

## **McKINNEY-VENTO ACT FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS**

The McKinney-Veto Act was originally authorized in 1987 and most recently reauthorized in December 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). It was designed to address the challenges that homeless children and youths have faced in enrolling, attending and succeeding in school. Gillingham attempts to identify homeless students during the initial enrollment process and on an ongoing basis. If a student or family has indicated they are homeless, or if a staff member has reasonable suspicion that a student or family is homeless, they are required to alert the Homeless Liaison. All procedures in place are designed to ensure this identification does not create or exacerbate educational barriers. Under the McKinney-Vento Act, state educational agencies must ensure that each homeless child and youth has timely and equal access to the educational and related services that they need to enable them to meet the same challenging state academic standards to which all students are held. In addition, homeless students may not be separated from the mainstream school environment. State and local educational agencies are required to review and undertake steps to revise laws, regulations, enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youths. Challenges of physical health are also addressed with referrals for medical, dental, and other health services, as needed. Coordination of transportation to and from school and school related events will be coordinated with the appropriate district to ensure the student is able to continue to attend Gillingham if they choose to do so.

All students at Gillingham Charter School receive free breakfast and lunch through the Community Eligibility Provision of the National School Lunch Program.

Who is considered homeless? Under McKinney Vento Act, the term “homeless children and youths” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence that includes children and youths who are:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations;
- Living in emergency, transitional or domestic violence shelters;
- Abandoned in hospitals;
- Awaiting Foster Care placement;
- Living in public or private places not designated 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;
- Living as migratory children in conditions described in previous examples;
- Living as run-away children;
- Living as school age unwed mothers in houses for unwed mothers if they have no other living accommodations.

Unaccompanied youth are afforded the same immediate enrollment, academic support, and can initiate their own school placement decisions and sign paperwork and/or other forms. Students shall not be discriminated against, segregated nor stigmatized based on their status as homeless. To the extent feasible, and in accordance with the student’s best interest, a

homeless student shall continue to be enrolled in their school or origin while they remain homeless or until the end of the academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. Parents/Guardians of a homeless student may request enrollment in the school in the attendance area where the student is actually living or other schools. If a student is unaccompanied by a parent/guardian, The Gillingham Homeless Liaison will consider the views of the student in determining where they will be enrolled. The selected school shall immediately enroll the student and begin instruction, even if the student is unable to produce records normally required for enrollment pursuant to Gillingham policies. Homeless families will also have access to all district-wide parent involvement activities and initiatives.

Gillingham has staff members who work with local community agencies to coordinate services in the student's community. The staff includes liaison, counselor, SAP members etc. Gillingham Website also has an extensive list of community resources/supports which can be found under the McKinney Vento Act on the Gillingham Homepage.

Placement/Dispute/Complaints: If Gillingham is unable to determine the student's grade level due to missing or incomplete records, the school shall administer tests or utilize appropriate means to determine the student's placement.

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The parent/guardian/student will be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision on the dispute, including the right to appeal. The parent/guardian/student will be referred to the Homeless Liaison who will carry out the state's grievance procedure as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. In the case of an unaccompanied student, the Homeless Liaison shall ensure that the student is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute. If disputes or complaints on noncompliance arise regarding the education of homeless students, the following steps may be taken:

- The person filing the complaint shall first contact the school's Homeless Liaison to present their concerns to the people closest to the situation and most likely to be able to resolve it quickly.

- If Step 1 is not successful or is not possible under the circumstances, contact should be made with the Homeless Project Education Liaison, or the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) will accept complaints directly through the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program.

- Individual cases may be referred to PDE's Office of Chief Counsel and the Office of the Deputy Secretary for Elementary and Secondary Education, as needed, by the State Homeless Coordinator.

PDE will deliver a response within fifteen (15) business days of the receipt of the complaint. The complaint may arrive in the form of a copy of the school/district letter or on the Dispute Letter Form if given directly to a Liaison of the Homeless Initiative.

Gillingham Charter School is committed to help your child receive a consistent quality education. If you or someone you know would benefit from the McKinney-Vento Act, please contact the Homeless Liaison:

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