Wa-Nee Community Schools

McKinney-Vento District Plan

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SECTION 1: OVERVIEW/GENERAL INFORMATION:

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act:

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program is authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) (McKinney-Vento Act). The McKinney-Vento Act was originally authorized in 1987 and most recently re-authorized in December 10th, 2016 by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).The McKinney-Vento Act is designed to address the challenges that homeless children and youths have faced in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school.

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, State educational agencies (SEAs) must ensure that each homeless child and youth has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as other children and youths. Homeless children and youths must have access to the educational and related services that they need to enable them to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held. In addition, homeless students may not be separated from the mainstream school environment. SEAs and local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to review and undertake steps to revise laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youths.

Definition of Homeless (McKinney-Vento Act Sec. 725(2); 42 U.S.C 11435(2)):

Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate night time residence:

- "Doubled up" - Sharing the housing of others due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons.
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds, due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations.
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters.
- Living in a public or private place not designed for humans to live.
- Migratory children living in above circumstances
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Unaccompanied Youth - Children or youth who meets the definition of homeless and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian

Residency and Educational Rights:

Students who are in temporary, inadequate and homeless living situations have the following rights in **Wa-Nee Community Schools**:

- Immediate enrollment in the school they last attended or the school in whose attendance area they are currently staying even if they do not have all of the documents normally required at the time of enrollment;
- Access to free meals and textbooks, Title I and other educational programs and other comparable services including transportation;
- Attendance in the same classes and activities that students in other living situations also participate in without fear of being separated or treated differently due to their housing situations.

Procedures for the Dissemination of Educational Rights:

All schools within the **Wa-Nee Community Schools** shall ensure that public notice of the educational rights of students and families in homeless situations is disseminated where children and youth receive services under the McKinney-Vento Act. Posters in both English and Spanish will be posted in all school buildings, local shelters, local hotels, the local post office buildings, Nappanee City Hall and Wakarusa Town Hall, local libraries, and local food banks.

SECTION 2: IDENTIFICATION AND ELIGIBILITY

Title 1 Services and Funding:

In **Wa-Nee Community Schools**, all children and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento services are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services, whether or not they attend a Title I, Part A school or meet the academic standards required of other students for eligibility (Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Sec. 1115(b)(2)(E); 20 U.S.C. 6315(b)(2)(E)). This automatic eligibility acknowledges that the experience of homelessness puts children and youth at significant risk of academic failure, regardless of their previous academic standing. Additionally, all **Wa-Nee Community School** children and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento services who are doing well academically are entitled to receive additional non-instructional education related support services needed to succeed in school.

School Selection:

Wa-Nee Community Schools will keep students in homeless situations in their school of origin defined as the school attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled, unless it is against the parent or guardian's wishes or unless it is determined to be in the student's best educational interest. Students and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services are eligible to remain in their school of origin for the entire duration in which they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing. Students and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services may also choose to enroll in any public school that students living in the same attendance area are eligible to attend.

Procedures to Identify and Verify Eligibility of McKinney-Vento Students:

Every current, returning, and new student in the **Wa-Nee Community Schools** must complete online enrollment via the district's School Management System known as Rediker. One of the forms to be completed online is the **Wa-Nee Community Schools** McKinney-Vento Residency Questionnaire and Form (Appendix A). This **Wa-Nee Community Schools** McKinney-Vento Residency Questionnaire and Form will be utilized to determine if the student is facing a homeless situation. Follow-up contact to verify the information provided on the **Wa-Nee Community Schools** McKinney-Vento Residency Questionnaire and Form will be conducted within 5 days of the completion of online enrollment by either the district or a building level McKinney-Vento liaison.

SECTION 3: SERVICES AND STANDARDS

Transportation:

Each **Wa-Nee Community School's** child or youth facing a McKinney-Vento situation shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected including transportation services.

Wa-Nee Community Schools will provide students and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services with transportation to and from their school of origin, at a parent or guardian's request. For unaccompanied youth, **Wa-Nee Community Schools** will provide transportation to and from the school of origin at the request of the District McKinney-Vento Liaison. If the student's temporary residence and the school of origin are in the same district, **Wa-Nee Community Schools** will provide and/or arrange transportation to and from school. If the student is living outside of the **Wa-Nee Community School's District**, **Wa-Nee Community Schools** will assume the responsibility and cost of providing transportation to and from school.

Students and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services are eligible to receive these transportation services for the entire duration in which they are homeless.

****"School of Origin" is defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. ****

Food Services:

Each **Wa-Nee Community School's** child or youth facing a McKinney-Vento situation shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected including school nutrition programs. Students and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services are eligible to receive free breakfast and lunch as offered by each school for the entire duration in which they are homeless.

Textbooks and Technology:

Each **Wa-Nee Community School's** child or youth facing a McKinney-Vento situation shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected including access to instructional materials, assessments, and technology. Students and youth who qualify for McKinney-Vento Services are eligible to receive free textbooks and technology fees as offered by each school for the entire duration in which they are homeless.

Academic Services & Standards:

Each **Wa-Nee Community School's** child or youth facing a McKinney-Vento situation shall be provided services comparable to services offered to other students in the school selected including educational services for which the child or youth meet the eligibility criteria (Title I services, pre-school, educational programs for children with disabilities or for students with limited English proficiency), programs in vocational and technical education, and programs for gifted and talented students as available.

SECTION 4: ENROLLMENT

Enrollment Procedures:

Any child or youth who claims to be homeless will be immediately enrolled in **Wa-Nee Community Schools** even if they do not have required documents such as:

- school records
- medical records
- proof of residency
- guardianship papers or other documents.

Enrolling schools must obtain school records from the previous school, and students must be enrolled in school while records are obtained.

The McKinney-Vento District Liaison will assist unaccompanied youth in choosing and enrolling in a school after considering the youth's wishes, informing the youth of their rights to transportation and assisting the youth in accessing transportation, and informing the youth of their right to appeal school or school district decisions. The McKinney-Vento District Liaison must ensure that unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes that may arise over school enrollment or placement.

Unaccompanied youth have the right to:

- Remain in their school of origin
- Transportation to and from the school of origin
- Immediately enroll in a new school serving the area in which they are currently living even if they don't have typically required documents (e.g. proof of guardianship)
- Equal access to programs and services such as gifted and talented education, special education, vocational education, and English Language Learner services.

Wa-Nee Community Schools shall remove any/all barriers to the enrollment and retention of children and youth in homeless situations. Students in homeless situations shall be free from segregation, isolation, and stigmatization.

****The term "enroll" is defined as attending classes and participating fully in school activities. ****

****"School of Origin" is defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled. ****

Appeal and Dispute Processes:

If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment in a school, the child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in, which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute. The child, youth, parent, or guardian shall be referred to the McKinney-Vento District Level Team, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible in accordance with the enrollment disputes section of the McKinney-Vento Act as follows:

- Work with the McKinney-Vento District and Building Level Liaisons to ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the enrollment disputes section of the McKinney-Vento Act as follows:
    I. the child or youth shall be immediately admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute;

II. the parent or guardian of the child or youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or youth to appeal
III. the child, youth, parent, or guardian shall be referred to the McKinney-Vento District Level Team, who shall carry out the Dispute resolution process expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and
IV. in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the McKinney-Vento District Liaison shall ensure that the youth is immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of the dispute.

****The McKinney-Vento District Level Team consists of McKinney-Vento District Liaison and Building Level Liaisons. ****

If a dispute arises over qualification for McKinney-Vento services, the child or youth shall receive all McKinney-Vento rights and services provided by **Wa-Nee Community Schools**, pending resolution of the dispute. The child, youth, parent, or guardian shall be referred to the McKinney-Vento District Level Team, who shall carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act as follows:

- Work with the McKinney-Vento District and Building Level Liaisons to ensure that enrollment disputes are mediated in accordance with the enrollment disputes section of the McKinney-Vento Act as follows:
  V. the child or youth shall receive all McKinney-Vento rights and services, pending resolution of the dispute;
  VI. the parent or guardian of the child or youth shall be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision regarding school selection or enrollment, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or youth to appeal (Appendix B)
  VII. the child, youth, parent, or guardian shall be referred to the McKinney-Vento District Level Team, who shall carry out the Dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible after receiving notice of the dispute; and
  VIII. in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the McKinney-Vento District Liaison shall ensure that the youth receives all McKinney-Vento rights and services pending resolution of the dispute.

SECTION 5: PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

McKinney-Vento Professional Development Opportunities:

Professional development for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act will be provided to all staff members of **Wa-Nee Community Schools** via the following ways:

- Safe Schools Portal
- Quarterly McKinney-Vento District Level Team Meetings
- 1 Professional Development Meeting per semester at each school building
- School Board Presentations

District Website:

The **Wa-Nee Community Schools** Website will include a page that will be used to communicate McKinney-Vento information with students, parents, staff, and community members. Information on the **Wa-Nee Community Schools'** Website will include:

- Contact information for the McKinney-Vento District Liaison
- Contact information for the McKinney-Vento Building Level Liaisons
- Notice of Rights for McKinney-Vento Families
- Dispute Resolution Documents
- Link to McKinney-Vento Resources

SECTION 6: EDUCATIONAL STAFFING AND SUPPORT

McKinney-Vento District Liaison's Roles and Responsibilities:

The Director of Curriculum & Instruction, **Gretchen Thomas**, will serve as the District McKinney-Vento Liaisons for **Wa-Nee Community Schools** and will:

- Ensure that procedures are established and followed across the school district and provide each child or youth who qualifies for McKinney-Vento Services with a free and appropriate education.
- Work collaboratively with transportation and food services personnel to coordinate appropriate services for any child or youth who qualifies for McKinney-Vento Services.
- Disseminate critical information concerning the rights of students in homeless situations to all schools.
- Post information regarding the availability of school programs and services for students facing homeless situations in local shelters, local hotels, the local post office buildings, Nappanee City Hall, Wakarusa Town Hall, local libraries, and local food banks.
- Maintain a McKinney-Vento District Liaison Log to document the McKinney-Vento process for each child and youth who qualifies for McKinney-Vento services.
- Plan and facilitate professional development regarding the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to all staff responsible for identifying and working with students facing homeless situations.
- Work with building level staff and administration to facilitate success of the McKinney-Vento program and each student facing a homeless situation.
- Meet with community agencies and volunteers to share resources and information and to evaluate impact of services.
- Monitor all district data collection and reporting requirements on each child and youth who qualifies for McKinney-Vento services.
- Attend state level professional development opportunities.

McKinney-Vento District Liaisons:

- Name: **Gretchen Thomas**
- **Email:** gthomas@wanee.org
- Phone: 574-773-3131

McKinney-Vento Building Level Liaison's Roles and Responsibilities:

Each school in **Wa-Nee Community Schools** District will identify one staff member (counselor, administrator, etc.) who will serve as a representation on the McKinney-Vento District Level Team and will:

- Identify students that may be facing homeless situations.
- Monitor school attendance.

- Facilitate training at the building level.
- Ensure that building level procedures are established and followed to provide each child and youth who qualifies for McKinney-Vento services with a free and appropriate education.
- Post public notice of the educational rights of students in homeless situations at the school.
- Make sure parents feel welcome and set the tone for further parental involvement.
- Establish a trusting relationship with students and parents.

Building Level McKinney-Vento Liaisons for each school are as follows:

School Name & Address: **NorthWood High School** 2101 N Main St, Nappanee, IN 46550

Liaison Name: Jade Sipic

Email: jsipic@wanee.org

Phone number: 574-773-4127

School Name & Address: **NorthWood Middle School** 301 N Elkhart St, Wakarusa, IN 46573

Liaison Name: Abigail Zahner

Email: azahner@wanee.org

Phone number: 574-862-2710

School Name & Address: **Nappanee Elementary** 755 E Van Buren St, Nappanee, IN 46550

Liaison Name: Mindi Mattern

Email: mmattern@wanee.org

Phone number: 574-773-7421

School Name & Address: **Wakarusa Elementary** 400 N Washington St, Wakarusa, IN 46573

Liaison Name: Kris Fielstra

Email: kfielstra@wanee.org

Phone number: 574-862-2000

School Name & Address: **Woodview Elementary** 800 E Woodview Drive, Nappanee, IN 46550

Liaison Name: Mindy Myers

Email: mmyers@wanee.org

Phone number: 574-773-4127

APPENDIX A

McKinney-Vento Act Residency & Educational Rights Information

(questionnaire must be completed for each student)

In Indiana, over 29,000 children experience homelessness each year. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was created with the goal of ensuring the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth in school.

The McKinney-Vento Act provides certain rights for homeless students. This includes waiving certain requirements such as proof of residency when students are enrolling and allowing eligibility for certain services, such as free textbooks.

When families and students find themselves in transition due to their housing situation, it is important that they know their rights regarding education. If students meet the requirements as stated in the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C 11431 et seq., Title VII, Subtitle B), their rights are as follows:

- Students may attend their school of origin or the school where they are temporarily residing.
- Students must be provided a written statement of their rights when they enroll.
- Students may enroll without school, medical or similar records.
- Students have a right to transportation to school.
- Students must be provided a statement explaining why they are denied enrollment or any other services.
- Students must receive services, such as transportation, while disputes are being settled.
- Students are automatically eligible for Title I services. Educational services for which the homeless student meets eligibility criteria including services provided under Title 1 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act or similar State or local programs, educational programs for students with limited English proficiency.

According to the U.S. Department of Education, people living in the following situations are considered homeless:

- Doubled up with family or friends due to loss of housing or economic hardship
- Living in motels and hotels for lack of other suitable housing
- Runaway and displaced children and youth – Unaccompanied Youth
- Homes for unwed or expectant mothers for lack of a place to live
- Homeless and domestic violence shelters
- Transitional housing programs
- The streets
- Abandoned buildings
- Public places not meant for housing
- Cars, trailers (does not include mobile homes intended for permanent housing), and campgrounds
- Migratory children staying in housing not fit for habitation

APPENDIX A

Wa-Nee Community Schools McKinney-Vento Residency Form

Student Name _____**Date of Birth**_____**Grade Level**_____

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Title X, Part C, of the No Child Left Behind Act) defines "homeless" as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." This includes children who "are temporarily sharing the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing or economic hardship."

☐ Does not apply; student is not homeless

Please check one of the following statements if your family is experiencing temporary homelessness:

☐ Living in a shelter, including transitional housing shelters. Please provide name of shelter and address

_____

☐ Living on the streets, abandoned buildings, in cars, trailers, campgrounds, public places, housing not fit for habitation--Please provide information regarding area in which student is living:

_____

☐ Living in hotels/motels for lack of other suitable housing – Please list name and address of hotel/motel: _____

_____

☐ Doubled-up; Temporarily living with family or friends due to lack of adequate housing or financial conditions. Please provide address of where student is living:
Address:_____

Please answer the following if you checked one of the four boxes above:

How long do you expect to be at this address? _____

Are you seeking permanent housing? _____ Date student moved to this address: _____

Is a parent living in the home with the student? _____

If no, with whom is student living? _____Relationship: _____

A McKinney-Vento Liaison representing the district may be in contact with you for clarification or bus transportation.

We have read the information provided & indicated our living circumstances above specific to the McKinney-Vento Act:

_____ _____

Parent/Guardian/Unaccompanied Youth Signature Date

Office Use Only: _____Does Qualify under McKinney-Vento Act _____Does NOT Qualify

_____ _____

McKinney-Vento Liaison/Appointee Signature Date

APPENDIX B

NOTICE OF RIGHT TO APPEAL

Dear Parent:

Be advised that you have the right to appeal the decisions made by **Wa-Nee Community Schools** regarding your student's eligibility and enrollment under Title X, Part C of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Students involved in a McKinney-Vento dispute process have the right to enroll immediately in the school of choice pending resolution of the dispute. Immediate enrollment includes full participation in all school activities.

As the Wa-Nee Community School District's McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Liaison designee, notification should be made to **Gretchen Thomas** in writing within 10 business days of receipt of this letter if you want to appeal the district's decision outlined above.

Attached you will find an appeal form that you can use for this notification. If we cannot reach a resolution at the district-level, the dispute will be moved to the state level for final resolution, facilitated by the Indiana Department of Education's (IDOE) State Coordinator for the McKinney-Vento Act. State Coordinator, Deepali Jani can be reached by phone at 317-233-3372 or 317- 460-1340 via email at: djani@doe.in.gov.

Attached you will find a copy of Indiana's McKinney-Vento Dispute Resolution Process that provides additional details on the state's McKinney-Vento dispute and appeals process, including key timelines.

Feel free to contact me if you have questions on this decision or the McKinney-Vento dispute or appeal process.

Attachments:
http://www.doe.in.gov/student-services/dispute-resolution

Sincerely,

Gretchen Thomas
Director of Curriculum & Instruction