
Was Your Family Displaced by Hurricane Harvey?

Does Your Child Have a Special Education or Section 504 Need?

What You Need To Do

- Enroll your child in school immediately, even if you plan to return home soon.**
The district legally cannot deny your child's enrollment because you lack certain paperwork.
Enrolling in a school in your new area does not take away your right to return to your child's home school. It simply makes sure that your child will begin receiving critical services as soon as possible.
- Compile any information you have about your child's IEP or 504 Plan.**
You may not have a physical copy of your child's IEP or 504 Plan with you, and it may take time for officials at your old school to provide one. That is OK – your new school must provide comparable services to your original IEP or 504 Plan.

To speed up the service delivery process, go through your email and compile as much information as you can about your child's service needs, previous ARDs, and previous 504 team meetings. This will ensure that your child receives comparable supports quickly.
- Contact key professionals in your district.**
Districts and campuses have people in place to help you navigate your new school and coordinate services. Three people in particular are most important:
- The local McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison for help with your displacement;
 - The Special Education Director for help with your IEP; and/or
 - The 504 Coordinator for help with your 504 Plan.
- See page 2 for more information on how to contact these professionals.
- Put your requests in writing.**
It is always best to put your needs in writing, but there's no need to start from scratch. A form letter specific to getting help from your district after Hurricane Harvey is here on page 3. Take it to your new school, and keep a copy signed by a school official as proof that he or she received it.
- Get outside help.**
Your community is ready to help you get the support you need. For legal advocacy and information about your rights, contact:
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| Disability Rights Texas
1-800-252-9108
www.drxtx.org | Disaster Relief Service Program
Legal Hotline
1-800-504-7030 |
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Legal Overview: What You Need To Know

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Protects children experiencing homelessness, including those displaced by natural disasters

Who's eligible? The Act covers youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition includes kids who are sharing housing after the loss of their home, and those who are living in shelters, public spaces, or substandard housing.

No records? No problem. Your child can immediately enroll in a nearby school, regardless of whether you have certain paperwork. Your new school has a legal obligation to reach out to your school of origin for student records. Note that enrolling in a new school still allows you to return to and re-enroll in your child's previous school in the future.

Can my child be segregated? The Act explicitly states that homelessness is not a sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.

Need a ride or a meal? Upon request, you can receive free transportation to your child's school of origin, even if you have been displaced outside of your home district. The Act also entitles your child to free school meals without the hassle of an application process.

Need individual help? Each district must appoint a liaison who will help you get the services you need. Find yours at <http://www.theotx.org/liaison-directory/>.

Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

Ensures that kids with disabilities receive a free and appropriate public education (FAPE) outlined by an IEP

What happens to my IEP? You do not need a new evaluation upon enrollment. The new district must provide your child with FAPE (as defined by your IEP), including comparable services and supports.

Need an evaluation? Districts must proactively identify kids with disabilities. They also must perform timely evaluations, even if you may return to your school of origin soon. Remember, a child's emotional state impacts his or her educational experience. If you think counseling may be necessary in Harvey's aftermath, you can request an evaluation.

What if I was separated from my parents? If a child was separated from his or her parents and a guardian cannot be located, the district must appoint a surrogate parent.

Need individual help? Every district has a special education director who can help you navigate your new school system. Find yours under "Local Disability Contacts" at <http://www.navigatelifetexas.org/en/education-schools/special-education-101>.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act

Prohibits discrimination based on disability

What happens to my 504 Plan? Section 504's eligibility and service requirements do not change between districts. Your new district should review and implement your child's 504 Plan. If the plan is deemed inappropriate, the district must re-evaluate your child.

Need an evaluation? Like the IDEA, Section 504 requires districts to proactively identify kids who have a disability, promptly evaluate them, and develop a service plan.

Need individual help? Contact your district's 504 Coordinator for assistance with your child's placement and accommodations. Call your child's school to find yours.

Form Letter Example for Families of Children with Disabilities Who Were Displaced by Hurricane Harvey

(Be sure to keep a copy for yourself)

Date

Name of principal (call the school to find this information if possible)

Name of school

Address of school

cc: The Local McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison
The Campus Special Education Coordinator
The Campus 504 Coordinator
(Include all that apply)

Dear (Name of principal - call the school to find this information if possible):

My family was displaced by Hurricane Harvey, and we have relocated to your school district. I am writing to request a meeting with **(include all that apply)**:

- Your Local McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison;
- Your Campus Special Education Coordinator;
- Your Campus 504 Coordinator

I require an in-person meeting with these individuals in order to plan for my child's successful enrollment in your school.

My child, **(name of student)**, is **(#)** years old and in the **(#)** grade. At **(name of former school)**, our school of origin, my child received the following services and supports:

- **(Provide a bulleted list of information with as much detail as possible.)**

These educational services and supports were provided in the following placement:

- **(Provide a bulleted list of information with as much detail as possible.)**

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act and Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act guarantee my child's right to a free and appropriate public education. Federal law further stipulates that my child must receive services that are comparable to what was provided at our school of origin. Because we were displaced by the storm, my child may also qualify for services and protections under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

I can be reached by email at **(insert email address)** and/or by phone at **(insert phone number)**. I look forward to hearing from you promptly so that we can facilitate my child's successful entry into your school as quickly as possible.

Thank you for your help.

Sincerely,

Your name

Your phone number

Your email address