

Districts with the Highest Numbers of Students Experiencing Homelessness

District	2024-25*	2023-24	2022-23	2021-22	2020-21
Bismarck Public Schools**	311	423	333	328	322
McKenzie Co. Public Schools	306	304	336	223	199
Williston-Basin Public Schools	266	315	293	229	295
Fargo Public Schools	246	366	326	287	206
West Fargo Public School	198	301	270	222	169
Minot Public Schools	172	162	155	109	119
Grand Forks Public Schools**	133	191	87	98	84
Solen Public Schools	91	74	55	49	59
Dickinson Public Schools	66	107	75	66	55
Devils Lake Public Schools	54	90	82	111	NA
Total for the 10 Districts	1843	2333	2012	1722	1508
Total for the State of North Dakota	2154	2802	2408	2021	1788

*July 1, 2024 - February 12, 2025

**currently has a 100% full-time employee serving as the district's Homeless Liaison

Job Duties of Liaisons

Per federal law district homeless liaison duties include twelve mandated duties. This is not an exhaustive list to the position, just what is required.

- identify homeless children and youths by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other agencies;
- ensure homeless children and youths are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school;
- ensure homeless families, children, and youths have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start programs, early intervention services under Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), and other preschool programs administered by the district;
- ensure homeless families, children, and youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services;
- confirm parents or guardians of homeless children and youths are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children;
- confirm public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youths is disseminated in locations frequented by parents or guardians of homeless children and youths, and unaccompanied youths, including schools, shelters, public libraries, and soup kitchens, in a manner and form understandable to parents and guardians and unaccompanied youth;
- ensure enrollment disputes are mediated according to 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E);

- confirm the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied homeless youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to the school of origin;
- ensure school personnel who serve homeless children and youths receive professional development and other support;
- ensure unaccompanied homeless youths are enrolled in school, have opportunities to meet the same challenging State academic standards established for other students, and are informed of their status as independent students and assisted to receive verification of their status for completing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA);
- knowledge of the exact language of the McKinney Vento Act; demonstrate sufficient time and capacity to carry out the required duties based on needs of homeless children, youth and unaccompanied homeless youth; and
- knowledge of trends in poverty and homelessness, the amount of support from community agencies and other entities serving homeless families and youth, the level of awareness in both the schools and the community of homeless student needs and related legal requirements, and the level of implementation that has occurred in the district.

Funding Sources and Allowable Uses of Funds

Current educational funding sources for students experiencing homelessness include:

- The purpose of Title I-A funds is to provide all children significant opportunities to receive a fair, equitable and high-quality education, and to close educational achievement gaps. Funds ensure children have the opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach proficiency on challenging state academic standards and assessments, supplement educational opportunities for students in high-poverty schools, provide professional learning for school staff, and implement other strategies for raising student academic achievement.
Title I-A Homeless Set-Aside: any district that reported students experiencing homelessness during the previous school year (2023-24) must set aside funds for the current school year (2024-25). There are currently no federal guidelines on what that should look like per student or per district. The North Dakota Department of Public Instructions encourages districts to review student need(s) in addition to what the district set aside and spent over the past two or three school years. Schools receive Title I-A funds every school year.
- The McKinney-Vento Assistance Act is the primary federal law dealing with the education of children and youth in homeless situations. The McKinney-Vento Act protects the right of homeless children and youth to get to, stay in, and be successful in school while they or their families are homeless. The law focuses on maintaining school stability and school access and providing support for academic success for homeless kids. The law also requires schools and states to use child-centered, best-interest decision making when working with homeless children and their families to choose a homeless child's school, services, and other needed resources. The McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Subgrants (EHCY) allows districts to supplement homeless children and youth's academic services, supplies, and other needed resources. The EHCY is competitive grant application, open for application every three



(3) years (i.e. May 2024, May 2027, etc.). Districts are allocated funds each year in the grant cycle as long as they are working toward and meeting goals. And utilizing funds in an appropriate manner. Previously, North Dakota had five – six districts that would apply for this grant. May 2024 saw a record-high 14 applications. The increased applications (and districts funded) are attributed to the expiration of American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth Funds (COVID relief) September 2024. Districts receiving the relief funds saw the impact they had on students through the services, supports, and professional development for administrators and teachers.

- There are sixteen allowable uses of funds for Title I-A Homeless Set-Aside and the McKinney-Vento Subgrant.
 - Tutoring, supplemental instruction, and other educational services that help homeless children and youths reach the same challenging State academic standards the State establishes for other children and youths. (Section 723(d)(1))
 - Expedited evaluations of eligible students to measure their strengths and needs. Evaluations may also determine a homeless child or youth's possible need or eligibility for other programs and services. (Section 723(d)(2))
 - Professional development and other activities for educators and specialized instructional support personnel that are designed to heighten the understanding and sensitivity of such personnel to the needs of homeless children and youths. (Section 723(d)(3))
 - Referrals of eligible students to medical, dental, mental, and other health services. (Section 723(d)(4))
 - Assistance to defray the excess cost of transportation not otherwise provided through Federal, State, or local funds, to enable students to remain in their schools of origin. (Section 723(d)(5))
 - Developmentally appropriate early childhood education programs for preschool-aged homeless children that are not provided through other Federal, State, or local funds. (Section 723(d)(6))
 - Services and assistance to attract, engage, and retain homeless children and youths. (Section 723(d)(7))
 - Before-and after-school, mentoring, and summer programs for homeless children and youths in which a teacher or other qualified individual provides tutoring, homework assistance, and supervision of educational activities. (Section 723(d)(8))
 - Payment of fees and costs associated with tracking, obtaining, and transferring records necessary to enroll homeless children and youths in school. The records may include birth certificates, immunization or other required health records, academic records, guardianship records, and evaluations for special programs and services. (Section 723(d)(9))
 - Education and training for parents and guardians of homeless children and youths about the rights of, and resources available to increase the meaningful involvement of parents and guardians of homeless children or youths in the education.
 - Coordination between schools and agencies providing services to homeless children and youths in order to expand and enhance such services. Coordination with programs



funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act must be included in this effort. (Section 722(g)(5)(A)(i)).

- Specialized instructional support services, including violence prevention counseling, and referrals for such services. (Section 723(d)(12))
- Programs addressing the particular needs of homeless children and youths that may arise from domestic violence and parental mental health or substance abuse problems. (Section 723(d)(13))
- Providing supplies to non-school facilities serving eligible students and adapting these facilities to enable them to provide services. (Section 723(d)(14))
- Providing school supplies, including those to be distributed at shelters or temporary housing facilities, or other appropriate locations. (Section 723(d)(15))
- Providing extraordinary or emergency services needed to enable homeless children and youths to attend school and participate fully in school activities. (Section 723(d)(16))

Gaps in Support and Funding

In order to address gaps in support and funding the barriers our students experiencing homelessness and district homeless liaisons face need to be highlighted.

Issue	Barriers
Chronic Absenteeism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Mobility ● Poverty ● Truancy ● Trauma ● Emotional/physical health ● Hygiene ● Lack of academic competence Lack of educational preparedness/being ready to learn Low test scores Homework/lack of safe space to complete homework Higher drop-out rate Lack of educational supports/services ● Transportation/Unreliable transportation ● Climate and environment ● Relationships ● Enrollment delays ● Lack of training for staff
School Supports and Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Lack tools ● Lack technology ● Lack of academic competence Lack of educational preparedness/being ready to learn Low test scores Homework/lack of safe space to complete homework Higher drop-out rate Lack of educational supports/services



Issue	Barriers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack healthy relationship(s) with adults/mentors• Stigmatism• Chronic Absenteeism• Bullying• Lack of counseling services• Lack of health services (including vision/dental)• Lack of access to school supplies• Lack of access to advanced or remedial coursework• Transfer of records/credits• Differing district course requirements• School policies• Limited funds/resources• District's budget/resources• Lack of public transit in rural areas• Safety• Time• Feeling of embarrassment
Behavioral and Mental Health	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Addiction – students• Addiction – family member(s)• Increased behavioral health issues• Truancy• Lack of access to providers• Struggling with anxiety or depression• Lack of friends, relationships, and separation• Safe and healthy behaviors• Higher rates of depression, stress and anxiety• Lower self-esteem• Higher rates of behavioral issues• Higher rates of alcohol/drug use• Access to medical care• Lack of knowledge/understanding of available supports• Isolation self-induced stigmatism(s)
Socioeconomics, Food Insecurities, and Housing Stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic needs not being met – food, housing, clothing, etc. – lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life• Parents who may not have finished high school/value education• Language barriers• Reliance on child labor• Lack of supplies/materials• Discrimination pregnant teenagers single parents being in poverty



Issue	Barriers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of food programs or other services in community• Society fails to cultivate a future for them, but also promotes the cycle of poverty• Higher rates of depression, stress and anxiety• Lower self-esteem• Lower academic performance• Higher drop-out rate• Poorer health/eat less healthy• School is the only place the student eats• Not knowing when/where next meal will come• Stigmatism• Lack of finances• Lack of consistent access to enough food for an active, healthy life• Housing/Program rules
Sustaining Knowledge and Skills of Laws/Resources re: Youth Homelessness to school personnel	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Teachers/administrators not knowing the impact being homeless has on students – for homeless students school could be the one safe place in their day-to-day lives and appreciate the safety and security of its routine. Students experiencing homelessness are forced to deal with significant, difficult, and interrelated challenges outside the classroom that inevitably impact their academic performance and participation. And, these challenges are out of their control.• Turnover of staff• Lack of experience with youth homelessness• Lack of available resources within many communities, urban and rural• Teachers/administrators lacking the knowledge to both identify and to assist• Teachers/administrators sticking to rigid policies re:<ul style="list-style-type: none">-homework/being lenient with deadlines-tests/because of lack of sleep, absenteeism• Need for skill building• Lack of staff development/training to understand homelessness and strategies for discussing this topic• Lack of family involvement to provide a safe space for concerns• Judgmental people/no support system in place• Lack of awareness of the hardships of homelessness• Limited amount of people who care or know how to help• Ignorant of education rights of homeless students
Trauma	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Disruption• Eviction/Loss of housing lack of affordable housing• Domestic violence



Issue	Barriers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Abuse• Neglect/dysfunction• Death• Divorce• Financial hardship• Disaster (fire, tornado, etc.)• Truancy• Mental Health Crisis/Behavioral issues• More vulnerable to other forms of trauma (assault, trafficking, etc.)• Constant fight/flight mode• Bullying
LGBTQ+	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stigmatism• Prejudice• Bullying• Needs not being understood or met• Non-inclusive environment• Family rejection• Lack of knowledge/understanding of available supports• Lack of friends/relationships
Stigmatism	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Dirty• Deviant/criminals• Scam artists• Unwell• Abusive• Lazy• Anti-Homeless Laws• Technology• Bullying• Uneducated• Not a good fit for college• Hopeless• Helpless
Disabilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mobility• Interruptions of services• Delays in records transfer• Absence of consistent teacher, interventions, and support• Access to professionals and resources• Access to medical care• Chronic Absenteeism• Bullying• Access to counseling and tutoring services
Trafficking	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Basic needs not being met• Language barriers• Lack of awareness/education



Issue	Barriers
Unaccompanied	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of access to parental financial information and support• Lack of financial means to live independently AND safely• Very limited housing options, especially in our rural areas• Struggle to balance school and other responsibilities• Lack of adult guidance• Lack of access to vital documentation• Lack of access to medical care• Lack of knowledge/understanding of available supports• Weak academic foundation/academic challenges• Enrollment delays• Continuity of schooling• Untimely access to appropriate educational and support services• Limited clothing, shoes, and products for hygiene• Lack of stability and continuity in educational services• Lack of or limited access to transportation, tutoring or other services• Fatigue, lack of sleep, food, nutrition, and basic needs for a healthy life
Access to Higher Education	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lack of access to parental financial information and support• Lack of financial means to live independently AND safely• Very limited housing options, especially in our rural areas• Inability to be financially self-sufficient when enrolled in college• Failure to meet state residency requirements• Struggle to balance school and other responsibilities• Lack of adult guidance (applications/paperwork, recommendations, etc.)• Lack of knowledge/understanding of available supports• Weak academic foundation/academic challenges• Food, transportation, and technology insecurity• Ongoing academic, health, and counseling support or services available• Homework help• Financial aid rules• Transfer of records/credits

Homeless liaisons across North Dakota have provided insight into their duties as outlined below:

1- What do you do as a homeless liaison:

- a. I am a dedicated point of contact that facilitates communication and collaboration between [REDACTED] Public School District and external stakeholders like community organizations, government agencies, parents, youth and other school districts. I ensure smooth operations, address concerns promptly and advocate for the needs of the district by maintaining strong relationships and navigating complex issues within our community. I actively build and maintain strong relationships with key community



partners, ensuring necessary support and collaboration on initiatives. I have the ability to meet with families and students immediately and assist with school enrollment. THIS IS THE BIGGEST IMPACT!!! I receive a phone call from a Community Partner and I am able to meet with that family if not the same day, but the next day. I walk with them through the enrollment process and ensure that their child has everything that is needed to be successful at school. This is extremely important especially when we are working with our Special Education Department - I have become the point of contact for both the school district and the family. ALSO IMPORTANT!!! Our Community Partners trust they can call me and I trust that I can call them. We have strong community involvement to wrap around our families/students and take action.

- b. First and foremost, I Identify Homeless Students within our District by working with community organizations, local shelters, social services, and school staff. I ensure that the students can enroll in school immediately, even if they lack required documents (e.g., birth certificates, proof of residence, immunization records). Once that process is complete, I coordinate what form of transportation is needed to get the student to school. We have multiple options for transportation and some days, 60% of my job is developing plans on how to get these students to school. Once the students educational needs are met, we focus on the family's current situation and what services they could benefit from. We connect families and students with resources such as school supplies, meals, clothing, and tutoring, laundry vouchers, gas cards, phone cards, and anything that the family mentions as a barrier. We assist with filling out housing apps, insurance apps, Service apps, (Food Stamps, Medicaid, etc).

One of the many hats we wear is being an advocate for the student's rights. This can be educating District staff, community members, organizations, and anyone else that is involved in this child's education. We make sure the students are not stigmatized due to their homeless status.

We pride ourselves on our relationships within the community and working with other agencies to better the lives of our families. We provide support through housing procedures and try and prepare the family for the next steps in their journey.

I have been in this position for 9 years, 7 of those years I was on my own, no staff, no help. I recently was able to hire 2 System Navigators that work with certain feeders and provide services at a more intense and direct level something I could have never done on my own. There is too much need in this area of youth homelessness that most don't know about, or could even wrap their head around.

2- What does a typical workday look like when the liaison position is an "other duty as assigned":

- a. 7:00 Difficulty with van fob, contact all students on Van 2 route of 10 minute delay in pickup time.
- 7-8:30 Several calls and texts between dispatch, families, and driver to notify of exact pickup due to fob malfunction and not wanting students to stand out in the -15 weather.
- 8:30 Email, send out new referrals for McKinney-Vento to team so that they can contact immediately.



- 9:00 Request PO for student and parent bus passes, send information to MAT, pick up bus pass when ready.
- 9:30 Discussion with team member regarding eligibility of a family due to fire. Also resources, etc. to offer.
- 10:00 Started to work on Title I assignment from Associate Superintendent, was interrupted with McKinney-Vento needs.
- 10:15 Meeting with parent room coordinator, social worker, and myself regarding needs and readmitting to school options.
- 11:00 Attempted Title I work, interrupted. Student at door with needs.
- 11:15 Processed Credit Card purchases and receipts.
- 11:45-12:15 Lunch
- 12:15-1 Address issue with a parent and needs - Social worker out on medical leave this week.
- 1:30-3 Coordinator's Meeting at District Office
While at coordinator's meeting social worker texting, calling, and changing vans to pick up 3 more students for the next morning.
- 3:00 Confirm with Valley Bus changes for the next morning.
- 3-3:30 Lawyer meeting to get McKinney-Vento student registered ASAP, brainstormed plan of action.

This is just a sample of my day. On the back side, the 2.5 FTE social workers are working in the trenches assisting with registration of students, meeting basic needs of clothing, food, safety, etc. Attending truancy/expulsion meetings, IEPs, assisting with SNAP and housing applications and meetings. There is never enough time in the day for us to get our work done. With additional help we could be more proactive as a team instead of reactive with emergencies.

- b. A normal day consists of the following
 - i. Welcoming new students
 - 1. assisting with enrollment documents
 - ii. Handling transportation requests
 - 1. updating routes for students with residential changes
 - 2. establishing transportation for new requests
 - iii. Delivering necessary school supplies
 - iv. Purchasing winter clothing as requested
 - v. Updating student records
 - vi. Providing a list of community resources as needed
 - vii. Communicating with counselors regarding needs of students
 - viii. Monitoring attendance, if applicable

With the number of MKV students in our district, time constraints are inevitable. Due to other responsibilities, I may not be able to handle matters immediately or communications may be delayed.



3- What would happen if Title I-A set-aside or the McKinney-Vento subgrant did not exist:

- a. If the federal funding of McKinney Vento would be eliminated, so would the Students in Transition program. Hundreds of local homeless youth would lose their voice that they have now through our program. We have helped and even saved HUNDREDS of homeless youth from terrible situations they felt they deserved to live in. No child deserves that, they deserve a home.
- b. The funding provided through these grants allows ease of access to items and/or services that normally would not be allowed due to financial constraints.
- c. I utilize everything that is provided to us and if there is a barrier, I find a way to work around it. Long Term Case Management is a need for our families/students. If we lose these additional dollars, we will no longer have access to make sure students experiencing homelessness are able to graduate and attend college or career academy, additional testing, mental health care, etc. Our community does NOT have the additional agencies, businesses, resources that larger communities may have access to.

4- What would the potential of a matching grant be able to provide a liaison or their district's students experiencing homelessness?

- a. A matching grant could have significant impact on students experiencing homelessness because it could help assist their immediate needs and provide long-term support. We would be able to better secure community partnerships to maximize student impact.
- b. Funds could be used to enhance direct student support, temporary housing and stability, academic needs, mental health and counseling services, technology and connectivity, parent and family support, professional development for district personnel.
- c. Additional funds would allow me to better serve students and provide training to staff to better understand and assist students who are experiencing homelessness. We could increase staff capacity, enhance identification efforts, and provide more immediate assistance, which could reduce student absences and increase grades.