
Family and Youth Services Bureau

Information Memorandum

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Administration for Children and Families
Family and Youth Services Bureau
Washington, DC 20447

No. 1-2006

Date: 01/09/2006

TO: FYSB Runaway and Homeless Youth Program Grantees

SUBJECT: Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) program coordination with the McKinney-Vento School Act (Subtitle B or title VII; 42 U.S.C. 11432 et seq). For statutory language on the McKinney-Vento School Act, visit the Department of Education site:
<http://www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/legislation.html>.

PURPOSE: To inform the nation's Runaway and Homeless Youth grantees about the McKinney-Vento provision in the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (Title III of the Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention Act of 1974), as amended by the Runaway, Homeless and Missing Children Protection Act of 2003, Public Law 108-96.

REFERENCES: P.L. 108-96 (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/aboutfysb/RHYComp.pdf>)

BACKGROUND: On October 10, 2003, the President signed the Runaway, Homeless and Missing Children Protection Act, which reauthorized the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act through Fiscal Year 2008. Under the reauthorization, Basic Center and Transitional Living programs must ensure **coordination with school district liaisons** under the **McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**, so that runaway and homeless youth are provided with information regarding the educational services available to them. (Section 312 and 322).

The **McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act** applies to "unaccompanied youth" defined as youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, which includes youth who have run away from home or are homeless. The Act removes barriers to school enrollment for unaccompanied youth such as waiving documentation requirements (i.e. proof of immunization) or adopting more lenient attendance policies. The Act requires that states address enrollment delays for youth without guardians and take steps to enroll such youth in school immediately. Some states allow unaccompanied youth to enroll independently or allow the service agency to sign for them in the role of caregiver.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act states that it is the responsibility of the school district liaison to: “assist unaccompanied youth in placement and enrollment decisions, explain the youth’s right to appeal school decisions, ensure the youth is immediately enrolled in school while appeals are pending, and ensure the youth has access to transportation to school” (42 U.S.C. §§11432). Liaisons are obligated to identify and ensure that RHY/unaccompanied youth have a smooth transition into school and receive the support services they are guaranteed under law. However, states have different timelines for meeting these objectives and may also define these needs differently than service providers. A check of the related state requirements and regulations may be necessary.

TIPS FOR STRONGER COORDINATION

Introduce the agency and the services provided to the liaison. Work on building a strong collaborative relationship, since this person will be a strong advocate during the intake process. Discuss issues regarding youth guardianship, case management and existing policies that may pose a barrier to receiving timely educational services. Decide how to introduce the youth to the school and how to best represent the student’s interests in the educational planning process.

To identify the school district liaison contact your state coordinator. A list of state coordinators is attached. This information can also be found online at <http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/sccontact.pdf>.

Be an advocate for the student in school. Periodically visit with the school administrators, teachers and counselors to educate them about the homeless/runaway/throwaway youth population. Encourage school personnel to contact the McKinney-Vento liaison for additional guidance. This will ensure that the school is aware of and sympathetic to the issues facing RHY students. It can also establish a resource where schools will feel comfortable making referrals to the agency for assistance. Visits and participation also help programs to learn more about how the schools in your district operate. For example, do they require school uniforms? Can these be made available to temporary students?

Learn the specific state laws for providing educational services. Most states will serve youth until a high school graduation or equivalent and up to at least age 18 (older in some states). For special education students, federal law guarantees access to services until age 22 (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act IDEA). A youth who needs special education services cannot be denied access; however someone who is legally responsible for the youth will have to authorize services. To accommodate this process the RHY program should work with the student to identify an adult relative or legal representative.

Inform young people upon intake about their rights to an education and how they can access educational services. They should know that

they are eligible for immediate school enrollment in their district school or school of origin if feasible. This should include their right to attend their school of origin or local school, rights to transportation to/from school, the right to participate fully in school activities, and the right to appeal school enrollment decisions.

Be aware of alternative school options for youth such as vocational education, credit-for-work programs and flexible school hours. Your school district liaison can explain specific programs in your area.

Consider additional ways that you can support the educational needs of the young people in case. Many RHY centers and programs provide tutoring, onsite classes or enrichment, transportation to schools, advocacy for navigating the system and encouragement toward completion of their education. For Transitional Living Programs, education enrollment and/or completion or GED attainment may be a requirement for enrolled youth.

ATTACHMENTS:

Information for School-Aged Youth poster, Dept. of Education. Call 1-800-308-2145 to order additional copies. This publication is also available in Spanish.

State Coordinators List, National Center for Homeless Education, <http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/sccontact.pdf>

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES:

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)
Web Address: www.serve.org/nche
NCHE, funded by the U.S. Department of Education, is a national resource center, providing valuable information, training, and materials to educators and community members seeking to address the educational needs of homeless children and their families.

U.S. Department of Education, Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

Web Address: www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/index.html

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program oversees the education of homeless children and youth in our nation's public schools, including the granting of McKinney-Vento funds and the monitoring of their usage.

INQUIRIES:

Inquiries should be directed to your Lead Regional Youth Specialist:

Maryellen Connors – Region I; (617) 565-1119

Junius Scott – Region II; (212) 264-2896

Gary Koch – Region III; (215) 861-4022

Ruth Walker – Region IV; (404) 562-2901

Bill Clair – Region V; (312) 535-0166

Ralph Rogers – Region VI; (214) 767-2977

Dale Scott – Region VII; (816) 426-2295

Al Martinez – Region VIII; (303) 844-1172

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