



Advocates for Children of New York

Protecting every child's right to learn

Students in Temporary Housing

Students in temporary housing face many challenges to succeeding in school. While they are experiencing homelessness, students in temporary housing need the stability that a secure school placement can provide. The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law that gives important educational rights to students in temporary housing.

Who are students in temporary housing?

Students who lack a “fixed, regular and adequate” nighttime residence are considered homeless and are entitled to protections under the McKinney-Vento Act. This includes students living in:

- Family or domestic violence shelters,
- Transitional housing,
- Motels or hotels,
- Cars,
- Parks, bus or train stations, or other public places,
- Sharing the housing of others because they lost their housing or because of economic hardship (sometimes referred to as “doubled-up”).

DID YOU KNOW?

The **McKinney-Vento Act** gives students in temporary housing the right to:

- Stay in the same school even if they move
- Immediately enroll in a new school even if they don't have the documents normally needed
- Get transportation to and from school
- Get referrals and access to services
- Get help from the McKinney-Vento liaison (also known as the [Students in Temporary Housing Regional Managers](#))
- And more!

Students in foster care are not protected under the McKinney-Vento Act, but they have similar rights to students experiencing homelessness. For more information about foster care, visit [AFC's website](#).

Who can help a student in temporary housing with school-related issues?

The Department of Education has liaisons called [Students in Temporary Housing \(STH\) Regional Managers](#) who can help students in temporary housing and their families. Also, most family shelters have a Department of Education STH Community Coordinator or Family Assistant onsite can help with enrollment, transportation, and other services. A list of the STH Regional Managers, Community Coordinators, and Family Assistants is available at bit.ly/STHStaff.

Where can students in temporary housing attend school?

Students in temporary housing can choose to go to:

- The school the student attended before they became homeless;
- The school the student last attended; or
- The school zoned for where the student is temporarily living.

Usually, it is in a student's best interests to stay in the same school when a loss of housing occurs or when they move between temporary housing locations.

Students in temporary housing are entitled to **immediate enrollment** (in other words, same-day enrollment) even if they don't have the documents normally needed, such as proof of residency/address, birth certificate, proof of immunizations, special education records, etc. It's the **responsibility of the school**, not the parent, to request the student's records (birth certificate, proof of immunization, special education records/IEP) from the student's previous school.

What other protections and services are available to students in temporary housing?

- **Transportation:** Students in temporary housing can get busing or a MetroCard. Also, parents of students in temporary housing who are not bused can get a free MetroCard. Students in temporary housing are eligible for:

→ **Busing**

- **In shelter:** Busing will be provided for students in grades K-6 and students with IEPs in 7th & 8th grade (if student doesn't already have busing on their IEP). To request busing, contact the [STH Community Coordinator, Family Assistant, or Regional Manager](#).
- **Temporarily doubled-up** (temporary shared housing): Busing will be provided for students K-6 if an appropriate route is available. To request busing, [Create a Ticket online](#).
- **Remainder of the school year after a student moves into permanent housing:** Busing will be provided if an appropriate route is available. To request busing, fill out an [online Request Form](#).
- **3-K and Pre-K:** Busing will be provided if an appropriate route is available, and usually only if the child has an older sibling who goes to school in the same building as the 3-K or Pre-K program. To request busing, [Create a Ticket online](#).
- **Students with busing on their IEPs:** Busing will be provided to all students with specialized transportation listed on their Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) regardless of their housing status. To get busing rerouted, ask the [school](#) to update your child's address in its system.

→ **MetroCards**

- **Student MetroCards:** full-fare cards are available to students in temporary housing from their school regardless of distance traveled.
- **Parent MetroCards:** free cards are available to parents of students in temporary housing

(preschool-6th grade) from their children's school to accompany their children to school, including summer school. For help, contact the [STH Community Coordinator, Family Assistant, or Regional Manager](#).

- **Title I Services:** All schools get [Title I STH funding](#) specifically to meet the needs of students in temporary housing. Schools can use the funding to support students in temporary housing in many ways. For example, schools can use the funding to buy school supplies, school clothes, hygiene supplies, emergency food, counseling services, tutoring services, and more! To find out more, talk to the school's [Students in Temporary Housing \(STH\) School-Based Liaison \(SBL\)](#) about how [Title I STH funds](#) might be used to support your child.
- **Timely Special Education Services:** If a student in temporary housing is in the process of getting special education evaluations and transfers schools, the new school must complete the evaluation process within the same timelines, unless the parent agrees to an extension. This means that the Committee on Special Education should not "close" the child's special education case and open a new case in the new school. If a student in temporary housing has an IEP and transfers to another NYC school, the new school must provide the services on the IEP. If the student is transferring from another school district, the school must provide "comparable" services to what are listed on the IEP.
- **Enrollment and Missed Deadlines:** Schools have to make sure that missed deadlines do not prevent a child who is homeless from enrolling. For example, if a child in temporary housing has missed the deadline to apply to 3-K, Pre-K, kindergarten, or any other program available to permanently housed students, the school should make every effort to ensure that the deadline does not create a barrier to the student's participation.
- **Academic and Extracurricular Activities:** Schools have to make sure that students who meet the eligibility rules do not face barriers to participating in academic and extracurricular activities. For example, if there is a fee to take an AP exam, participate in a school club, or pay for a sports uniform/equipment, the school should waive that fee for a student in temporary housing.
- **Preschool and Child Care Services:** Children in temporary housing must be prioritized for Pre-K, 3-K, Head Start, and programs for infants and toddlers. For information about these preschool programs, call 718-935-2009 or email ESEnrollment@schools.nyc.gov and CCapplication@schools.nyc.gov. Also, all families in temporary housing who are income-eligible can get free child care vouchers. For more information about child care vouchers, call the Early Care and Education Call Center at 212-835-7610 or email temporaryhousingRA@acs.nyc.gov. <mailto:CCapplication@schools.nyc.gov>
- **School-Related Shelter Transfer:** If the Department of Homeless Services places a family in a shelter far from the child's school, the parent can ask for a shelter transfer to be closer to the child's school. The Department of Homeless Services will transfer the family if there is an appropriate unit available. For more information, speak with your shelter caseworker, the [STH Regional Manager](#), or email us at ProjectLIT@afcnyc.org.

How do schools know when students are in temporary housing?

Schools have to ask parents about their housing situation whenever they change a child's address or enroll a child in a new school. Usually this is done by giving the parent a [Housing Questionnaire](#) to complete. Even if not asked, we strongly encourage parents to talk to school staff if they think that their child may qualify as a student in temporary housing and how to get additional services.

What if the school does not agree that the student is temporarily housed?

If a school has questions about the student's eligibility under the McKinney-Vento Act, the school should talk to the Students in Temporary Housing Regional Manager. If there is a disagreement between the Department of Education and the parent about whether the student is projected as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act (or a disagreement about enrollment or transportation for a student in temporary housing), the Department of Education must follow the dispute resolution process. The school must give the parent written notice of their decision, and the parent (or the student if they are not living with their parent/guardian) has 30 days to appeal the decision. The student can go to the school where they would like to enroll until the dispute is resolved. For more information, see [here](#).

For more information or to get help for a student in temporary housing, contact Advocates for Children's **Project LIT** – Learners In Temporary housing – at **(212) 822-9546** or email ProjectLIT@afcnyc.org.

More information can also be found on our [website](#).

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Have other questions or need more assistance?

Please call AFC's Jill Chaifetz Education Helpline:

(866) 427-6033 (toll-free) • Monday—Thursday • 10am—4pm

www.advocatesforchildren.org

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