

STATE PLAN

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

State Name: North Dakota



U.S. Department of Education
June 28, 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 State plan’s description of its procedures was clear and precise. The peer reviewers found that the State plan meets this requirement with its descriptions of procedures for identification, as well as descriptions on accountability, monitoring, and professional development. The SEA plan provides a specific strategy to help flag potential homeless students, eligibility determination, and a needs assessment if eligibility criteria are met, followed up with the implementation of immediate enrollment and services.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers observed the State plan narrative described in detail the relevant procedures used by the State. The State plan described processes for identification and needs assessment, professional development for LEAs, technical assistance, resources, monitoring, and data collection and analysis. For example, the State plan described how the SEA completes a yearly comparative analysis of LEA’s procedures for the identification of homeless students to look for significant increases or decreases.
<i>Limitations</i>	While the peer reviewers found the State plan’s narrative to have met this requirement, it was noted that additional activities during the school year would be good to include the State’s identification procedures beyond the beginning of the year, such as communicating with local shelters and child care agencies about potential families with children who may qualify for services, and utilizing the homeless student needs assessment at regular intervals. It was also noted that the inclusion of the frequency of the professional development, monitoring, and data collections activities would be beneficial to add to outline.
<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 reviewers observed that the State plan narrative for this requirement described a procedure for the resolution of disputes regarding homeless children and youth with detailed descriptions that included professional development, monitoring, technical assistance, resources, and data analysis. The outlined dispute process was explained in a logical, sequential order, and demonstrated an escalation procedure. The peer reviewers observed that the State plan’s response to this requirement included training/professional development on disputes and how to handle them, as well as other trainings including the dispute resolution process. However, peer reviewers also observed that the timeline for resolution of the dispute was not noted within the plan, so peer reviewers could not determine if the process was prompt.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers observed that in the State plan, while not fully addressing the requirement language, there was a process in place for disputes. The overall dispute procedure was described and included specific steps. Peer reviewers also observed as strength in the State plan that the dispute resolution policy and procedure was shared with members of the State Homeless Coalition to gather input and recommendations.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that the State plan’s narrative for this requirement was limited. The plan did not describe transportation needs and rights during the dispute process, the SEA’s timeline for dispute resolution in general, the specific steps provided in the State plan during a dispute, or paper work required of a family or youth in a dispute. Peer reviewers also indicated that tracking disputes would be valuable in allowing the SEA to see where there may be spikes in the number of disputes submitted from a particular LEA or part of the State to be helpful in the preparation of TA for the local liaisons.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (2) Reviewers <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No (1) Reviewer
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	Peer reviewers indicated that in order to fully address this requirement, the State’s plan could be strengthened if it described the McKinney-Vento Act’s transportation requirements while disputes are being resolved, a timeline for the dispute process in general and for the specific steps outlined in the plan, as well as a description of the paper work required by the family/youth involved in the dispute.

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 State plan’s narrative for this requirement addressed the program requirement for school personnel for heightening the awareness of the specific needs of homeless children and youth but did not explicitly include mention for runaway youth who are homeless.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw that the State plan’s narrative provided descriptions of the processes provided by the SEA to support this requirement and described a variety of modalities to heighten awareness to include webinars, memos, web sites, and newsletters. The peer reviewers observed the State’s self-monitoring tool as a good resource, as well noted the enhanced consistency and access to school personal from the trainings offered at the State level that are available via the SEA website and shared directly with liaisons and administrative staff through email. The peer reviewers liked that the trainings were based upon LEA feedback regarding district needs. The peer reviewers also noted the SEA’s requirement for LEAs to attend at least three webinars annually as a strength.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted that the State plan’s narrative is missing any specific mention of runaway homeless youth. In addition, professional development listed in the plan did not specifically include all the personnel categories mentioned beyond liaisons and administrators, and the programs listed in the plan do not specifically mention the category of “runaway and homeless youth” as being covered. While trainings are offered, the plan did not indicate the frequency of the trainings, or how the SEA can know if the trainings are being utilized, or utilized by the intended staff beyond annual attendance at yearly webinars.
<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 narrative could be strengthened by describing specifically programs that address runaway youth who are homeless, as well as programs that address all school personnel listed in the requirement and the frequency and tracking of professional development.

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 State plan’s narrative described efforts the SEA is currently underway to develop procedures to ensure that homeless children have access to public preschool programs, administered by the LEA as provided to other children. However, peer reviewers observed that the State plan’s did not meet the requirements and did not describe procedures that ensure that homeless children and youth have access to public preschool programs administered by the SEA or LEA as provided to other children. The peer reviewers observed that the State plan addressed the challenges encountered with inadequate numbers of spaces held open in Head Start programs, and the State’s intent to better collaborate with Head Start, including professional development and guidance developed with the intent to develop consistent/uniform protocols for enrollment. However, the State plan did not specifically describe procedures as stated in the requirement.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers observed that the State plan described several procedures that could be expanded on to include access to early childhood education for homeless children.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted that the State plan’s response to this requirement was limited in that it did not describe specific procedures to ensure that homeless children will have access to SEA or LEA preschool programs nor did it describe professional development and guidance that will be developed in the future by the SEA; Head Start was the only program addressed throughout the plan.
<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 indicated that the State plan could be strengthened by providing a plan outlining how they will meet the elements of the requirement, as well as specific procedures and a timelines on when the SEA will have such procedures in place to ensure homeless children have access to public preschool programs administered either by the SEA or the LEAs in their state. Procedures could include collaboration with local daycare centers to identify potential homeless children, use of Federal data, and specific collaboration, coordination, and training designed to ensure that homeless preschool children have access to public preschool programs.

- **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 State plan’s narrative did not provide a clear description of the process needed to address the requirement. While the plan clearly states that homeless students lacking documentation such as credit information will be immediately enrolled, the State plan did not describe specific procedures to ensure that these students received appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with State, local, and school policies. The State plan was observed to have included information about potentially relevant professional development offered but was not clearly defined. Peer reviewers observed the SEA provided assurances rather than outlined procedures to address this requirement.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers observed that the State plan’s response to this requirement provided information on their LEA procedures. LEAs were encouraged to review and revise policies, participate in professional development opportunities, and complete a self-monitoring tool.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted that the State plan did not outline clear procedures to demonstrate how the SEA or LEAs would work toward removing barriers or the provision of credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by McKinney-Vento students.
<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 indicated that the State plan could be strengthened by the provision of procedures that ensure that homeless youth and youth separated from public schools are identified and accorded equal access. Also, it was recommended that the State include a description of how SEA and LEA policies are reviewed and monitored, as well as a description of professional development, technical assistance, resources, and monitoring conducted by the SEA. Including SEA procedures related to the acceptance of confirmed partial credit and applying it toward coursework in the new district, or requiring counselors to meet with students at or near enrollment to determine if any credit could be utilized, would strengthen the State plan. NCHE has resources on developing policy around maximizing credit accrual to support the State plan in this area.

- **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 State plan’s narrative did not provide a description of procedures to meet this requirement, such as removing barriers to accessing magnet school, summer school, charter school, career and technical education, advanced placement, and online learning. The peer reviewers observed that the State plan described further collaboration to take place with the State high school activities association, special education, and others, but did not describe procedures of how this would be done.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw the State plan had several procedures already in place that could be expanded to include delivery services to homeless students that would meet this requirement. The peer reviewers also noted the State plan described that it will work with the High School Activities Association, special education, and gifted and talented programs to remove barriers.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that the State plan did not provide a complete response to this requirement. Peer reviewers noted that the plan did not provide specific procedures or steps which would ensure that McKinney-Vento students wouldn’t face barriers to accessing academic or 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>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 indicated that the State plan could be strengthened by the description of procedures outlining how they will meet the elements of the requirement to 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. This could be further described to be inclusive of a timeline outlining when the SEA will have these procedures in place.

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 plan’s narrative for this requirement did not provide a clear description of strategies to meet all of the elements in this requirement. The SEA plan provides assurance that students will be immediately enrolled even if lacking records, but there was no specific mention of guardianship issues; uniform or dress code requirements, and residency requirements were not identified within the plan.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers observed that the State plan had several procedures already in place that can be expanded to include delivery services to homeless students that would help meet this requirement, such as the procedure to immediately enroll students even if they are lacking some required records and other documents. The State plan described professional development opportunities, technical assistance from the SEA, various resources, and monitoring in regards to removing barriers.
<i>Limitations</i>	The peer reviewers noted that the State plan addressed some but not all of the elements of the requirement. While certain elements, such as immunization and lack of birth certificates and other school records are mentioned, the plan did not include strategies to indicate how they cause problems in respect to enrollment delays and what is in place to address the barriers. Peer reviewers noted that more detail on specific steps and strategies need to be added to the State plan in order to meet the requirement. For example, if immunizations are missing, the SEA or LEA could require the liaison work directly with the family to secure appointments and extend deadlines if needed.
<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 indicated that the State plan could be strengthened to provide an outline of specific strategies to address each element of this State plan requirement.

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 the plan included some procedures but did not completely provide enough to meet the requirement. While the plan included some overall general policies and procedures related to enrollment, peer reviewers did not find the policies relevant to addressing outstanding fines or absences.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers noted that the State plan’s narrative outlined professional development and technical assistance in relation to this requirement as part of their McKinney-Vento program, and provided specific mention of how they remove barriers to general identification, enrollment, and retention of homeless children and youth.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that the plan did not address how policies were developed, reviewed, and/or revised, nor did it provide specific policies on how missing documents will be addressed. Also, the plan did not provide targeted technical assistance and resources specific to this requirement. The professional development activities listed does mention “waiving fees” but there was no further detail found in the narrative about what this entailed. The technical assistance and resources listed do not seem specific to this requirement. Peer reviewers observed that the plan addressed strategies to remove barriers to identification, enrollment, and retention but did not demonstrate how such policies are developed, reviewed, and revised.
<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 plan could be strengthened by adding specific steps demonstrating how the SEA or LEA’s policies would remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, and retention of homeless children and youth in schools such as each of those listed in the requirement, as well as demonstrating how such policies are developed, reviewed, and revised.

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 that the State plan’s narrative described the SEA process to identify barriers, provide professional development, technical assistance, and SEA resources to address this requirement. The peer reviewers observed that the State plan provided a number of assurances so that students are prepared for college. Through the work of the counselors and outlined the programs that the counselors follow as well as key benchmarks that must be met through current legislation.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers noted that the State plan provided description of State code collaboration with the American School Counseling Association (ASCA), as well as a requirement for counselors through grade seven. Also, the State had mandated activities including ACT or WorkKeys assessment, as well as high school courses connecting to career interests to improve the readiness of students for college.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that the plan needed more specific information on the duties of the school counselors. Further clarification is needed on the specific steps or a timeline of activities, such as the frequency of counseling with McKinney-Vento students, and the specific topics that will be covered in these meetings to prepare students for college. Also, more information on how the SEA or LEA will sponsor events to walk students through the process would strengthen the plan. Peer reviewers also observed that the plan did not include information on the specific means or timing of interactions between counselors and homeless students to ensure that they are ready for college.
<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>	