



COVID-19 School Closures & Students Experiencing Homelessness

This resource was last updated on April 17, 2020. Some information may have changed.

1. Students in Temporary Living Situations Have Important Rights: A federal law called the “McKinney-Vento Act” supports students from preschool to high school in temporary living situations – defined as “homelessness.” You are eligible if you are living:

- “doubled-up” by sharing housing for economic reasons or due to loss of housing
- in different places, also called couch-surfing
- in a shelter
- on your own as a student without the support of a parent
- unsheltered, in a motel, campground, or car
- in substandard housing.

2. You Have a Right to Stay in Your Current School: You can stay in your current school or immediately enroll in a new school near where you are temporarily staying. Schools can’t turn you away even if you can’t prove where you are living or provide enrollment documents.

3. “Liaisons” Offer Support for School Success: Special school staff called “McKinney-Vento liaisons” help students experiencing homelessness get support. Liaisons can help with free school supplies, computers and internet for distance learning, and free meals. This person may be listed on your school’s website. You can also search [this website](#) to find your school’s liaison.

4. Young People Living On Their Own Can Get Extra Help: Youth who are living in temporary situations on their own can get extra help from a McKinney-Vento liaison. The liaison can help you enroll and stay in school and provide additional support. If you receive special education services, they can help make sure you have a special education decision-maker to get what you need.

5. You Can Get Help Graduating and Planning Your Future: Your new school must make sure you receive appropriate full and partial credit for coursework completed at your prior school. Guidance counselors must help you prepare for college, including pre-college counseling. Your school should provide a “verification” form of your status as a student experiencing homelessness that you can use to get financial aid.

The Education Law Center-PA (ELC) is a nonprofit, legal advocacy organization with offices in Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, dedicated to ensuring that all children in Pennsylvania have access to a quality public education.

ELC’s publications provide a general statement of the law. However, each situation is different, and state and federal guidance on these topics continues to change.

If you have questions or concerns, please call our Helpline at 215-238-6970 (Eastern and Central PA) or 412-258-2120 (Western PA).