



Homeless Education

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Identification Process Guidance & Resources

The Arizona Homeless Education Program (HEP) has designed this document to provide local education agencies (LEAs) and McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons with essential guidance for the identification, immediate enrollment, school retention, and academic success of children and youth experiencing homelessness. **Unaccompanied homeless youth** (UHY) are homeless children or youth (HCY) who are not in the physical custody of a parent or court-appointed legal guardian, which includes children and youth from preschool through 12th-grade.

Statutory Requirements

- LEAs shall ensure that HCY, including UHY, have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths ([42 U.S.C. § 11431](#)).
- Where proof of residency or other requirements in laws, regulations, practices, or policies, may act as a barrier to the identification of or the enrollment, attendance, or success in school of HCY, including UHY, the State educational agency (SEA) and LEA will review and revise such laws, regulations, practices, or policies to ensure that HCY are afforded the same free, appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths ([42 U.S.C. § 11431 \(2\)](#)).
 - Refer to the [Arizona Department of Education's Arizona Residency Guidelines](#) for further guidance on ensuring the removal of barriers to the immediate enrollment of HCY, including UHY, in Arizona.
- HCY, including UHY, should have access to the educational and other services that such children and youths need to ensure that such children and youths have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held ([42 U.S.C. § 11431\(4\)](#)).
- Provision of both the [Arizona Student Residency Questionnaire and Educational Rights of Homeless Children and Youths](#) to the parent, guardian, caregiver, or UHY is required at **any time enrollment is requested** and twice annually ([42 U.S.C. § 11432 \(g\)\(3\)](#)).
- HCY, including UHY, have the right either to continue attending their school of origin or to enroll immediately in the local school, according to each student's best interest ([42 U.S.C. §§ 11432\(g\)\(3\)\(A\); \(g\)\(1\)\(J\)\(iii\)](#)).
- The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" include **attending classes and participating fully** in school activities ([42 U.S.C. § 11434a](#)).
- LEAs must **presume** that keeping the child or youth in the **school of origin** is in the child's or youth's **best interest**, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth ([42 U.S.C. § 11432\(g\)\(3\)\(B\)\(i\)](#)).
- To ensure that enrollment and placement decisions are made in the best interest of UHY, McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons must assist youth by ensuring their understanding of their educational rights, giving priority to the views of the youth, and providing notice to the youth of their right to appeal such decisions ([42 U.S.C. § 11432\(g\)\(3\)\(B\)\(iv\)](#)).

- LEAs must establish policies and procedures to remove barriers to the immediate enrollment of HCY and UHY, including procedures to maintain and share records with a new school or district in a timely manner [\(42 U.S.C. §§ 11432 \(g\)\(1\)\(H\)-\(I\); \(g\)\(3\)\(A\)-\(D\)\)](#).
- LEAs must establish policies and procedures to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of children and youth experiencing homelessness through the prompt coordination and assistance of parents, guardians, and UHY in accessing transportation to and from the school of origin [\(42 U.S.C. §§ 11432 \(e\)\(3\)\(E\)\(i\)\(III\); \(g\)\(1\)\(J\); \(g\)\(4\)\(A\); \(g\)\(5\)\(A\)\(ii\); \(g\)\(6\)\(A\)\(vii\); \(g\)\(7\)\(B\)\)](#).
- LEAs may not establish a standard procedure to make a report to child protective services or other law enforcement solely based on the determination of HCY or UHY status, as this may pose a barrier to the identification, enrollment, and retention of HCY and may be a violation of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) [\(42 U.S.C. § 11432 \(g\)\(1\)\(I\); 20 U.S.C. § 1232g\)](#).
- LEAs must ensure awareness of the differences between the legal authorities determined by court-appointed legal guardianship, adoption, and power of attorney when determining if a caregiver is a court-appointed legal guardianship of an HCY or UHY. LEAs must not require or pressure caregivers to obtain court-appointed legal guardianship to enroll or provide academic support to UHY for the duration of their homelessness. [\(42 U.S.C. §§ 11432 \(g\)\(1\)\(F\)\(iii\), \(g\)\(1\)\(H\)\)](#)
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons must ensure that UHY are informed of their status as independent students and assist youth in receiving verification of such status for purposes of the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) [\(42 U.S.C. § 11432\(g\)\(6\)\(A\)\(x\)\(iii\); 20 U.S.C. § 1087vv\)](#).
- According to the child's or youth's best interest, the LEA shall continue the child's or youth's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, even if they experience homelessness across multiple academic years [\(42 U.S.C. § 11432\(g\)\(3\)\(A\)\)](#).
- **Documentation** collected related to a student's HCY and UHY eligibility, such as a completed Arizona Student Residency Questionnaire, Caregiver Authorization Affidavit, and case management notes, **should not be maintained in the student's cumulative file** to ensure HCY privacy is maintained and they are not stigmatized due to their homelessness [\(42 U.S.C. § 11432 \(g\)\(1\)\(I\); 20 U.S.C. § 1232g\)](#).

Requirements to Ensure Programmatic Sustainability & Statutory Compliance

- LEAs are required to develop a written internal plan detailing the personnel responsible, process (i.e., sequential steps to be taken), timeline, and related documents required to ensure that HCY and UHY are identified, immediately enrolled, and services coordinated during the summer, intersession breaks, and any time when school is not in session.
- LEAs are required to establish a written internal plan detailing the personnel responsible, process (i.e., sequential steps to be taken), and timeline required to utilize the required [Arizona Student Residency Questionnaire and Educational Rights of Homeless Children and Youths](#) to remove barriers to the identification and immediate enrollment of HCY and UHY.
- If individuals choose not to complete the Arizona Student Residency Questionnaire, but have been identified as experiencing homelessness, immediate enrollment and referral to the

McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison **must** occur to remove barriers to the identification and immediate enrollment of HCY and UHY.

- LEAs are required to establish a written internal plan detailing the personnel responsible, process (i.e., sequential steps to be taken), and timeline to incorporate and utilize the **LEA's Caregiver's Authorization Affidavit** in place of guardianship requirements to remove barriers to the immediate enrollment and academic success of UHY.
- LEAs are required to establish a written internal plan detailing the personnel responsible, process (i.e., sequential steps to be taken), and timeline to ensure UHY who are **living on their own** can immediately enroll themselves in school or remain enrolled in their school of origin without a parent, guardian, or caregiver.
- LEAs are required to develop a written procedure establishing an internal process to **coordinate with LEA personnel** to identify HCY and UHY throughout the school year.
- LEAs are required to develop a written procedure to establish a process of **coordinating** with **nearby LEAs** to streamline the identification and immediate enrollment of HCY, including UHY.
- LEAs are required to develop a written procedure to establish a process of **coordinating** with local shelter and housing service providers and programs to streamline the identification and immediate enrollment of HCY, including UHY.
- UHY may continue to remain in qualifiable living situations either with a caregiver or on their own for multiple school years. Thus, McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons must maintain communication with UHY and/or the caregiver through regular case management and must ensure that annual evaluations are made to determine re-eligibility.
- LEAs are required to develop an internal written plan to review and revise policies, procedures, and practices to support with the continued development, effectiveness, efficiency, and sustainability to identify, refer, and provide services for HCY, including UHY.

Resources

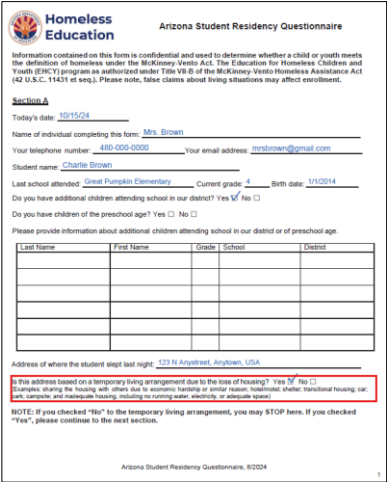
Arizona Student Residency Questionnaire and the Educational Rights of Homeless Children and Youths	Provision of both the Arizona Student Residency Questionnaire and the Educational Rights of Homeless Children and Youths is required at any time enrollment is requested and twice annually (42 U.S.C. § 11432 (g)(3)).
Caregiver Authorization Affidavit	This sample form is designed to ensure awareness of the local education agency's policies regarding youth living with caregivers and collect necessary information from such caregivers.
ADE Sample Identification and Eligibility Interview Questions and Checklist	This sample checklist is designed to help guide McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison conversations with the parent, guardian, or youth to determine if the child or youth meets the definition of homeless and identify the needs of the family, and child or youth.
ADE Sample Best Interest Determination (BID) Form	This sample form will help ensure that the school placement decision is student-centered and individualized .
National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) Unaccompanied Youth Eligibility Flowchart	This resource is designed as a general guide to support McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons in determining if a student may qualify as an unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY). Since all eligibility determinations must be made on a case-by-case basis, the situations included in this guide may not reflect all eligible situations.
ADE Sample Written Notice of Eligibility and School Placement Determination	Determined Eligible: - Once the LEA determines that a child or youth is eligible, written notification, including the Educational Rights of Homeless Children and Youths shall be provided immediately. Determined Ineligible: - If, after examining the details acquired through the interview step, the LEA concludes that a child or youth is not eligible, written notification, including the Rights of Homeless Students shall be provided immediately, and must detail the reason for the determination and include information regarding the right to appeal through the LEA's Dispute Resolution process.
ADE McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison Trainings	Recordings and other presentation materials are available for your reference and use.
The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)	NCHE provides many resources designed to aid State and local education agencies support children and youth experiencing homelessness. The following resources provide guidance specific to supporting unaccompanied homeless youth. Brief into Practice Identifying Children and Youth in Homeless Situations Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homelessness Students Living with Caregivers: Tips for Local Liaisons and School Personnel Meeting the Educational Needs of Students Displaced by Disasters: Youth on their Own



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The following procedure and flowchart detail a general identification and enrollment process for unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY). This resource may be used as reference during the development and revision of local education agency policy and procedure to ensure the effective identification, immediate enrollment, and removal of educational barriers for UHY.

Step 1: Following enrollment form completion, the individual supporting enrollment shall check the completed SRQ to evaluate how the screening questions were answered.	Person Responsible: Individual Supporting Enrollment (Front Office, Counselor, Registrar, etc.)	
Task	Guidance	Resource
Review Section A Questions (page 1): <i>Is this address based on a temporary living arrangement due to the loss of housing?</i> Yes ☐ No ☐ 	To qualify as an unaccompanied homeless youth, a young person must meet two primary criteria under the federal McKinney-Vento Act: Homeless: The youth must lack a “fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence”. Unaccompanied: They must not be in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The questions in Section A highlight if a student may be experiencing homelessness.	Identification Process Guidance & Resources Arizona Student Residency Questionnaire and the Educational Rights of Homeless Children and Youths

Review Section B Questions (page 2):

- *Name of the parent, guardian or adult caring for the student*
- *Relationship to the student*
- *Please place an “X” in each box that best describes where the student sleeps at night.*
☐ *With an adult that is not a parent or court appointed legal guardian*
☐ *Alone, not in the care of a parent or court appointed legal guardian*
☐ *None of the above (please explain):*

The questions in Section B highlight whether a student experiencing homelessness is in the care of a caregiver or if they are living on their own and supporting themselves.

Section B

Name of the parent/guardian/adult caring for the student: Mrs. Brown

Relationship to the student: Grandmother

If the address you provided in section A is based on a temporary living arrangement, is it due to loss of housing or economic hardship? Yes ☐ No ☐

Please place an “X” in each box that best describes where the student sleeps at night.

☐ In a place that does not have windows, doors, running water, heat, electricity, or overcrowded

☐ Staying with a friend or relative because of loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
(Example: eviction, foreclosure, fire, flood, burglary, disaster, domestic violence, kicked out by parents, ran away from home)

What date did you begin staying here? _____

☐ In a shelter/transitional housing program (name of agency): _____

What date did you begin staying here? _____

☐ In an unsheltered location (e.g., tent, vehicle, abandoned building, streets, campground, park, bus/train station, or similar place)
Provide the main cross streets of this unsheltered location: _____

☐ In a hotel/motel (name of hotel/motel & address): _____

What date did you begin staying here? _____

☒ With an adult that is not a parent or court appointed legal guardian

☐ Alone, not in the care of a parent or court appointed legal guardian

☐ None of the above (Please explain): The parents are currently incarcerated and we are taking care of him.

The following signature certifies that the information provided above is accurate. False claims about living situations may affect enrollment.

Mrs. Brown 1/15/24
Signature of Person Providing Information Date
Parent/Legal guardian/Caregiver/Student

For School Use Only

Please note, the student's cumulative file should not include a copy of this form. Do not make copies of this form. If Section B is filled out, please notify the LSA/Homeless Education Liaison, and provide the original form to them.

Name of school site personnel who enrolled the student: _____

Please check the housing types that apply:

Sheltered ☐ Doubled-up ☐ Unsheltered/FEMA/Substandard ☐ Hotel/Motel ☐

Unaccompanied youth: Yes ☐ No ☐ Transportation to school of origin needed: Yes ☐ No ☐

Arizona Student Residency Questionnaire, 8/2024 2

Step 2: Immediately enroll the student if any of the options mentioned in step 1 are selected.	Person Responsible: Individual Supporting Enrollment (Front Office, Counselor, Registrar, etc.)	
Task	Guidance	Resource
Remove barriers to the student's enrollment, such as requirements to provide documentation such as: • Birth certificate • Immunization records • Proof of guardianship or Power of Attorney (POA) • School records, including special education records • Proof of residence or require completion of the Arizona Residency Documentation Form or Affidavit of Shared Residency • Open enrollment application • Any other forms that are required by the LEA • Caregiver's Authorization Affidavit	A child or youth experiencing homelessness may request enrollment. If their parent, guardian, or caregiver is not present, they must be enrolled immediately. While the LEA may request completion of the Caregiver's Authorization Affidavit, it may not be required for immediate enrollment. Advise the caregiver that the completed form will be sent to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison for review, and they will follow up to provide additional support.	The Educational Rights of Homeless Children and Youths Caregiver's Authorization Affidavit Sample

Step 4: Complete internal referral and coordination process.	Person Responsible: Individual Supporting Enrollment (Front Office, Counselor, Registrar, etc.)	
Task	Guidance	Resource
Immediately utilize the LEA's coordinated system to refer the UHY to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison.	LEAs must develop and provide training to all staff regarding a referral process to ensure the identification and support of HCY, including UHY. This may look like a physical hand-off of the enrollment materials, utilization of an electronic referral form, or another method.	
Step 5: Once the Caregiver's Authorization Affidavit and referral form is received, follow up with the caregiver or youth is conducted.	Person Responsible: McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison	
Task	Guidance	Resource
An interview and needs assessment shall be conducted as expeditiously as possible to gather additional details regarding the circumstances involving the housing situation. During the interview process, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison shall seek information to determine eligibility, as well as to establish awareness of factors regarding the child or youth's housing, academics, and related needs.	As a requirement, any request for review of McKinney-Vento eligibility is added to the internal tracking sheet. Each child or youth has a unique housing situation; as a result, determinations must be determined on a case-by-case basis for each unique circumstance. Interviewing the caregiver, child, youth and in some cases, the parent helps determine	McKinney-Vento Internal Tracking Sheet Sample Identification & Eligibility Interview Questions & Checklist Sample Arizona HEP Training Material • The Process for Utilizing an Internal Tracking

	why the child or youth is with the caregiver or on their own. Consulting with school faculty, staff and community partners that know the child, youth of family is helpful in gathering information. Reminder: An unaccompanied homeless youth must meet two criterias to be considered an unaccompanied homeless youth: <u>First Criteria:</u> • Meet the definition of homeless. <u>Second Criteria:</u> • The child or youth is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, or • The child or youth is living on their own.	Sheet & AzEDS Reports (August 2025) • Eligibility, Best Interest Determination, Disputes, & Written Notification (December 2024)
Step 6: Once the interview and needs assessment is complete, the information shall be evaluated.	Person Responsible: McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison	
Task	Guidance	Resource
Evaluation of the relevant information and details gathered during the interview (<i>Step 1: Homeless Definition</i> and <i>Step 2: Assessment of Need Planning Guide</i>) must be completed to determine if the student	A student's housing must satisfy all three criteria to be considered permanently housed. If one or more of the three criteria is missing, the student would be	NCHE Eligibility Flowchart

lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and if they are an unaccompanied homeless youth.	considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. Utilization of the NCHE UHY Eligibility Flowchart is useful to help navigate some of the unique circumstances in which a child or youth may not be in the physical custody of the parent or guardian. There are two categories of unaccompanied homeless youth. The information gathered will help determine which category applies to their living situation. 1. Living with a caregiver: The role of the caregiver is important. This is a responsible adult, 18 years of age or older who has agreed to fulfill the role of caring for the minor child or youth, and they do not have legal court-appointed guardianship. 2. A youth on their own: A child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent, guardian, or caregiver, and without a stable home. They are supporting themselves, and may be living on their own or “couch-surfing”.	NCHE Unaccompanied Youth Eligibility Flowchart Arizona HEP Training Material • Office Hours: Re-Eligibility and New Eligibility (SY 25-26) • Supporting Unaccompanied Homeless Youth, Part II (SY 24-25)
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Step 7: Immediately following the eligibility and school placement decision, written notice is provided.	Person Responsible: McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison	
Task	Guidance	Resource
Following the interview and evaluation of information gathered, written notice of McKinney-Vento eligibility and school placement determination shall be provided to the parent, guardian, or youth immediately.	LEAs are required to provide to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth written notice of decisions related to the eligibility decision, school selection or enrollment. The letter must include a detailed explanation regarding the determination, and it must be provided in a format that is understandable to the receiver. Details regarding the right to appeal must be shared and the letter must be accompanied by the Educational Rights of Homeless Children and Youths. All eligibility determinations must be reflected on the internal tracking sheet.	Written Notification of McKinney-Vento Eligibility Decision Arizona HEP Training Material • McKinney-Vento in Practice (August 2025)

