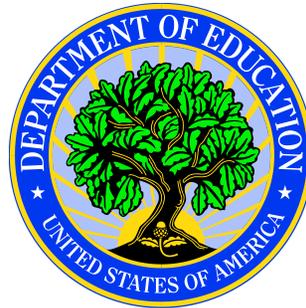


STATE PLAN

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

State Name: Mississippi



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>	Peer reviewers observed that the State’s plan provided a set of strategies to address the identification of homeless children and youth. Homeless children and youth are identified at the local level, and the SEA provides technical assistance in this area to all LEAs. Information is collected through the Mississippi Student Information System (MSIS).
<i>Strengths</i>	Strengths identified by the peer reviewers include the provision of online training, in-person training, and one-to-one technical assistance for LEAs who are over or under-identifying homeless children and youth. Additionally, reviewers noted that the SEA has a data system which provides monthly reports on numbers of homeless students, services being provided, living conditions, and barriers for homeless youth. Also, the plan discussed establishing a multi-agency advisory council.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that although the identification of homeless children and youth is a local responsibility, the State’s plan did not provide detailed information regarding the kinds of local activities that will be expected to ensure adequate and appropriate identification of homeless students. Additionally, it was unclear to reviewers how the SEA will monitor LEAs to determine compliance.
<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>	Peer reviewers observed that the State’s plan included a multi-level dispute resolution policy. However, while local policies are required, the SEA plan did not indicate that they are reviewed. Also, it was unclear to reviewers whether LEAs are to adopt the SEAs dispute resolution process or if they may create their own (the plan described LEAs developing written policies and procedures with timelines that govern the dispute resolution process).
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers noted that the State’s plan described the involvement of the local homeless liaison. During a dispute, the plan states that the Superintendent’s designee will be someone other than the local liaison, to allow the liaison to remain neutral and establish trust.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers indicated that the State policy, as described in the narrative, did not stipulate that the student be enrolled in the chosen school while the dispute is in process or if the local policy is reviewed during monitoring. The current dispute resolution process implies the existence of a timeline, but the plan did not mention this until the dispute reaches the SEA level. Finally, transportation was not mentioned in the dispute resolution protocol.
<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>	Peer reviewers noted that the State’s plan would be strengthened by addressing the requirement of immediate enrollment in the school in which enrollment is sought pending the resolution of a dispute, outlining the duties of the local liaison relative to unaccompanied youth, and addressing transportation in the dispute resolution process.

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>	Peer reviewers observed that the State’s plan provided multiple opportunities for LEA staff to increase their awareness of the specific needs of homeless children and youth, but did not discuss the liaisons role in providing local training or how the various training mechanisms will be employed. It was also noted that the plan did not address the issue of runaway and homeless youths.
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers identified several strengths in the State’s plan including the SEAs provision of training for LEA staff through multiple professional development events, online materials made available through the SEA website, and one-to-one technical assistance to LEAs as needed.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that it was unclear how the SEA identifies topics and reaches target audiences beyond invitation, or how the SEA monitors and tracks attendance at McKinney-Vento trainings.
<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>	Peer reviewers indicated that the State’s plan could be strengthened by further discussing how the training will be made available and how it will be targeted to the areas and groups of greatest priority. Additionally, reviewers noted that it will be important to have a mechanism to document training participation, especially by local liaisons, and to include training as an element examined in LEA monitoring.

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>	Peer reviewers observed that the State’s plan listed multiple procedures to increase the access of homeless children to public preschool. However, reviewers noted that the narrative described general approaches to ensuring preschool access but did not include actual procedures that will be followed.
<i>Strengths</i>	Strengths identified by the peer reviewers include the variety of strategies to increase early childhood enrollment in preschool and intra-agency collaboration at the SEA. Additionally, reviewers noted that enrollment forms are available, which can help with identification of siblings.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers observed that the strategies listed by the SEA focused on the encouragement of LEAs to take certain actions. It was unclear to reviewers how the SEA will monitor access or determine which strategies are in use or are effective.
<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>	Peer reviewers indicated that the State’s plan would be strengthened by further description of resources and activities that LEAs are expected to use to identify eligible children. Additionally, more detail is needed regarding what activities are expected to result from the various collaborations and how activities will be targeted to locales or audiences most in need of assistance in this area.

- **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>	Peer reviewers observed that the State’s plan described a commitment to ensuring that homeless youth receive appropriate credit for coursework completed at a prior school, but did not identify how this will take place and how the SEA will monitor LEAs for compliance.
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers noted a strength of the plan was the SEA’s stated intention to ensure that LEAs develop procedures to award credit as part of immediate enrollment and that LEAs will develop local procedures for credit accrual.
<i>Limitations</i>	Reviewers noted that it was unclear what strategies or procedures the SEA will use to ensure that credit is awarded.
<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>	Peer reviewers indicated that the State’s plan could be strengthened by discussion of the procedures the State will use to ensure that credit is awarded, including credit transfer policies and procedures. Additionally, peer reviewers noted that additional description around the removal of barriers would strengthen the SEAs response to this requirement.

- **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>	Peer reviewers observed that the SEA described its intent to ensure that LEAs develop alternative enrollment procedures to academic and extracurricular activities, but noted that the State’s plan did not provide a description of how this will occur, or how this requirement will be monitored.
<i>Strengths</i>	Strengths identified by peer reviewers include the SEA-required alternate application procedures to allow youth to immediately enroll in magnet schools, charter school programs, advanced placement and career and technical education. Additionally, the SEA will encourage prioritization of homeless students for extracurricular activities.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that the State’s plan did not explain how an alternate application process will increase access to programs for homeless youth, or describe a process to support LEAs in developing procedures, or describe how to ensure that local policies and procedures are adequate and appropriate.
<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>	Peer reviewers indicated that the State’s plan could be strengthened by specifically addressing how the SEA will review and update State and local policies and procedures impacting access to, and participation in, each of the listed academic programs – magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning and charter school programs – as well as extracurricular activities.

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>	Peer reviewers observed that the State’s plan referenced SEA-developed procedures to ensure that educators in a variety of roles are trained regarding McKinney-Vento requirements, but the SEA did not describe how that training results in the elimination of delays caused by the five categories listed in this requirement.
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers identified strengths in the State’s plan including the provision of training on trauma-informed care and cultural competency to local homeless liaisons, counselors, administrators and school attendance officers. Additionally, reviewers noted the collaboration the SEA encourages with community-based, religious, and civic organizations to provide support to homeless children and their families.
<i>Limitations</i>	Reviewers observed that while the State’s plan described many efforts to both identify homeless children and youth and ensure compulsory attendance, the narrative did not address enrollment delays and their causes.
<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>	Peer reviewers indicated that the State’s plan would be strengthened by further discussion of specific strategies to address enrollment delays for each of the areas noted in this requirement – immunization and other health records, residency requirements, lack of birth certificates, school records, or other documentation, guardianship issues, and uniform or dress code requirements.

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>	Peer reviewers observed that the State’s plan referred to the existence of State and local policies, but did not discuss what the policies are, or how they will be reviewed and revised as needed.
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers noted that LEAs were provided a webinar outlining policy changes and are required to update local policies.
<i>Limitations</i>	Reviewers indicated that the State’s plan was unclear regarding how the SEA monitors required policy revisions. It was also noted that the narrative did not describe SEA policies related to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.
<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>	Peer reviewers noted that the State’s plan could be strengthened by further discussion of State and local policies regarding barriers to identification, enrollment and retention, including barriers related to outstanding fees or fines, or absences. Reviewers indicated that the plan should also describe a process to review State policies and the monitoring guidelines for local policies to identify those in need of revision.

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 State’s plan discussed the provision of technical assistance to counselors, but did not articulate how or when the training will occur. Reviewers also noted that the plan did not provide specific efforts to prepare counselors to advise homeless youth or enhance their college readiness.
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers identified the provision of technical assistance to school counselors to assist them with the implementation of new ESSA requirements on preparing youth for college as a strength of the plan.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers indicated that the State’s plan limited in its discussion of technical assistance and observed that additional details are needed regarding how this assistance will occur and what specific training counselors and others will receive to provide the needed support to students. Additionally, it was noted that data was not cited in relation to the extent to which readiness for college or access to financial aid are problems and, if so, what aspects need to be 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>	Peer reviewers indicated that the State’s plan could be strengthened by further discussion of how homeless students will receive assistance from counselors. Additionally, further description is needed regarding the training and technical assistance activities in place to provide counselors with the needed information and resources.