

PUSD Homeless Program Parent and Student Handbook

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Program Contacts

Website: <http://mypusd.prescottschools.com/pusdwp/about/policies/rights-of-homeless-students/>

District Homeless Liaison

928-445-5400 ext. 105
Fax: 928-776-0243

District Homeless Program Coordinator

928-445-5400 ext. 137
Fax: 928-776-0243

State Coordinator (Arizona Department of Education)

Frank Migali
Toll Free: 855-711-3231
Fax: 602-542-5175
frank.migali@azed.gov
Website: <https://www.azed.gov/populations-projects/home/homeless/>

Rights of Homeless Students

According to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act, eligible students have rights to:

- Receive a free, appropriate public education.
- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment.
 - **Schools cannot refuse to enroll a homeless student** for lack of records (e.g., school records, transcript, IEP, MET, birth certificate or immunization records) or proof of a home address.
- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.
- Enroll in the local school; or continue attending their school of origin, if that is your preference and is feasible.
 - If the school district believes that the school you select is not in the best interest of your children, then the district must provide you with a written explanation of its position and inform you of your right to appeal its decision.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if you request this.
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to your children's needs.

“School of Origin” can mean two things:

The last school enrolled in prior to becoming homeless

or

*The last school serving the area where the student was
last permanently housed.*

Program Overview

PUSD's McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Program is a federally funded program for children in the Prescott Unified School District who are "in transition" in their housing situation. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act protects homeless children and youth by providing additional rights and educational support services beyond that offered in the regular classroom setting.

PUSD students, preschool-12th grade, may qualify for certain rights and protections under the federal McKinney-Vento Act if they live in any of the following situations:

- In a shelter
- In a motel or campground due to the lack of an alternative adequate accommodation
- In a car, park, abandoned building, or bus or train station
- Doubled up with other people in someone else's home due to loss of housing or economic hardship
- Children living with non-custodial relatives or friends
- Families who live in substandard housing without access to running water or adequate heating

Screening Process

To get an application:

The *Student Eligibility Form* (application) must be submitted for all students. Ask the front desk at school for an application. They will either have applications or they will refer you to the school's point of contact for the program.

Submitting the application:

Return the application to the staff member you received it from, the school front desk or the Homeless Liaison listed at the bottom of the form.

Screening Process:

Upon receiving the application, the Homeless Liaison will call to discuss the students' housing situation. She will ask several questions and listen for details that indicate eligibility for the program. She must follow federal guidelines.

Transportation

PUSD provides for the transportation rights of homeless students in various ways, and may or may not include those listed below. Each student's situation is evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

School Bus Arrangements

If the student does not live near a bus route for their school of origin, PUSD will assess whether it is in the best interest of the student(s) to add an additional stop or transfer point to bus service in the area.

Mileage Reimbursement

Mileage Reimbursement is one way PUSD may supply transportation for homeless students to attend school-sponsored before or after school activities. Activities that may be covered include tutoring, after-school clubs, sports, and trips to and from bus stops or school for the regular school day (if the bus stop is far away).

Before tracking mileage, **always get approval from the Homeless Liaison for each type of activity.** If approved, the Homeless Liaison will give you a form to fill out with instructions. As of March 2014, the reimbursement rate was \$0.44 per mile. After the form is properly submitted, it may take up to 2 weeks to process it and have a check ready to pick-up at the District Office in downtown Prescott.

Additional Services

Students are eligible for services from the time they are approved for the homeless program through the remainder of that school year.

Expedited Free School Breakfast and Lunch

Students who are approved for the Homeless Program are automatically eligible for the free breakfast and lunch program. The *Free and Reduced Price Meal Application* does not need to be completed. Free meals are usually available within a few days of being approved for the program.

Hungry Kids Project (Weekend Meals)

Hungry Kids Project is a community organization that delivers weekend food packs to students in need at all PUSD schools. School staff distribute the packs to students enrolled in the program. Ask how to enroll your children at the school front desk.

Free Full Day Kindergarten

Full day Kindergarten fees for homeless students will be waived by PUSD.

Head Start

The Homeless Liaison will provide information on Head Start to homeless families with preschool-age children.

Referrals to Community Resources

The Homeless Liaison may be able to provide information on community agencies that provide health and human services.

Title I Services

Students approved for the Homeless Program are automatically eligible for Title I services, even if they are not attending a Title I School. Services include supplemental education programs such as Elementary Remedial Summer School and academic support during the school day.

Limited Services

PUSD has applied for and received a grant to provide additional services to homeless students. Grant funding is limited and unfortunately may not last the entire school year. Grant funded services may include:

School Clothing, School Supplies, and Toiletries

A limited amount of funding may be available for each homeless child each school year for hygiene items, appropriate school clothing, and school supplies that were requested by the student's teachers. The goal of all items provided to the student is to help them be prepared for their school day.

PHS Book Store Fees

Academic fees accrued at the Prescott High School Book Store may be paid for by the Homeless Program. The following are likely to be covered: books, lab fees, art class fees, Activity Fee/ID, and possibly more. Lost book fees will not be covered. If your student has outstanding fees at the bookstore, please ask the Homeless Liaison to look into paying them.

Fees for School-Sponsored Activities

The goal of the program is to help homeless students access as many school activities as they would normally participate in. If funding is available, the following types of school-sponsored activities may be covered:

- Sports
- Kids and Company child care
- After-school clubs, activities and homework assistance

Tutoring

Homeless students in 1st –12th grades with at least one grade of D, F, or N may qualify for after school tutoring at their school.

Summer School

The Homeless Program will pay for a summer school program the student otherwise qualifies for, including:

- Elementary Enrichment Summer School
- Middle School Summer School

- High School Summer School

Dispute Resolution Process

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment for a student eligible under the McKinney-Vento Act –

The child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. PUSD will provide its share of the transportation to the school selected for the duration of the dispute resolution process.

The child, youth, parent, or guardian shall be referred to the District Homeless Coordinator, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute. In the case of an unaccompanied youth, the District Homeless Coordinator will work with the school Principal to ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending the resolution of the dispute.

The District Homeless Coordinator shall work through the expedited dispute resolution process. For Prescott Unified School District, that process involves:

- Referral from District Homeless Liaison with a disputed homeless application to the District Homeless Coordinator.
- The District Homeless Coordinator will communicate directly with the child, youth, parent or guardian. The District Homeless Coordinator is the decision maker to verify eligibility of homeless status. The decision is based on the information the family provides and following eligibility guidelines as stated in the McKinney-Vento Act.
- The District Homeless Coordinator will contact youth, parent, or guardian within 48 hours of receipt of the application. Eligibility determination is made within 48 hours.

PUSD will provide the parent, guardian, or homeless youth with verbal verification of status. If dissatisfied with the school's decision, the parent, guardian or youth may appeal the decision to the state level. Contact information will be provided by District Homeless Coordinator.

Dispute Resolution web page:

<http://www.ade.az.gov/asd/homeless/disputeresolution.asp>