



# McKinney-Vento Program: Help for Homeless Youth

According to the American Institutes for Research, over 2.5 million children suffer homelessness and its effects every year in America. Homelessness is defined by the federal government as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes individuals staying in shelters or transitional housing, sharing housing of others, sleeping in cars, parks, or similar settings.

Being homeless is often thought of as something that only happens to people with particular traits, habits, or low economic status. In reality, homelessness impacts people from all backgrounds and economic status. In Wake County, the majority of families in transition are employed. Some Wake County families are displaced due to domestic violence or fires and storm damage that occur in households regardless of economic status. Last school year, over 70% of students identified as experiencing homelessness were living with others and 20% were living in hotels. The primary reason for being displaced is financial (evictions and foreclosure) and the main barrier to housing is the lack of affordable options in our area. Landlords are selling what affordable housing options that have been available to take advantage of the area's growth. Additionally, Covid-19 has increased loss of housing because of job losses or reduced working hours.

Homelessness can have devastating effects on children's physical, emotional, cognitive, social, and behavioral development. They often have limited access to food, healthcare, and basic needs. From an educational standpoint, homeless children have a higher absentee rate, a higher risk of learning disabilities, and a higher chance of dropping out of school.



To address these issues, the United States of America enacted the McKinney-Vento Act. The federal legislation states that, “Each State educational agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths.”

For students experiencing instability, school is a place of stability, safety, and security. Students in the Wake County Public School System McKinney-Vento Program can remain in the school he or she is attending. Being stable at school provides the student with a sense of belonging, positive relationships, and a daily predictable routine. School also supports families with basic needs, community, and housing resources through the school program contact. All of the support the family and student receive through the program remove barriers to academic success.

“In the midst of the current crisis, school has never been more critical – whether remote, hybrid or in person,” Michelle Mazingo, a Wake County Public School System social worker and district liaison for the McKinney-Vento Program, said. “Schools are required to identify, enroll, and serve children and youth who have been displaced, but distance learning and other COVID-related complications make this process challenging. It’s important that families and youth who are in transition know that help is available, that they have educational rights, and know how to exercise them.”



To qualify for the program, a student must be aged 21 or below and be living in a temporary situation due to a hardship. Hardships can include but are not limited to domestic violence, fires, incarcerations, deportations, families or youth being kicked out, or other circumstances.

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If you or a family member needs assistance from this program, call (919)694-0582 or complete the online form (<https://www.wcpss.net/Page/40684>) to be directed to the appropriate school liaison.

If you would like to help the program, visit <https://www.wcpss.net/mckinney-vento> and click on the McKinney-Vento School Contact link. Needs vary and they can direct you to the right resource. Specific organizations that the program has used and would accept donations include Note in the Pocket ([noteinthepocket.org](http://noteinthepocket.org)); Green Chair ([thegreenchair.org](http://thegreenchair.org)); and local food pantries.

## Helpful Links

**Community Resources:** <https://www.wcpss.net/Page/35038>

**Coordinated Intake Flyer:** <https://www.wcpss.net/cms/lib/NC01911451/Centricity/Domain/12860/CoordinatedEntryOct19.pdf>

**McKinney-Vento Act:** <http://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title42/chapter119/subchapter6/partB&edition=prelim>

**NC Homeless Education Program:** <https://hepnc.uncg.edu/>

**Rights:** <https://hepnc.uncg.edu/wp-content/uploads/Docs/NCHepparentposter17.pdf>

**Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Rights / Derechos de los Jóvenes Sin Hogar No Acompañados:** <https://www.wcpss.net/Page/35038>

**Wake Network of Care Resources:** <http://wake.nc.networkofcare.org/mh/index.aspx>