

North Carolina Homeless Education Program

Hurricane Florence 2018 Disaster Response Calls Frequently Asked Questions

This FAQ was created from the various questions raised during the Hurricane Florence Response Calls held during September and October 2018.

Identification

Q: If a family is in a shelter and cannot currently access their home, are they eligible for McKinney-Vento identification and services?

A: Being evacuated or staying in a shelter temporarily does not automatically qualify a student as McKinney-Vento. Eligibility must be determined on whether the student lost housing.

Identifications cannot be made official while school is out of session; just as in the case of summer break. Determinations of eligibility must be made on the circumstance present at the time school resumes.

Some families may have been evacuated to a shelter but were able to return home. Those families would not be eligible under McKinney-Vento. One possible scenario to demonstrate this point would be:

A family evacuated under a mandatory evacuation order. Their home was not damaged, and they have returned home. They were out of the home for at least one night. Would they be qualified as McKinney-Vento? *No; they did not lose their housing.*

Other families may have been evacuated and were not able to return home due to destruction of the property, nor were they able to secure other permanent housing. These families would qualify under McKinney-Vento.

Q: Is there a time limit on homeless identifications made related to this natural disaster?

A: Eligibility for McKinney-Vento services is for an academic year; typically, LEA school years end in June. Students who are still not in permanent housing at the close of each academic year, should be reassessed just prior to the start of the new school year to see if they still meet eligibility criteria.

If the student is eligible for services at the start of the new academic year, then best interest decisions should be made on school of attendance and services provided.

North Carolina Homeless Education Program

Hurricane Florence 2018 Disaster Response Calls Frequently Asked Questions

Q: If a family who had been identified as McKinney-Vento before the hurricane also lost temporary housing due to the storm, would they still qualify as McKinney-Vento?

A: Yes. If the original identification was made within this current academic year, the student(s) would be eligible for services throughout the 2018-2019SY, regardless of whether they lost housing again or retained housing.

Q: If a student was evacuated to another county, would that affect their eligibility?

A: No. Keep in mind that being evacuated doesn't automatically qualify a student under the Act. However, if the student loses housing or is able to return home, but that home would be considered "substandard," the student would be eligible for McKinney-Vento services. The next step after making a determination of eligibility is to consider "best interest" on whether remaining at the school of origin or attending the school of residence is in the best interest of the student. ESSA indicates that the assumption should be to remain at the school of origin, but in some cases, this may not be in the student's best interest.

Q: How long do you have to be in a situation to be a homeless student?

A: In order to be eligible for McKinney-Vento services a student must lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence for at least one night. Students cannot be identified "before" a crisis, or after they have secured permanent housing.

Q: If a child was in a shelter during the storm or had to leave their home during the storm, would they be considered homeless?

A: Eligibility is based on fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. There were many families forced to evacuate. If the family can return to their home and it is livable and not demolished, the family would not qualify as McKinney-Vento. However, if the family is not able to return to their home due to the home being demolished, or upon returning finds the home to be substandard/unlivable, the family would qualify as McKinney-Vento.

North Carolina Homeless Education Program

Hurricane Florence 2018 Disaster Response Calls Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Is there a best practice for identifying families who have been displaced? Should we send out a schoolwide notification/survey or work individually?

A: The law requires individual review for identification, but in this case, you may be able to say that a geographical area may indicate eligibility (i.e. an entire neighborhood is destroyed). Be very careful about making these more general identifications; however, the U.S. Dept of Education has allowed this in prior disaster situations. It is always advisable to reconfirm individually, if possible, to ensure you are not making an incorrect assessment of anyone's situation.

Pender County used a Qualtrics questionnaire to help identify their students, and this resource will be shared for use by interested LEAs.

Pamlico County worked with their bus drivers to execute a questionnaire/survey to identify qualifying families. That resource will be shared, if interested.

Q: Would a family who lived in a camper and had to move due to the rising flood waters be qualified as McKinney-Vento?

A: Make sure that the family didn't have to just evacuate and then was able to return. If they could return, they would not qualify for services. If the family is unable to return or they do not have any other location on which to permanently settle, they would qualify as McKinney-Vento.

Transportation

Q: Would a school district have to continue mileage reimbursement to a parent for a student who was able to return to the original home in the following situation?

Student/family was displaced due to the hurricane. Eligibility was established, and student was identified as McKinney-Vento. School of origin was in student's best interest and family needed transportation assistance. Mileage reimbursement was the method used.

A: No; if a family who is receiving mileage reimbursement while displaced can return home, and there is LEA transportation being offered from that area to the school the student is attending, then the general method of transportation can be utilized for the McKinney-Vento student. Mileage reimbursement to the parent can be ceased at that point.

Keep in mind that it is the local school district that determines the type of transportation to offer and if circumstances change during the school year, the mode of transportation may need to be modified as well.

North Carolina Homeless Education Program

Hurricane Florence 2018 Disaster Response Calls Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Can a transportation contract be reviewed by semester?

A: Yes. It is acceptable to review transportation contracts and the usage of the provided transportation on a periodic basis. When creating a transportation contract, be clear on expectations and how the transportation will be provided. Be sure to include a clause in the agreement that states that the transportation arrangement will be reviewed periodically throughout the year.

In this disaster situation, many roads currently flooded and not accessible may reopen during the school year, so transportation arrangements may need to be modified as road access changes.

Q: If an LEA uses mileage reimbursement to provide transportation for an identified student, should they use the state reimbursement rate or a local reimbursement rate?

A: The McKinney-Vento Act does not indicate specific mileage reimbursement rates. It is best practice to utilize a rate that is similar to or the same as other reimbursement rates being used in that LEA or in adjoining LEAs in order to provide comparable services to families who may be accessing services in these locations.

There is no set reimbursement rate. Some LEAs use the state rate, while others use a flat rate or similar rate being used for other programs in their LEA (such as EC). Work with your Transportation Department to work out these details. Some LEAs are instituting hub stations for transportation. Make sure that it is still in the student's best interest to stay at the school of origin; if so, work to provide transportation services.

Q: What transportation strategies would be helpful as school districts work toward arranging transportation for identified students?

A: Some strategies to consider as you work to provide transportation to identified students might include:

1. Communicating with other adjoining LEAs to brainstorm options between locations
2. Setting up hub stops where multiple students can be picked up instead of door-to-door service
3. Reimbursing mileage for those with access to transportation

North Carolina Homeless Education Program

Hurricane Florence 2018 Disaster Response Calls Frequently Asked Questions

Q: What is the typical maximum distance for a bus to pick up a child when arranging special transportation back to school of origin?

A: There is not a specific distance specified under the law. Distances differ from LEA to LEA; topography may affect this (i.e. in mountains or coastal areas where ferry travel is needed). Also consider that in the eastern part of NC, there may still be some roads that are inaccessible for extended periods of time. Look at typical best interest factors when determining best interest for a child's transportation and school of attendance.

Resources

Q: Where can McKinney-Vento disaster relief information/resources be found?

A: McKinney-Vento disaster relief information can be found on the NCHPEP website on the [Connecting Schools and Displaced Students webpage](#). Many of these same resources, along with additional information on preparedness, are also available from the [NCHPEP webpage, Disaster Preparation and Response](#).

Q: How would an LEA receive resources being provided by NCHPEP, but is not able to receive mail or shipments yet?

A: Please contact NCHPEP through your Program specialist or Lisa Phillips to indicate what your available methods of receipt are. NCHPEP will be happy to work with LEAs to provide needed materials, whether electronically or by delivering the resources in person. Boxes are already packed at the office for affected LEAs. If you cannot receive a shipment yet, our staff is available to bring the resources directly to you in your current working location. All resources are at no cost to the LEA.

North Carolina Homeless Education Program

Hurricane Florence 2018 Disaster Response Calls Frequently Asked Questions

School Selection

Q: When an identified student does not remain in his/her school of origin (SOO), and the school of residence (SOR) is in another LEA, should the SOO liaison contact the SOR liaison to advise of the pending enrollment?

A: Yes. Be sure to smooth the transition of the identified student by contacting the receiving LEA to make them aware of the student's identification under the Act and provide any appropriate information to facilitate the new enrollment.

Contact information for all liaisons in NC is available on the NCHPEP website on the [Local Liaison page](#). Click on Liaison Contacts and download the Liaison Contact List. If you need assistance in locating contact information, please contact your program specialist.

Subgrants and Title I Set-Aside

Q: Can subgrant funds be used to help defray cost of excess transportation costs?

A: Yes. Subgrant funding can be used to help defray excess transportation costs. If your current subgrant does not include that as a current activity, you may need to submit an amendment to the State Coordinator, (lphillip@serve.org), stating you want to amend your current subgrant activities to include defraying excess transportation costs. Lisa will process your request and provide you with authorization. Additionally, the 10% cap usually placed on this activity can be lifted. Also, within the Title I set-aside funds, there is no cap on the dollar amount that can be used for excess transportation costs; however, you must be able to demonstrate that all other academic needs are being met through other means.

Q: What other expenses are allowable with subgrant and Title I set-aside funds that might be appropriate for students affected by the hurricane and subsequent flooding?

A: Subgrant funding can also assist with supports such as tutoring and extracurricular activities. Title I funding can also provide assistance with needed academic supports. Check with your Title I Director on what is currently in this year's plan.

North Carolina Homeless Education Program

Hurricane Florence 2018 Disaster Response Calls Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Are there other resources outside of subgrant funding, Title I set-aside funding and LEA funding to assist with other unique student needs, such as extracurricular sports?

A: As shared on our call by liaisons many organizations are beginning to offer support, such as local banks including [SECU](#). Jeff Bezos, founder of Amazon, also has funding available to help young homeless families. Another organization identified on the SchoolHouse Connection website is [Donors Choose](#). This organization is working to support teachers in devastated areas recover needed classroom materials.

Keep in mind that these are merely suggestions based on information shared during conference calls.

Q: What school fees are districts typically paying? Does that continue through the year or until homelessness is resolved?

A: All typical activities considered allowable under subgrant parameters as well as allowable under Title I or Title I set-aside activities also will be allowable for hurricane victims. Don't forget to look for ways to "waive" fees or locate other financial resources before tapping into these federal funds.

Data Collection

Q: What is the best way to capture McKinney-Vento eligible student information for data collection purposes?

A: Use the NCHPEP tracking tool entitled, "LEA McKinney-Vento Student Identification Tracking Log in Disaster Situations" (available on the [NCHPEP Connecting Schools and Displaced Students webpage](#)). This is the form that was shared in our original email to affected school districts.

School districts can begin to compile student information for families currently displaced even though school is not in session. If the student can return to a home which would not be considered "substandard," place a comment in the comments section indicating that the student returned to permanent housing.

Student information, including qualifying younger preschool-aged siblings of eligible students, should be entered into this Excel spreadsheet for specific tracking purposes. A new form would be generated for each new disaster as it occurs. Directions for its use are included in the form; however, you must include the date of identification, the student's name, student ID number, and services provided.

The State Coordinator's office will request this form on June 15th when you submit your PowerSchool annual data submission. These students will also need to be entered into your

North Carolina Homeless Education Program

Hurricane Florence 2018 Disaster Response Calls Frequently Asked Questions

PowerSchool collection so that all students identified in this current academic year are captured and submitted in the annual data collection.

Q: I know we count younger siblings in the home. What are the limits of reporting older siblings?

A: Currently, we are still collecting data not only on the younger qualifying siblings of identified students, but also on their school-aged, but out-of-school siblings. The upper age limit in NC is 21 unless the student is EC; that upper age limit is 24 in NC. Additional details on this topic can be found in the Data Collection User Guide beginning on page 14. The Guide can be accessed on the [Data Collection web page](#).

Q: If students who were displaced come to my school for enrollment, do I place them on my disaster tracking log or does the prior school put the family on their tracking log?

A: If the student you encounter did NOT attend school in their prior LEA after the disaster, they should be placed on the receiving LEA's tracking log and NOT the original LEA's tracking log. That student will also go into the PowerSchool annual data submission in June.

However, if the student attended even one day in the prior LEA after the disaster, both LEAs should place the student on their tracking log, as well as enter the student in PowerSchool for the annual June data submission.

Q: What happens if a student ends up on two tracking logs?

A: Once an LEA submits to our office the electronic Excel spreadsheet, we will be able to combine all submissions and remove any duplicate student numbers. All LEAs serving an identified student during the same academic school year should report that student in PowerSchool. Once your data is submitted, NCDPI will remove duplicates before submitting to US Dept. of Education.

North Carolina Homeless Education Program

Hurricane Florence 2018 Disaster Response Calls Frequently Asked Questions

- Q: We have had several students who stated they are displaced by the storm, but it is common knowledge that they were not displaced since their homes were not flooded. Do I still list them on the tracking log and/or enter them into PowerSchool for the annual data submission?**
- A:** If an LEA does not believe a family is McKinney-Vento eligible, speak with that family about your decision and provide them with written notice of decision. The family will have the right of dispute and all dispute protocols should be followed. Make every effort to resolve the dispute locally by working with the family; if you need assistance/guidance on the dispute process don't hesitate to contact your program specialist for assistance.

Services Offered

- Q: Will all students affected by the hurricane and resulting flooding qualify for free school meals?**
- A:** Yes. NCDPI has indicated that within the first 30 days of returning to school, all students in hurricane affected areas will be receiving free school meals. Keep in mind that all students identified as McKinney-Vento eligible receive free school meals under the provisions of the Act. The only way to be deemed eligible for free meals is through DSNAP, McKinney-Vento or filling out an application. If identified through any of these programs, Child Nutrition will serve the student through the remainder of this school year and 30 days into the next school year.

Child Nutrition shared that if you were in one of the 28 counties with a Major Disaster Declaration in NC, families are to be fed free of charge through October 31st. Waivers expire on October 31st. If there is a need for an extension of your district's waiver, Child Nutrition needs to be notified. NCHPEP will work with liaisons to gather feedback no later than October 15th to share with Child Nutrition.

If you have additional questions, please contact your program specialist directly.

State Coordinator

[Lisa Phillips](#)

NC Homeless Education Program
Office: 336-315-7491

Regional Contacts

[Paullett Wall](#), Program Specialist

Northeast, Southeast, North Central and Sandhills
Office: 336-315-7407
Cell: 336-455-0062

[Patricia Lentz](#), Program Specialist

Southwest, Piedmont-Triad, Northwest, and Western
Office: 336-315-7402
Cell: 336-681-7561