



Federal law is meant to assist homeless schoolkids: letter to the editor

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Other Voices

By

Friday's **Plain Dealer** article about the high degree of mobility of Northeast Ohio students raised an important issue facing our schools. Students who change schools often do not perform as well. The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a law created to address this problem. The definition of "homeless" under McKinney-Vento is much broader than one might expect: A child may be considered homeless in several situations, including living in a homeless shelter or car, doubling up with family or friends, or living in a home that is not adequate.

McKinney-Vento helps children with issues like enrollment in a new school, even if they are without all of the documents normally required (e.g. birth certificates, utility bills), and with district-provided transportation to keep the child at his or her last school, even if he or she is not now staying close to the school or is not even in the same school district.

McKinney-Vento requires that every district and charter school have a homeless children and youth school district liaison, who helps families in this situation. Districts also have an obligation to proactively identify children considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. Families in this situation may reach out to their district to request the protections provided under McKinney-Vento.

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