

# SOUTHBRIDGE PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## DISTRICT POLICY ON THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

In an effort to help homeless parents and children, the Southbridge Public Schools have implemented the McKinney-Vento Act for Homeless Children and Youth. The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law that protects all children and youths in homeless situations. The goal is to ensure equal access to the same free and appropriate public education as provided to other children and youths, including a public pre-school education.

The Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education has adopted Section 725(2) of Act regarding the definition of homeless children and youth:

- *individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or have a primary nighttime residence in a supervised, publicly or privately, operated shelter for temporary accommodations (including welfare hotels, congregate shelters, and transitional housing for the mentally ill), an institution providing temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.*

This definition shall include:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing or economic hardship;
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Being abandoned in hospitals;
- Awaiting foster care placement;
- Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings;
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, transportation stations or similar settings;
- Unaccompanied youths under the age of 18- a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian;
- Migratory children living in conditions described above.

Homeless students in the Southbridge Public Schools have the right to:

1. Stay in their school of origin even if they move to another district.
2. Immediately enroll in school without proof of residency, immunizations, school records and/or other documents.
3. Obtain transportation to their school of origin.
4. Receive free breakfast and lunch at school.
5. Receive all the educational and supplemental services they need.
6. Receive dispute resolution information if there is an enrollment dispute.

The McKinney-Vento Act requires every school district to designate a staff person to serve as the Homeless Education Liaison whose role it is to assist homeless students enroll in school and to ensure that they receive the educational services for which they are eligible. **The Southbridge Public Schools have designated, Maria Eliza-Rodriguez, as their Homeless Education Liaison. She is located at Mary E. Wells Jr. High School, (508) 765-9793.**

For further information or assistance, contact Peter D. Cirioni, State Coordinator, Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, 781-338-6294, [pcirioni@doe.mass.edu](mailto:pcirioni@doe.mass.edu) or Sarah Slautterback, Homeless Education Specialist, 781-338-6330, [sslautterback@doe.mass.edu](mailto:sslautterback@doe.mass.edu).

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