

Educating displaced children and youth in Montana presents many unique challenges due to the nature of our state. Most of our school districts are small and rural with dedicated staff members filling multiple roles. Our communities have few resources or services designed to meet the needs of families and youth experiencing homelessness, such as emergency shelters, transitional housing, or soup kitchens. Despite these challenges, our educators and communities work tirelessly to meet the needs of Montana's most vulnerable children.

The Office of Public Instruction (OPI) provides training and technical assistance to school districts and local homeless liaisons. The OPI also provides information and awareness materials to educators, nonprofits, shelter providers, and other interested community members throughout the state of Montana.

The OPI's McKinney-Vento Program is located in the 1300 11th Avenue building, Helena, Montana, in the Federal Programs Unit. The purpose of this program is to ensure that every homeless child and youth in Montana has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youth in Montana schools.

Montana Office of Public Instruction

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National Center for Homeless Education

At the SERVE Center

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) provides research, resources, and information enabling communities to address the educational needs of children experiencing homelessness. Funded by the U.S. Department of Education, NCHE serves as a clearinghouse of information for people seeking to remove or overcome educational barriers and to improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness. The NCHE also supports educators and service providers through producing training and awareness materials and providing training at regional and national conferences and events.

Contact the NCHE helpline at 1-305-306-8495 or NCHE.helpline@safalpartners.com. 9:00 AM to 5:30 PM ET, Monday-Friday

District Liaison Name Rose Wagner

School Name Vaughn Elementary

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Montana Office of Public Instruction

Families in Transition

McKinney-Vento
ESEA Title IX, Part A



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The Montana Office of Public Instruction Families in Transition Program

Definition of Family in Transition

The term "family in transition" refers to individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Under the law a child may qualify as homeless if he/she is:

- Living in an emergency shelter, domestic violence shelter, or transitional housing.
- Living in a motel or hotel due to economic hardship.
- Living in a car, park, public place, bus or train station, abandoned building, or other structure not meant for housing.
- Doubled up with relatives or friends due to a loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.

Children who are not living with a parent or legal guardian may be considered a homeless, unaccompanied youth if their living situation meets one of the four definitions listed above.

If you or someone you know is living in one of these situations, contact your local school district for assistance with services in your school and your community.

The Office of Public Instruction is committed to equal opportunity and non-discriminatory access to all our programs and services.

For more information or to file a complaint, contact Autumn, OPI Title IX/EEO Coordinator at 406-444-3161 or Autumn.Frey2@mt.gov

Educational Rights of Eligible Students

They Have Rights to:

- Immediate enrollment in school, even if the student does not have required paperwork.
- Continue attending the school in which they were enrolled when they became homeless, the last school attended, or the school closest to their temporary residence.
- Remain in the sequence of schools with their peers when homelessness is longer than one school year.
- Receive transportation to and from school.
- Automatic enrollment for free meals at school without proof of income.
- Automatic qualification for Title I services, even if the student is enrolled in a non-Title I school.
- Receive all school-based services for which they qualify.
- Participate in all programs and activities offered to other students, including athletics, music, clubs, and other extracurricular activities.
- Have their parents participate in and attend school events and activities.
- Challenge decisions on homeless status or services made by schools and districts through a dispute/grievance procedure.





Tips for Parents

- Make sure your child arrives at school on time every day. Children who miss school miss out on important learning activities.
- Make sure your child gets eight to ten hours of sleep every night. Children who are well rested learn more.
- Read to your child every day. Reading is the key to success in school. Talk to your child's teacher or school librarian about books you can read together.
- Talk with your child's school about your living situation. Your child may qualify for additional help through other programs and resources available at the school.
- Talk to your child's teacher. The more a teacher knows about your child the more they can help them succeed.
- Get involved in your child's education. Your child's teacher and school can talk with you about how to become an active part of the school community.

If you or your family lives in any of the following situations:



- In a homeless shelter
- In a hotel or motel
- In a campground, RV, or building that is not a home
- Doubled up with friends or relatives because you cannot find or afford housing

Then you and your family may have certain rights or protections under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.



Students, you have the right to:

- **Go to school,** no matter where you live or how long you have lived there. You have the right to attend classes even if you don't have immunization records or a birth certificate. You must be given access to the same public education provided to other children.
- **Enroll in a school without giving a permanent address.** Schools cannot require proof of residency that might prevent or delay school enrollment.
- **Enroll in school even if you are not living with a parent or guardian.** Schools cannot require you to have a parent or guardian to sign paperwork if you are not living with them.
- **Continue in the school you attended before you became homeless** or the school you last attended.
- **Receive transportation to and from school** if you or a guardian request transportation.
- **Participate in the same special programs and services** as provided to all other students, including athletics and other extra-curricular activities.
- **You have the right to file a dispute** if you disagree with any decision about your education.

For help with school, do the following:

- **Contact the district's liaison** (see phone number below) for help enrolling in a new school or continuing at the school you are now attending. The liaison can also make referrals.
- **Contact the local homeless shelter and social services office** for help with housing, medical care, food, and other support.
- **Contact the school** and provide any information you think will assist in helping the student to adjust to difficult circumstances. Needs, such as transportation, free school meals, supplies, and counseling services, should be addressed.

School Name

Vaughn Elementary School

District Liaison Name

Rose Wagner

Phone Number of Liaison

406-965-2231

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