



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: August 19, 2026
To: Local Educational Agency Leads
Route To: District Registrars, District Homeless Liaisons, Principals, School Nurses, All District Staff with Enrollment Responsibilities
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Annual Enrollment Guidance for Students Experiencing Homelessness

As the 2026-2027 school year begins, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) reminds local educational agencies (LEAs) of key federal and state requirements for enrolling students experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth and those displaced by natural disasters (earthquakes, hurricanes, etc.). The [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#) (MKV) requires LEAs to remove barriers that may impede a student's identification, enrollment, attendance, or educational success ([42 U.S.C. §11432\(g\)\(1\)\(I\)](#)). This guidance highlights enrollment requirements, residency considerations, health services requirements, district homeless liaison (DHL) responsibilities, and NJ Statewide Longitudinal Educational Data System (NJSLEDS) reporting obligations.

A student may be eligible for protection and support if they meet MKV's [definition of homelessness](#). MKV defines "homeless children and youths" as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." This includes students displaced by natural disasters and those sharing housing with others due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as "doubled-up").

An unaccompanied youth is a student who is not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian. Identification of unaccompanied youth is critical because these students are entitled to specific protections under MKV and must be reported separately in NJSLEDS. This may include students who have run away, been asked to leave, or been abandoned by their parents. To be considered an unaccompanied homeless youth under MKV, both of the following conditions must be met:

- The youth's living situation meets the definition of homelessness; and
- The youth is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Enrollment/School Records

MKV requires LEAs to immediately enroll all students experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied youth, even when required enrollment documentation is unavailable. This includes students awaiting immigration proceedings who are residing with a relative or other responsible adult.

Students experiencing homelessness often lack documents typically required for enrollment, such as proof of residency, school/immunization records, and/or birth certificates. Requiring proof of residency affidavits or similar documentation as a condition of enrollment or continued enrollment may create a barrier to education access. Immediate enrollment, regardless of missing documentation, is a core protection under MKV ([42 U.S.C. §11432\(g\)\(3\)\(C\)](#)). Additionally, proof of guardianship is not required for the immediate enrollment of unaccompanied youth.

Health Services

When a student transfers to another school, the sending school district shall ensure documentation is forwarded to the receiving school district pursuant to [N.J.A.C. 6A:2.2\(h\)2](#). If a student does not have a medical home, as defined in [N.J.A.C. 6A:16-1.3](#), the LEA shall provide the entry medical examination at the school physician's office or other comparably equipped facility, pursuant to [N.J.S.A. 18A:40-4](#).

Additionally, under [N.J.A.C. 8:57-4.6](#), immunization records submitted in a language other than English must be accompanied by a translation sufficient to determine compliance with the immunization requirements. For additional information, please refer to the May 31, 2023 [Translation of Student Immunization Records broadcast](#).

Tuition and Transportation

Pursuant to [N.J.A.C. 17-2.8\(c\)2](#), when a student's district of origin/residence is outside of New Jersey, the State of New Jersey assumes fiscal responsibility for the student and reimburses the LEA in which the student is enrolled. Additional information regarding tuition reimbursement for state-responsible students experiencing homelessness is available in the [Tuition Reimbursement for State-Responsible Homeless Children and Youth Guidance](#). Questions may be directed to SRHT@doe.nj.gov.

District Homeless Liaisons

District Homeless Liaisons (DHLs) play a critical role in coordinating services and ensuring educational continuity for students experiencing homelessness are identified, enrolled, connected to health services, and provided educational continuity. DHLs should collaborate with enrollment personnel, school counselors, parents, and other student support staff to ensure students receive appropriate services and supports.

NJSLEDS Reporting Responsibilities

If a student becomes homeless at any time during the year, the NJDOE's NJSLEDS record must be updated accordingly. NJSLEDS homeless status indicates whether a student experienced homelessness for at least one day during the school year. Students who meet the MKV definition should be coded as follows:

- Y1 = Yes, student was homeless at any time during the school year and was in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian; or
- Y2 = Yes, student was homeless at any time during the school year and was NOT in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian (unaccompanied); or
- N = No, student was not homeless "Y1" or "Y2."

For any questions or need further clarification, please visit the NJDOE's McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth [webpage](#) or email McKinney.Vento@doe.nj.gov.