



STATE OF NEW JERSEY  
**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: October 14, 2020  
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads  
Route To: District Registrars, District Homeless Liaisons, Principals, School Nurses and All District Staff with Enrollment Responsibilities  
From: Peggy McDonald, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner  
Division of Student Services

### **Reminder: Enrollment of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

Annually, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) provides guidance to assist school districts with fulfilling federal and state requirements regarding the enrollment of students who are experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) requires state and local educational agencies (LEAs) to remove barriers to school enrollment for homeless children and youth. ([42 U.S.C. §11432\(g\)\(1\)\(I\)](#)). New Jersey school districts must review this memo and undertake steps to revise practices and/or policies that may act as barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, or success of homeless children and youth in school.

Children and youth experiencing homelessness often do not have the documents ordinarily required for school enrollment (i.e., proof of residency, school/immunization records, and/or birth certificates). Many students, especially those living in “doubled-up” situations (i.e., shared living arrangements, some of which may be considered homeless), may not be able to provide proof of residency. Though proof of residency affidavits may be intended to ensure that only eligible students are able to enroll in a district school, the use of such forms as a requirement for enrollment, or continued enrollment, constitutes an educational barrier for students who do not reside in permanent living situations. The right to enroll immediately in school, even without documents normally required for enrollment, is one of the core protections of McKinney-Vento. ([42 U.S.C. §11432\(g\)\(3\)\(C\)](#))

School districts must immediately enroll or continue to enroll students while the district reviews the parent’s and/or student’s residency claims. If the district disputes a claim of homelessness, it must continue the student’s enrollment for the duration of the dispute resolution process, as described at [N.J.A.C. 6A:17-2.7](#). The requirement for immediate enrollment also applies to unaccompanied homeless youth who lack proof of guardianship.

Due to the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic and the necessity for online enrollment, districts must work with their [district homeless liaison](#) and/or [regional coordinator](#) to remove barriers that may impact the immediate online enrollment of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

If you have questions or need clarification, please visit the NJDOE’s McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth [webpage](#) or contact Pheobie Thomas, state coordinator at [McKinney.Vento@doe.nj.gov](mailto:McKinney.Vento@doe.nj.gov).

c: Members, State Board of Education  
Kevin Dehmer, Interim Commissioner of Education  
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