

NATIONAL LAW CENTER ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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As Shutdown Puts Families at Risk of Homelessness, Federal Law Protects Children's School Rights

(January 25, 2019, Washington, D.C.) – Over 2.5 million children experience homelessness each year in the U.S., and advocates fear their ranks will increase due to the continuing government shutdown.

As the 800,000 federal government employees currently furloughed or working without pay miss their second paycheck today, some will be unable to pay their rent or mortgage--putting them and their families at risk of homelessness. More than two million other low-income families rely on government rental subsidies to help pay their rent, subsidies that are only guaranteed through February 28th.

To help these families and their children, the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (the Law Center) published today two toolkits for families experiencing homelessness—including those doubled up with others after losing their own housing—that address the education rights of their children, which are protected under federal law.

“The current federal government shutdown will inevitably increase homelessness for families and children in America--from the maintenance crew members at the Smithsonian Museums to security guards at courthouses, many government employees and government contractors live paycheck to paycheck and don't have the savings to survive this shutdown,” said Maria Foscarinis, executive director of the Law Center.

Homelessness is traumatic, especially for children, who lose their neighborhood, friendships, routines, and even school. But the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) protects the rights of homeless children to stay in their school-- to ensure that amid all of these changes, school remains a constant for children, and a place where they can retain friendships, teachers, and a chance for a better future.

“The education provisions of McKinney-Vento ensures that the loss of one's housing doesn't have a downward spiral effect on a child's education by requiring schools to prioritize the educational needs of this vulnerable population,” said Eric Tars, legal director at the Law Center. “It's important that families know their children have a right to stay in, and be transported back

to, their school, even if they don't consider themselves homeless because they're doubled up with family or friends.”

Under the education provisions of McKinney-Vento, students whose families have unstable housing or are doubled-up with relatives or friends have many important rights, including the right to stay in the school they were attending before they lost their housing, the right to enroll in the school where they are now staying without cumbersome paperwork or delays, the right to school services to help them stay in school (including clothing, tutoring, school supplies, and more), and the right to free transportation back to their old neighborhood school if they choose to remain enrolled there.

“Whether as a result of the shutdown or some other catastrophic event, children who are experiencing homelessness have the right to stable education. These toolkits are designed to help parents understand their children’s educational rights and advocate to ensure those rights are respected,” said Foscarinis.

The *Know Your Rights Toolkits for Families* are available now. Find the edition for New York [here](#) and the federal edition [here](#).

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The [National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty \(the Law Center\)](#) is the only national organization dedicated solely to using the power of the law to prevent and end homelessness. With the support of a large network of pro bono lawyers, we address the immediate and long-term needs of people who are homeless or at risk through outreach and training, advocacy, impact litigation, and public education.