



National Center for  
Homeless Education

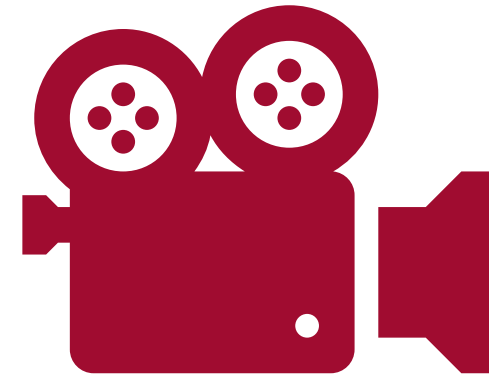
# McKinney-Vento Eligibility Determinations: Understanding Doubled-Up Living Arrangements

We'll begin momentarily. Feel free to say hello in the chat.

# Webinar Logistics

- This webinar is being recorded and will be posted to the NCHE website at <https://nche.ed.gov/>.
- The webinar recording and materials also will be sent to webinar attendees following the webinar.
- All attendees are muted.
- Attendees may turn on or disable closed captioning; please look for the “Live Transcript” button in your Zoom toolbar to enable them.
- Please use “Q&A” to submit questions.

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National Center for  
Homeless Education

# McKinney-Vento Eligibility Determinations: Understanding Doubled-Up Living Arrangements

Wednesday, April 22, 2026, 2:00 – 3:30 PM ET

*Presented NCHE Staff*

# About NCHE



The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) is the technical assistance (TA) center for the U.S. Department of Education's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program.

NCHE provides training and technical assistance (TA) to State Coordinators, local liaisons, community partners, parents, students, and other stakeholders to support the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Visit the NCHE website at  
<https://nche.ed.gov/>.

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# Meet Your Presenters

Leading us through  
today's session



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# Webinar Objectives

**By the end of this webinar, you will be able to**

- **apply the definition of homelessness** under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) to determine if doubled-up living arrangements meet eligibility criteria;
- **utilize strategic questioning techniques** to gather information necessary for eligibility determinations;
- **navigate complex scenarios** involving doubled-up living arrangements; and
- **document eligibility decisions** using statutory language, guidance, and case-specific factors.

# Webinar Agenda

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- Welcome and Session Overview
- Understanding Doubled-Up Under the McKinney-Vento Act
- Common Challenges and Recommendations
- Scenario-Based Walkthroughs
- Dispute Resolution and Documentation
- Resources and Next Steps



# What is your biggest challenge with making doubled-up eligibility determinations?

(Please share comments using the chat feature)

# Understanding Doubled-Up Within the McKinney-Vento Act

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# National Homeless Education Data



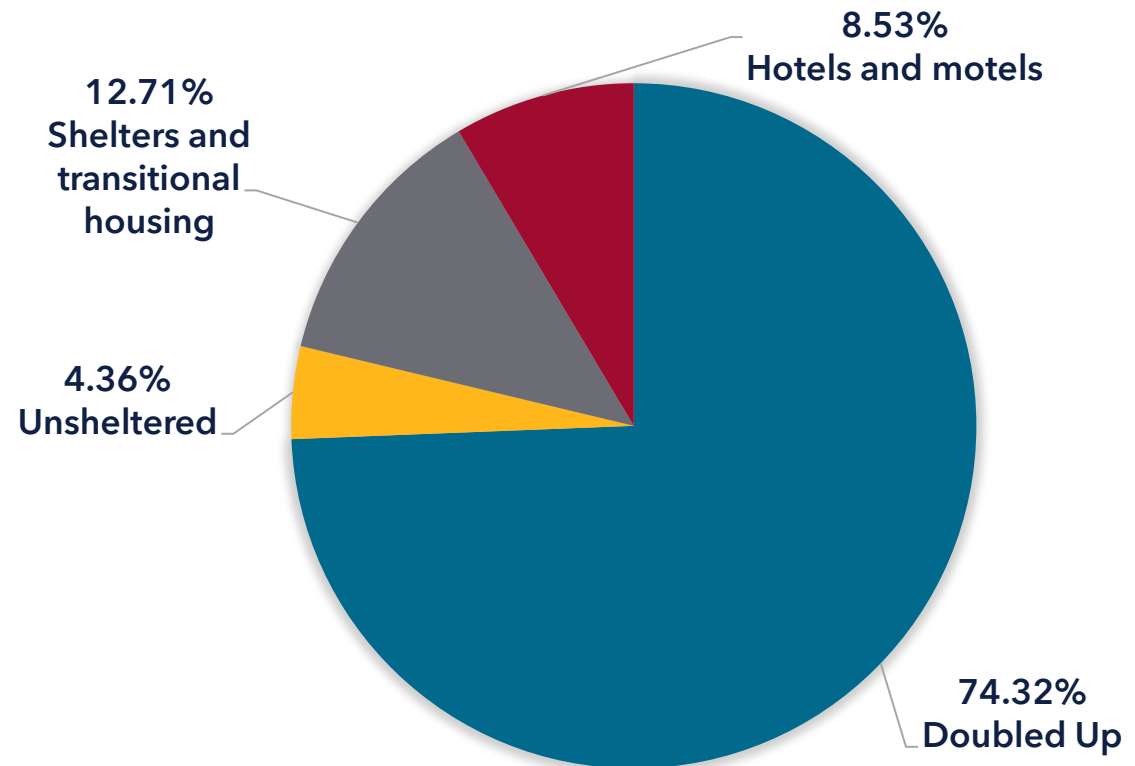
**1,548,191**

Children and youth experiencing homelessness were enrolled in U.S. public schools during the 2023-24 school year

**127,848**

of those students were unaccompanied youth

## Enrollment by Primary Nighttime Residence during 2023-24 School Year



# The Dynamics of Doubling Up

**Doubled-up arrangements often serve as temporary shelter, but may be unstable or unsafe**

- Staying in a shelter may not be an option
  - Not every community has a shelter
  - When shelters are present, they may be full or have stay limits
  - Parents and youth may have concerns about the shelter environment
  - Some shelters have policies that may create barriers
- Families and youth often avoid unsheltered locations and may not have the money to stay in a hotel/motel

# What Is Meant By Determining Eligibility?

## Determining eligibility is



The process of considering whether a student is eligible for McKinney-Vento Act rights and services



Based on whether the student's primary nighttime living arrangement meets the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homeless



A decision made by the district's local homeless education liaison and, in some cases, trained liaison designees

# McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including

- **Sharing the housing of other persons, due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason**
  - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds *due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations*
  - Living in emergency or transitional shelters, or abandoned in hospitals
- Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children *living in the above circumstances*

(Section 725(2))

# Unaccompanied Youth: Determining Eligibility

The term “unaccompanied youth (UY)” includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian

McKinney-Vento Act 726(6)

For a student to be a UY, they must meet two criteria:

1 They must be **experiencing homelessness** (in a living arrangement that meets the definition of *homeless*)

**AND**

2 They must be **unaccompanied** (not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian)

Visit NCHE’s [Unaccompanied Homeless Youth webpage](#) for more information.

# Breaking Down the Definition

## The Guiding Phrase:

Can the student go to the same place (fixed), every night (regular) to sleep in a safe and sufficient space (adequate)?



- **Fixed:** Stationary, permanent, not subject to change
- **Regular:** Used on a predictable, routine, consistent basis
- **Adequate:** Lawfully and reasonably sufficient for meeting the physical and psychological needs typically met in a home environment

# Breaking Down the Definition: Doubled-Up

## “Sharing the housing of other persons...”

- Does the family or youth have a legal right to be in the home?
- Can the family or youth be asked to leave at any time with no legal recourse?

## “...due to loss of housing,...”

Did the family or youth lose housing due to

- An eviction or foreclosure?
- Destruction of or damage to the previous home?
- Unhealthy or unsafe conditions?
- Domestic violence?
- Abuse or neglect?
- The absence of a parent or guardian due to abandonment, incarceration, or a similar reason?

# Breaking Down the Definition: Doubled-Up

**"...economic hardship"** implies that **limited financial resources** have forced the family or youth to **leave their personal residence and share housing** due to an inability to pay the rent/mortgage and other bills

Did economic hardship due to

- an accident or illness,
- loss of employment,
- loss of public benefits, or
- a similar reason

force the family or youth to share the housing of others temporarily?

# Breaking Down the Definition: Substandard Housing

## “Living in substandard housing”

- Standards for adequate housing may vary by locality
- Consider city, county, and state housing codes
- Does the housing lack a fundamental utility?
- Is the housing infested with vermin or mold?
- Does the housing lack a basic functional part?
- Does the housing present unreasonable danger to people staying there?

See [U.S. Department of Education Guidance](#)  
Question A-3 for  
more information

**Establish guiding criteria for your area and apply them consistently**

# Clarifying Questions: Doubled-Up

- What circumstances led to the shared housing?
- What is the intention of the people sharing housing?
- What are the family's or youth's housing options if not sharing housing?
- Is the shared housing arrangement fixed, regular, and adequate?



# Eligibility Helpful Hints



The local liaison has the authority and responsibility to make **determinations of eligibility**; in some LEAs, liaisons train other LEA or school staff to assist with determinations.



Pay close attention to the **legislative wording**, as it may provide needed clarity.



Eligibility determinations should be made on a **case-by-case basis**, considering the circumstances of each student.



Some determinations will be clear and self-evident, while others **may require a more nuanced application** of the definition of **homeless**.



**What do you find most challenging about making determinations of McKinney-Vento eligibility for unaccompanied youth in doubled-up situations?**



**Questions or comments?**  
(Please share using the Q&A feature)

# Common Challenges and Recommendations

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# Long-Term Doubled-Up Situations

- The McKinney-Vento Act **does not establish here a specific time limit for how long a child or youth can remain McKinney-Vento eligible.**
- While the duration of a doubled-up living arrangement is a relevant consideration, **the "bigger picture" of the circumstances** of the homeless shared housing arrangement must be considered.
- Liaisons should **reassess McKinney-Vento eligibility annually** at the time of school enrollment.
- Long-term shared housing arrangements **may be fixed and regular, but not adequate.**
- **Document** an ongoing lack of fixed, regular, and adequate housing.

# Cultural vs. Economic Factors

- **Cultural preferences** for extended family living may be relevant to consider.
- **Loss of housing or economic hardship may still drive the arrangement**; a good question to consider is the previously mentioned “What are the family’s or youth’s housing options if they were unable to stay in their current shared housing arrangement?”
- **Focus on statutory language criteria**, not general concepts or assumptions.
- **Case-by-case** analysis is essential.

# “But they seem fine/stable”

- Stability along doesn't automatically equal adequacy; some stable arrangements may be unsafe or inadequate.
- Lack of a legal right to remain in the shared housing arrangement is a key factor, as the family or youth could be asked to leave at any time with no recourse.

# Scenario-Based Walkthroughs

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# What Do You Think?



Darin is a senior at George Washington High School. His mom passed away when he was young, so it's just him and his dad. Darin's dad struggles with untreated mental health issues and hasn't always provided Darin with the stability he needs. His dad recently stopped paying the rent on their apartment and moved in with his brother, who says he doesn't have space for Darin. Unsure of where else to go, Darin asks his girlfriend, Josie, if he can stay at her house. Josie's parents say Darin can stay on the couch for now until they can figure something else out.

**Is Darin an UY?**

**Yes? No? Not sure?**

**If you said "yes" or "no," why?**

**If you said, "not sure," what additional information do you need?**

# What Do You Think?

Based on the information we have, Darin would be considered an **UY** and therefore eligible for McKinney-Vento rights and services. He is sharing someone else's housing due to loss of housing and is not under the physical custody of a parent or guardian. It's also unclear how long Darin will be able to stay at his girlfriend's house, so it may not be a stable (regular) arrangement.

# What Do You Think?



Carlos and his son, Jorge, show up to enroll Jorge in Howard Middle School in your LEA. Carlos says that he and Jorge are staying with Carlos' sister, who lives nearby, but their names aren't on the lease or any utility bills, and so he's not sure how to prove they're living there. Carlos shares that they have been living there for 2 years.

**Would you consider Jorge to be McKinney-Vento eligible?  
Yes? No? Not sure?**

**If you said "yes" or "no," why?  
If you said, "not sure," what additional information do you  
need?**

# What Do You Think?

Based on the information we have, it would be **difficult to make a determination** of McKinney-Vento eligibility for Jorge.

We know that Carlos and Jorge are sharing housing with a family member, but we don't know much about the surrounding circumstances. **We need more information.**

# What Do You Think?



Lucy and Tim Brown and their three children (Derek, 11 months; Jamie, 5 years; Shane 7 years) lived in a 3-bedroom mobile home until October, when their mobile home was severely damaged by a category 4 hurricane. Since then, they've been staying a couple of miles away with Lucy's great aunt in her 2br/1ba apartment. Tim, Lucy, and the baby sleep in the 2nd bedroom while Jamie and Shane sleep on a foldout couch in the living room.

**Would you consider the Brown children to be McKinney-Vento eligible?**

**Yes? No? Not sure?**

**If you said, "yes" or "no," why?**

**If you said, "not sure," what additional information do you need?**

# What Do You Think?

Based on the information we have, the Brown children would be **McKinney-Vento eligible**. They are sharing someone else's housing due to loss of housing.

The living arrangement also brings up questions about adequacy due to overcrowding, less than ideal sleeping arrangements, and a single bathroom for the number of occupants. It also is unclear how stable this arrangement will be.

# Dispute Resolution and Documentation

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# Disputes Under the McKinney-Vento Act

Every state must have **procedures for the prompt resolution of disputes** regarding eligibility, enrollment, or school selection of homeless children and youths.  
(Section 722(g)(1)(C)).

# Eligibility Disputes

If a dispute arises, the McKinney-Vento Act states that the following must occur:

(722(g)(3)(E))

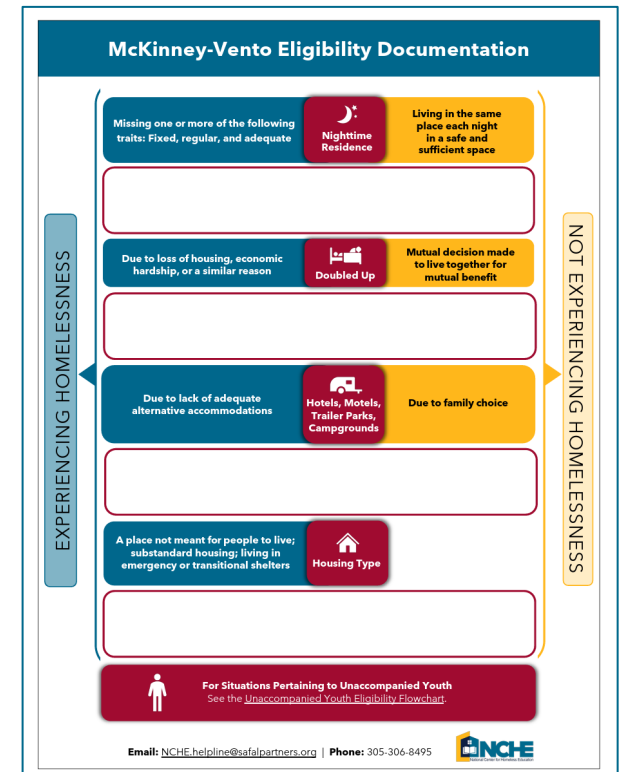
- **Immediate enrollment** in the selected school (school of origin or local school);
- The provision of a **written explanation** to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth of dispute-related decisions;
- Referral of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to the homeless liaison for **assistance with resolving the dispute** promptly; and
- The provision of **dispute-related support to unaccompanied youth** by the homeless liaison

# Documentation

It is important to document eligibility decisions as a best practice.


- Use statutory language
- Note specific factors considered
- Document case-specific circumstances


Reference NCHE's [McKinney-Vento Eligibility Determinations Flowchart](#), which includes a 2<sup>nd</sup> page for documentation purposes.





The form is titled "McKinney-Vento Eligibility Documentation" and is designed for documenting eligibility decisions. It features a central column with four rows of text boxes, each preceded by a blue box containing a reason and an icon. The first row is for "Nighttime Residence" (moon icon), the second for "Doubled Up" (two people icon), the third for "Hotels, Motels, Trailer Parks, Campgrounds" (truck icon), and the fourth for "Housing Type" (house icon). A fifth row is for "For Situations Pertaining to Unaccompanied Youth" (person icon). The form is flanked by vertical labels: "EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS" on the left and "NOT EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS" on the right. At the bottom, it includes contact information for NCHE: Email: NCHE\_help@safalpartners.org | Phone: 305-306-8495.


**McKinney-Vento Eligibility Documentation**


Missing one or more of the following traits: Fixed, regular, and adequate  Living in the same place each night in a safe and sufficient space

Due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason  Mutual decision made to live together for mutual benefit

Due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations  Due to family choice

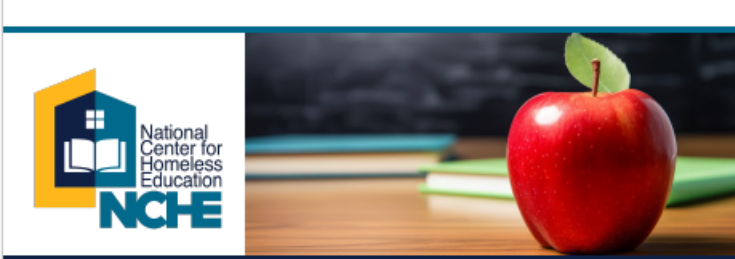
A place not meant for people to live; substandard housing; living in emergency or transitional shelters 

 For Situations Pertaining to Unaccompanied Youth  
See the [Unaccompanied Youth Eligibility Flowchart](#).

Email: [NCHE\\_help@safalpartners.org](mailto:NCHE_help@safalpartners.org) | Phone: 305-306-8495 

# NCHE Dispute Resolution Resources

## Resource Spotlight



**MCKINNEY-VENTO LAW INTO PRACTICE BRIEF SERIES**  
**Dispute Resolution**

**This NCHE brief**

- summarizes the key provisions in the McKinney-Vento Act related to dispute resolution and
- suggests implementation strategies at the SEA and LEA levels.

**INTRODUCTION**

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Section 721 et seq.; McKinney-Vento Act) guarantees educational rights and services for children and youth experiencing homelessness (CYEH). The Act requires state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs; commonly referred to as *school districts*) to follow a dispute resolution process when parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth disagree with LEAs concerning eligibility for McKinney-Vento rights and services, or school selection or enrollment under the Act (Section 722(g)(3)(E)). The dispute resolution process is intended to represent each party's views for objective consideration, ensuring that disagreements can be resolved expeditiously and in keeping with McKinney-Vento Act provisions. This NCHE brief summarizes the key provisions in the McKinney-Vento Act related to dispute resolution and suggests implementation strategies at the SEA and LEA levels.

**THE MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT DEFINITION OF HOMELESS (Section 725(2))**

The term "homeless children and youths"—

**A.** means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and

**B.** includes—

- i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
- ii. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...;
- iii. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- iv. migratory children...who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

McKinney-Vento Law into Practice Brief Series: Dispute Resolution 1

For more information, download NCHE's *Dispute Resolution* issue brief or visit [NCHE's Dispute Resolution webpage](#)



**Questions or comments?**  
(Please share using the Q&A feature.)

# Resources and Next Steps

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# NCHE Resources

- [Pre-recorded Webinar: \*Determining McKinney-Vento Eligibility\*](#)
- [\*Determining Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Rights and Services\* brief](#)
- [\*McKinney-Vento Eligibility Determinations Flowchart\*](#)
- [\*Unaccompanied Youth Eligibility Flowchart\*](#)
- [\*Understanding and Navigating the Federal Definitions of Homelessness\* issue brief and pre-recorded webinar](#)
- [\*Dispute Resolution\* issue brief](#)



**What is one action step you'll  
take in the next 30 days to  
improve your doubled-up  
determinations?**

(Please share your thoughts using the  
chat feature)



# Upcoming

Part 2 of NCHE's determining eligibility series

## Wednesday, May 20<sup>th</sup> | 2:00-3:30 EST McKinney-Vento Determinations: Understanding Substandard Housing

- By the end of this webinar, attendees will be able to
  - apply the definition of homelessness under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act to determine if substandard housing living arrangements meet eligibility criteria,
  - utilize strategic questioning techniques to gather information necessary for eligibility determinations,
  - navigate complex scenarios involving substandard housing living arrangements, and
  - document eligibility decisions using statutory language, guidance, and case-specific factors.

Join our listserv to stay informed of upcoming webinars

# NCHE Helpline



**Operational hours:** 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM  
ET, Monday through Friday



**Phone line:** +1 305-306-8495



**Dedicated email address:**  
[NCHE.helpline@safalpartners.com](mailto:NCHE.helpline@safalpartners.com)

# Thank you! We'd love to hear from you.

- Please take ~3 min to complete our feedback form
- [Click here to access the survey](#)

## As a reminder, **today's objectives** were to be able to

1. apply the definition of homelessness under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act to determine if doubled-up living arrangements meet eligibility criteria;
2. utilize strategic questioning techniques to gather information necessary for eligibility determinations;
3. navigate complex scenarios involving doubled-up living arrangements; and
4. document eligibility decisions using statutory language, guidance, and case-specific factors.



[Access our  
feedback form](#)