

McKinney-Vento Best Interest Determination (BID) for School Placement

The McKinney-Vento Act requires schools to consider the school of origin as the first option in school enrollment. Parents may choose the school of origin or the school in the residency area where the child is currently living. Individuals who may be consulted when determining what placement is in the child's or youth's best interest include:

- the child or youth experiencing homelessness,
- the parents or caretakers of the child or youth,
- school division homeless liaisons,
- school principals/administrators,
- the student's teacher(s),
- homeless shelter personnel,
- school social workers, and
- school counselors.

It is the school division's responsibility to determine the school of origin and residency, and to resolve any conflict concerning the school placement focusing on the best interest of the student. Whenever possible, the school division should comply with the parents'/guardians'/unaccompanied homeless youth's wishes. If the school division and parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth do not agree on the appropriate placement, Virginia's School Selection and Enrollment Dispute Resolution Process must be followed. The student should be enrolled in the school that the parent or unaccompanied homeless youth have chosen during the resolution process. If the school of origin is determined to be the best placement, the local homeless education liaisons from both divisions must work together to arrange transportation.

The McKinney-Vento Act requires that a child or youth experiencing homelessness attend:

- The *school of origin*: the school that the child or youth last attended when permanently housed or the school in which the student was last enrolled, including preschool (administered by the school division) and feeder schools; or
- The *school of residency*: The school identified by the attendance zone in which the student is currently physically staying. (If students in the attendance area have additional options, the student may enroll in such an option IF there is room in the program and student meets any eligibility criteria.)

If the student will attend the school of residency, enrollment should take place immediately.

The following form documents the determination for school placement that is in a student's best interest. It is recommended that the liaison use these questions to discuss the school enrollment options with the parent/youth. If the new residence is in another school division, the liaison from the new division should be included in the conversation, as a best practice, to ensure smooth transitions or the provision of transportation that may be shared. The information collected documents agreement about school enrollment OR provides the input needed to craft the justification for a written explanation should the parent/youth and school division disagree. Liaisons should maintain this form with their case notes.

McKinney-Vento Best Interest Determination for School Placement Worksheet

Date: _____

Person completing the worksheet: _____

Individuals consulted while making this best interest determination for school placement:

Housing

1. History of housing status. When was housing originally lost? What were the circumstances? What are the barriers to maintaining housing? (e.g., history of evictions, multiple doubled-up arrangements)
2. Based on the knowledge of the family situation, how long is it likely that the family will remain at the current residence?
3. What is the likelihood that the family experiencing homelessness will once again establish residency in the attendance area of the school of origin?

Education

4. Please provide the following information for the previous schools the child attended, listing the most recent school first.

Dates of Attendance	Grade Level	School/Division/State	Living Arrangement at the Time

5. Where does the student want to attend school?
6. Where does the parent or caregiver want the student to attend school?
7. What time of year is it (near the end of the school year, the summer)?
8. How is the student performing academically?

9. Are the school of origin and the school of residency in the same or different school divisions?

10. How long did the child attend the school of origin? Were meaningful social and educational relationships established?

11. Are there specific people in the school of origin who have been providing support or assistance to the family or student experiencing homelessness?

12. What is the history of absences and tardies for this student?

13. Are there special programs such as gifted, English language services, remedial education or extracurricular activities in which the child has been participating at the school of origin?

If yes, please name:

Are these programs available at the school of residency?

14. If the student is in high school, how would a school move affect credit accrual?

15. What is the distance and time spent on travel from the current residence to the school of origin?

16. If transportation is not currently available back to the school of origin, how can it be arranged?

17. Are there any safety concerns related to staying in the school of origin or attending the local school of residency?

The *optional* Likert scale on the following page may be used to summarize the decision-making process.

	Recommendation/Preference	Date/Method of Communication
Liaison for school of origin		
Parent/youth		
Liaison for school of residence		

Justification:

If the school of origin is recommended, when will this decision be reviewed? _____

If the parents or unaccompanied homeless youth disagree, the disagreement triggers the need for Written Explanation of the McKinney-Vento Determination.

Optional form: Based on the information gathered, rank the relative importance of the following considerations.

School of Origin (SOO) Considerations			Local School Considerations	
Continuity of instruction				
1	2	3	4	5
The student would be served best at the SOO due to circumstances that look to his or her past.			The student would be served best due to circumstances that look to his or her future.	
Age and grade placement of the student				
1	2	3	4	5
Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has been in this environment for an extended period of time.			Maintaining friends and contacts with peers in the school of origin is not particularly critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has attended the SOO a brief time.	
Length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location				
1	2	3	4	5
The student's current living situation is outside the SOO's attendance zone, but the living situation continues to be uncertain. The student will benefit from the continuity offered by continuing to attend the SOO.			The student's current living situation appears stable and unlikely to change suddenly; the student will benefit from developing relationships with school peers who live in his or her local community.	
Academic progress				
1	2	3	4	5
The student is likely to fall further behind if he/she transferred to another school.			The school transfer is not likely to affect the student academically.	
Student's need for special instruction				
1	2	3	4	5
The SOO is better equipped to meet the student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services.			The local attendance area school is better equipped to meet the student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education and related services.	
Social and emotional needs				
1	2	3	4	5
The student is suffering from the effects of mobility, has developed strong ties to the current school, and does not want to leave.			The student seems to be coping adequately with mobility, does not feel strong ties to the current school, and does not mind transferring.	
Personal safety of the student				
1	2	3	4	5
The SOO has advantages for the safety of the student.			The local school has advantages for the safety of the student.	
Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education				
1	2	3	4	5
The advantages of continuing to attend the SOO outweigh any potential disadvantages presented by the length of the commute.			A shorter commute may help the student's concentration, attitude, or readiness for school. The local school can meet all of the necessary educational and special needs of the student.	

Adapted from the Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO) and NCHE