

C. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Program and Foster Care Students

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Program helps remove barriers to learning for students experiencing homelessness or placement in foster care. The term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, adequate nighttime residence. In an effort to identify and assist students experiencing homelessness, the District provides liaisons at both the building and district level. The liaisons are tasked with administering the regulations and procedures as outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act while complying with the provisions of the Fort Smith Public Schools Homeless Education Program. Enrollment requirement exceptions for homeless and foster care youth are listed above in “B, 1. Enrollment documentation”.

1. Transportation of Homeless and Foster Care Students – Under the “Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015” students awaiting foster care placement and students in actual foster care are eligible for the same transportation services as students designated as “homeless”. Such services will be comparable to those provided for non-homeless students.

Fort Smith Public Schools acknowledges that the responsibility for transporting children to and from school belongs to the parent. However, due to the size of the district, the student population, and the locations of various programs and schools, it is the policy of the Fort Smith Public Schools to provide transportation exceptions if a student meets at least one of the following conditions:

- a. A student attending his/her home school lives outside a two-mile radius of his/her school,
- b. A student who cannot attend his/her home school due to overcrowding. He/She will be transferred and bussed from their home school to a school that has space available at his/her grade level,
- c. Special needs students, with a qualifying disability, may be picked up at home, at a neighborhood school, or at a bus stop near their home,
- d. School to school program transfers for some secondary classes that are provided at locations other than the home school.

2. FSPS Transportation Policy for Homeless and Foster Care Students - Homeless and Foster Care Students (HFCS), who wish to attend a school outside their school of location may do so, if it is determined by the parents, the school administration, and the local welfare agency, in the case of foster care students, to be in the best interest of the child.

For the purposes of school transportation, Homeless and Foster Care Students (HFCS) will be considered “at-large students” eligible to ride to and/or from any bus stop that serves their school of choice. (Comparable Service)*

If the school of choice is within a two-mile radius of their residence, then no bus transportation will be provided. (Comparable Service)*

However, if any school within that two-mile radius has a bus route that connects to their school of choice, the HFCS may ride that bus from that school to their school of choice. This is an additional service that is provided to HFCS and this option is not available to other students and parents. (Additional Service)**

If the school of choice or a connecting school is outside a two-mile radius of their residence, then FSPS will make arrangements for that student to be transported from a bus stop or a neighborhood school, to the school of choice. Parents should be aware that this option may require earlier pick up or later drop off times and possibly one or more bus transfers to get the students to their destination.

(Additional Service)** Students in foster care or awaiting foster care are eligible for these same transportation services if requested by the local welfare agency. However, in order to account, control, and share transportation costs, a completed registration form, along with documentation from the Department of Human Services of each qualifying student's status (only those students requesting bus transportation), must be made and provided to the District each school year. The registration form and documentation letter should be submitted to the FSPS Homeless Liaison by September 15th of each year; who will then forward copies to the FSPS Student Services Office and the FSPS Transportation Office by October 1st of each year. If HFCS are being transported between neighboring school districts, then both districts share the responsibility and the costs of arranging transportation details. The cost for any additional services for foster students, such as those listed above, will be the responsibility of the local welfare agency, as stated under the provisions of the law.**

*Paragraph 3; Sect. A –Transportation Services – 42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(4) Comparable Services

** The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 and Amendments on Foster Care in Title 1 Part-A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.