

STATE PLAN
Composite Notes Form
for the McKinney-Vento EHCY Program

State Name: Pennsylvania



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 State plan outlined ongoing trainings by regional and site coordinators to LEAs and community agencies regarding the identification of homeless children and youth. Reviewers noted the utilization of a needs assessment, intake forms and interviews.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the State plan's description of the ongoing trainings for LEAs and community agencies. Regional staff hold at least two meetings in each county each school year where identification procedures are reviewed, resources and best practices are shared in school districts to address the identification of homeless students. Peer reviewers also observed the utilization of technology for trainings when onsite trainings cannot be attended.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that the State's plan did not provide details about how needs assessment and monitoring data will be used to assess areas that need improvement and to inform trainings, and that the plan referenced that intake interviews are completed at the regional level and noted that it may be more appropriate for intake interviews to occur at the district or school level.
<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 State plan provided a detailed description of the dispute resolution process including a timeline.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the State plan’s detail regarding the stages of the dispute process, a timeline, the individuals involved, the right to dispute and the procedure for initiating a dispute, and that students remain in their school of origin during the dispute process.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that the plan seemed contradictory in places indicating in Phase I that students are to be immediately enrolled and then in the general description indicating that districts have a right to deny the enrollment of a student but that it must follow the dispute process. It was also noted that the timeframe for initiating a disputed was not clear to all reviewers.
<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 State’s plan was descriptive and that the plan outlined support, trainings and materials that are provided to regions, specialized groups and new liaisons to increase awareness, and specialized training was available for districts who do not identify any homeless children and youth.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the State plan’s description of PDE’s onsite training, annual staff in-service training and the orientation provided to new liaisons to ensure that posters and other materials are distributed to LEAs.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewer noted that the State’s plan did not specifically reference the needs of runaway and homeless youth.
<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 State plan described training and collaboration with local liaisons and external partners, and included detailed procedures for improving access of homeless children to preschool programs.
<i>Strengths</i>	The peer reviewers saw strengths in the State plan’s description of cross-system collaborations, distribution of posters to the community, trainings that are offered, and that age-appropriate homeless children are placed in Head Start programs.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that the State’s plan did not make specific mention of the retention of slots for homeless students when possible, and that the plan lacked detail regarding access to public preschool programs beyond training and collaboration, and did not address data tracking or accountability to track homeless students who enroll in public preschool programs.
<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>	

- **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 provided mention of the elimination of barriers and some aspects of partial/full credit but that overall the plan lacked detail as to how the SEA and LEAs will remove barriers.
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers saw strengths in the State plan’s training for local liaisons and the plan, to be established, that will address crediting of partial coursework.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers noted that the State’s plan would be strengthened if the plan provided a description of procedures utilized to identify and serve students who are separated from school.
<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 plan would be strengthened if the SEA provided more detail related to the data, policies and procedures that are either in place or that the SEA will put in place to ensure that homeless youth and youth separated from public schools are identified and have equal access to appropriate secondary education and support services, including identifying and removing barriers that prevent homeless students from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school.

- **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 outlined procedures that are in place to allow students to access academic and extracurricular activities and eliminate barriers.
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers saw strengths in the State plan’s description of trainings provided to local liaisons to increase awareness and to remove barriers. Strengths were also observed in the plan’s description of the effort to work with charter and magnet schools, including reserved slots in charter/magnet schools for homeless students, and training that is provided to increase the understanding and importance of connecting to student’s previous schools to assist in the accrual of credits.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the State’s plan would be strengthened if the plan described how LEAs will ensure the removal of barriers and how they will assist homeless students in accessing programs (academic and/or extracurricular), and how LEAs will be monitored. It should also describe how charter and magnet schools are addressed through policies or procedures.
<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 SEA could strengthen the plan but must provide detail as to what activities and services are offered to homeless students. The SEA must address how they will review and update state and local policies and procedures which impact access to and participation in the areas of magnet schools, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning and charter schools. The SEA also needs to provide specifics regarding monitoring for each of these areas and how that data is used to identify priority areas to be reviewed and addressed.

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 provided detail around the collaboration between the local liaisons and regional coordinators to remove barriers to enrollment for students experiencing homelessness, and that homeless students are to be enrolled in school while information is being obtained. It was also observed that the State plan focused specifically on the strategies that are employed to work through gathering immunization documentation and other required health related documents.
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers saw strengths in the State plan’s description of the utilization of a standard enrollment form and ongoing efforts to obtain birth certificates and the provision of uniforms at no cost as well as uniform vouchers provided to homeless students, and in the State plan’s specificity around the immediate enrollment of homeless students even when they are missing documentation and that the lack of documentation should not be a barrier to enrollment.
<i>Limitations</i>	Peer reviewers observed that the State plan would be strengthened by describing document review, needs assessment data and monitoring that will be used by the SEA.
<i>Did the SEA meet all requirements?</i>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes (3) Reviewers
<i>If no, describe the specific information or clarification that an SEA must provide to fully meet this requirement</i>	

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

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

	<i>Peer Response</i>
<i>Peer Analysis</i>	The peer reviewers observed that the State plan did not meet this requirement.
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers did note a strength in the State’s response to this requirement in that local liaisons continue to try to acquire records from the school of origin.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the State’s plan did not address 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>	Peer reviewers indicated that the SEA must address the requirement by providing clarification on the procedures regarding outstanding fees or fines, and 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>	Peer reviewers observed that the State plan described training for school counselors and local liaisons to ensure that homeless youth are prepared for college readiness but did not agree the requirement was fully met.
<i>Strengths</i>	Peer reviewers saw a strength in the State plan’s description of the training that school counselors and local liaisons participate in to ensure students are provided with assistance related to post-secondary education.
<i>Limitations</i>	It was noted that the State’s plan did not address the requirement, and that verification of status for the FAFSA was not addressed.
<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>	To strengthen the plan, peer reviewers indicated that the SEA must address the requirement and include specifically how homeless youths will receive assistance from counselors to advise them and prepare and improve their readiness for college.