the federal government and with state, local, tribal and territorial partners in support of children’s disaster related needs.

The federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) Office of Human Services Emergency Preparedness and Response (OHSEPR), as part of Health and Human Services (HHS), developed a model, [*Children and Youth Task Force in Disasters*](#), to support state and local partners in building capacity to respond effectively to various types of disasters that may strike

a community. The model is based on lessons learned from four case studies following devastating natural disasters: The Joplin Child Care Task Force, The Hurricane Isaac Children’s Needs Task Force, The Superstorm Sandy New Jersey State-led Task Force, and The Superstorm Sandy New York Children’s Task Force. Based on these four examples, the model offers guidelines for the development of a state-driven process to assist state and local planners in creating a community task force that they can tailor to individual communities and to specific disasters. The model offers recommendations for states and local communities interested in launching their own task forces in efforts to coordinate an effective planning process for addressing the needs of children and youth during emergency preparedness, response and recovery, including starting in the preparedness phase to forge partnerships with local, state, and federal agencies prior to disaster striking the community. Strong partnerships require that the aforementioned agencies work together to share a common assessment of community needs and to develop an integrated strategy to address those needs.

The model offers a comprehensive list of potential partners, representing federal, state, and local agencies. The deliberate and strategic inclusion of school personnel who understand McKinney-Vento would certainly optimize outcomes for children and youth impacted by disaster.

The Office of Safe and Healthy Students (OSHS) in the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) developed a model *School Emergency Management Plan*, framed by four phases: Prevention-Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery. Key elements for each phase are as follows:

- Prevention-Mitigation: Implement (1) prevention actions, which decrease the likelihood that an event or crisis will occur, and (2) mitigation actions, which eliminate or reduce the loss of life or property damage for events that cannot be prevented (e.g., natural disasters).
- Preparedness: Coordinate with community partners on (1) developing emergency plans, policies, and protocols; (2) adopting the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS); and (3) training and exercising and revising the plan.

- Response: Implement the following steps: (1) activate the plan and the ICS, 2) activate the communication plans, (3) deploy resources, and (4) account for students and staff, and (5) activate family reunification.
- Recovery: To assist students, staff members, and their families in the healing process and to restore operations in schools, implement activities for (1) physical/structural recovery, (2) business/fiscal recovery, (3) academic recovery, and (4) psychological/emotional recovery.

The planning process involves the establishment of a team to determine goals and objectives based on the unique characteristics of the school community and the type of disaster. The six steps governing the process are:

- Form a collaborative planning team,
- Understand the situation,
- Determine goals and objectives,
- Develop a plan (identify courses of action),
- Prepare, review, and approve the plan, and
- Maintain plan implementation.

The [Readiness for Emergency Management for Schools \(REMS\) Technical Assistance Center](#) sponsored by OESE provides further information about school emergency management through publications, webinars, training, and other resources. State Coordinators are urged to support local liaisons in building the relationships with local emergency management staff needed to increase their knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Act and their understanding of the importance of educational stability in helping them to meet their goals.

For more information on good practices, and available resources, see Appendix L.2 – Annotated List of Available Resources for State Coordinators and Local Liaisons. State Coordinators are encouraged to review these materials, along with sample documents and other tools on the NCHS website.

L.5 Conclusion

Disasters are unpredictable and devastating, each with its own unique challenges and impacts on children, youth, and families. The question is not *if* a disaster will occur in a community, but *when* will a disaster occur. States, communities must be prepared to respond quickly and efficiently. Schools serve a critical role in ensuring safety, routine, and healing from trauma for children and youth who have been displaced by a disaster. State- and local-level McKinney-Vento programs are instrumental in identifying impacted children and youth and reconnecting them to school as quickly as possible.

To facilitate this quick response, State Coordinators should incorporate disaster preparedness in their work plans by

- Familiarizing themselves with all provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act to ensure that the requirements for implementation can be communicated clearly in disaster situations (particularly in regard to determining eligibility for McKinney-Vento services, school selection, and transportation),
- Familiarizing themselves with federal disaster resources and processes,
- Joining state emergency management and disaster response teams,
- Developing a process for using McKinney-Vento state-level activity funds to support the educational needs of children and youth displaced by disasters, and
- Including disaster preparedness in their liaison trainings.

By taking these preliminary steps, State Coordinators and local liaisons will be well-positioned to be proactive and efficient in the event that a disaster occurs.

Finally, it must be noted that disaster recovery can be an extensive and long-term process. Indeed, disaster-impacted children may need support specific to the disaster well into the following school year. For example, many school children in New Jersey were unable to return to their original school districts for more than a year following Hurricane Sandy. Thus, the issue of transporting children across district lines for many months, and possibly into the next school year, could likely be an issue that school districts should prepare for in advance.

Appendix L-1. Goals and Strategies for State-Level Support for McKinney-Vento Services for Students Displaced by Disasters

<p>Goal 1: Children and youth made homeless by disaster are able to return as soon as possible to the normalcy afforded by stable schooling.</p> <p>a. Families and youth made homeless by disaster are made aware of and understand their educational rights.</p> <p>b. Local school districts are prepared to address both the academic and the trauma needs of children impacted by disaster.</p>	
Challenges	Strategies/Activities/Good Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Families may move to temporary housing outside of the school district. • Families may not realize they fit the McKinney-Vento (MV) definition; families and youth may have never expected to be homeless and are unfamiliar with the law. • Information on rights and services may be unavailable during times of disaster due to limited communication or damaged communication infrastructure. • LEAs may not be in contact with homeless families and youth during or after a disaster. • LEA administrators may not understand how MV applies to families displaced by disaster. • Schools may be damaged or destroyed. • LEAs receiving large numbers of displaced students may not have the capacity to identify, enroll, and serve eligible students; instructional resources may be insufficient to meet needs of high numbers of homeless students enrolled from disaster impacted area. • LEAs may resist providing services for an extended time period after the disaster even though families are still in temporary housing; some scenarios of temporary housing are grey and complex for eligibility determination due to types of support a displaced family may receive. • Families, children, youth may be traumatized; children may experience fear and/or separation anxiety. • Other needs may take precedence over schooling. • Staff may not be equipped to assess trauma needs of children and youth; trauma staff may be spread thin in the area where disaster has occurred. 	<p><u>Before:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a liaison disaster work group to develop a plan for disaster response; disseminate the plan to all LEAs. • Develop sample tools to facilitate the implementation of the disaster plan, including guidance documents, sample memoranda, checklists, tip sheets, and a list for all community emergency contacts. • Include disaster response in all liaison trainings (e.g., eligibility scenarios that address families displaced by disaster). • Encourage the development of a small work group at the district level to receive all state level communication and provide consistent outgoing information to all program representatives involved. • Develop a disaster web page and include the link in parent handbooks so that parents will know that this will be a centralized information portal after a disaster when electricity and Internet capability are restored. • Identify state emergency resources and ensure they are aware of the McKinney-Vento program; identify local affiliates and provide this information to local liaisons so that they may participate in disaster planning activities and ensure that services to help children and youth return to school expeditiously are part of the plan. <p><u>During:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If communication is possible, provide short, targeted information to key role groups regarding rights and services for students displaced by disasters. • Communicate with other state leaders to figure out the scope of the problem, where and how many school districts are impacted, and where evacuees are likely to find safe haven. • Update the disaster web page on a continual basis. • Engage additional staff or volunteers to assist with enrolling large numbers of displaced students and linking them to community resources. • Ensure that schools use the disaster code when enrolling displaced

Goal 1: Children and youth made homeless by disaster are able to return as soon as possible to the normalcy afforded by stable schooling.

a. Families and youth made homeless by disaster are made aware of and understand their educational rights.

b. Local school districts are prepared to address both the academic and the trauma needs of children impacted by disaster.

Challenges	Strategies/Activities/Good Practices
	<p>students.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communicate with state-level administrators to ensure that transportation and food services can be expedited at the locations where displaced children and youth enroll. • Contact counselors and external agencies to be prepared to provide trauma-informed care to children, youth, and families. • Review budget for state-level activities to determine what funds can be provided to support the enrollment and continuous education for displaced students in impacted LEAs. <p><u>After:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide periodic updates to all LEAs that enrolled displaced students reminding them that there is no time limit on homelessness and offer assistance to help them review eligibility of students on a case-by-case basis. • Provide information and resources to local liaisons for ongoing support for the educational needs of students displaced by disasters. • Collect data on students displaced by the disaster to provide to governmental agencies or other possible funders. • Update the disaster web page with information and resources for parents. • Convene a work group of liaisons, educators, administrators, and service providers to review what went well related to meeting the educational need of displaced students and what policies and practices need to be implemented in the event of a future disaster.

Goal 2: Local school districts are prepared to collaborate with other agencies to implement McKinney-Vento Act rights and services for children and youth impacted by disasters.

a. Local homeless liaisons have the information and resources they need to ensure appropriate connections and linkages with key agencies in support of educational stability for children and youth made homeless by disaster.

b. School districts are prepared to play a role in linking families and youth made homeless by disaster with community services.

c. Emergency management agencies support educational continuity for children and youth made homeless due to disaster.

Challenges	Strategies/Activities/Good Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LEAs may not be familiar with the local service providers, including emergency management agencies, and the resources they provide. 	<p><u>Before:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and communicate with emergency management agencies at the

Goal 2: Local school districts are prepared to collaborate with other agencies to implement McKinney-Vento Act rights and services for children and youth impacted by disasters.

- a. Local homeless liaisons have the information and resources they need to ensure appropriate connections and linkages with key agencies in support of educational stability for children and youth made homeless by disaster.
- b. School districts are prepared to play a role in linking families and youth made homeless by disaster with community services.
- c. Emergency management agencies support educational continuity for children and youth made homeless due to disaster.

Challenges	Strategies/Activities/Good Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local service providers, including emergency management agencies, may not be familiar with McKinney-Vento rights and services. • Emergency management agencies may not prioritize educational continuity. • Emergency management agencies may be unable to meet with homeless education staff while addressing basic needs of victims. 	<p>state level to make sure they know about the McKinney-Vento Act and rights and resources made available to students made homeless by disaster.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop joint communications with state agencies regarding the McKinney-Vento Act, the supports that are available in schools, and the importance of stability in school for students made homeless by disaster, and request that they refer families with school-aged children impacted by disaster to the school district local homeless liaison. (Consider providing them NCHES's Connecting Schools and Displaced Students handbooks.) • Determine if a statewide disaster preparation task force exists, and if so, ask to join or provide information to the group on a periodic basis. • Develop a resource manual for local liaisons for state-level resources during an emergency. • Include a recommendation in liaison trainings that local liaisons develop a resource manual for local resources for children, youth, and families made homeless by disaster; remind them to update the manual annually. • Encourage local liaisons to contact emergency preparedness task forces or planners in the school system and in the community to provide information on the homeless education program and the importance of school continuity in the wake of disaster, and to become part of the emergency preparedness planning process. <p><u>During:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with state-level relief agencies to send short memos to local emergency service providers requesting that they refer impacted families with school-aged children the school district local liaison; provide contact information for the local liaison. • Contact local liaisons in impacted LEAs to ensure they have resource guides and contacts for making referrals to emergency services for children, youth, and families made homeless by disaster. <p><u>After:</u></p>

Goal 2: Local school districts are prepared to collaborate with other agencies to implement McKinney-Vento Act rights and services for children and youth impacted by disasters.

- a. Local homeless liaisons have the information and resources they need to ensure appropriate connections and linkages with key agencies in support of educational stability for children and youth made homeless by disaster.
- b. School districts are prepared to play a role in linking families and youth made homeless by disaster with community services.
- c. Emergency management agencies support educational continuity for children and youth made homeless due to disaster.

Challenges	Strategies/Activities/Good Practices
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convene a meeting of liaisons to determine what went well and what lessons could be learned for future disaster events, specific to linking families to services. • Meet with state-level emergency assistance providers to discuss what went well and what lessons could be learned for future disaster events, specific to linking families to services. • Work with state agencies to jointly develop policies and protocols based on lessons learned and disseminate to LEAs and local agencies.

Goal 3: State agencies, state educational agencies, and local educational agencies have mechanisms in place to share appropriate data so that children and youth made homeless by disaster are appropriately coded, counted, and provided with immediate supports.

Challenges	Strategies/Activities/Good Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • State or local database may not include appropriate data elements to ensure accurate data collection of students made homeless by disaster. • Physical damage to infrastructure may have destroyed internal technology capacity to access needed data. • Relationships with community based relief agencies may not be strong enough to support the sharing of needed information. • School districts may not have adequately prioritized collecting data on the number of students displaced by disasters because they are focused on meeting the immediate needs of their students and staff. • School district staff may be reluctant to share data on students impacted by the disaster due to their understanding of FERPA. 	<p><u>Before:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with state data staff to establish a uniform disaster code for use when LEAs enroll students displaced by disaster. • Review FERPA laws to determine what data can be shared. • Provide a joint memorandum with state-level emergency relief agencies to local agencies and shelter providers and local liaisons to clarify FERPA laws; encourage the development of a Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) between LEAs and local agencies before a disaster occurs. <p><u>During:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Send a memorandum to liaisons and enrollment staff to ensure that the residency and cause status of students made homeless by disaster is appropriately coded and tracked. <p><u>After:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review data collection and coding process for students made homeless by disaster and improve as needed. • Identify data-sharing challenges and develop policies and protocols to resolve; update disaster handbook as needed.

Goal 4: Legislators, granting agencies, and other funders understand the need to provide financial support for the educational needs of children and youth made homeless by disaster.

Challenges	Strategies/Activities/Good Practices
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Legislators and funders may not be aware of the extraordinary needs and expenses for serving children and youth made homeless by disaster. Legislators and funders may not be aware of the importance of educational continuity and stability for homeless children and youth. 	<p><u>Before:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify state and local philanthropic organizations that might be interested in providing support for children and youth made homeless by disaster; research their funding priorities and application process; develop a relationship and provide information packets on the importance of school continuity in times of crisis. Reinforce in liaison trainings the importance of keeping quality data on the numbers of children and youth made homeless by disaster and expenses incurred to meet their educational needs. <p><u>During:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Look for announcements of federal, state, or local funds directed to communities impacted by disaster; determine eligibility of LEAs to apply for funds to support the educational continuity of students and application process. Look for announcements of nonprofits and other funding agencies who will provide support for; determine eligibility of LEAs to apply for funds to support the educational continuity of impacted students and application process. <p><u>After:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review needs identified in impacted school districts by local liaisons and apply for funds or assist local liaison with applying for funds, as appropriate. Review quality of data collected by LEAs on students made homeless by disaster and determine changes that need to be made to the data collection system. Develop a report for legislators and policy makers on the extent to which the educational needs of students made homeless by disaster were met and make recommendations for policy changes.

Appendix L-2. Annotated List of Available Resources for State Coordinators and Local Liaisons

NCHE Resources

Connecting Schools and Displaced Students handbook series:

This handbook series was published in 2006 following the challenges experienced in many states as families relocated throughout the nation following the Gulf Coast Hurricanes of 2005. The handbooks explain how the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act applies to students displaced by disaster and how the Act can assist these students and their families. Each handbook in the series targets information either to parents of displaced children, relief agencies, or educators. The series includes the following handbooks:

- [After the Storm: Information for Parents on How Schools Can Help After Disasters \(A Handbook for Parents\)](#)
- [Disaster Relief Agencies and Schools: Working Together to Ensure School Enrollment and Success \(A Handbook for Local Liaisons and State Coordinators\)](#)
- [From the School Office to the Classroom: Strategies for Enrolling and Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [School as a Safety Net: Connecting Displaced Children With Educational and Support Services \(A Handbook for Relief Agency Staff and Volunteers\)](#)

The following brief highlight from one of the handbooks referenced above, *Disaster Relief Agencies and Schools: Working Together to Ensure School Enrollment and Success*, provides a concrete list of strategies for working successfully with relief agencies. Strategies are discussed, with tips provided for each, accompanied by a Checklist for Working Together:

- ✓ Communicate: Start building relationships with relief agencies now.
- ✓ Teach: Provide McKinney-Vento training and awareness materials to relief agency staff.
- ✓ Learn: Discuss with local relief agency staff how your program can complement and support theirs.
- ✓ Share: Make sure relief agencies know about doubled-up, unaccompanied and “hidden” homeless students.
- ✓ Strategize: Work with relief agencies to develop release forms so they can share information with you.
- ✓ Coordinate: Enlist a superintendent or school board member to help you gain access to local disaster planning committees.
- ✓ Cooperate: Discuss school enrollment procedures with relief agency staff.
- ✓ Plan for the future: Engage relief agencies in long-term planning.

This handbook, along with others in the series, will be of great value to local liaisons and other key community stakeholders as they come together to build a comprehensive proactive plan for keeping education in the equation before, during and after disaster strikes.

***Connecting Schools and Displaced Students* brief series:**

This series of briefs also addresses how the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act applies to students displaced by disaster and how the Act can assist these students and their families.

Each brief in the series targets information either to youth experiencing homelessness on their own, relief agencies, or school district administrators. The series includes the following briefs:

- [Meeting the Educational Needs of Students Displaced by Disasters: Youth on Their Own](#)
- [What Relief Agencies Should Know About the Educational Rights of Children Displaced by Disasters](#)
- [What School District Administrators Should Know About the Educational Rights of Children Displaced by Disasters](#)

[A McKinney-Vento Toolbox: Constructing a Robust and Rigorous Homeless Education Program, In Case of Disaster and Every Day](#)

This toolbox is designed to help school districts implement the McKinney-Vento Act fully, so they can address the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness on a daily basis and in times of disaster. The toolbox contains information and practical lessons learned and resources developed during the recovery process following the 2005 Gulf Coast hurricanes.

[In Their Own Words: Schools and Students Overcoming Adversity](#)

This NCHE publication provides readers with a window into the daily challenges and triumphs of the schools and students affected by August 2005's Hurricane Katrina. *In Their Own Words*, in large part, is a first-person account of the hurricane's effects on education on the Gulf Coast during the few weeks and months after landfall and since. It is the voices of the students and the school, district, and relief agency staff who were closest to the challenges that resulted from the hurricane.

Other Publications/Guides/Documents

[A National Report Card on Protecting Children During Disasters](#)

This July 2010 brief from Save the Children provides a state-by-state assessment on four measures of caring for children in the wake of a disaster: Does the state require licensed child care facilities to: 1) have a plan for evacuating kids in child care; 2) have a written plan to notify parents of an emergency and reunite them with their kids; and 3) have a written plan that accounts for kids with special needs; and 4) Does the state require all schools to have a disaster plan that accounts for multiple hazards?

[A Practical Guide for Crisis Response in our Schools](#)

This webpage includes links to all chapters of this valuable resource from the American Academy of Experts in Traumatic Stress. Relevant chapters include *Practical Suggestions for*

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State Coordinators' Handbook: When Disaster Strikes: What State Coordinators Need to Know and Do
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Assisting Children in the Aftermath of a Tragedy, Teacher Guidelines for Crisis Response, Parent Guidelines for Crisis Response, and Traumatic Stress: An Overview.

[After the Storm: A Guide to Help Children Cope With the Psychological Effects of a Hurricane](#)

This guide, published by 7-Dippity.com in the wake of the 2004 hurricane season that devastated Florida, provides information, activities, and coping strategies to help parents and children cope with their reactions and feelings resulting from a hurricane and its aftermath.

[FERPA Policy Guidance: Disclosure of Student Information Related to Emergencies and Disasters](#)

This guidance from the U.S. Department of Education, issued in June 2010, answers questions about the sharing of personally identifiable information from students' education records to outside parties when responding to emergencies, including natural or man-made disasters.

[Homeless Education Advocacy Manual: Disaster Edition](#)

This manual from the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty informs advocates and families concerned about the educational needs of children and youth displaced from their homes due to a disaster. It includes information about topics such as which students are considered homeless under federal law; methods of advocating for individual students; methods of advocating for system-wide change; securing immediate school enrollments; ensuring stable school placements; and accessing necessary and beneficial services such as transportation and academic assistance.

[Madison Metropolitan School District: Guide on Enrollment and Service Provision for Students Displaced by Hurricane Katrina](#)

This guide from the Madison Metropolitan School District (MMSD) explains how MMSD will respond to the needs of students displaced by Hurricane Katrina that wish to attend school within the district. The guide covers issues such as immediate enrollment, free and reduced lunch, post-trauma intervention services, and more.

[The National Disaster Recovery Framework](#) is a guide from FEMA that enables effective recovery support to disaster-impacted States, Tribes, Territorial and local jurisdictions. It provides a flexible structure that enables disaster recovery managers to operate in a unified and collaborative manner. It also focuses on how best to restore, redevelop and revitalize the health, social, economic, natural and environmental fabric of the community and build a more resilient Nation.

[Related Agencies/Websites](#)

[American Red Cross](#)

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This national organization with local chapters provides relief services to communities affected by disasters, including food, water, short-term shelter, counseling support, and assistance with family reunification.

[American School Counselors Association: Helping Children Cope with Natural Disasters](#)

This webpage provides tips for administrators, counselors, parents, and teachers, in helping children and youth cope with the devastation caused by a natural disaster.

[Center for Mental Health in Schools: Responding to a Crisis](#)

This website provides a variety of quick aids, resources, and materials for use in crisis prevention and response in schools.

[Coordinated Assistance Network \(CAN\)](#)

CAN is a network of seven charities that participate in community-led preparedness and response coalitions focusing on best practices to serve those in need. CAN partnered with FEMA to develop a web-based database to share information between agencies.

[Coping with Disasters](#)

This webpage from the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) offers suggestions for how to help young children deal with witnessing or being directly affected by the destruction of a natural disaster.

[DisasterAssistance.gov: The Nation's First Stop for Disaster Relief](#)

This U.S. government website enables citizens to locate and apply for disaster relief.

[Fairfax County Public Schools: Emergency Preparedness and Support](#)

This webpage from Fairfax County Public Schools details the district's emergency preparedness and response plans, which have been cited by the U.S. Department of Education and the U.S. Department of Homeland Security as national models.

[Federal Emergency Management Association \(FEMA\)](#)

FEMA's website provides disaster victims with information on how to access a variety of support services, including government benefits, hotlines for finding loved ones, and more.

[National Association of School Psychologists: School Safety and Crisis Resources](#)

This website provides a variety of resources dealing with crisis prevention, planning, and response. It addresses a variety of emergency situations, including school violence and natural disasters.

[National Voluntary Organizations Active in Disaster \(NVOAD\)](#)

NVOAD is a membership organization of approximately 40 disaster response agencies that coordinates the planning efforts of those agencies and serves as an information clearinghouse. There are state and regional VOADs, although not in every state.

[Office of Safe and Healthy Students: Emergency Planning](#)

This webpage from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Safe and Healthy Students is designed to be a one-stop shop that provides school leaders with information they need to plan for any emergency, including natural disasters, violent incidents and terrorist acts.

[Oregon School Boards Association \(OSBA\): Student Safety Center](#)

This webpage from the Oregon School Boards Association (OSBA) provides various checklists and resources related to emergency preparedness and response.

[Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools Technical Assistance Center](#)

The Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance (TA) Center supports grantees funded under the Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) discretionary grant program by providing emergency management resources, training, and publications. The Center also helps non-grantee local educational agencies (LEAs) and private schools with improving and strengthening their emergency management plans through the provision of resources, responses to technical assistance requests, and facilitation of emergency management for schools training events.

[Salvation Army](#)

A Christian church, founded in 1865 to advance the Christian religion, promote education, relieve poverty, and pursue other charitable works. Employees and volunteers work with programs that focus on health, education, social services and emergency disaster relief.