

# Know Your Enrollment Rights

National Center for Youth Law (NCYL)

[www.youthlaw.org](http://www.youthlaw.org)



## Are You and Your Family Experiencing Homelessness or Insecure Housing?

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act protects students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

Students living in the following situations fall within the law's protections:

- ❖ **Doubling-up:** couch surfing, or sharing a living space with friends, family, or strangers, because of economic hardship, loss of housing, or a similar reason
- ❖ **Hotels or motels** because of a lack of alternative housing
- ❖ **Shelters or transitional housing programs:** including domestic violence shelters, homeless shelters, youth shelters, and other transitional housing
- ❖ **Substandard housing**, including spaces that do not have electricity, heat, or water, are infested with vermin or mold, or presents unreasonable dangers
- ❖ **Unsheltered:** living in cars, busses, parks, public buildings, abandoned buildings, the streets, or similar settings
- ❖ **Any other situation that is not fixed, regular, or adequate**

It **does not matter how long** you are living in any of the above situations. You are entitled to additional rights, supports, and services.

## What Are the Rights of Students Experiencing Homelessness?

- **Remain enrolled** in the school they were attending before losing secure housing for that school year
- **Enroll in a new school** where they are living now if it is in the student's best interest
- **Enroll even if they are missing required documents**, including proof of residency, birth certificates, proof of immunization, or prior school records
- **Enroll without a parent or legal guardian signature** if the student is an **unaccompanied youth**, or living without parents or a guardian
- **Enroll after the deadline**
- **Be provided a written explanation** if the school denies enrollment.
- **Challenge school decisions** about enrollment and **remain enrolled** until a final decision is made
- **Privacy** of the information about the student's living situation to others unless they give permission to disclose
- **Free transportation** to attend school and any school-related activities if needed when classes are in-person
- **Assistance with school supplies** including school uniforms, books, and devices

When students are living in the above situations, they are entitled to special rights, protections, and supports to ensure that they have the opportunity to succeed in school. Students have these rights during the entire time they are experiencing homelessness. These rights apply to all homeless students, including those who are not U.S. citizen

## Where Can I Get Help?

To ensure that a student is receiving all of the benefits and services of the McKinney-Vento Act, you should **let your school know of your living situation as soon as possible**. Call your school and ask to speak with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison. Every school district has a liaison to help students experiencing homelessness. They are able to help with enrollment and other services. You can [find your school's liaison here](#). If you need any additional help, you may reach out to:

Taylor Jones  
National Center for Youth Law  
(202) 868-4789 | [tjones@youthlaw.org](mailto:tjones@youthlaw.org)

## Tips for Enrolling Online for the 2020-2021 School Year!

Enrollment in both DCPS and charter schools can be done on a computer, phone, or tablet. You may also contact your child's school to see if they are offering an in-person process. Both the DCPS and the MySchoolDC enrollment packets are available in six languages: English, Spanish, Amharic, Vietnamese, French, and Chinese.

### DCPS Enrollment Process

Submit an Application through [DCPS's process](#) if you are enrolling in:

- Your in-boundary DCPS school. You can find that school [here](#).

#### Helpful tips for filling out the DCPS Enrollment Packet:

- Have an email address that you can access freely
- When the application asks about housing status, be sure to disclose your living situation so that you will be identified as entitled to additional supports and services
- If you do not have the documents requested on the application, or the ability to upload them, then contact the school as soon as possible
- If you receive an "error" but have filled in all required information, check to make sure your phone numbers have dashes "-" and the dates and birthdates have slashes "/"

### My School DC Enrollment Process

Submit a [MySchoolDC](#) Lottery Application if you are enrolling in:

- charter schools
- a DCPS out-of-boundary school,
- Preschool (PreK3)

#### Helpful Tips for Completing the MySchoolDC Application:

- A family account can be created without an email address, but you will want an email or a stable mailing address to receive lottery results and other important information
- You may submit your application while your housing is unstable: If you are experiencing homelessness or living in an unstable housing situation, then you should list your most stable address and phone number where you can receive mail or be contacted by phone. You may also list your case manager as a secondary contact, if applicable. If you are unable to list an address, then reach out to one of the contacts above
- Look out for an email or letter in April with the lottery results, and be sure to enroll your student in matched schools as soon as possible and before the May deadline below

### Important Dates to Remember for the 2021-2022 My School DC Lottery

December 14, 2020 Lottery application opens  
February 1, 2021 Application deadline for 9-12  
March 1, 2021 Application deadline PK3- grade 8  
April 2, 2021 Lottery results are released  
May 3, 2021 Enrollment deadline for matched students

### **Need Additional Assistance?**

If you are having trouble with a D.C. school including identifying the local homeless liaison, getting your student enrolled, or getting your student needed supports, you may contact Taylor Jones for any assistance

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