

# FLORIDA PRE-K-12 STUDENTS DISPLACED BY HURRICANE IRMA: YOU HAVE THE *RIGHT* TO ATTEND SCHOOL!

If you are a student attending public pre-K-12 schools in Florida and have recently been displaced by Hurricane Irma, you may have education rights for support and services under federal law.



## WHAT LAW PROTECTS ME?

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is **a federal law that allows students who do not have a permanent place to live to stay in their same schools even if they move outside of their school districts, or to immediately enroll in the new district wherever they are.**

## WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Generally, students who lack a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence are eligible, including:

- ☐ Students living with friends or relatives due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- ☐ Students living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or campgrounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- ☐ Students living in emergency or transitional shelters
- ☐ Students who have a primary nighttime residence not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- ☐ Students living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- ☐ Children abandoned in hospitals
- ☐ Children of migrant workers who are in similar situations

## WHAT ARE MY RIGHTS?

- ☐ To go to school, no matter where you live or how long you have lived there;
- ☐ To go to the school that is in your best interest, including:
  - Staying in the school you were enrolled in before being displaced, with adequate transportation provided to get you back;
  - Going to any school you would be eligible to attend based on your new residence, with comparable transportation to what other regularly housed students receive;
- ☐ To be *immediately* enrolled in school without typically required enrollment records or without parental or guardian signature for unaccompanied youth, and even if application or enrollment deadlines have been missed during any period of homelessness;
- ☐ To participate fully in school activities including extracurricular activities;
- ☐ To receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;
- ☐ To be automatically enrolled in free school meal programs;

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- ☐ To receive related school services that you may need;
- ☐ To stay in the same school for the rest of the academic year even if permanently housed;
- ☐ To be free from harassment, isolation, and stigmatization;
- ☐ If the school does not believe you have the right to attend that school, you have the right to remain enrolled pending any appeals, to receive a written explanation of the reasons, and to receive assistance from the district's homeless liaison to dispute a school's decision about eligibility, school selection, or enrollment.
- ☐ Children with disabilities who are living in similar situations may have additional rights under the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act, including the right to needed changes to their Individualized Education Program as a result of the hurricane. Services to address the impact of trauma from the hurricane may be requested.



## WHOM TO CALL FOR HELP?

If you think you are eligible under the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act, please get in touch with the local school district McKinney-Vento liaison:

**<https://app1.fldoe.org/flbpso/nclbchoice/bpsDirectory/directory.aspx>**

*For additional questions or concerns, you can also contact the following:*

**Florida Department of Education – 850-245-0479**

**National Center for Homeless Education Office – 1-800-308-2145 | [homeless@serve.org](mailto:homeless@serve.org)**

**U.S. Department of Education – 1-844-348-4082 | [Irmarelief@ed.gov](mailto:Irmarelief@ed.gov)**

*For legal assistance or referral to a legal advocate:*

**National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty – 202-638-2535 | [email@nlchp.org](mailto:email@nlchp.org)**

**Southern Legal Counsel – 352-271-8890 | [slc@southernlegal.org](mailto:slc@southernlegal.org)**