

Homeless Status Indicator Instructions

This document, developed by the Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO), is intended to assist districts in collecting and reporting information necessary for compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act regarding homeless students. This document itself is not a form or instrument that can be used to collect this information. However, it does contain sample language to collect the required information that can be incorporated into district enrollment forms or databases. There is a sample template included at the end of the document that can be taken and modified by districts if they want to use a stand-alone form to collect this information.

This is not intended as a resource explaining the McKinney-Vento Act or the education of homeless students. THEO has a website with extensive resources regarding the McKinney-Vento Act, the identification and education of children and youth experiencing homelessness, and federal and state requirements pertaining to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness:

<http://www.theotx.org/>

There is also a toll-free number for anyone with a question about either a specific situation regarding a homeless student or a more general aspect of the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness:

1-800-446-3142

To access the Texas Education Data Standards, go to

https://www.texasstudentdatasystem.org/TSDS/TEDS/Texas_Education_Data_Standards/

To access the *Homeless and Unaccompanied Youth Status Indicators Frequently Asked Questions* document, go to

http://www.theotx.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/TSDS_PEIMS_HomelessStatus_Instructions_2017.pdf

HOMELESS-STATUS-CODE

Student data element *E1082* is the *HOMELESS-STATUS-CODE*. *E1082* is populated by code table *C189 HOMELESS-STATUS-CODE*. Code table *C189 HOMELESS-STATUS-CODE* has five (5) codes.

The previous code “1” (shelter) on code table *C189* was retired when the definition for homelessness was revised with the ESSA reauthorization. The retired code “1” for shelters was replaced with the new code “5” (shelter).

All students in the state must fall within one of the five code categories below:

0 = Student is **not homeless** at any time during the current school year.

2 = Student lives temporarily **doubled-up** (sharing residence with a family or individual) at any time during the current school year.

Doubled-Up (e.g., living with another individual or family) is defined as sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason. This classification requires a case-by-case determination. Many students in doubled-up situations are homeless, but that is not always the case. See Question 6 on the *Homeless and Unaccompanied Youth Indicators Frequently Asked Questions* document (URL) for more information.

3 = Student is **unsheltered** (i.e., lives on the street, lives in cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailers [including FEMA trailers], or abandoned buildings) at any time during the current school year.

Unsheltered is defined as a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings. It includes such places as cars, parks, campgrounds (if they live there because they lack an alternative accommodation), abandoned buildings, and substandard housing. Substandard housing may be determined by local building codes, community norms, and/or a case-by-case determination as to whether the accommodation is a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” For more information regarding determining whether an accommodation is “fixed,

regular, and adequate” see the National Center for Homeless Education document *Determining Eligibility for Rights and Services Under the McKinney-Vento Act* at http://www.theotx.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/det_elig-Updated-August-2017.pdf

4 = Student lives in a **motel or hotel** at any time during the current school year.

Students who stay at a **motel or hotel** are considered homeless if they reside there because they have lost their housing, lack an alternative accommodation, and do not have a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” In rare instances, some students living in hotels or motels might not be considered homeless.

5 = Student lives in a **shelter**, transitional housing at any time during the current school year.

Shelters are defined as supervised publicly or privately operated facilities designed to provide temporary living accommodations. The “shelters” category for homeless students **includes** emergency shelters, family shelters, domestic violence shelters, youth shelters, and transitional housing programs.

The “shelters” category for homeless students **does not include** residential treatment facilities, Title I Neglected or Delinquent facilities, or Texas Juvenile Justice Department facilities.

For guidance, questions about any of these categories, or assistance with determining the correct code for any given situation, contact the Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO) at 1-800-446-3142.

Federal law and state reporting requirements require Texas public school districts to determine the homeless status of **every student** who enrolls. The following table or just the language can be incorporated into a district’s enrollment forms or databases to collect the necessary information in order to comply with the reporting requirements regarding a student’s homeless status. The relevant coding from *HOMELESS-STATUS-CODE* table *C189* is provided in parentheses next to each item. In the sample table, the person completing it would “X” all boxes that best describe where the student sleeps at night. The information regarding a natural disaster is not required for McKinney-Vento reporting (and does not have a respective code), but is often necessary for federally administered disaster aid programs.

It is important for districts to ensure that determinations of homeless status are made by the homeless liaison, who has statutory authority to make such determination. If the homeless liaison will not be the individual entering homeless status data, then the person who is entering that data must obtain it from the homeless liaison. Districts must develop an efficient, effective system for ensuring accurate entry of homeless students.

There are a few important considerations regarding homeless status to keep in mind. The word *homeless*, as used for state and federal education reporting has a specific, technical meaning that is defined by federal statute, the McKinney-Vento Act. However, the word *homeless* as used in everyday language has many other definitions and connotations. Because most people are familiar with the word, but not the specific, technical meaning in the McKinney-Vento Act, it is best to avoid use of the word (homeless) when attempting to determine homeless status. Do not ask the direct question of a parent or student, “Are you homeless?” Instead, ask about the type of place where a student sleeps at night—if a student lacks a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” then they are homeless. The language in the following table is based on the statutory language of the definition itself. The table attempts to identify homeless students by inquiring where they sleep at night.

Another reason to avoid the word “homeless” when attempting to determine a student’s homeless status is because of the negative connotations of the word. Most people assume that they will get into some sort of trouble or might even be reported to CPS if they are known to be homeless, so they go to great lengths to hide or obscure their situation. Usually people do not self-identify as homeless, even if they suspect that they could be considered homeless. Therefore, it is a good idea to use such phrases as “housing status” or “McKinney-Vento eligibility” wherever possible in order to avoid the word *homeless*.

The sample table for homeless status identification is on the next page.

EXAMPLE:

“X” all boxes below that best describe where the student sleeps at night, leave those blank that do not apply:

	In a home that the student’s parent or legal guardian owns or rents (C189=0)
	In a place that does not have windows, doors, running water, heat, electricity, or is overcrowded (C189=3)
	Staying with a friend or relative because of loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (C189=2) <i>(Examples: eviction, foreclosure, fire, flood, lost job, divorce, domestic violence, kicked out by parents, ran away from home)</i>
	In a shelter (C189=5) <i>(Examples: living in a family shelter, domestic violence shelter, children/youth shelter, FEMA housing)</i>
	In an unsheltered location, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• a tent• a car or truck• a van• an abandoned building• on the streets• at a campground• in the park• in a bus or train station• other similar place (C189=3)
	In a hotel or motel because of loss of housing or economic hardship (C189=4) <i>(Examples: eviction, foreclosure, cannot get deposits for permanent home, flood, fire, hurricane)</i>
	In a transitional housing program (C189=5) <i>(Housing that is available as part of a program for a specific length of time only and is partly or completely paid for by a church, a nonprofit organization, governmental agency, or another organization)</i>
	The student lives here because of a natural disaster. “X” the type of disaster below and provide the requested information: ___ Hurricane--Name of hurricane: _____ ___ Flood ___ Tornado ___ Wildfire ___ Other—Please describe: _____ Date the natural disaster took place: _____ Where the natural disaster took place, including county: _____
	The student does not sleep in any of the places described above. Tell below where the student does sleep: <i>(FOR DISTRICT INFORMATION ONLY: this option is uncoded for the Texas Education Data Standards. If a student selects this option, the school must determine which category above is appropriate for describing where the student sleeps at night. There is no code for OTHER—all students must fall into one of the five categories listed on Homeless-Status-Code Table C189)</i>