

McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Program Guidance on Awaiting Foster Care Placement

REVISED AUGUST 2013

The McKinney-Vento (MV) Homeless Assistance Act reauthorized in 2001 specifically covers children "awaiting foster care placement" {Title X, Part C of the ESEA; Section 725(2)(B)(i); and USED Guidance, Item G-10}. However, the Act does not define that phrase. Federal guidance recommends that educators and advocates consult state laws, regulations and policies (in both education and social services) and provide guidance on a definition.

Due to the temporary nature of foster care placements, in general, and new placements, in particular, the MDE Homeless Education Program staff will continue to consider a foster care placement temporary until a youth has been in the care of the same foster parent for a minimum of six continuous months.

MV SCHOOL SELECTION:

- ◆ When a youth is placed in foster care, temporary care, or an emergency placement, it is the MDE's expectation that the youth will remain in his/her school of origin, whenever feasible, if doing so is in the youth's best educational interest.
 - The youth would be allowed to complete the remainder of the current school year in this school, under McKinney-Vento guidelines.
 - Feasibility and best educational interests are expected to be determined in consultation between foster care caseworkers, District MV Liaisons, and MV Grant Coordinators.
 - The final determination of feasibility and best educational interest will be made in writing by MV staff.
 - If foster care staff wish to appeal a determination of foster youth, the local district's or MDE's Dispute Resolution Procedures must be followed.
- ◆ When a foster care placement begins during the months between school years, the six-month stability period also begins on the date of placement. The youth in such a placement would be eligible for McKinney-Vento educational services at the outset of the next school year. (A youth placed in care in July or August would be eligible for MV services at the start of the school year the following September, for six months from the placement date.)
- ◆ For youth placed in care **outside** the school or origin - It is expected that foster care caseworkers or DHS Foster Care Education Planners will collaborate and coordinate with District MV Liaisons and/or MV Grant Coordinators in both districts **prior to** school selection and placement.
- ◆ For youth placed in care **within** the school of origin - It is expected that foster care caseworkers or DHS Foster Care Education Planners will notify the District MV Liaison and school staff of the change in placement and care within ten school days.

MV HOMELESS EDUCATION SERVICES:

The school of origin is obligated to provide transportation and other support services for youth meeting the state definition of “awaiting foster care placement,” under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act.

A foster youth continuing attendance in the school of origin is eligible to receive transportation from the new foster care placement to that school for the six-month period identified in paragraph two of this Guidance.

- ◆ For youth placed in care **outside** the school of origin – The school of origin and the school of residence must either agree on a transportation plan or equally share the costs of transportation to the school of origin. {Section 722 (g)(3)(J)(iii)(I-II)} The mode of transportation is to be determined by the districts.
- ◆ For youth placed in care **within** the school of origin - Transportation arrangements in place prior to the placement will continue through the school of origin.
- ◆ For youth enrolling in the school of residence instead of the school of origin – The school will continue to provide comparable services to the youth who is in a new foster placement.
- ◆ District MV Liaisons and MV Grant Coordinators are responsible for notifying foster parents and DHS foster care caseworkers of the ending date **no later than 30 days before the end of the six-month stability period.**
- ◆ AFTER THE SIX-MONTH ELIGIBILITY STABILITY PERIOD – **Once the six-month period ends, school transportation to the school of origin becomes the responsibility of DHS**, and is to be determined and arranged by foster care caseworkers and/or DHS Foster Care Education Planners. School staff must be informed of the revised transportation plan at least five (5) school days prior to the change.
- ◆ It is expected that MV educational services other than transportation will continue for foster youth through the end of the eligible school year. **NOTE:** MV grant funds may not be used to provide items that can be paid by DHS to foster parents, i.e., school clothing, school supplies or additional food. (No supplanting of federal funds.)
- ◆ It is expected that changes in foster care placement will be kept to a minimum, per the Fostering Connections Act of 2008, so that educational stability can be maintained for as many youth as possible.

District Homeless Liaison Responsibilities:

1. Facilitate immediate enrollment and participation, as well as school transportation (if needed) and other homeless education services available for those children awaiting foster care placement, as defined above.
2. Facilitate collaboration between school systems, state agencies, and contract providers regarding school transportation to share responsibilities and costs.
3. Coordinate services with any involved state agency case manager and/or foster parent or temporary guardian identified by the state agency.
4. Seek guidance as needed from the MV Grant Coordinator or the State Coordinator for Homeless Education.