NCHE publications are supported through a contract with the U.S. Department of Education's Student Achievement and School Accountability Programs. For more information, visit *http://www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/index.html*.

What You Need to Know to Help Your Child in School

A Guide for Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers

Local Liaison

Carrie Sanborn, School Counselor
603-968-7622

State Coordinator for Homeless Education

If your family is in a temporary or inadequate living situation due to a loss of housing, your child might be eligible for certain educational rights and services.

National Center for Homeless Education
Toll-free Helpline: 800-308-2145
Website: *http://www.serve.org/nche*
E-mail: *homeless@serve.org*

National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE

National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE

National Center for Homeless Education

Supporting the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT: THE BASICS

If you lost your housing and now live in a shelter, motel, vehicle, camping ground, or temporary trailer; on the street; doubled-up with family or friends; or in another type of temporary or inadequate housing, your child might be able to receive help through a federal law called the McKinney-Vento Act.

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, children in homeless situations have the right to:

- Go to school, no matter where they live or how long they have lived there.
- Attend either the local school or the school of origin, if this is in their best interest; the school of origin is the school the child attended when he/she was permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin.
- Enroll in school immediately, even if missing records and documents normally required for enrollment, such as a birth certificate, proof of residence, previous school records, or immunization/medical records.
- Enroll, attend classes, and participate fully in all school activities while the school gathers records.
- Have access to the same programs and services that are available to all other students, including transportation and supplemental educational services.
- Attend school with children not experiencing homelessness; a school can not segregate a student because he or she is homeless.

RESOURCES FROM NCHE

Toll-free Helpline: 800-308-2145 or *homeless@serve.org*

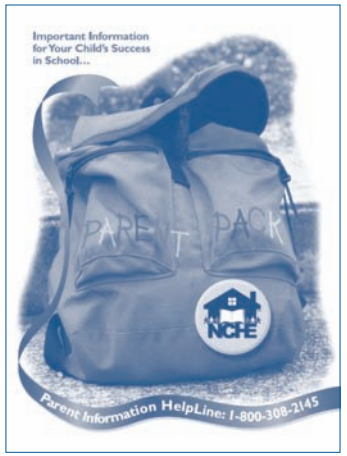
- NCHE can explain your child's school rights and tell you how to contact the local liaison in your school district. The local liaison can help enroll your child in school and make sure that your child receives the help that he/she needs.

Website: *http://www.serve.org/nche*

- The NCHE website has a lot of good information, including a webpage for parents who want to help their child in school: *http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/parent_res.php*.

Parent Pack Pocket Folders

- Parent Pack Pocket Folders are folders where you can keep important records and papers related to your child's schooling. The folder also explains the educational rights of children in homeless situations. Order these folders for free by calling 800-308-2145 (toll-free) or visiting *http://www.serve.org/nche/online_order.php*.



Parent Pack Pocket Folder

What can I do to help my child in school?

- Make sure your child goes to school every day and arrives rested and fed.
- Provide a quiet place for your child to do homework and set aside time every day to help your child with homework.
- Pay attention to your child's health needs and take care of problems early.
- Ask your child what he or she is learning in school; have him or her explain it to you. If you show interest in your child's education, he or she will know that it's important.
- Read to your child every day; for older children, set aside time each day for you and your child to read together silently. Talk about what you read.
- Praise your child for what he or she does well, like getting a good grade or playing on a school sports team.
- Listen to what your child shares with you and talk about any problems he or she is having. You can also talk about these problems with a teacher or school counselor.
- Encourage your child to participate in things like sports and music.

GOOD QUESTIONS MAKE GOOD READERS

Asking children about what they read will help them become good thinkers

For stories (fiction):

- What happened? What do you think will happen next? Why?
- Who is the main character? Do you like him/her? Why? Would you have done what he or she did? If not, what would you have done?
- How did this story make you feel? What did it remind you of?

For informational material (non-fiction):

- What was the article or chapter about? Get as many details as possible.
- What do you think was the author's main point?
- What part did you find the most interesting or surprising?
- Why do you think this information is important? How could it help you? Who else could it help?

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

When I move, should I keep my child in the school of origin or transfer my child to the local school?

Moving from one school to another can be very upsetting for children. They have to leave the friends and teachers they know and get used to new friends, teachers, and classes. Because of this, it is usually best for your child to stay in his/her same school (the school of origin), even if you move to a different area.

Here are some questions to think about when deciding whether your child should stay in the same school or move to the new school where you're living:

- How old is your child?
- How permanent is your current living arrangement? Do you plan to move back close to the school of origin or do you think you'll stay near your current living arrangement?
- Is your child attached to his/her school of origin? An older child who feels very connected to his/her school of origin and/or is about to graduate might have a harder time changing schools.
- How anxious is your child because you have had to move? Would changing schools be overwhelming?
- Would changing schools cause your child to fall behind in school and receive bad grades?
- Is this a good time of year for your child to change schools, such as at the end of a semester or school year, after testing, or after an event that is important to your child?
- How much time would your child have to spend going back and forth to the school of origin? A long ride might have a negative impact on your child's schoolwork.
- Are there safety issues to think about in choosing which school your child should attend?

What if the school and I disagree on where my child should go to school?

If you and the school disagree, the school district has to tell you in writing why it thinks your child should go to a different school than the one you want. The district also has to tell you in writing how you can appeal this decision. Your child can still enroll in, attend, and participate fully in the school you think is best for him or her while the disagreement is being settled.

Whom can I contact to help with my child's education?

- Every school district has a local homeless education liaison. This person can help you decide which school would be best for your child and communicate with the school. The local liaison also can help your child get school supplies, supplemental services, and free school meals; set up transportation to and from the school of origin; and help you find community supports.

- When you enroll your child in a new school, you should ask to meet his/her teacher(s). You should also talk to your child's teacher(s) every so often to talk about how he or she is doing. Know at least one teacher at your child's school well enough to ask questions about your child's schoolwork and to give him or her information that will help your child learn.

- The school counselor can help your child deal with changes and challenges. Share with this person any information about how your child is acting at home or things he or she is dealing with that might affect his/her schoolwork.

- Other good people to know are the school principal, attendance officer, bus driver, school social worker, and school nurse.

- All school and school district staff can help make sure your child gets all the services he or she needs to do well in school. You are an important partner in your child's schooling and should work as a team with the school and school district.

What questions should I ask regarding services under McKinney-Vento?

- Who is the local homeless education liaison? How can I contact him or her?
- What transportation is available for my child to stay in the same school (the school of origin)?
- If my child changes schools, who can help us transfer records quickly?
- How can my child receive free meals at school?
- How can my child receive free school supplies, if needed?
- Who can help if my child needs special education services? How quickly can these services be set up?
- What academic help is available for my child, such as Title I programs or after-school tutoring?
- What programs can help develop my child's talents and address his/her unique needs?
- Are there sports, music, or other activities available for my child?
- How can my child go on class field trips or participate in other school activities if I can't pay for them?
- Is there a preschool program for my younger children?