

NCHE Credit Accrual Tip Sheet

SEA and LEA Strategies for Addressing Credit Accrual for Students Experiencing Homelessness

This NCHE tip sheet:

- summarizes the key provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act related to credit accrual,
- provides credit accrual strategies at the State and local levels, and
- recommends credit accrual training and collaboration practices.

CREDIT ACCRUAL IN THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT

Children and youth experiencing homelessness face unique challenges in accessing and succeeding in school. [Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act \(McKinney-Vento Act\)](#), reauthorized in 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act, establishes the definition of *homeless* used by U.S. public schools, and the educational rights to which children and youth experiencing homelessness are entitled. According to the McKinney-Vento Act, every State educational agency (SEA) must have procedures in place to ensure that all homeless students, including those who have been out of school, can receive “appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with State, local, and school policies.” By providing needed credit accrual and recovery support to students experiencing homelessness, SEAs, and local educational agencies (LEAs) help ensure that these students stay engaged in school and on track for graduation.

SEA STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING CREDIT ACCRUAL

- **Convene an SEA stakeholder group** to address the credit accrual requirements included in the McKinney-Vento Act. Include the Director of Curriculum Development, Dropout Prevention Specialist, Alternative Education staff, and other appropriate personnel.
- **Review State policies** for barriers and/or areas where legislative language may be leveraged in support of credit accrual for students experiencing homelessness.
- **Review LEA student information systems** to determine what kind of student information is available, how long the information can be accessed, and by whom it can be accessed within the SEA and LEA; use this information to track students at-risk of dropping out due to a credit issue, and/or to inform the SEA or LEA of previous work completed.
- **Develop policies, procedures, guidance, and/or model templates** for calculating and awarding partial or full credit based on learning time.
- **Identify and communicate** who at the SEA should be contacted if questions arise related to awarding full or partial credit to a McKinney-Vento student; communication should include the McKinney-Vento State Coordinator.
- **Provide LEAs with training** related to credit policies, procedures, guidance, and/or model templates developed by the SEA.
- **Work with other States** to develop memoranda of understanding (MOU) for transferring and/or awarding credits to McKinney-Vento students who transfer between States.
- **Leverage statewide data** to target SEA supports to LEAs that may need technical assistance to improve their credit awarding practices.
- **Develop and utilize a shared leadership model** at the SEA and LEA levels that engages students in meaningful stakeholder input and decision-making.

- **Review State graduation requirements** to explore the potential advantages and disadvantages of awarding a State-issued diploma in lieu of a high school diploma.

LEA STRATEGIES FOR ADDRESSING CREDIT ACCRUAL

- **Become familiar with and implement** State policies, procedures, and/or guidance related to awarding credit.
- **Participate in training opportunities** offered by the SEA around credit accrual.
- **Convene an LEA stakeholder group** to address how the LEA will award credits in alignment with State processes. Include Curriculum Coordinators, Alternative Education teachers, staff who work with military and/or migrant families, and other appropriate personnel. These stakeholders are skilled in working with highly mobile students and awarding credit to students from diverse educational backgrounds.
- **Consider what LEAs need to know about a student to award credit**, for example: grades; seat time vs anytime, anywhere learning; proficiency; and attendance.
- **Utilize student information systems** to review student coursework, assignments, syllabi, curriculum descriptions, and copies of grade books to target interventions and supports to students.
- **Review completed coursework** and look for equivalent coursework. For example, in the case of a student who has taken a State history class in one State, and is now residing in another State, award credit because the student has completed a State history course.
- **Develop portfolios** of assignments completed for McKinney-Vento students.
- **Utilize technology**, online learning, and independent study programs that allow students to work independently outside of school to address learning and credit gaps.
- **Enroll homeless students** in classes that the student has partially completed to allow for full completion.
- **Post LEA curricula** online for easy access.

CONCLUSION

Creative thinking and clear communication are critical when developing strategies and implementing supports related to credit accrual for students experiencing homelessness. Innovation and flexibility are key in establishing successful policies and practices at the SEA and LEA levels that address the awarding of credits to students experiencing homelessness who have transferred between districts and/or States.

Maximizing credit accrual and recovery for all McKinney-Vento students will require combining various strategies to meet the unique needs of individual students; however, these efforts are essential not only to comply with the McKinney-Vento Act (in that, as of SY 17-18, SEAs and LEAs must report homeless student graduation rates on public report cards), but also to improve academic achievement, reduce dropout rates, and support all students in achieving their aspirations for higher education and future success.

For additional information on supporting credit accrual and recovery for students experiencing homelessness, visit <https://nche.ed.gov/ibt/credit.php>.

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)

Operating the U.S. Department of Education's technical assistance center for the
Federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program
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