

*Homeless Children
in the Montgomery
County Public Schools:
Responsibilities,
Rights, and
Resources*



Rockville, Maryland

Responsibilities

The Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) is committed to what is in the best interest of homeless children and youth. Whenever feasible, MCPS will minimize the effects of mobility on homeless students by maintaining a stable educational environment.

MCPS is responsible for enrolling homeless children and youth in the school that is in his or her best interest, and for providing prompt and sensitive service to parents and children who need assistance.

Definition of Homelessness

According to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, students are considered homeless if they lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, even if the temporary residence is outside Montgomery County. Students living under the following conditions are considered homeless:

- Living with friends or relatives due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
- Living in motels, hotels, or trailer parks used to house homeless families
- Living in an emergency shelter or transitional shelter
- Living in camping grounds
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, buses, or train stations
- Foster children awaiting foster care placement
- Unaccompanied youth who may be living in a shelter, inadequate housing, or denied housing by family

Where will my child go to school?

The decision about which school your child attends should be made after considering such factors as—

- special needs of your child
- continuity of instruction
- length of stay in your temporary nighttime location
- time and distance to transport your child to and from school

You have the right to decide whether it is best for your child to—

- stay in the same school he or she attended before becoming homeless (school of origin); or
- attend the school serving your temporary nighttime location.

If the school your child attended before becoming homeless (school of origin) is in Montgomery County, your child may continue to attend that school unless—

- you decide it would be better for your child to transfer to the school serving your temporary nighttime location, or

- we believe there is a good reason for your child to transfer to the school serving your temporary nighttime location

If the school your child attended before becoming homeless (school of origin) is outside Montgomery County, we will need to involve that school in deciding which school your child will attend and in setting up transportation.

What if I disagree?

If you disagree with MCPS on the school that would serve the best interest of your child, you have a right to appeal. Appeals should be made using MCPS Form 270-8: *Complaint from the Public*. During the appeal, your child has the right to attend the school you choose and we will provide transportation. The principal or homeless liaison can help you complete the appeal form.

What do I need to enroll my child in school?

Your child has the right to be enrolled in school without delay. You will need to complete the following forms, available at all MCPS schools and on the MCPS Web site:

- MCPS Form 560-24: *New Student Information* and check the homeless box
- MCPS Form 335-77: *Homeless Status*

You will need to provide the following documents either while or after enrolling your child:

- School records
- Birth certificate
- Immunization records

Do not delay in enrolling your child in school. If you do not have these documents, we can help you get them.

Your child will receive lunch the first day, and is automatically eligible for the Free and Reduced-price Meal System (FARMS). Additionally, the school will provide you with information on any other program for which your child is eligible.

How will my child get to school?

Transportation will be provided or arranged for homeless students attending their school of origin or the school serving their temporary nighttime location, except for walkers. School staff will assist in arranging transportation, which will be provided within four school days. If your child misses school due to lack of transportation, the absence will be excused. If a homeless student becomes permanently housed during the school year, he or she will continue to receive transportation until the end of that school year.

Resources

The MCPS homeless liaison, pupil personnel worker, or other school staff can help you do the following:

- Locate and obtain school records
- Obtain required immunizations
- Seek additional services such as special education, gifted and talented programs, tutoring, and school supplies
- Obtain transportation
- Seek support from appropriate governmental and community agencies such as the Department of Health and Human Services
- File an appeal over any disagreements regarding which school would be in your child's best interest
- Answer questions about getting a waiver of school-related fees

Important Information

MCPS Regulation JEA-RD: *Enrollment of Homeless Students* provides more detailed information and is on the MCPS Web site at www.montgomeryschoolsmd.org/departments/policy/pdf/jeard.pdf

Montgomery County Public Schools
Homeless Liaison
301-279-3322

Montgomery County Board of Education
850 Hungerford Drive
Rockville, MD 20850

Maryland State Department of Education
Homeless Education Coordinator
200 W. Baltimore Street
Baltimore, MD 21201
410-767-0293

This document is available in an alternate format, upon request, under the Americans with Disabilities Act, by contacting the Public Information Office, 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 112, Rockville, MD 20850, 301-279-3391 or 1-800-735-2258 (Maryland Relay).

Individuals who need sign language interpretation or cued speech transliteration in communicating with the Montgomery County Public Schools (MCPS) may contact Interpreting Services in Programs for Deaf and Hard of Hearing at 301-517-5539.

The Montgomery County Public Schools prohibits illegal discrimination on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, ancestry, national origin, marital status, age, disability, or sexual orientation. Inquiries or complaints regarding discrimination or Title IX issues such as gender equity and sexual harassment should be directed to the MCPS Compliance Officer, Office of the Deputy Superintendent at 301-517-8265, 1-800-735-2258 (Maryland Relay), or write to that office at 850 Hungerford Drive, Room 170, Rockville, MD 20850.

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