

# STATE PLAN

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

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State Name: Louisiana



**U.S. Department of Education**

**June 20, 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;
- Overall Determination: 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 review panel observed that the SEA thoroughly described procedures for identifying students experiencing homelessness and their needs.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer review panel noted the use of a Statewide referral form and residency questionnaire. Other strengths included a robust data collection process which supported a comprehensive needs assessment throughout the State, the ability to obtain real-time data in a management system, and a State Department of Education Homeless Tracking System.
<i>Limitations</i>	<p>The peer review panel observed the SEA did not include mention of trainings, technical assistance or collaborations for non-subgrant districts or LEAs regarding identification and needs assessments for homeless children and youth. The reviewers were unclear how the State would monitor or check for compliance in non-subgrant districts or LEAs.</p> <p>The peer review panel recommended the SEA specify that the training in identification and assessing needs for homeless children and youth be provided for all LEAs, especially those without subgrants, as well as a description of how the State monitored compliance with non-subgrant districts or LEAs.</p>
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (3) Reviewers <input type="checkbox"/> No
<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 review panel observed that the SEA emphasized training and accountability and worked diligently to assure coordination with other offices and agencies to provide a prompt resolution for disputes.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer review panel noted many strengths, which included a Statewide uniform dispute resolution process across all LEAs, a homeless hotline number that families and advocates could access to assist in timely responses to questions and complaints, ongoing training opportunities for liaisons regarding the dispute process, and various distribution methods for parents, guardians and unaccompanied youth to access information related to their rights.
<i>Limitations</i>	<p>The peer review panel observed that the SEA lacked a clear description regarding State-level resolution of the dispute process, as well as the standard procedures for a dispute appeal. Additionally, the SEA did not specify the dissemination and capacity building with LEAs related to dispute resolution, nor did it outline how the State would assure LEAs would provide the information to parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth through the list of sources listed in the narrative.</p> <p>The peer review panel recommended that monitoring information be included as part of the State’s process, as applicable, to strengthen the plan.</p>
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (3) Reviewers <input type="checkbox"/> No
<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 review panel observed that the SEA provided a comprehensive description of activities that supported the heightened awareness for the various stakeholders listed in the question.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer review panel noted that the SEA described a variety of ways and modalities that liaisons and school personnel could access to heighten their awareness of the needs of homeless children and youth. The plan specifically included resources from National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), coordination with other Federal programs, and posting of information to the State website to support the various stakeholders. The peer review panel noted that the State distributed posters and family brochures to raise awareness surrounding the educational rights of homeless children and youth. Also, the SEA ensured that LEAs described procedures in their subgrant applications to ensure that school personnel were aware of the unique needs of homeless children and youth.
<i>Limitations</i>	<p>The peer review panel observed the plan lacked accountability to ensure that the various stakeholders received awareness activities. There was no description of the SEA’s monitoring process to determine if LEAs, particularly those that were non-subgrantees, were conducting professional learning opportunities for school personnel or were attending the trainings offered by the SEA.</p> <p>The peer review panel recommended that the SEA consider how to support liaisons in fulfilling their more comprehensive training requirements under Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). Additionally, more specific information was suggested regarding the duration, intensity, and frequency of the trainings offered to LEAs.</p>
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (3) Reviewers) <input type="checkbox"/> No
<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 review panel observed that the SEA clearly outlined several strong collaborative efforts across programs and agencies. The plan described specific ways that the SEA had addressed and will continue to address access to preschool.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer review panel noted the extensive collaboration and coordination between the State Coordinator and key early childhood programs, such as the State offices and other Federal programs, to build cross-departmental capacity and awareness. Additionally, the State worked with several programs to help ensure liaisons were included in local conversations surrounding access to preschool for homeless children. Another strength noted by the peer reviewers was the collection of data on preschoolers, and the description of funding support for supplemental services.
<i>Limitations</i>	<p>The peer review panel saw that the SEA lacked clarity in how preschool program access was monitored and how the data collected on preschoolers was used to track progress. Additionally, the SEA did not specifically share how often trainings occurred for districts or LEAs, nor did it describe the procedures for assuring districts or LEAs were offering access to public preschool programs at the State level.</p> <p>The peer review panel recommended that the SEA include information on how often trainings occurred for districts or LEAs, as well as describe the procedures for assuring districts or LEAs were offering access to public preschool programs at the State level to demonstrate fidelity.</p>
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (3) Reviewers <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	

- **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 review panel observed that as a new provision under ESSA, the SEA recognized this as an area of growth and provided evidence to further strengthen the State’s current credit procedures.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer review panel noted that the SEA included networking, training, policy-making, and evidence of strong coordination with Title I Part D, juvenile justice correctional facilities, and transitional services for youth in order to reach youth separated from public school. Additionally, the SEA utilized identification data as an indicator to support the need for greater outreach, which suggested a strong data analysis process at the State level. Another strength noted by the peer reviewers was the SEA’s description of the current credit accrual practices.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer review panel suggested further descriptions on the current expectations of LEAs to review a student’s prior school transcript to calculate, award, and ensure they receive partial credits, or a description of a framework currently in place to assist districts with this process.  The peer review panel recommended that the data on graduation rates be used to inform progress in this area.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (3) Reviewers <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	

- **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>	<p>The peer review panel observed that the SEA described sources of funding for before-and-after school programs, extended day and summer programs for homeless children and youth to access, but the section did not clearly address the procedures for such children and youth in accessing academic and extracurricular activities for magnet schools, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs.</p> <p>The narrative did address procedures to remove barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities for students experiencing homelessness, but it focused on LEAs which were supported by subgrant dollars.</p>
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer review panel noted that the SEA described sources for funding, such as Title 1 funds, and several programs that could be accessed. Subgrant funding did support efforts to remove barriers.
<i>Limitations</i>	<p>Two peer reviewers saw that the SEA did not address extracurricular activities nor did the plan address magnet schools, career and technical education, advance placement, online learning, or charter school programs. Based on the narrative it was unclear which programs existed in the State. Additionally, there was no description of monitoring or reviewing of data to ensure students received access nor was there a description of procedures for non-subgrant LEAs.</p> <p>One peer reviewer thought that the plan would be strengthened by including a section on the expectation of the State to have local board policies in place for LEAs to remove barriers for homeless children and youth in accessing academic and extracurricular activities. Additionally, it was suggested that further explanation be included on coordination at the State and local levels with other funding sources, such as the Title I, Part A set-aside. Also, it would be beneficial to include information on how the State addressed this with non-subgrantee districts.</p>
<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 suggested that the plan would be strengthened if it would indicate which of the academic and extracurricular activities/programs in the question are accessible to homeless children and youth at the State and local levels. The SEA must describe the procedures to ensure the removal of barriers for homeless children and youth to access the available activities and programs. Lastly, the SEA must clarify if the current description of procedures applies to all LEAs, including those that are non-subgrant LEAs.

**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 review panel observed that the SEA specifically addressed each of the barriers encountered by homeless children and youth that disrupt their education due to enrollment delays.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer review panel noted that the SEA’s cross-agency and cross-departmental collaboration, which included the Director of Federal Programs, BESE State regulations, parents, students, advocates, and other service providers, addressed enrollment delays for homeless children and youth. Additionally, training, State letters to liaisons, and annual evaluations for subgrantees reflected an ongoing review and revision of local policies and ongoing technical assistance to provide awareness regarding barriers to enrollment in the field. Another strength noted by the peer reviewers was the toll-free hotline.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer review panel observed the SEA lacked clarity on the procedures for determining if LEAs, specifically those without McKinney-Vento subgrants, implemented and assured compliance with Statewide regulations. The plan appeared to emphasize subgrants and the strategies for non-subgrantees were unclear.  The peer review panel recommended further clarification on the strategies for non-subgrant districts or LEAs to strengthen the plan.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (3) Reviewers <input type="checkbox"/> No
<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 review panel observed that throughout other portions of the plan, the SEA addressed efforts to identify barriers and review/revise polices on identification, enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth, but there was no mention or reference to barriers to enrollment and retention due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer review panel noted that other portions of the plan included the SEA and LEAs efforts to review and revise policies to identify and remove barriers to identification, enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth. Also, the BESE state regulation (Bulletin 741, Section 341) included language on McKinney-Vento enrollment and placement for homeless students that was regularly reviewed and revised.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer review panel saw that the SEA did not address policies to remove barriers to enrollment and retention related to outstanding fees, fines or absences.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <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 suggested that the plan would be strengthened if it would ensure the SEA as well as LEAs have policies in place that address removing barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of homeless children and youth in schools due to outstanding fees, fines or absences.

**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 review panel observed that the SEA provided a thorough graduation plan for each student, which included a variety of methods homeless youth could receive assistance from not only from counselors but other school staff in order to prepare for post-secondary experiences. Additionally, specific training and technical assistance for school counselors to support students experiencing homelessness was described and was supported by State laws aimed at supporting students with post-secondary access.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer review panel noted the support of two State laws for the SEA’s implementation of Individual Graduation Plans for students. The SEA provided ongoing training and outreach to school counselors and included informing unaccompanied homeless youth of their independent status on the FAFSA.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer review panel observed the State plan lacked clarity on the transferability of the State’s Individual Graduation Plan with highly mobile students, such as homeless students. The peer review panel recommended more information in the State plan on the SEA’s efforts to ensure liaisons are trained and familiar with the same graduation efforts as school counselors. More information was desired on the types and frequency of interactions with school counselors by homeless students. Another recommendation included by the panel reviewers was the plan could include more detailed information on the collaboration efforts at the State level surrounding credit accrual.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (3) Reviewers <input type="checkbox"/> No
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	