



Domestic Violence Shelters & Your Child's Education

How the McKinney-Vento Act Protects DV Survivors and Their Children

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law that ensures educational stability and equal access to education for children and youth experiencing homelessness — including those who are temporarily living in domestic violence shelters.

- Families fleeing domestic violence often must relocate suddenly and may lack access to documentation or stable housing.
- Schools cannot require the shelter's address to be disclosed publicly or to the abusive party; confidentiality protections apply.
- The McKinney-Vento liaison can coordinate with the shelter and the parent to maintain the child's stability, privacy, and safety.
- The law is designed to remove barriers — not create them — so a parent's safety situation cannot be used to delay or deny enrollment.

80%

of women who are homeless with children in CA attributed domestic violence as the primary reason.

humanoptions.org

Once identified as McKinney-Vento eligible, the child has the right to:

- Immediate enrollment in school — even without documents such as proof of residence, immunization records, or prior school records.
- Attend their “school of origin” (the school attended before entering the shelter) or enroll in the new local school, whichever is in the child's best interest.
- Receive free transportation to and from the school of origin if requested.
- Access all school programs and services (e.g., special education, counseling, free meals, extracurriculars).
- Protection from stigma or separation due to their living situation.
- Support from a McKinney-Vento liaison, who ensures these rights are upheld and assists with enrollment, transportation, and records.

Step 1: Contact Your McKinney-Vento Liaison

A [full list of CA Liaisons](#) is available on the Capable Kids Website under the “Domestic Violence” resources tab. What you should ask the liaison:

- “What is the full name and contact information of the homeless education liaison for our district/LEA?”
 - “How can we access the rights and protections under McKinney-Vento for my child?”
 - “What support or services are available because of our housing situation?”
 - “How is transportation handled if we keep child in the school of origin?”
 - “What documentation or steps do I need to complete for identification or enrollment?”
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Phone Script - Speaking With The Liaison

What to say – short phone script

“Hello, my name is [First name]. I am currently staying in a domestic violence shelter and need McKinney-Vento assistance to enroll my child. For safety reasons I cannot disclose the shelter address. Please confirm that you will keep our location confidential and tell me what steps are needed to enroll my child and arrange transportation while protecting our privacy.”

If asked for proof of residence: “I can provide documentation from my shelter case manager. Could I have your email so my advocate can send it?”

What to request from the liaison/school (be explicit)

- Confirm in writing that the shelter address will not be entered into public directories or disclosed to staff outside those who need to know.
- Ask for alternative contact instructions (use shelter phone, case manager contact, or a PO Box).
- Request transportation options that won’t reveal your location (e.g., neutral pickup point, school bus stop that is not the shelter).
- Ask for a named liaison who will be your confidential point person and request written confirmation of the plan.
- Ask that school records not include the shelter address or that the address be listed as “confidential – provide to liaison only.” **Explain that the abusive parent still has FERPA rights and can access school documents that may contain your address.**

If The District Resists Confidentiality / Requests The Shelter Address

- Ask to speak to the district's legal counsel or the county homeless liaison.
 - Request that the district accept a shelter advocate's verification of residency instead of the shelter address.
 - If needed, contact local DV legal services or the National Domestic Violence Hotline for support and advocacy.
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Quick List Of Resources

- National Domestic Violence Hotline: 1-800-799-SAFE (7233) or text "START" to 88788
- SchoolHouse Connection (McKinney-Vento resources):
schoolhouseconnection.org
- Local shelter advocate / case manager – your first safety contact