



Deputy Commissioner
Office of Instructional Support
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Dear Parents and Community Members:

Recently, Hurricanes Harvey, Irma, and Maria battered Texas, Florida, Puerto Rico, the U.S. Virgin Islands, and several other countries in the Caribbean, leaving thousands displaced. The New York State Education Department (NYSED or Department) is aware that hurricane affected areas are beginning a long road to recovery, and that Puerto Rico in particular has been left with severe power, fuel, water, and communications challenges. As a result, many families have been displaced and forced to leave the island. NYSED is deeply concerned with the mounting scope of these tragedies and what it means, in particular, for the schoolchildren in these impacted areas.

The Department is prepared to assist students and families who want to register their children in New York State (NYS) public schools. Under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento), children identified as homeless may register in a public school without the documents normally required for enrollment. It is likely that many families displaced by natural disaster will fall under the protections of this federal law.

However, families displaced by natural disaster who do have access to some or all of the documents identified in this letter should bring them when relocating to NYS. While such documents are not required for enrollment of students covered under the McKinney-Vento Act, having them in your possession may expedite your child's public school enrollment and placement. Families should also keep in mind that enrollment procedures and requirements vary by district, provided they follow certain minimum requirements.

On the following pages, we have identified resources regarding the types of programs offered in NYS public schools as well as information about parental rights. Other resources can be found on NYSED's Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages website at <http://www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed>.

Sincerely,

Angelica Infante-Green
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Individuals Entitled to McKinney-Vento Protection May Enroll Immediately Without Records

It is expected that many individuals recently displaced by hurricanes who come to NYS will be able to register their children in school without the documents normally required for enrollment, because their temporary housing arrangements will likely meet the definition of “homeless” in the federal McKinney-Vento Act. The definition of “homeless” in McKinney-Vento includes students who are temporarily staying with another family because they have lost their home due to a natural disaster. McKinney-Vento eligibility determinations are made on a case-by-case basis. For more information about McKinney-Vento, see www.nysteachs.org.

However, if you currently have access to the following documents, please gather them before relocating to New York State – while they are not required if you are covered by the McKinney-Vento Act, having them may expedite your child’s enrollment and placement into NYS schools. Please keep in mind that enrollment procedures and requirements vary by district, provided they follow certain minimum requirements.

Documents Needed For Enrollment In New York State By Permanently Housed Students

To enroll in school, you usually need to show proof of age, proof of residency, and proof of immunizations. Also, schools typically ask that you bring any records from the last school the student attended. Again, students protected under the McKinney-Vento Act do not need to show any documents before enrolling in school, but it is recommended that you bring as many of these documents as you have available.

PROOF OF AGE:

- A birth certificate or record of baptism, if available.
- If the two above documents are not available, a passport, if available.
- If all three of the above are not available, the following may be used as proof of age (this list is not intended to be exhaustive nor is it a list of required documents):
 - Official driver's license
 - State or other government issued identification
 - School photo identification with date of birth
 - Consulate identification card
 - Military dependent identification card



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- Documents issued by federal state or local agencies (e.g., local social service agency, federal Office of Refugee Resettlement)
- Court orders or other court-issued documents
- Native American tribal document
- Records from non-profit international aid agencies and voluntary agencies.

PROOF OF RESIDENCY:

If you are not eligible under McKinney-Vento, you have to show that you live in the school district where you want to enroll your child. Here are some examples of the types of documents that a parent could use to show that the student is living in the district (in other words, proof of residency):

- A written lease or deed
- A statement, which doesn't have to be sworn under oath, from the person you are leasing an apartment verifying you live there
- A statement by any other individual verifying your residence.
- Supplemental proof of address, such as:
 - Pay stub
 - Income tax form
 - Utility or other bills
 - Membership documents (e.g., library cards) based upon residency
 - Voter registration document(s)
 - Official driver's license, learner's permit, or non-driver identification
 - State or other government issued identification
 - Documents issued by federal, state, or local agencies (e.g., local social service agency, federal Office of Refugee Resettlement)
 - Evidence of custody of the child, including but not limited to judicial custody orders or guardianship papers.

PROOF OF CUSTODY:

- If you are not named on the child's birth certificate or document submitted as proof of age, please be prepared to fill out a statement verifying that you have total and permanent custody and control of the child.



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- You do not have to submit proof of legal guardianship or custody, but if you do have such documents please bring them with you.

PROOF OF IMMUNIZATION:

- You do not need proof of immunization to enroll, but generally, an unvaccinated student cannot attend school in NYS more than 14 days unless the student is transferring from out-of-state or from another country, and can show a good faith effort to get the necessary evidence of immunization, in which case the 14 day period may be extended to 30 days.

TRANSCRIPTS AND PRIOR SCHOOL RECORDS:

- While transcripts and prior school records are not required for enrollment, if such records are available please bring them to facilitate placement and services.

PROOF OF INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PROGRAM (IEP):

- If your child is receiving special education services under an IEP, please bring the IEP and any other documents about the services to facilitate placement and provision of services.
- Like other school records, however, they are not required for enrollment.

New York State Educational Resources

This animated video provides parents with information about program options for students in NYS. This video is shown at parent orientation sessions and can also provide educators with information about these program models.

<http://www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed/parents/parent-orientation-video-english-language-learner-ell-programs-new-york-state>

The English Language Learner (ELL) Parents' Bill of Rights summarizes critical rights concerning educational access and programming for ELLs and their parents. The Bill of Rights also includes information on how parents and students can contact NYSED's Parent Hotline or Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages if they have questions or concerns. It serves as a mechanism for parents of ELLs and persons in parental relation to inquire about their rights and the delivery of services for their children based on NYS regulations.

<http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/bilingual/parentbillofrightsspanish.pdf>



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If you would like to learn more about programs and services for ELLs generally, please visit the Office of Bilingual Education and World Languages website:

<http://www.nysed.gov/bilingual-ed>