

How Do I Get More Information or Help?

The primary focus of the H.E.L.P. Office is meeting the educational needs of students who have been identified under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Our specific goals are to (1) eliminate barriers to school enrollment at the school of origin or neighborhood school, (2) improve daily attendance, (3) increase proficiency rates on all high stakes assessments, and (4) increase the graduation rates. The program works closely with all stakeholders to ensure educational stability for students.

If you have additional questions regarding services for students in transition, please contact:

H.E.L.P. Office

School Social Work Services
Hillsborough County Public Schools
Phone: (813) 315-HELP (4357)
Fax: (813) 384-3979
Email: HELPOffice@hcps.net

You may also refer to the school district website:
<https://www.hillsboroughschools.org/helpteam>

Important Questions to Ask Your Child's School:

- Is my child eligible for free lunch?
- Is assistance available for school supplies?
- Is assistance available for uniforms?
- Do you have a pre-school program?
- Do you have before and after school programs?
- Do you have a summer program available?
- If we change schools, can my child's records be transferred to the new school?
- If we move, is transportation available back to this school?
- What can I do if I think my child is falling behind academically?
- Are there tutoring services available for my child?
- What is the best way to communicate with my child's teacher?



Homeless Education and Literacy Program

"Helping Children and Youth"

H.E.L.P. Office

School Social Work Services
Hillsborough County Public Schools
(813) 315-HELP (4357)
Fax: (813) 384-3979
Email: HELPOffice@hcps.net



Helping Children and Youth

Is My Child Eligible?

According to the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, a child or youth is eligible if they *lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence* that includes one (1) of the following:

- Sharing the housing of other persons *temporarily due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason. (doubled-up)*
- Living in emergency shelter, transitional housing, or abandoned in hospitals.
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- Living in motels, hotels (Airbnb), temporary trailer parks, or camping grounds *due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations.*
- Migratory children living in one (1) of the situations above.
- Unaccompanied Youth, not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian **and** living in one (1) of the situations above.

Your child's education is key to their future success. Let us work together to keep your child on track in school while you secure permanent housing.

Your Child's Rights:

Every child has the right to a free and appropriate public education. Florida Statute s.1002.31 requires that all children attend school regularly until they are 16 years old. Children and youth who fit the federal definition of homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act have the right to:

- ✓ Immediate school enrollment and attendance, even in the absence of records required for enrollment at either the ***school of origin*** (the school last attended before they lost their housing) **or** the ***neighborhood school*** (the school they are zoned for based upon their current living situation).
- ✓ Remain at their ***school of origin*** for the duration of the school year.
- ✓ Transportation to and from the "*school of origin*" school for the duration of the school year.*
- ✓ Receive free breakfast and lunch immediately for the duration of the school year.
- ✓ Receive prompt resolutions about school placement, to include special education, bilingual education, gifted, and remedial programs.

**Decisions are made based upon what is in the best interest of the child educationally.*

What Other Services Can My Child Receive?

In addition to services required under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, your child may be able to receive services through the H.E.L.P. Office:

- Academic planning, support, and tutoring.
- Personal care, hygiene, cleaning, school supplies, and school uniforms.
- Literacy skills development training.
- Gas card or HART bus pass while waiting for school bus transportation to start.
- Certification of homeless status for the purpose of tuition and fee waiver for an Unaccompanied Homeless Youth.
- Certification of homeless status for the purpose of accessing health services, a state ID card, a state birth certificate, and applying for Federal Financial Aid.
- Referrals to community agencies.