

# Waterloo School District



## McKinney-Vento Families in Transition Program

### **Guidelines and Procedures**

## Table of Contents

Program Summary.....	page 3
District Liaison for Families in Transition (Homeless).....	page 3
Student Eligibility (shared housing, unaccompanied youth).....	page 4
Finding Families Eligible for FIT.....	page 5
Identification for New Enrollments.....	page 5
Identification for Current Waterloo Students.....	page 6
Transportation Services for FIT Program.....	page 7
Gas Cards.....	page 7
Field Trip Waivers.....	page 8
Title I.....	page 8
FAFSA.....	page 9
Other help for FIT Families.....	page 9
Dispute Process.....	page 10

## Program Summary

The Waterloo **Families in Transition Program's (FIT)** responsibility is to implement the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. Children that are experiencing homelessness and/or are unaccompanied youth must have immediate access to public school educational programs and services that allow them to meet the same challenging academic standards to which all students are held. This program ensures that the Waterloo School District is abiding by the McKinney-Vento Act. For more information on the McKinney Vento Act, go to the DPI's website: <https://dpi.wi.gov/homeless>.

It is important that families contact the district each school year that they are experiencing homelessness. Once a family is identified as needing FIT services, the family will continue to receive services for the **remainder of the school year**, even if the family becomes permanently housed. These services include free breakfast and lunch, the ability to stay at their school of origin, and transportation *if they are eligible*.

### **District Liaison for Families in Transition (Homeless) Contact information:**

*Michele Armentrout, Director of Student Services*

*Phone: 920-478-3633 ext. 1024*

*Email: [armentroutm@waterloo.k12.wi.us](mailto:armentroutm@waterloo.k12.wi.us)*

### **Roles of the District Liaison for Families in Transition (Homeless):**

- Identify and immediately enroll any [homeless](#) child or youth even without documentation typically needed for enrollment (birth certificate, proof of address, immunization records)
- Continue children or youth in their school of origin for the duration of their homelessness and/or throughout the current school year if it is within the best interest of the child
- Inform families of their [educational rights](#) for their children
- Provide transportation or support to family member transporting if eligible, at the request of the family, to the school of origin
- Help families connect with community resources
- Keep up to date with any changes to McKinney-Vento
- [Remind families](#) to re-apply for the next school year with a letter that is sent home along with a [FIT Questionnaire](#)

## Student Eligibility

The best way to determine if families are eligible for the Families in Transition Program (FIT) is to ask them questions that focus on the living situation and if it is “*fixed, regular, and adequate.*”

- **Fixed:** stationary, permanent, not subject to change
- **Regular:** Used on a predictable, routine, and consistent basis
- **Adequate:** lawfully and reasonably sufficient, for meeting the physical and psychological needs typically met in a home environment

You can ask yourself, “*Can the student go to the SAME PLACE (fixed) EVERY NIGHT (regular) to sleep in a SAFE and SUFFICIENT SPACE (adequate)?*”

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youth as: Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence including:

- Sharing the housing other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, campgrounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters, or abandoned in hospitals
- Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children living in the above circumstances

### Shared Housing

A family must be sharing the home of others due to economic hardship, loss of housing, or a similar circumstance. Just because a family is living with another family does not mean they qualify for FIT. Here are some examples:

- A family chooses to move in with grandma because grandma needs someone to help care for her. (Would NOT qualify)
- A family moves into Mom’s boyfriend’s house because she wants to live with him. (Would NOT qualify)
- A family was evicted from their home and cannot afford a new place so they are living with an uncle. (DOES qualify)
- A mother and her children are fleeing from a domestic violence situation and are currently living with a friend. (DOES qualify)

### Unaccompanied Youth

Unaccompanied youth are students who are living WITHOUT a parent or legal guardian. An unaccompanied youth can be difficult to identify. This includes students who were

kicked out of their home or who have run away. This does NOT include foster care or any other out of home placements made by the courts. This also does NOT include parents who have made arrangements for their child to live with someone else. Some examples include:

- A student who was kicked out of the home and is currently living with a family member or friend. (DOES qualify)
- A student who has run away from home and is staying with a family member or friend. (DOES qualify)
- The parent is currently homeless and the child has to stay with a family member so the child is not in a shelter with the parent. (DOES qualify)
- The parent is currently incarcerated and an out of home placement has not been made by the courts. (DOES qualify)
- The parent decided that the student is going to live with a grandparent because mom doesn't want to have her child attend a specific school. (Would NOT qualify)
- Arrangements have been made for a student to stay with someone else and the parent consents. (Would NOT qualify).

### **Finding Families Eligible for FIT**

ONLY the District Homeless Liaison can identify families as eligible for the program.

There are a few ways that you are able to identify students. The first is through school staff. Should staff become aware that a student may be experiencing homelessness, they will immediately contact the district liaison. The District Homeless Liaison will reach out to the family to complete the FIT Questionnaire.

The second way is through the enrollment process. The enrollment office will have families complete a Pupil Services Survey. If the survey flags the possibility of a family experiencing homelessness, the District Liaison will be notified and then will reach out to the family to complete the FIT Questionnaire.

A third way to identify families is through other local agencies like the Jefferson, Dodge, or Dane County Human Service Department. These agencies will contact the District Homeless Liaison either via phone or email with the information needed for the liaison to contact the family.

### **Identification for NEW Enrollments**

- Enrollment flags potential homelessness
- Call or meet with the family to determine eligibility through the FIT Questionnaire
  - If the family does not qualify, the reading will be written on the form and it will be filed alphabetically in the "Do not qualify" binder. Enrollment will be notified that the student did not qualify.

- If the family qualifies, discuss the school placement with the family. Complete the [Checklist](#). Since the student is new to Waterloo, the student will be immediately enrolled and the [family rights](#) will be shared under [McKinney-Vento Act](#)
- Determine if the family qualifies for transportation services and complete appropriate forms
- Send an email to enrollment and student services administrative assistant stating that the family qualifies for FIT
- If the student is residing with someone other than the legal guardian, include this person's information in the email
- Enter the family into the Google Documentation
- Tag the student in Skyward under Special Programs-Homeless
- Inform Free/Reduced lunch coordinator that the student qualifies
- Inform the following staff of eligibility: administration, school counselor, Title I teacher, school nurse
- Pupil services staff will reach out to teaching staff
- Create a folder for the family, place FIT Questionnaire and any transportation agreements in file alphabetically

### **Identification for CURRENT Waterloo Students**

- Receive call/email from family or staff that a student may qualify for FIT
- Call or meet with the family to determine eligibility through the FIT Questionnaire
  - If the family does not qualify, the reading will be written on the form and it will be filed alphabetically in the "Do not qualify" binder Enrollment will be notified that the student did not qualify
  - If the family qualifies, discuss the school placement with the family and [family rights](#) will be shared under [McKinney-Vento Act \(Qualification Letter\)](#)
  - Determine if the family qualifies for transportation services and complete appropriate forms
  - Send an email to enrollment and student services administrative assistant stating that the family qualifies for FIT
  - If the student is residing with someone other than the legal guardian, include this person's information in the email
- Enter the family into the Google Documentation
- Tag the student in Skyward under Special Programs-Homeless
- Inform Free/Reduced lunch coordinator that the student qualifies
- Inform the following staff of eligibility: administration, school counselor, Title I teacher, school nurse
- Pupil services staff will reach out to teaching staff
- Create a folder for the family, place FIT Questionnaire and any transportation agreements in file alphabetically

## Transportation Services for FIT Program

Students who qualify for services under the McKinney-Vento Act have the right to continue their education at their school of origin and receive transportation if they are eligible.

### **Busing within Waterloo School District**

The FIT Program follows the transportation criteria of Waterloo. Meaning, students have access to bus transportation if they meet the following eligibility criteria:

- Reside 2.0 miles or more from school in a manner as required by Wisconsin statutes
- Reside less than 2.0 miles from school in areas that have been designated as hazardous transportation areas by the sheriff of Dane, Jefferson or Dodge counties and have received DPI approval as such
- Reside less than 2.0 miles from school and are in early childhood through third grade
- Reside within the District and have an Individual Education Plan (IEP) that requires transportation services

### **Busing outside of the Waterloo School District**

If a family moves to another county or school district due to homelessness, the students have the right to continue their education at their school of origin if it is deemed to be within the best interests of the student. When a family would like to keep their students at the school of origin, it is the homeless liaison's job to contact the homeless liaison of the other district to set up transportation.

However, if one of the school districts is unable to provide transportation for the family, the other district may bill the other district for half of the transportation costs.

### **Gas Cards**

If busing is not available, and the family is willing to transport the student to school, the family may be reimbursed for the gas used to bring the student to and from school. This includes the distance from home to school and then school to home. The distance that the family drives around without the student in the vehicle is not reimbursed.

The parent must sign a contract stating that they understand that they are receiving reimbursement for the days that the student attends school. The District will use a [Gas Card Calculation](#) worksheet to determine reimbursement amounts. This looks at the student's attendance along with mileage to figure out the reimbursement. Once the amount is determined, a Kwik Trip gas card will be issued to ensure that the reimbursement is on gas only and not on other items in the gas station. The parent should sign [that they have received the gas card](#). Receipts for the gas cards should be

given to the business office and half of the fees may be given to the other district (if applicable).

### **Field Trip Waivers**

The family will be asked to pay for field trip fees, but if the family is unable to do so, FIT can cover the fee.

In order to cover the fee, a [FIT Field Trip](#) form must be completed by a school staff member (teacher, school counselor, school administrator, school secretary, etc.) and include the following information: student name, cost of the field trip broken down between admission and busing, and the place where the field trip will be held. This information is then given to the business office.

## **Title I**

Waterloo School District as a Title I teacher to help aid in the education of homeless students who are below grade level in reading or math. Students are seen on a weekly basis. It is the responsibility of the Title I teacher's job to work with the teachers of identified students to lend support. Once a time has been agreed upon, students are pulled once a week for approximately 20-45 minutes to work with them in areas of weakness. These services are conducted by a licensed Title I teacher to all qualified students. These students include grades PK-8 in both reading and math.

Students are chosen based on need. This need is determined by a variety of testing and teacher recommendations. Those who do not receive educational services will still be monitored. This means that the Title I teacher will work with the classroom teacher to see if the student's need has changed or is in need of any assistance. If the student is already receiving special education services and it is decided that the student does not need service by the Title I teacher, that student will not be seen, but the Title I teacher will still check in with the classroom teacher.

The family can choose to waive this service. If the family chooses to waive this service, a tutor waiver form must be completed. This form is sent to the Title I teacher as well as the District Liaison.



## [FAFSA for Homeless or Unaccompanied Youth](#)

If a student is homeless or an unaccompanied youth, it can be difficult for the student to get the parent/guardian's tax information to complete the FAFSA for financial aid for college. When a student receives their Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) from, they will be asked whether they are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, and "unaccompanied". Answer the question and continue with the application. The student can then submit the form without providing information about their parents. While a home address is not required on the form, a mailing address is. This can be the address of a relative or friend who has given you permission to use it or it can be your college's address (but the student must reach out to the college for permission and instructions to ensure the mail gets to them). If the student is asked to provide a homeless youth determination, contact the district liaison or school counselor.

### **Other help for FIT Families**

FIT also provides additional services to families that may include:

- School supplies
- Reminder mailings to reapply for the next year
- Information on community resources
- Assistance with medical or dental referrals

### **Dispute Process**

The McKinney-Vento Act has established criteria for families identified as Families in Transition in accordance with the Act, the Waterloo School District has established a process for families to address disputes, in the event that one of the following services has been violated:

- **School Selection/Enrollment**
  - School of Origin: the school the student attended when permanently housed, or in which the student was last enrolled, or
  - School of Residence: the school in the attendance area in which the student resides
- **Transportation**
  - Students residing two miles or more from their home school or on a street deemed hazardous are eligible for transportation
  - Walters are students living within two miles of the school in grades 4th and above

- Homeless students who live within the school's busing boundary will receive the same transportation services as other students living within the school's busing boundary
- Homeless students temporarily living outside the school's busing boundary will receive transportation support such as a bus assignment, other school-provided transportation, or a gas card
- **Lunch/School Fees**
  - Upon enrollment in FIT, students will automatically be enrolled in free and reduced lunch and school related fees will be waived

**If a dispute arises over any of the above services, the following steps can be taken:**

1. The child in transition's parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth in transition shall be referred to the District's liaison for children and youth in transition, who will carry out the dispute resolution process and provide a written response including the right to appeal to the District Administrator.
2. The child in transition's parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth in transition shall be referred to the District Administrator, who will carry out the dispute resolution process and provide a written response including the right to appeal to the School Board.
3. The child in transition's parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth in transition shall be referred to the School Board, who will carry out the dispute resolution process and provide a written response including the right to appeal to the Department of Public Instruction.
4. If a dispute continues after exhausting all local processes, the child in transition's parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth in transition shall be referred to the Department of Public Instruction who will carry out their dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute.
5. The child or youth in transition will be immediately enrolled in the appropriate district school, based upon the procedures above, pending resolution of the dispute.