



# Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education

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## School Enrollment Information for Children Who Have Lost Their Housing

The following Frequently Asked Questions are intended to provide information to parents and service providers on enrolling children and youth who have lost their housing and how schools can support their educational needs. Access to a public education and the opportunity to succeed is protected under the federal law known as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) and reauthorized by the *Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015*. For guidance on specific concerns that go beyond the information provided here please first consult with the local school district's Homeless Education Liaison. Further technical assistance can be provided by the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education at 781-338-3700.

**1. I am staying with a relative are my children covered by McKinney-Vento?**

Yes, McKinney-Vento covers children who are living in shelters, hotels, campgrounds, cars or are staying with friends or relatives due to economic hardship or loss of housing. If your home was damaged or destroyed by the hurricanes and your children can no longer live there, then they are covered by McKinney-Vento.

**2. What is a homeless liaison?**

McKinney-Vento requires that every public school district to designate a homeless liaison to ensure that homeless children and youth are immediately enrolled and attending school. The liaison's job is help homeless families access the educational services their children need in public schools.

**3. Where can I enroll my children in school?**

You should enroll your children in the public school where you are staying. It may help to contact the homeless liaison beforehand but that is not necessary.

**4. What do I need to enroll my children in school? What if I do not have school records or immunization and health records with me?**

Any school records, guardianship documents, birth certificates or health records you have will help schools place your child in the most appropriate setting. However, if your family has lost its home **you do not need any records to immediately enroll your child in public school.** The school may ask you questions about your child's needs to ensure the best classroom placement.

The school will also ask you for emergency contact information in case your child gets sick in school or needs you. This can be a cell phone or the phone at the home or shelter where you are staying. This is protected information and the school cannot share it with anyone outside the school (including landlords) unless you consent to its release.

**5. How do I access school meals for my child?**

Homeless children and youth automatically qualify for free school meals. This includes free lunch and if the school is serving breakfast and/or snacks your child will receive those as well. The homeless liaison will ensure that that happens.

**6. Which school activities can my child participate in?**

Your child may participate in any school course, activity or event they are eligible for including school run after-school programs, sports teams, and summer school. Your child has access to special education, title 1 services, gifted and talented programs, and English Language programming if needed.

**7. Do my children need school uniforms?**

Most Massachusetts public schools do not require uniforms but some do. If the school your child is enrolling in requires uniforms it should provide your child with a uniform if you cannot afford one.

**8. I do not have school supplies for my children. Can the school help with these?**

Yes, the school can help with school supplies such as paper, pens, and pencils. If the school is using computers or tablets it must ensure that your child has access to the equipment he/she needs to be successful in school.

**9. I have a child/youth staying with me but I am not his/her parent. Can she still enroll in school?**

Yes, children/youth who are not with a parent or legal guardian (known as unaccompanied homeless youth) may enroll themselves in public school or be enrolled by an adult caregiver.

**10. I have a preschool-age child. Can he/she enroll in school too?**

If the public school where you are staying has a preschool program that your child is eligible for he/she may be enrolled or put on the waitlist. If he/she is on a waitlist or the school does not have an appropriate program, the homeless liaison may be able to refer you to a licensed early education and care program in your community that includes Head Start, Early Head Start and Family Child Care. Please use this link to access the Department of Early Education and Care website for more information- <http://www.mass.gov/edu/birth-grade-12/early-education-and-care/find-early-education-and-care-programs/>

**11. I am interested in continuing my postsecondary studies in Massachusetts. Will my credits transfer to a public college or university?**

Massachusetts public colleges and universities are encouraged to work with students from Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands and support them as they transition to Massachusetts. Institutions of public higher education in Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands are accredited by Middle States Commission on Higher Education. We understand that not all students may not have access to their transcripts. If possible, students should try to acquire unofficial copies of their transcripts and institutions will work with students on a case-by-case basis. Institutions may require an official transcript at a later date once they become available. Students are encouraged to connect with a transfer advisor at one of our Massachusetts campuses. Contact information can be found by visiting this site: <http://www.mass.edu/masstransfer/about/contact.asp>.

## **Public School Homeless Education Liaisons**

There are over 400 homeless education liaisons in Massachusetts public schools. The following list includes those most likely to be receiving children who have lost their homes in Puerto Rico during the recent hurricanes. If the public school district you are looking for is not on this list please call 781-338-3700 or check the online list at <http://profiles.doe.mass.edu/search/search.aspx?leftNavId=11239>

<u>Public School District</u>	<u>Homeless Liaison</u>	<u>Phone number</u>
Boston Public schools	Mary William	617-635-8037
Brockton Public Schools	Karen McCarthy	508-580-7561
Chicopee Public Schools	Jill Fijal	413-594-3552
Fall River Public Schools	Siobhan Ryan	508-675-8420
Fitchburg Public Schools	Kathleen Niemi	978-345-3223
Framingham Public Schools	Rosangela Ferreira	508-782-6930
Haverhill Public Schools	Lorna Marchant	978-374-5700
Holyoke Public Schools	Rebeca Chaverri	413-534-2000 x1140
Holyoke Community Charter School	Sonia Pope	413-533-0111
Lawrence Public Schools	Nelson Butten	978-975-5900
Leominster Public Schools	Edward Pratt	508-534-7700 x307
Lowell Public Schools	Rosa Segarra-Morales	978-674-2040
	Nancy Humphrey	978-674-2128
Lynn Public Schools	Tracey Scherrer	978-477-7220 x3207
Marlborough Public Schools	Mary Murphy	508-460-3506 x1400
Methuen Public Schools	Gina Bozek	978-722-6014
New Bedford Public Schools	Sonia Walmsley	508-997-4511 x3315
Pittsfield Public Schools	Joseph Curtis	413-499-9510
Revere Public School	Douglas Goodwin	781-485-8453
Salem Public Schools	Jodi Connelly	978-825-3601
Southbridge Public Schools	Maria Eliza-Rodriguez	508-764-5455
Springfield Public Schools	Lourdes Soto	413-787-6959 x49842
	Jenn Wands	413-787-6764
West Springfield Public Schools	Ellen Broadhurst	413-263-3288
Westfield Public Schools	Chris Rogers	413-572-6441
Weymouth Public Schools	Robin Howard	781-335-1460
Worcester Public Schools	Maura Mahoney	508-799-3020