



AN INTERVIEW CHECKLIST FOR SUPPORTING SCHOOL SELECTION: PARENTS

Adapted with permission from NCHE's [Guiding the Discussion on School Selection](#).

The McKinney-Vento Act provides a child or youth identified as homeless the right to attend either the school of origin or the local school, according to the child or youth's best interest. The *school of origin* is the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled, including a preschool. The *local school* is any public school that housed students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend. Local educational agencies (LEAs) must make best interest determinations about school selection that:

- presume that staying in the school of origin is in the best interest of the child or youth;
- consider specific student-centered factors;
- prioritize the wishes of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth; and
- include a written explanation and notice of the right to appeal if the LEA determines that remaining in the school of origin is not in the best interest of the child or youth.

School district homeless liaisons and other school personnel play a critical role in helping parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness evaluate best interest. This brief provides a guide for school selection conversations with parents and guardians. Involving parents and guardians fully in the school selection process can reduce the likelihood of disputes or unnecessary school changes and respects the role of parents and guardians in their child's education.

Step One: Explain the rights and significance of school selection

Thank the parents/guardians for speaking with you and let them know that while it is the LEA's responsibility to determine the best school placement for their child, the LEA must prioritize school stability and the parents'/guardians' wishes, and you are here to support them in this process. As appropriate, acknowledge the challenges of the family's living circumstances and the importance of making sure that their child is in a school setting that supports his or her academic success and overall well-being during this difficult time.

Step Two: Help the parents/guardians consider their options

Explain to the parents/guardians that you can help them consider whether the school of origin or local school would best meet their child's current needs by asking them a few important questions. Remind the parents/guardians that they may change their wishes about school placement later if their housing circumstances or priorities change or if their child's needs change.

School of Origin Considerations (Check if yes)		Local School Considerations (Check if yes)	
<input type="checkbox"/>	Overall continuity Has your child attended the school of origin for a long time?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Overall continuity Has your child attended the school of origin for only a brief time?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Length of anticipated stay at current residence Do you expect that you and your child will have to move again very soon, or are you unsure how long you can stay?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Length of anticipated stay at current residence Do you expect that you and your child will be able to stay where you are staying now for a while?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Time of year Is it late in the academic year?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Time of year Is it early in the academic year?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal safety of the student Does the school of origin have advantages for the safety of your child?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Personal safety of the student Does the local school have advantages for the safety of your child?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Interaction with peers Is maintaining school friends important to your child's emotional well-being, meaningful school experience, and participation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Interaction with peers Would your child benefit from developing relationships with school peers who live closer to his/her new community?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Academic strength Is your child likely to fall far behind if he/she transfers to another school?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Academic strength Is your child likely to recover academically from a school transfer?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Social and emotional state Has your child developed strong ties to the current school, and does not want to leave the school? Do changes in the environment or routine provoke anxiety or other difficulties for your child?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social and emotional state Has your child experienced challenges at the current school, and/or does not mind transferring to a new school?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Impact of the commute on the student's education Do the advantages of continuing to attend the school of origin outweigh any potential disadvantages presented by the commute?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Impact of the commute on the student's education Would a shorter commute help your child's concentration in, attitude toward, or readiness for school?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Student's need for special instruction Does your child receive, or is he/she currently being evaluated for, special education or other special services at school? Is it best for your child to continue receiving those services or complete the evaluation at the school of origin?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Student's need for special instruction If your child receives, or is currently being evaluated for, special education or other special services at school, can the local school better meet your child's needs?
<input type="checkbox"/>	Participation in extracurricular activities Is your child active in extracurricular activities that are meaningful and important to him/her at the school of origin, and will your child be able to continue those activities while living in your current living situation?	<input type="checkbox"/>	Participation in extracurricular activities Would your child be better able to take advantage of extracurricular activities, if he/she so desired, at the local school?
Total checks:		Total checks:	

Review the responses and their significance in determining the school placement. If the LEA determines that the appropriate school is DIFFERENT from that selected by the parents/guardians, explain to the parents/guardians that the LEA will provide them with a written explanation of the LEA's determination—including a statement regarding their right to appeal.

Step Three: Ensure continuity of instruction in the current school or a smooth transition to the new school

Staying in the school of origin: Explain to the parents/guardians that, if remaining in the school of origin is in the best interest of their child, transportation will be provided to the student upon their request. With sensitivity, encourage the parents to inform the school promptly of any changes in residence and to communicate openly about their circumstances and unique needs so that teachers and staff can do their best to support the student's academic success and overall well-being.

Transferring to a new school: If enrolling in the local school is the best option for their child, explain to the parents/guardians that the homeless liaison in the district of origin will contact the liaison in the district in which their child is now living (if these are two different districts) to facilitate immediate enrollment. Explain that the local school must remove any barriers to enrollment that are created by homelessness, including transportation barriers.

Work with parents/guardians to make the transition at a time when disruption can be minimized, such as at the end of a grading period or over a holiday break. With sensitivity, encourage the parents/guardians to communicate openly with the new school about their circumstances and unique needs so that teachers and staff can do their best to support the student's academic success and overall well-being.