

# Working with School Transportation

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## *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*

**“A federal law designed to increase the school enrollment, attendance, and success of children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. “ NC Homeless Education Program**

**The idea is to remove barriers and provide these students with the same opportunities as their peers.**

**For many, the key to accessing these opportunities is transportation.**

# Outline Some Key Aspects of the Liaison

- Who you are and what you do
  - At least in regard to how you'll be working together
- Identify homeless students
- Determine “Best Interest” regarding school of origin
- Work with Transportation to ensure homeless students receive transportation
- Handle disputes

# Lay the Legal Groundwork

- Stay Non-Technical
- Keep it simple and specific to transportation
- What do we have to do for people who qualify?
  - Broadly: Make sure their school life isn't upended because of this trying time in their home life
    - Includes getting them to their assigned school and home from it (No matter where)
    - What extra services or considerations beyond that?
  - How quickly?
    - And what does that really mean?
- Answer the "How long we have to do it" question
  - School Year?
  - Multiple Years?
  - How often is the best interest of a student reassessed?
- Let them know that you're there for support and when to contact you
  - For example, if the kid isn't coming to school or using transportation

# Who Qualifies and Why

- What are the allowed factors for consideration?
- Who decides?
- Focus on corner case examples
  - Kindergartener with potentially 2 extra hours of ride time each way who has little attachment to their current school
  - Highschool student in their senior year at a school their parents went to and they've been at since they were a freshman
- Double Down Emotionally
  - Of all the kids, we owe it to these kids to make school the eye of the storm

# *Feasibility Sample Criteria (Stole this One! Thanks Lisa!)*

**Continuity of  
instruction**

**Age of the student**

**Safety issues**

**Expected length of  
stay in temporary  
housing**

**Likely area where  
the family will find  
permanent housing**

**Need for special  
educational  
programs**

**Distance of  
commute and  
impact on student's  
education**

**School placement  
of siblings**

**Time remaining in  
the school year**

# Also Say What's Not

It's "Best Interest of the Student" not the Adults

- Not Cost
- Not Overtime
- Not Availability of Drivers
- Not Convenience or Existing Routes

It most resembles IEP 'related services' transportation

# Support – Talk Up Front

- Before determining “Best Interest” make sure to understand what transportation might look like
  - When would pick up be?
  - When would drop off be?
  - How long would they be riding versus waiting?
    - Siblings in the next county may both be picked up at 5:30 AM but one might start school at 7:30 and the other 8:30
  - Who will supervise?
- Understand extracurricular activities and transportation and how your district handles
- Understand what happens with inclement weather
  - Especially if in a different district



# Transportation Department Difficulties

- Same problems as everyone
  - Not enough staff
  - Not enough money
  - Not enough time
  - Endlessly Frustrating Parents
    - From “Don’t care” .... all the way to the “my little angel”
- Aggravating the Situation
  - Coordinating across district lines
  - Short Timelines to Plan and Implement
  - Outsized impact on work effort to coordinate for a small number of students
  - Students/Parents Not Following Through

# Flexibility

- Let them know that they have leeway to determine what transportation will look like
  - Could be contracted
  - Could be school bus with a transfer between two buses
  - Could be public transit if available and age-appropriate
- Consider other options like mileage reimbursement

(Note: Giving the parent actual fuel might not be legal as our fuel is tax free; Check with legal)

# Have a Process

- Know who is involved
- Try to have the process electronically available to monitor progress if possible
- From Identification and Verification of qualification
- Transportation needs
- Creating a transportation plan
  - And emergency plan if needed short term
- How to note concerns

# Offer Support

- Communicate Regularly
- Wide Gamut of Personalities
- Recommend a contract
  - If not for everyone, at the first sign of trouble
  - To contain the Plan
  - Responsibilities of the Parties
  - Consequences
- Potentially be involved in searching for regular contract transportation providers or even in the bid process

# Support Finding More Funding

(Thanks Again Lisa!)

**McKinney-Vento Subgrant Funding – 3 year grants (Not much but perhaps to cover the emergency transportation!)**

**Title I Set-Aside Funding**

**American Rescue Plan – Homeless Children & Youth(ARP-HCY) Funding**

**State Funds for the Extraordinary Costs of Transportation for Students Experiencing Homeless and in Foster Care**

**Other grants**

# Support with New Ideas

- Using staff/drivers who live near student's temporary address
- Provide a way to track issues with students/parents
- Contract with other individuals and organizations  
(Where they're staying, school system employees, DSS, City transit, etc.)
- Agree to reimburse parents or even the student!
- Ask liaison, parent, or even older students for their ideas on how to make it work
- Create relationships with neighboring LEAs

# Other Ideas

- Consider a 'lower impact' Boundary with Transportation
- Within it, transportation can move more quickly
  - Best interest might not need to include a full picture of a transportation plan but a general one
  - Could move to a shorter process for these students
  - Might involve different or less staff time to complete
- Outside of the Boundary more planning required
  - Might use a temporary solution while a full plan is created
  - Develop a more complete plan of what transportation would look like daily
  - Potential factor into a final best interest determination because time and distance would have a bigger impact on the student's day and studies

# Number One Thing

- Transportation staff want a strong advocate for the child's best interest (That's the Liaisons!)
  - Who will verify qualifications
  - Who will inform parents of their rights AND their responsibilities
  - Who will review situations for changes periodically
  - Who will address issues with parents and students which are not doing their part (not showing up)
  - Who knows that it isn't a buffet where the parent gets to choose how it will be done; but who can negotiate solutions
  - Who knows best interest is NOT always whatever the parent wants
  - Who knows best interest is NOT always transportation back to the school of origin
- Trust is Key



# Don't forget the “Why”

- School transportation staff generally believe in the mission
  - If they don't -- they'll soon be in a different business
    - Just like educators
- They're also logistics people, they'll find a way
- Share Real Successes (if not of those in your county due to privacy, maybe of others)
- Make them Believe

# Transportation Office Staff



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