

Homeless Liaisons for King County School Districts (2014-2015)

Students or parents who think they might be eligible for support under the McKinney-Vento Act should contact a Liaison and ask!

2014-2015 EDITION

UNDERSTANDING HOMELESS STUDENTS' EDUCATIONAL RIGHTS

A GUIDE FOR PARENTS, STUDENTS, TEACHERS, AND SOCIAL WORKERS



AUBURN
Dennis Grad
Transportation Director,
McKinney-Vento Liaison
dgrad@auburn.wednet.edu
(253) 931-4938

Vicki Jensen
McKinney-Vento Program
Router
vjensen@auburn.wednet.edu
(253) 931-4938

Kyle Carrier
Administrative Assistant
kcarrier@auburn.wednet.edu
(253) 931-4938

Pam Craft
Office Manager
pcraft@auburn.wednet.edu
(253) 931-4938

BELLEVUE
Betty Takahashi
District Homeless Liaison
takahashib@bsd405.org
(425) 456-4241

ENUMCLAW
Anne Chambers
Director of Student Support
Services
anne_chambers@enumclaw.
wednet.edu
(360) 802-7104

FEDERAL WAY
Christopher Willis
Director, Student Support
Services
cwillis@fwps.org
(253) 945-2084

Cindy Wendland
Transportation & Facilities
cwendlan@fwps.org
(253) 945-5965

Cindy Billington
Transportation Specialist
cbilling@fwps.org
(253) 945-5967

HIGHLINE
Aimee Denver
Coordinator, Health Services
denverat@hsd401.org
(206) 631-3251

Antonio Lewis
McKinney-Vento Family
Service Worker
antonio.lewis@
highlineschools.org
(206) 631-3256

Jean Blackburn
McKinney-Vento Liaison
jean.blackburn@
highlineschools.org
(206) 631-3255

ISSAQUAH
Dennis Wright
Director, Career and
Technical Education
wrightd2@issaquah.wednet.edu
(425) 837-7045

Pam Ridenour
Counseling Specialist
pridenour@issaquah.wednet.edu
(425) 837-7671

KENT
Elizabeth Gongora-Knight
McKinney-Vento Liaison
elizabeth.gongora-knight@
kent.k12.wa.us
(253) 373-7099

Rona Popp
Assistant Director,
Student Services
rona.popp@kent.k12.wa.us
(253) 373-7269

LAKE WASHINGTON
Cheryl Chikalla
Program Specialist/Homeless
cchikalla@lwsd.org
(425) 936-1297

Kelly Pease
Director of Intervention
Programs
kpease@lwsd.org
(425) 936-1276

MERCER ISLAND
Jennifer Wright
Executive Director, Learning
and Technology Service
jennifer.wright@
mercerislandschools.org
(206) 236-3445

NORTHSHORE
Cathy Barela
Student Services Specialist
cbarela@nsd.org
(425) 408-7725

Chris Bigelow
Director of Student Services
cbigelow@nsd.org
(425) 408-7726

RENTON
Joan Thordarson
Administrative Assistant
joan.thordarson@
rentonschools.us
(425) 204-2431

Jason Breaker
Assistant Director of Student
and Family Support Services
jason.breaker@rentonschools.us
(425) 204-2466

RIVERVIEW
Ken Heikkila
Director Special Services
heikkilak@riverview.wednet.edu
(425) 844-4515

RIVERVIEW (cont.)
Kimberly Canady
Program Assistant
canadyk@riverview.wednet.edu
(425) 844-4516

SEATTLE
Dinah Ladd
Program Manager,
McKinney-Vento Liaison
djladd@seattleschools.org
(206) 252-0857

Jolene Taylor
McKinney-Vento Coordinator
jetaylor@seattleschools.org
(206) 252-0955

SHORELINE
Pam Kinnaird
Homeless Education Liaison
pamela.kinnaird@
shorelineschools.org
(206) 393-3387

SKYKOMISH
Cindy Pugh
Secretary/Registrar
cpugh@skykomish.wednet.edu
(360) 677-2623 ext.100

Martin Schmidt
Principal/Superintendent
mschmidt@skykomish.wednet.edu
(360) 677-2623 ext.101

SNOQUALMIE VALLEY
Nancy Meeks
Director of Student Services
meeksn@svsd410.org
(425) 831-8015

Rene Reynolds
Secretary
reynoldsr@svsd410.org
(425) 831-8420

TAHOMA
Jennifer Haley
Special Education Records
jhaley@tahomasd.us
(425) 413-3417

Mark Koch
Director of Human Resources
mkoch@tahomasd.us
(425) 413-3402

TUKWILA
Kathleen Gantz
Family Support Coordinator
gantzk@tukwila.wednet.edu
(206) 901-8044

VASHON ISLAND
Donna Donnelly
Assistant to the Superintendent
ddonnelly@vashonsd.org
(206) 463-2121 Ext 7

Stephanie Spencer
Assistant Principal
sspencer@vashonsd.org
(206) 463-8682



This brochure was prepared by the **SEATTLE/KING COUNTY COALITION ON HOMELESSNESS**. Download a printable version, learn more, and support our work at our website: WWW.HOMELESSINFO.ORG

77 S. WASHINGTON STREET, SEATTLE, WA 98104

Each school district in the nation must appoint a "Homeless Education Liaison" who helps homeless students and families access supports and services. Sometimes more than one person carries out these responsibilities. The Liaison for your district may have changed since this brochure was published (August 2014). A list of all Homeless Education Liaisons in Washington state is maintained by the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction: www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/ContactList.aspx

We want to hear from you! Please tell us: How have you used this guide to assist students? What would improve it? Tell us about your experience as a student or parent, or a staff person working to support homeless students' success in school. Write to speakup@homelessinfo.org

UPDATED AUGUST 2014 | Understanding Homeless Students' Education Rights

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HOMELESSINFO.ORG

Students who are homeless have **educational rights** under the McKinney-Vento Act, an important federal law.

If you think a student might be eligible for support under the McKinney-Vento Act, speak with your Liaison!



When are students considered homeless?

Many children and families who are eligible for help do not consider themselves homeless. The McKinney-Vento Act protects the educational rights of homeless children and youth. The definition of homelessness under the Act includes, but is not limited to, children or youth in these circumstances or settings:

- Children or youth in shelters or transitional housing.
- Children or youth living in parks, public spaces, vehicles, abandoned buildings, or other places not meant for people to live.
- Children or youth sharing housing (doubled up or couch-surfing) due to loss of housing or economic hardship.
- Children or youth living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations.
- Unaccompanied children or youth (i.e. not in the physical custody of their parents or guardians).
- Children or youth awaiting foster care (in WA this means the time between a child's initial placement into state care and 30-day shelter care hearing).



Homeless students' rights include:

- To remain enrolled in, and be transported to a student's School of Origin when feasible, even if a student moves across or outside the district. ('School of Origin' means the school last attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled.)
- To be enrolled immediately (even without medical or school records) in the neighborhood school.
- To receive FREE breakfast and lunch in schools that serve both.
- To have barriers addressed so that they can participate in athletics, field trips, and afterschool activities (this could include having certain school fees waived). Parents or guardians should contact school staff for help.
- To get help with basic school supplies, including uniforms, shoes, textbooks, and notebooks. If a student's family cannot afford required supplies, parents or guardians should contact school staff for help.
- To ask for more academic support if a student is struggling with classwork. Parents or guardians should contact school staff for assistance.
- To use the school district's Dispute Resolution Process to appeal a school's decision when there is a disagreement about school selection or enrollment (attending class and participating fully in school activities).

About the Coalition

The Seattle/King County Coalition on Homelessness is an independent county-wide coalition of housing and homeless service providers, advocates, and community groups. We encourage active collaboration among homeless service providers, school staff, parents, and students. Coalition members and volunteers help hundreds of homeless students each year through Project Cool for Back-to-School. We speak up for the smart policies, robust budgets, and strong partnerships needed to help and house our neighbors who are homeless.

LEARN MORE AND JOIN US!
www.homelessinfo.org

Resources

SchoolHouseWA.org features training materials, best practices, and policy analysis of student homelessness in Washington state. The website will re-launch in October 2014.

www.SchoolHouseWA.org

Washington State Office of the Education Ombudsman (OEO) is a free, confidential resource for students and families to turn to if they want to mediate a problem with the school or district. OEO staff help resolve complaints, disputes, and problems between families and Washington State elementary and secondary public schools in all areas that affect student learning.

Toll-free: (866) 297-2597
www.governor.wa.gov/o eo/

The **Education for Homeless Children and Youth** program is part of the state Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI). Staff provide state-wide trainings for Homeless Education Liaisons and help resolve problems that cannot be resolved within the district. Melinda Dyer heads this program.

(360) 725-6050
Melinda.Dyer@k12.wa.us

The **National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)** offers assistance on the Homeless Education Helpline. Assistance is available in English and Spanish. *Ayuda está disponible en inglés y español.*

1-800-308-2145
homeless@serve.org
www.center.serve.org/nche/

Columbia Legal Services' Children and Youth Project works to remove barriers to homeless students' enrollment and retention in Washington public schools. If you have a question or unresolved problem related to homeless students' education, and feel that additional advocacy is warranted, please contact Katara Jordan, Staff Attorney.

Katara.jordan@columbialegal.org