MCKINNEY-VENTO IN ACTION

A MCKINNEY-VENTO TOOLBOX: CONSTRUCTING A ROBUST AND RIGOROUS HOMELESS EDUCATION PROGRAM, IN CASE OF DISASTER AND EVERY DAY

AUTHORS
Carol Calfee, M.Ed.
Director of Federal Programs and Local Homeless Education Liaison
Santa Rosa District Schools, FL

Patricia Julianelle, J.D.
Program Specialist, NCHE
Pro Bono Counsel, NAEHCY

March 2007
The Daily Challenges and Triumphs of Students

U.S. Department of Education - Hurricane Help for Schools: Providing Assistance for Schools Serving Students Displaced by Hurricane Katrina
http://hurricanehelpforschools.gov/index.html

For more information on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Program, contact the U.S. Department of Education, Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs (SASA), Office of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

Phone: 202-260-0826
Website: http://www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/index.html

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) is a national resource center of research and information enabling communities to address the needs of children and their families and of unaccompanied youth in homeless situations.

NCHE is funded by the U.S. Department of Education and is housed at the SERVE Center at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro.
Phone: 800-308-2145
Website: http://www.serve.org/nche

Visit the NCHE website for information on In Their Own Words: School and Students Rising Above. Based on interviews with school staff, relief agency staff, and students, In Their Own Words provides a window into the daily challenges and triumphs of schools and students affected by Hurricane Katrina and shows the crucial role that schools and McKinney-Vento programs play in the healing and recovery of individual families and entire communities following disasters.

* The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the U.S. Department of Education, nor does mention of trade names, commercial products, or organizations imply endorsement by the U.S. Government.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The tools contained in this document are based on fifteen years of practice in implementing the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and come from state departments of education, school districts, State Coordinators for Homeless Education, local homeless education liaisons, community agencies, and national nonprofit organizations.

The authors wish to express particular gratitude to the following key contributors:

**Tim Stahlke**, Senior Program Officer of the Texas Homeless Education Office, for his vital contributions to this document from its inception to its final editing.

**Dianne Sepielli**, Coordinator, Homeless Education Program, Broward County Public Schools in Florida, for her ideas, feedback, editing, and energy.

**Dr. Patricia Popp**, State Coordinator for Virginia, for her sage comments and valuable resources.

**Christina Endres and Molly Chamberlin**, Indiana Department of Education, for their constructive criticism and contributions to the draft report.

Although it is impossible to recognize all the educators and organizations whose ideas, strategies, and tools appear within, the authors wish to highlight the following additional contributors:

Rich DeHart, Illinois State Coordinator, retired  
Melinda Dyer, Washington State Coordinator  
Barbara James, Texas State Coordinator  
Joanne Miro, Delaware State Coordinator  
Connie Thompson, Houston ISD, TX; Homeless Education Liaison  
Susan Underwood, former Arkansas State Coordinator  
Patsy Williams, Lafayette Parish, LA; Homeless Education Liaison  
Sheldon Winnick, Pennsylvania State Coordinator  
Arizona Department of Education  
Center for Mental Health in Schools of UCLA  
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)  
National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)  
National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP)  
National Volunteer Organizations Active in Disaster (NVOAD)  
Pennsylvania Department of Education  
Project HOPE, Virginia  
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)  
Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO)
INTRODUCTION

“If we have it right all the time, then we don’t have to worry about being unprepared for specific disaster situations.”
Senior Program Coordinator, Texas Homeless Education Office*

The nation’s public schools played a critical role in the response to the hurricanes of 2005, and they continue to contribute to the recovery of individual families and entire communities. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the staff charged with implementing it form the basis for this contribution.

Following Hurricane Katrina, the Secretary of Education, Margaret Spellings, acted immediately to contact impacted states to see what the U.S. Department of Education could do to support the enrollment of displaced students. The Department developed a Hurricane Help for Schools website (http://hurricanehelpforschools.gov/index.html) to provide quick responses to states asking for flexibility in operating school programs, as well as guidance and resources for states, districts, and schools, to identify helping agencies, organizations, places for donations, and federal aid for displaced and homeless students. One of the first resources the website identified was information on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Children and youth who lost their housing due to the hurricanes were eligible for McKinney-Vento services. This eligibility permitted their entry into schools and allowed schools to become a key to healing and recovery by enrolling displaced children with compassion and efficiency, providing parents with information and assistance, and supporting the mental, physical, and intellectual well-being of students and families on a daily basis.

Students who lose their housing due to other disasters, such as floods, tornadoes, fires, and mudslides, are also eligible for McKinney-Vento services. Since such disasters can occur with no warning, school districts must be prepared to respond efficiently to large numbers of homeless families and youth. Having a robust and rigorous McKinney-Vento program is a key element to a successful disaster response. Responding to a disaster is easier if the school district has in place strong policies and practices to enlist community support; to enroll and place students without documents; and to support basic needs, mental and physical health, and academic achievement. Rigorous McKinney-Vento programs allow school districts to serve all children and youth experiencing homelessness quickly and effectively.

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.

WHAT IS IN THE TOOLBOX?

This toolbox is meant to be exactly that: a package containing the basic tools necessary to construct a rigorous and robust McKinney-Vento program. It contains tools to assist in: (1) developing strong community collaborations, including disaster planning and mitigation; (2) implementing the McKinney-Vento Act, including disaster response (consisting of identification, immediate enrollment, meeting immediate academic and health needs, transportation, nutrition, and data management); and (3) promoting mental health and academic success, including disaster recovery.

The intent is not to focus on narrative or anecdotes, but to provide a collection of user-friendly tools: sample documents, templates, charts, checklists, etc. The toolbox also contains extensive lists of useful web links. Each link is accompanied by a detailed description of the information it provides.

WHO SHOULD USE THE TOOLBOX?

The toolbox should be used by school district local homeless education liaisons, district and school administrators, district federal program directors, and mental health personnel at all levels. It contains useful tools and information for personnel who are unfamiliar with the McKinney-Vento Act, as well as for the most experienced local liaisons.

The toolbox can also be used as a technical assistance and training tool by State Coordinators for Homeless Education; state administrators; state federal program directors; and mental health personnel at all levels. Appendix 21 is designed to assist State Coordinators in using this toolbox.

HOW DO WE USE IT?

It is not necessary or even advisable to read the entire toolbox from beginning to end. To help users develop their own course of study, the toolbox begins with a brief self-assessment. The substantive contents of the toolbox are modeled on the self-assessment, following the same order and offering hands-on tools to improve the school district’s program in each area of the assessment. The self-assessment scores will inform users as to where they should begin in the toolbox. For example, areas where the assessment reveals a less-developed program are good places to begin work, while areas where the user’s program is already functioning well may be lower priorities for improvement.
Since the goal of the exercise is to produce a robust and rigorous McKinney-Vento program, it is important for users to administer the self-assessment honestly and with a critical eye toward their programs. Each chapter of the toolbox concludes with a targeted self-assessment to assist the user in evaluating the district’s implementation of the tools and strategies contained in that chapter.

Of course, users interested in particular topics are welcome to go directly to the appropriate chapter, by consulting the table of contents or the topical index in Appendix 1.

**WHAT IF I AM FACING A DISASTER RIGHT NOW?**

The goal of the toolbox is to encourage school districts to utilize its tools as fully as possible prior to a disaster so that districts will be prepared and able to respond efficiently and effectively. However, for districts not entirely prepared for a disaster, Appendix 20 contains a Quick-Start Disaster Response Tool which provides a basic checklist to guide immediate responses. This tool can also help new local homeless education liaisons prioritize their efforts and quickly implement the basics of a strong McKinney-Vento program.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>THE MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• guarantees the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness to a free and appropriate public education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• requires a local homeless education liaison in every school district ensures:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• immediate enrollment</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• access to needed services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• school stability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• support for academic achievement</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For more on the McKinney-Vento Act, visit the NCHE website at http://www.serve.org/nche/m-v.php
## SELF-ASSESSMENT

**Does your district have a robust and rigorous McKinney-Vento program?**

School District Name: _____________________________________________________

Individual(s) Conducting Assessment: ________________________________________

Date of Review: ___________________________________________________________

Rank the following in order of their effectiveness within your McKinney Vento Program:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No evidence</td>
<td>In existence but not effective</td>
<td>Moderately successful</td>
<td>Successful but needs improvement</td>
<td>Strength of the program</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### I. Developing Strong Community Collaborations, Including Disaster Planning and Mitigation

A. Public, private, and community agencies are known to each other, communicating and engaged in interdisciplinary disaster planning. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

B. Public, private, and community services are coordinated, integrated, and delivered collaboratively. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

**TOTAL SCORE FOR SECTION I**

(Community Collaborations) _____/10

### II. Implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act, Including Disaster Response

A. Local liaison understands the rights of homeless children and youth, and district policies are in line with the McKinney-Vento Act to support the full, efficient and effective implementation of federal law. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

B. Local liaison has a full understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of homeless. Expedited identification strategies ensure that children and youth eligible for services are identified. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

C. Immediate enrollment strategies ensure that barriers to enrolling and remaining in school are eliminated. | 1 2 3 4 5 |

D. Strategies are implemented for placing students in appropriate classes without academic records and for obtaining complete school records. | 1 2 3 4 5 |
### III. Mental Health and Academic Success, Including Disaster Response

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Aggressive and timely strategies ensure full, productive participation in educational activities and include tactics to address physical and mental health needs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F.</td>
<td>Strategies, policies, and procedures address anticipated transportation barriers.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G.</td>
<td>Strategies, policies, and procedures are in place to expedite placement in school nutrition programs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H.</td>
<td>Policies and procedures are in place to manage data tracking and reporting of student outcomes effectively.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I.</td>
<td>The district utilizes the media in a positive way.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J.</td>
<td>Strategies, policies, and procedures are in place to deal with the coordination of donations.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL SCORE FOR SECTION II**
(Mental Health and Academic Success)______/25

---

### III. Mental Health and Academic Success, Including Disaster Response

<p>| | | | | | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A.</td>
<td>Strategies are in place to address the short- and long-term mental health and case management needs of students and families.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B.</td>
<td>Strategies, policies, and procedures are in place to deal with staff fatigue.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C.</td>
<td>Strategies are in place to address the short- and long-term academic needs of displaced students, including graduating seniors.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D.</td>
<td>Funding: Needed services are available and accessible to all in a variety of settings using a combination of public, private, community, and personal resources.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E.</td>
<td>Strategies, policies, and procedures are in place to address long-term recovery issues, including housing needs.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TOTAL SCORE FOR SECTION II**
(Implementation of McKinney-Vento)______/50
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

## I. DEVELOPING STRONG COMMUNITY COLLABORATIONS, INCLUDING DISASTER PLANNING AND MITIGATION

A. Public, private, and community agencies are known to each other, communicating, and engaged in interdisciplinary disaster planning.

1. Getting started: Identifying key players/stakeholders  
2. Getting a seat at the table: Joining community forums and inter-agency taskforces  
3. Setting a new table: Convening community forums and inter-agency taskforces  
4. Getting prepared: Designing a comprehensive disaster plan  

**Targeted Self-assessment:**  
Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

B. Public, private, and community services are coordinated, integrated, and delivered collaboratively.

1. Sharing information  
2. Developing memoranda of understanding  
3. Establishing robust communications systems  

**Targeted Self-assessment:**  
Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

## II. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT, INCLUDING DISASTER RESPONSE

A. Local liaison understands the rights of homeless children and youth, and district policies are in line with the McKinney-Vento Act, to support the full, efficient, and effective implementation of federal law.

1. Developing strong McKinney-Vento policies in school districts  
2. Developing additional policies specific to disaster situations  

**Targeted Self-assessment:**  
Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

B. Local liaison has a full understanding of the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of homeless and expedited identification strategies ensure that children and youth eligible for services are identified.

1. Understanding how to apply the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of homeless

**MCKINNEY-VENTO IN ACTION**
2. Increasing awareness of homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act in schools and the broader community

**Targeted Self-assessment:**
Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

C. Immediate enrollment strategies ensure that barriers to enrolling and remaining in school are eliminated.

1. Forms for use during the enrollment process
2. Talking to parents and youth: Timing of enrollment and school selection
3. Enrollment checklist
4. Dealing with overcrowding when receiving a large number of displaced students
5. Other enrollment tools

**Targeted Self-assessment:**
Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

D. Strategies are implemented for placing students in appropriate classes without academic records and for obtaining complete school records.

1. Tools for obtaining academic records
2. Placing students without records
3. Enrolling students with special needs
4. Strategies to help preserve records in cases of disasters

**Targeted Self-assessment:**
Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

E. Aggressive and timely strategies ensure full, productive participation in educational activities including tactics to address physical and mental health needs.

1. Obtaining health records and addressing physical health needs
2. Welcoming students and families into the school community and addressing immediate mental health needs
3. Preventing conflicts between new and previously attending students and serving all homeless children and youth
4. Ensuring participation in athletics
5. Contact list for students who have experienced a traumatic event

**Targeted Self-assessment:**
Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools
F. Strategies, policies, and procedures address anticipated transportation barriers.

    Targeted Self-assessment:
    Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

G. Strategies, policies, and procedures are in place to expedite placement in school nutrition programs.

    Targeted Self-assessment:
    Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

H. Policies and procedures are in place to manage data tracking and reporting of student outcomes.

    Targeted Self-assessment:
    Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

I. The District utilizes the media in a positive way.

    Targeted Self-assessment:
    Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

J. Strategies, policies, and procedures are in place to deal with the coordination of donations.

    Targeted Self-assessment:
    Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

III. MENTAL HEALTH AND ACADEMIC SUCCESS, INCLUDING DISASTER RECOVERY

A. Strategies are in place to address the short- and long-term mental health and case management needs of students and families.

    1. Assessing needs
    2. Planning to meet mental health needs
    3. Potential supplemental funding for mental health needs
    4. Hands-on resources for mental

    Targeted Self-assessment:
    Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

B. Strategies, policies, and procedures are in place to deal with staff fatigue.

    Targeted Self-assessment:
    Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools
C. Strategies are in place to address the short- and long-term academic needs of displaced students, including graduating seniors.

1. Collaborating with Title I
2. Ensuring that seniors can graduate
3. Supporting highly mobile students
4. Supporting young children
5. Supporting students with special needs

Targeted Self-assessment:
Evaluating The District’s Implementation Of The Chapter’s Tools.

D. Funding: Needed services are available and accessible to all in a variety of settings—using a combination of public, private, community, and personal resources

1. Grants available from the U.S. Department of Education
2. Grants from other federal sources
3. Funding available from community and private sources

Targeted Self-assessment
Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools

E. Strategies, policies, and procedures are in place to address the multiple issues of long-term recovery, including housing needs

1. General resources for families
2. Forming a long-term recovery committee

Targeted Self-assessment
Evaluating the District’s Implementation of the Chapter’s Tools
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Appendix</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Topical Index</td>
<td>124</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Comprehensive Community Stakeholders Chart</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Glossary of Key Terms and Acronyms in Disaster Planning, Response, and Recovery</td>
<td>139</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Sample Letter to a Collaborative Taskforce Invitee</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Determining Eligibility for Rights and Services under the McKinney-Vento Act</td>
<td>150</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Sample Enrollment Forms</td>
<td>157</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Questions for Discussing Enrollment Timing with Displaced Parents and Youth</td>
<td>164</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>School Selection: A Checklist for Decision Making</td>
<td>165</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Enrollment Checklist</td>
<td>166</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Prompt and Proper Placement: Enrolling Students Without Records</td>
<td>167</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Records Management Checklist</td>
<td>173</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Delaware Interscholastic Athletic Association Policies for Homeless Students</td>
<td>174</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Contact List for Students Who Have Experienced a Traumatic Event</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sample Transportation Forms</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Sample Free Meal Application Form</td>
<td>179</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Media Relations Tip Sheet</td>
<td>183</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Disaster Assessment and Referral Tool for Children and Adolescents</td>
<td>185</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Disaster Mental Health Plan Checklist</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Sample Case Management Form</td>
<td>189</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Quick-Start Disaster Response Tool</td>
<td>191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>State Coordinators’ Companion</td>
<td>193</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>