

# STATE PLAN for the McKinney-Vento EHCY Program

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State Name: Alabama



**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 described the SEA collaboration along with the LEA and liaison processes to identify homeless students and assess their needs.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers identified strengths in the plan’s collaborative approach to identification and needs assessment, including training representatives from various stakeholder groups in the SEA and LEAs, and groups external to the educational domain.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the State’s plan did not specifically address the requirement for an SEA level procedure, or training additional school staff. The plan would be strengthened by more discussion of how training is delivered and documented, what accountability mechanisms are in place to ensure all LEA liaisons and other key personnel receive and complete training that is offered, and by some mention of how data are collected and recorded across LEAs.
<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.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 observed that the plan described a revised process to effectively resolve disputes that will go into effect if approved by the State Board of Education and addressed the liaison’s role and responsibility to assist during the process.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the plan’s proposed revision of dispute resolution policies at LEA and SEA levels, outlining responsibilities of key personnel, to improve policy at all levels. Students will remain in school during the dispute, the appeal process was discussed in the plan, and the timeline was provided for the response to the dispute.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the proposed revision is still pending approval. The plan would be strengthened by a description of the current status and the plan to address the new requirements in the law, if the board does not approve the proposed procedure. Also, the plan did not indicate a timeframe for the student and/or parent to present the dispute.
<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.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 plan described the training, technical assistance, and monitoring provided to ensure awareness and understanding. Trainings are conducted on a two-level system to provide awareness to school staff and outside agencies on the needs of children, youth, and runaways.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the plan’s requirement for LEAs to send designated staff to trainings conducted jointly with other State agencies and advocacy groups. Trainings use a multi-tiered approach, including the RTI model, and disseminate warnings sign to identify runaway students. Also, program needs assessments are conducted to ensure compliance, and the plan addresses the process for students in the juvenile system.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted that the State plan addressed this requirement fully and did not identify any limitations in the SEA response to this requirement.
<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.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 plan described programming and detailed collaboration of outside agencies that administer preschool programs and had an allowance for homeless students to have access, but did not include procedures ensuring access.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the SEA’s inclusion of homeless children as a targeted subgroup to receive access to Title 1 funded programs and use of trainings and conferences to disseminate information.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the plan stated all students have access, but it did not provide detail regarding how that access is ensured for homeless children of preschool age. Information is provided at conferences and training sessions, but the plan did not mention specific strategies to ensure access.
<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 procedures to ensure preschool aged students experiencing homelessness have access to preschool, such as making slot allocations and providing transportation. The plan should detail specific strategies with and among various agencies and partners to address the challenges faced in enrollment of preschool children who are in homeless situations.

- **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 all students, including students experiencing homelessness, are required to meet the same academic standards, and that annual liaison trainings include enhanced credit accrual and recovery. However, it was observed that the plan did not mention youth separated from public school.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw as strengths that homeless students are required to meet the same academic standards as other students, that required trainings provide information to liaisons in relation to credit accrual and recovery, and that conferences are used to disseminate information.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the State’s plan did not provide clear procedures or mention youth separated from school or 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 indicated that the State plan could be strengthened by discussing strategies that target the group specified in the prompt, including a description of how homeless youth who are separated from school actually receive education and support services. Procedures need to be clearly expressed on the duties of the liaison and school counseling staff regarding full and partial credit, the enrollment processes to alleviate barriers, and how the SEA will address students from the juvenile system, dropouts, and runaway homeless youth.

- **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 plan did not describe procedures to ensure students do not face barriers when accessing these activities.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw as strengths that homeless students are required to meet the same academic standards as other students and that trainings and conferences are used to disseminate information related to the requirement.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the plan did not clearly express procedures, or address the collaboration of the liaison and other agencies. Also, the plan did not mention of any of the program components 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 indicated that the State plan could be strengthened by describing how they will ensure access to academic and extra-curricular activities, provide transportation, enroll students in summer school, and ensure students complete the process for online learning. It could also be strengthened by the mention of magnet school, summer school, and career/technical education programs. If such programs are not available in the State, or locally, this should be stated in the plan.

**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 SEA has State policy to address three of the barriers in this requirement. The plan mentioned training by the State Coordinator in the areas of required documentation, but the language of the plan was general, and reviewers observed that there was not enough detail to meet the requirement of I.5.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the plan’s description of desk audits and onsite reviews to ensure compliance and required corrective action plans when LEAs are out of compliance. Also, the plan identified a State policy to address some barriers, and students are allowed immediate enrollment.
<i>Limitations</i>	Reviewers found that the State’s plan did not specifically address guardianship or uniform or dress code requirements, and two reviewers noted there was no mention of birth certificates. Also, it was noted that the plan did not detail strategies when students face these barriers, such as the timeline for obtaining immunization records and the role of the liaison to assist with gathering the required documentation.
<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 addressing all the listed problems and discussing specific strategies to address these barriers.

**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 the plan identified the need to review policies addressing fees, fines, and absences. The SEA works with a State Advisory Committee to conduct reviews of existing LEA policies and practices and demonstrates a strong commitment to ensure removal of barriers through professional development and training.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers identified strengths in the plan’s inclusion of a State level advisory committee to support the removal of barriers and the provision of professional development to identify barriers to liaisons and other school personnel. Also, the plan addressed training for newly-appointed LEA homeless coordinators to address the needs of liaisons that begin their role mid-year.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the State’s plan did not provide detailed information on the procedures it will use to remove the barriers, such as how the SEA will address fees, fines and absences. It also did not discuss ongoing monitoring to ensure barriers are removed.
<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.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>	The peer reviewers observed the SEA has State level collaboration, and the plan described the collaboration of the liaison with school counselors through professional development and mandatory trainings. It did not describe how school counselors are involved in service delivery and support to homeless youth in preparation for college and/or post-secondary opportunities.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the plan’s description of State level coordination with counseling and guidance, and the plan’s focus on financial aid, college visits, school requirements, and college waivers for application fees.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the State’s plan did not describe how youth will receive assistance from counselors, and it was not clear what liaisons and counselors do to support this 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 indicated that the State plan could be strengthened by describing the role of the school counselor relative to the requirements of this requirement. The activities listed are appropriate, but it was not clear to reviewers which responsibilities are provided by the liaison and what services are provided by the counselor. The plan should also include the school counselor’s role in providing students information on application fee waivers, and college requirements.