

# STATE PLAN

## Peer Review Criteria and Notes Form for the McKinney-Vento EHCY Program

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State Name: Alaska



**U.S. Department of Education**  
**September 2017**

## Background

Peer reviewers will apply their professional judgment and experiences when responding to the questions in response to the criteria below. Consistent with section 1111(a)(4)(C) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, peer reviewers will conduct an objective review of State plans in their totality and out of respect for State and local judgments, with the goal of supporting State- and local-led innovation and providing objective feedback on the technical, educational, and overall quality of a State plan, including the validity and reliability of each element of the plan. Reviewer responses to the questions inform the written determination of the Secretary regarding the State plan.

## Role of the Peer Reviewers

- Each peer reviewer will independently review a consolidated State plan in accordance to the criteria for Title VII, Subtitle B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY). Each reviewer will record their responses to the questions, will note where changes may be necessary for an SEA to fully address statutory and regulatory requirements, and may also present suggestions for improving the plan or to highlight best practices. Each peer will create individual recommendations to guide the remote review. These are submitted to the Department but will not be shared with the State.
- A panel of peer reviewers will meet remotely to discuss each SEA's plan. The panel of peer reviewers will generate one set of peer review notes that reflects their collective review and evaluation of the SEA's State plan, but the panel is not required to reach consensus. The notes should reflect all reviewer perspectives on each item.

After the peer review is completed, each SEA will receive the final peer review notes that include the peer reviewers' responses to the questions and any recommendations to improve the SEA's State plan in the sections that the peers reviewed. The peer review notes serve two purposes: 1) they constitute the official record of the peer review panel's responses to questions regarding how an SEA's State plan addresses the statutory and regulatory requirements; and 2) they provide technical assistance to the SEA on how to improve its plan. The peer review notes also serve as recommendations to the Secretary to determine what, if any, additional information to request from the SEA. Taking into consideration the peer reviewers' recommendations, the Department will provide feedback to each SEA that outlines the areas the SEA must address, if any, prior to the Secretary's approving its State plan. If a plan cannot be approved, the Department will offer the State an opportunity to revise and resubmit its plan and have a hearing, consistent with ESEA section 8451.

Consistent with ESEA section 1111(a)(5), the Department will make publicly available all peer review guidance, training, and final peer panel notes. The names of peer reviewers will be made publicly available at the completion of the review of all State Plans, though the peer reviewers for any individual State will not be made available.

## How to Use This Document

The reviewer criteria is intended to 1) support States as they develop their consolidated State plans, and 2) inform peer review teams as they evaluate each State plan. This document outlines required elements in order for an SEA to fully address the applicable statutory and regulatory requirements. If an SEA has provided insufficient information for peer reviewers to determine whether any question is fully addressed, peer reviewers should indicate that the SEA has not fully addressed that requirement and identify what additional information or clarification may be needed.

## Instructions

Each peer reviewer should include individual review notes in the space provided below each State plan requirement. For each State plan requirement, a peer reviewer will provide:

- Peer Analysis: Describe the peer reviewer's justification for why an SEA did or did not meet the requirements;
- Strengths: Summarize strengths of the SEA's response to the State plan requirement;
- Limitations: Summarize the limitations of an SEA's response to the State plan requirement, including issues, lack of clarity, and possible technical assistance suggestions;
- Assessment: Determine if the SEA met the State plan requirement (indicated by Yes/No); and
  - If the peer reviewer indicates 'no' above, the peer must describe the specific information or clarification that a State must provide in order to meet the requirement.

The peer reviewer notes should address all of the required elements of each State plan requirement in this document, but do not need to address each element individually (*i.e.*, the peer notes should holistically look at I.5 the Strategies to Address Other Problems, incorporating each of the five identified items in this element but do not need to individually respond to each item).

## SECTION I: EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH PROGRAM, MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT, TITLE VII, SUBTITLE B

### I.1: Student Identification (722(g)(1)(B) of the McKinney-Vento Act)

- **Does the SEA describe the procedures it will use to identify homeless children and youth in the State and to assess their needs?**

	<i>Peer Response</i>
<i>Peer Analysis</i>	The peer reviewers observed that the plan describes that LEAs will be responsible for the identification of homeless students, the dissemination of identifying trainings and materials, and ensuring a needs assessment is done for each child. However, reviewers did not find this description provided detail on the SEA's role to meet the requirement.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the plan's description of the homeless liaison's role, including ensuring all school staff are trained in identification, as well as making the LEA solely responsible for the identification, enrollment, and needs assessment of the student.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the State's plan did not fully address assessing the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness. It also did not describe how the SEA will collect LEA counts or how it will use that data to support services and remove barriers for homeless students.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (3) Reviewers
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	The peer reviewers indicated that the State plan could be strengthened by describing its State-level needs assessment process, how the SEA supports identification beyond solely listing technical assistance and guidance, and how it will collect LEA numbers of homeless students.

**I.2: Dispute Resolution (722(g)(1)(C) of the McKinney-Vento Act)**

- **Does the SEA describe procedures for the prompt resolution of disputes regarding the educational placement of homeless children and youth?**

	<i>Peer Response</i>
<i>Peer Analysis</i>	The peer reviewers noted that the SEA plan stated that there is a process outlined in regulation, but it was unclear if the State’s process meets the criteria.
<i>Strengths</i>	Reviewers saw the State’s dispute resolution process as a strength in the plan.
<i>Limitations</i>	The reviewers found as limitations that the SEA did not include procedures, and there wasn’t enough information provided in the description to show that a plan was in place.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (3 Reviewers)
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	The peer reviewers indicated that the State plan could be strengthened by including a description of the dispute resolution process or a link to the existing procedures.

**I.3: Support for School Personnel (722(g)(1)(D) of the McKinney-Vento Act)**

- **Does the SEA describe programs for school personnel (including the LEA liaisons for homeless children and youth, principals and other school leaders, attendance officers, teachers, enrollment personnel, and specialized instructional support personnel) to heighten the awareness of such school personnel of the specific needs of homeless children and youth, including such children and youth who are runaway and homeless youths?**

<i>Peer Response</i>	
<i>Peer Analysis</i>	The peer reviewers observed that the SEA will provide technical assistance and create guidelines and updates as needed. Reviewers also noted that although the plan described several opportunities for liaison training, it was unclear to the reviewers how the State supports other staff in heightening awareness.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the plan’s detailed information on the supports provided to heighten liaisons’ awareness, including a description of the variety of methods and modalities for providing training.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted as limitations that the plan did not describe programs that will address all areas. While the State provides training to liaisons and references monitoring, it was unclear how other school staff are engaged in a program to heighten awareness or how the existing training is implemented or measured for effectiveness. Additionally, the needs of runaway and homeless children and youth were not addressed.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) Reviewer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (2) Reviewers
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	The peer reviewers indicated that the State plan could be strengthened by adding specific information on heightening awareness beyond that for liaisons and ensure programs are strong for students experiencing homelessness.

**I.4: Access to Services (722(g)(1)(F) of the McKinney-Vento Act)**

- **Does the SEA describe procedures that ensure that homeless children have access to public preschool programs, administered by the SEA or LEA, as provided to other children?**

	<i>Peer Response</i>
<i>Peer Analysis</i>	The peer reviewers observed that the SEA gave assurances, but did not find evidence of procedures that ensure homeless children have access to public preschool programs.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the plan’s inclusion of preschool children in its discussion on the removal of barriers and that LEAs uses a student residency questionnaire to gather information about older or younger siblings to refer for appropriate services.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted the very limited information provided in this section, and that it did not provide specific details as to how preschools are made available to homeless children. It was unclear to reviewers how this provision is currently implemented by the SEA, or how any existing procedure is utilized in ensuring access to preschool for homeless children.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (3) Reviewers
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	The peer reviewers indicated that the State’s assurances alone may not ensure preschool access for homeless preschool students. The plan could be strengthened by including a description of SEA procedures, early childhood collaborations, identified barriers and how they can be overcome, or how current practice creates a systemic method of identifying and assisting preschool students who might be in a homeless situation.

- **Does the SEA describe procedures that ensure that homeless youth and youth separated from public schools are identified and accorded equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services, including by identifying and removing barriers that prevent youth described in this clause from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with State, local, and school policies?**

	<i>Peer Response</i>
<i>Peer Analysis</i>	The peer reviewers observed that the SEA will use the residency questionnaire to identify secondary homeless students, but that there was little description of procedures as evidence of how the SEA might meet this requirement.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw as strengths that the State Coordinator collaborates to ensure full and partial credit is obtained for unaccompanied homeless youth, and how the SEA will use the Student Residency Questionnaire to help liaisons match students with advocates so they can return to school and participate in programs.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted as limitations that while the State references one strategy in meeting this section, it did not provide enough description of its procedures to ensure access to secondary education and support services.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (3) Reviewers
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	The peer reviewers stated that the plan could be strengthened by including specific examples of procedures addressing the criteria outlined in the question, including either the procedure utilized in awarding credit or clarifying how it works with district liaisons and school counselors on this process. The plan should also mention other ways to identify students who do not self-identify.

- **Does the SEA describe procedures that ensure that homeless children and youth who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs, if such programs are available at the State and local levels?**

	<i>Peer Response</i>
<i>Peer Analysis</i>	The peer reviewers observed that the SEA gives assurance that every effort will be made to remove barriers, but the procedure utilized by the State to remove these barriers was unclear.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw as a strength the SEA's plan to work with athletic associations to ensure access for homeless students.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted as limitations that the State did not include a description of its procedures for removing barriers to accessing each of the programs listed in the requirement.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (3) Reviewers
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	The peer reviewers stated the plan could be strengthened by including the actual procedures it utilizes in removing the barriers listed in the requirement to access these programs in addition to the athletic associations. Working with the State-level person who oversees high-ability programming (AP, IB, TAG) or meeting student needs through Special Education supports, if needed, would be helpful in strengthening the response to this requirement.

**I.5: Strategies to Address Other Problems (722(g)(1)(H) of the McKinney-Vento Act)**

- **Does the SEA provide strategies to address other problems with respect to the education of homeless children and youth, including problems resulting from enrollment delays that are caused by—(i) requirements of immunization and other required health records; (ii) residency requirements; (iii) lack of birth certificates, school records, or other documentation; (iv) guardianship issues; or (v) uniform or dress code requirements?**

	<i>Peer Response</i>
<i>Peer Analysis</i>	The peer reviewers observed that the State provided some specificity regarding its strategies to remove the barriers to enrollment, stating that immediate enrollment is the expectation for homeless students lacking the documentation that is usually required.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw as strengths that the SEA has a plan for each of the required areas, provided strategies to address these problems, and conducts monitoring to ensure district procedures and polices remove these common barriers to enrollment.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted as limitations that the residency requirements section is unclear as it appears that the homeless student completes this form. A description of the liaison’s role in obtaining records would be beneficial, along with more specificity of the monitoring of LEAs on the requirements in this section.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (3) Reviewers
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	

**I.6: Policies to Remove Barriers (722(g)(1)(I) of the McKinney-Vento Act)**

- **Does the SEA demonstrate that the SEA and LEAs in the State have developed, and shall review and revise, policies to remove barriers to the identification of homeless children and youth, and the enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth in schools in the State, including barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences?**

	<i>Peer Response</i>
<i>Peer Analysis</i>	The peer reviewers observed that while the SEA gave an assurance that policies and practices do not create barriers for homeless students, specific policies were not mentioned in the narrative response to this requirement. References were made to monitoring, but more information was needed to show that it has developed and shall review and revise policies to remove these barriers.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw the SEA’s monitoring process to assist in the LEAs’ compliance of the removal of barriers as a strength.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted as limitations that the SEA did not reference specific policies, and that the SEA did not provide information on how the SEA and LEAs have adopted and shall review and revise policies to remove barriers. Additionally, peer reviewers did not find a full description of the monitoring process to assist in understanding how the State ensures LEAs remove these barriers.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (3) Reviewers
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	The peer reviewers stated the plan could be strengthened by including a more specific description of how the SEA meets these criteria, including how it addresses outstanding fees, fines, and absences. It should reference specific policies, address each of the required areas, include an example of how the SEA has removed barriers, how the LEA may look for barriers, or how the SEA and LEA may work together to remove barriers if necessary.

**I.7: Assistance from Counselors (722(g)(1)(K))**

- **Does the SEA include how youths described in section 725(2) will receive assistance from counselors to advise such youths and prepare and improve the readiness of such youths for college?**

	<i>Peer Response</i>
<i>Peer Analysis</i>	Peer reviewers observed that the SEA has a plan in place to work with counselors to ensure students receive services, but it was noted that while support is provided to counselors, it was unclear how the State assures that these activities translate to youth receiving assistance.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw the multi-program approach to support students experiencing homelessness. Credit recovery, tutoring, ACT/SAT fee assistance, FASFA help, and the Alaska Performance Scholarship are ways in which counselors are expected to help. The plan also described several resources and trainings available to school counselors in understanding the social and emotional needs of students experiencing homelessness as a strength.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted as limitations that this section did not fully explain how homeless youth will be provided assistance from counselors. The plan did not mention ongoing support to LEA staff to ensure this occurs systemically.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (1) Reviewer <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (2) Reviewers
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	The peer reviewers stated that the plan could be strengthened by including an explanation of how counselors will assist homeless youths and improve their college readiness as a result of the technical assistance provided.