

## **INSTRUCTIONS FOR COMPLETING THE ENROLLMENT FORM – RESIDENCY QUESTIONNAIRE**

### **Purpose of the Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire**

All LEAs are required to identify students experiencing homelessness. Additionally, all LEAs that receive Title I funds must ask enrolling students about their housing status. SED encourages all LEAs regardless of whether they receive Title I funds to do the same. To collect this information, LEAs may:

1. Use the Model Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire attached here,
2. Update/modify the Model Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire to address the needs of the LEA, or
3. Incorporate the housing status question from the Model Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire into the LEA's Enrollment Form or other documents already used by the LEA during the enrollment process.

If an LEA elects the third option and incorporates the housing status question into the LEA's Enrollment Form, the LEA should take steps to ensure that a student's housing status does not become a part of the student's permanent record, because of the sensitive nature of this information. Please see the section titled "Confidentiality" (below) for information about how and when housing information may be shared within the LEA.

### **Who should fill out the Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire?**

A Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire should be filled out for all students enrolling in school and for all students who have a change of address in grades preschool-12. Preschool includes any LEA program for 3-5 year olds, such as pre-k, Head Start, or Even Start. The Form - Questionnaire should be completed by the student's parent, person in parental relation, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, by the student directly.

### **Confidentiality**

**Student housing information should be kept confidential to the maximum extent possible. This information should only be shared with LEA/school staff members who need information about housing status to ensure that the student's educational needs are met.** To this end, LEAs may share a student's completed **Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire** with LEA personnel such as:

1. the LEA liaison,
2. the registrar,
3. the student's teachers, and/or guidance counselor, and
4. the LEA staff member responsible for reporting data to SED

**However, this information should only be shared with the above staff members to the extent that it will enable them to better meet the educational needs of the student in question and to fulfill reporting requirements mandated by SED.**

Other than the above uses, housing information **should be kept confidential** and generally **should not be shared** with other LEA/school personnel due to its sensitive nature and the stigma attached to being labeled homeless. LEAs are also encouraged to seek out ways of preventing Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaires and housing information from becoming a part of a student's permanent record.

### **Discussing the Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire with Students and Families**

In reviewing the Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire with parents, persons in parental relation, and unaccompanied youth, LEAs should emphasize that the purpose of gathering the information is to ensure that students in temporary housing arrangements are provided with the rights and services to which they are entitled under the McKinney-Vento Act. These rights and services include:

1. The right to stay in the same school the student had been attending before losing his/her housing or the last school attended (both known as the school of origin),
2. The right to immediate enrollment for students who decide to transfer schools, even if the student does not have all of the documents normally for enrollment,
3. Transportation services if the student continues to attend the school of origin,
4. Categorical eligibility for Title I services if offered in the LEA,
5. Categorical eligibility for free meals if offered in the LEA, and
6. Access to services provided with McKinney-Vento funds if available in the LEA.

The LEA should also ensure that the parent, person in parental relation, unaccompanied youth is aware that the student's housing status will be kept confidential and will only be shared with those LEA staff responsible for providing services to the student and those responsible for keeping track of how many students are identified as living in temporary housing in the LEA.

LEAs are advised to explain to parents that if a parent claims that her/his child is living in temporary housing, and the LEA wishes to conduct an investigation to verify this information, the LEA may conduct a home visit. However LEAs **cannot contact a landlord or building superintendent** to verify a student's housing status. Contacting a landlord or building superintendent may be a violation of FERPA, a federal law, and may put the family at risk of losing its housing. If the student is living in a doubled up situation, it may also lead to loss of housing for the primary tenants.

### **If the Parent, Person in Parental Relation, or Unaccompanied Youth Declines to Fill Out the Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire**

If the parent, person in parental relation, or unaccompanied youth declines to complete the Enrollment Form - Residency Questionnaire, the LEA should note on the form that the parent, person in parental relation, or unaccompanied youth declined to provide the information requested.

### **Completing the Form**

If a parent, person in parental relation, or unaccompanied youth enrolling in school indicates that a student is living in one of the five temporary housing arrangements, the school may not require proof to verify where the student is living before enrolling the student. The five temporary housing arrangements are listed below:

1. In a shelter,
2. With another family or other person (sometimes referred to as "doubled-up"),
3. In a hotel/motel,
4. In a car, park, bus, train, or campsite, or
5. Other temporary living situation.

After the student is enrolled and attending classes, the school or LEA is permitted to verify the student's housing arrangements. However, the student must first be enrolled in school. Again, LEAs **cannot not contact a landlord or building superintendent** to verify a student's housing status. (See above for more information.)

### **Definitions of Temporary Housing Arrangements**

*"With another family or other person" (also referred to as "doubled-up")*

LEAs should be aware that students who are sharing the housing of others are eligible for services under the McKinney-Vento Act and State law, if sharing housing is due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.

*"Other temporary living situation"*

In addition to the four examples of temporary housing, students who lack a "fixed, adequate, and regular" nighttime residence are also covered as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act and State law. This may include unaccompanied youth who have fled their homes or were forced to leave their homes and who do not otherwise meet the definition of "doubled-up."

*"In permanent housing"*

Permanent housing means that the student's living arrangements are "fixed, regular, and adequate."

### **Next Steps for LEAs with Students Living in Temporary Housing Arrangements**

**If the parent, person in parental relation, or unaccompanied youth indicates that a student is living in temporary housing, the LEA must complete a Designation Form.** If the LEA believes additional information is needed before reaching a final decision on the student's eligibility under McKinney-Vento, enrollment should not be delayed and a Designation Form should still be filled out. For more information about determining eligibility see the National Center on Homeless Education's Determining Eligibility Brief, available at: [www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/det\\_elig.pdf](http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/det_elig.pdf)

If a student who is identified as homeless was last permanently housed in a different school district, the district of attendance/local district will be eligible for tuition reimbursement from SED for the cost of educating the student. School districts should complete a STAC-202 form if eligible for tuition reimbursement. For more information about STAC-202 forms contact the STAC Office at 518-474-7116 or NYS-TEACHS at 800-388-2014.