



PROJECT UP-START TOOLKIT 2024-2025



Revised August 2024

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Project UP-START Mission Statement

Project UP-START seeks to ensure a successful educational experience for children and youth who are unstably housed in Miami-Dade County by collaborating with parents, families, schools, and the community through opening the doors to academic opportunities, removing barriers, and promoting a healthy sense of self with hope for a bright tomorrow.

Purpose

The purpose of this Toolkit is to provide information to families of students enrolled in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), Unaccompanied Youths, community partners, school site administrators, and staff regarding the Project UP-START Program. School site administrators and staff shall read the entire Toolkit to become familiar with all policies and procedures contained therein. Administrators and the designated UP-START Liaison are encouraged to reach out to the Project UP-START Program, if clarification or assistance regarding the identification and enrollment of eligible UP-START students is needed.

Together, we will ensure adherence to the purpose of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and the Stewart B. McKinney-Bruce Vento Homeless Assistance Act to provide children living in unstable housing conditions with significant opportunities to receive a fair, equitable, and high-quality education.

Project UP-START will continue providing guidance to schools to help identify eligible students. Guidance and updated information will be provided via the District's Weekly Briefings System, electronic communications sent by the District Homeless Liaison, telephone calls, virtual meetings/training sessions via the Microsoft Teams, Zoom Application, the Project UP-START's website at <http://projectupstart.dadeschools.net>, and this Toolkit.

Project UP-START Program Description

The Project UP-START Program assists with the identification, enrollment, attendance, and academic support of students who are living in unstable housing. Each school has a designated School UP-START Liaison to help identify students living in unstable housing as well as work with Project UP-START staff on services for the student. Upon enrollment into the Project UP-START Program, students can apply for transportation through Project UP-START if they live over two (2) miles from their school of origin, the school the student was attending when he/she had stable housing. Families or school staff of eligible students can call the office for case management services or make an appointment to speak with a Project UP-START staff member in person. Efforts are made to expedite psycho-educational evaluations for children who may be gifted or who are experiencing academic or behavioral difficulties. Project UP-START also works to increase advocacy on behalf of students through the distribution of information to school-based personnel on issues related to unstable housing and available community resources.

Additionally, Project UP-START has an after-school tutorial component that is designed to supplement the learning taking place at selected shelter sites. Activities to promote a healthy sense of self and to strengthen academic competence are part of the tutorial sessions. The parental/family component brings participants to workshops in order to learn ways to help their children with homework, communicate with school staff, or assist in accessing the Parent Portal. Parental/family engagement meetings are scheduled regularly at selected shelters to encourage the academic success of students participating in the Project UP-START Program.

School Board Policy 5111.01 Regarding the Educational Rights of Homeless Students

5111.01 - HOMELESS STUDENTS

The District Project UP-START program serves children and youth who are identified as meeting the Federal definition of "homeless". Homeless children and youth, including those who are not currently enrolled in school due to homelessness, shall have equal access to the same free appropriate public education (FAPE) in public schools and preschool education programs in the same manner as all other District students.

Additionally, homeless students shall have access to other services needed to ensure an opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held and to fully participate in the District's academic and extra-curricular activities for which they meet relevant eligibility criteria. To that end, homeless students shall not be stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless. The District shall establish safeguards that protect homeless students from discrimination on the basis of their homelessness and shall remove barriers identifying homeless children and youth.

The District shall regularly review and revise its policies, including school discipline policies that impact homeless students, including those students who may be a member of any of the protected classes (See Policy 2260, Nondiscrimination and Access to Equal Educational Opportunity). No School Board policy, administrative procedure, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way as to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or success of homeless children and youth in school.

I. Definition of Homeless Students and Youth

Homeless children and youth are defined as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and include children and youth who meet any of the following criteria:

- A. share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
- B. live in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- C. live in emergency or transitional shelters;
- D. are abandoned in hospitals;
- E. have a primary night time residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

F. live in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus or train station, or similar setting; or

G. are migratory children who are living in circumstances described above.

Pursuant to the McKinney-Vento Act, the definition of homeless students and youth includes an unaccompanied youth or child who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, including a youth who has run away from home, who has been forced to leave his/her home, or whose parents have left the area and left the youth behind. Under State law, an unaccompanied homeless youth, who is sixteen (16) years of age or older and found to be unaccompanied homeless youth eligible for services under Federal law, shall be issued a card documenting homeless status by the District's Liaison for Homeless Children that includes information on the rights and benefits for such youth, the contact information for the District's Liaison for homeless children and youths, and all of the information required by F.S. 1001.42(28).

II. Services to Homeless Children and Youth

The District and each school shall provide services to homeless students that are comparable to other students in the District, including, but not limited to:

- A. transportation services to the school of origin;
- B. public preschool programs administered by the LEA;
- C. counseling services for unaccompanied youth to prepare and improve their readiness for postsecondary education;
- D. other educational programs and services for which the homeless student meets eligibility criteria including, but not limited to:
 - 1. programs for children with disabilities;
 - 2. programs for English Language Learners (ELL) (i.e. students with Limited English Proficiency (LEP));
 - 3. programs in career and technical education;
 - 4. programs for gifted and talented students;
 - 5. school nutrition programs; and
 - 6. Title I programs; and
 - 7. before and after school programs.

The Superintendent shall appoint a District Liaison for homeless children and youth who will perform the duties required by the McKinney-Vento Act.

Additionally, the Liaison will coordinate District programs and collaborate with the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, as well as with community and school personnel responsible for the provision of education and related services to homeless children and youth. The Liaison will coordinate and collaborate with local social services and other community agencies to provide support to homeless students and their families, with other school districts regarding homeless student-related transportation, transfer of school records, and other inter-district activities, as needed, and with housing authorities, and with Exceptional Student Education (ESE) programs.

III. School Stability

Maintaining a stable school environment is crucial to a homeless student's success in school. An "eligible school" is the school of origin, the school zoned for the address where the student is temporarily residing, or another school which students residing in that attendance zone are eligible to attend. To ensure stability, the District must make school placement determinations based on the "best interest" of the homeless child or youth considering student-centered factors. The eligible school for the student is the school of origin, the school zoned for the address where the student is temporarily residing, or another school in which students residing in that attendance zone are eligible to attend. The District shall:

- A. continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness when a family becomes homeless between academic years or during an academic year; and for the remainder of the academic year even if the child or youth becomes permanently housed during an academic year and will continue to be receive all McKinney-Vento Act benefits; or
- B. enroll the student in the District school zoned for the address of the nighttime residence that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area are eligible to attend.

When determining a child or youth's best interest, the District must presume that keeping the homeless student in the school of origin is in that student's best interest, except when doing so is contrary to the request of the student's parent or guardian, or the student if he or she is an unaccompanied youth. The school of origin is the school the student attended or was enrolled in when permanently housed, including a public preschool. The school of origin also includes the designated receiving school at the next level for feeder school patterns, when the student completes the final grade level at the school of origin. The designated receiving school includes the next level of school (e.g. elementary from prekindergarten; middle from elementary; high from middle) that a homeless child or youth will attend.

When determining the student's best interest, the District must also consider student-centered factors, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety. The District also considers the school placement of siblings when making this determination.

If the District finds that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, or unaccompanied youth, the District must provide the individual with a written explanation and reason for the determination in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth. This written explanation will include information on the right to appeal the placement determination and be provided in a timely manner.

IV. Immediate Enrollment

The District is obligated to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless students in District schools and preschool education programs. "Enroll" and "enrollment" include attending classes and participating fully in school activities. Upon enrollment in a District school, the homeless student must be immediately enrolled, even if the student does not have the documentation typically necessary for enrollment, such as immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, proof of guardianship, birth certificate, previous academic records, or other required documentation.

Pursuant to Board Policy 5112 and Policy 5320, a homeless student must be given thirty (30) days to produce the documentation of verification of age and health/immunization records. The homeless student must also be enrolled immediately in the eligible school regardless of whether the student missed application or enrollment deadlines during the period of homelessness, fails to meet uniform or dress code requirements, or has outstanding fines, fees, or absences or if the student does not have the uniform or dress code requirements. Enroll and enrollment include attending classes and participating fully in school activities. Homeless children and youth must be provided appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school.

The enrolling school must immediately contact the school last attended by the homeless student to obtain relevant academic or other records. If the student needs immunization or other health records, the enrolling school must immediately refer the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to the Liaison or the Project UP-START staff members, who will help obtain the immunizations, screenings or other required health records. Records usually maintained by the school must be kept so that they are available in a timely fashion if the child enters a new school or district. These records include immunization or other required health records, academic records, birth certificates, guardianship records, proof of residence, other required documentation, and evaluations for special services or programs. Procedures for inter-state records transfer between schools should be taken into account in order to facilitate immediate enrollment. In addition, it shall be the District's responsibility to ensure that, once identified for services, the homeless student is attending classes and not facing barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities,

including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs.

V. Transportation

The District shall promptly provide homeless students with transportation services that are comparable to those available to non-homeless students. At the request of the parent or guardian, or the Liaison in the case of an unaccompanied youth, the District shall provide, or arrange for, transportation to and from the student's school of origin.

- A. If the homeless student continues to live in the District, comparable transportation shall be provided, or the District shall arrange for the student's transportation, to/from his/her school of origin.
- B. If the homeless student resides in another school district, but the best interest determination is that the student should continue his/her education at the school of origin in the District, the District and the school district in which the student now resides shall agree upon a method to equitably apportion responsibility and costs for comparable transportation to the school of origin. If there is no agreement, the District shall assume responsibility to transport the student from the district of residence to the school of origin in the District. Since Federal law requires that the responsibility and costs be shared equally, the district of residence shall be invoiced for their share of the cost for transportation.
- C. When the student obtains permanent housing, comparable transportation shall be provided to and from the school of origin until the end of the school year.
- D. The mode of transportation shall be determined in consultation with the parent or guardian and shall be based on the best interest of the student.
- E. In accordance with Federal law, the above transportation requirements still apply during the resolution of any dispute. The District will work with the State to resolve transportation disputes with other districts. Until the districts reach agreement, the responsibility and costs for transportation shall be shared equally.
- F. If the disputing district is in another state, the District will turn to the State for assistance as Federal guidance says that both states should try to arrange an agreement for the districts.

VI. Dispute Resolution

Homeless families and youth have the right to challenge placement and enrollment decisions. If a dispute arises between a school and a parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth regarding eligibility, school selection, or enrollment of a homeless student, the District must follow its dispute resolution procedures, consistent with the State's procedures. If a school selection dispute arises, the child or youth will either remain enrolled in the student's school of origin or shall be immediately enrolled in the eligible school in which enrollment is sought. This includes the school zoned for the address where the student is residing or another school which students residing in that attendance zone are eligible to attend, pending final resolution of the dispute, including all appeals. The student will receive all services for which they are eligible until all disputes and appeals are resolved. The parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth shall be referred to the District's designated Homeless Liaison/Project UP-START Coordinator to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible (305- 995-7318).

Pursuant to Federal and State law, State Board rule, and this policy, the District will provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of all decisions regarding school selection and enrollment made by the District, along with a written explanation of the right to appeal the decision to the Superintendent's designee within ten (10) days. All decisions and notices shall be provided in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.

The District's notice and written explanation about the reason for its decision will include, at a minimum, an explanation of how the school reached its decision regarding eligibility, school selection, or enrollment, including the following:

- A. a description of the proposed or refused action by the school;
- B. an explanation of why the action is proposed or refused;
- C. a description of other options the school considered and why those options were rejected;
- D. a description of any other relevant factors to the school's decision and information related to the eligibility or best interest determination such as the facts, witnesses, and evidence relied upon and their sources, and;
- E. an appropriate timeline to ensure deadlines are not missed.

The District's notice and written explanation shall include contact information for the Liaison and the State Coordinator, and a brief description of the roles of each. The District's notice and written explanation shall also inform the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth that the Liaison is responsible for providing information describing the State-level dispute resolution process and distributing the appropriate forms to all parties wanting to file an appeal.

To initiate the State-level appeals process, within ten (10) working days after receiving written notification of the District-level or inter-district decision, the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth may file an appeal with the Liaison, who must provide it to the FLDOE. Upon receipt of an appeal, the Liaison is required to notify the FLDOE of the State-level appeal and provide that appeal to the FLDOE. The local liaison also must log incidents of State-level appeals in the FLDOE Online Dispute Resolution Tracking System. The FLDOE and the Commissioner of Education will render a decision on any appeal and provide a copy of such decision to the parties.

All decisions and notices shall be drafted in a language and format appropriate for low-literacy, limited vision readers, and individuals with disabilities.

For children and youth and/or parents or guardians who are English learners or whose dominant language is not English, the District will provide translation and interpretation services in connection with all phases of the dispute resolution process pursuant to Federal laws.

The District will also provide electronic notices via e-mail if the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth has access to e-mail followed by a written notice provided in person or sent by mail.

VII. Public Notice

In addition to notifying the parent or guardian of the homeless student or the unaccompanied youth of the applicable rights described above, the District shall post public notice of educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness in each school and include information to contact the District Homeless Liaison and the State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. In addition, the District shall post public notice of the McKinney-Vento rights in places that homeless populations frequent, such as shelters, soup kitchens, and libraries in a manner and form understandable to the parents and guardians and unaccompanied youths.

VIII. Homeless Children in Preschool

Homeless preschool-aged children and their families shall be provided equal access to the educational services for which they are eligible, including preschool programs and Head Start programs administered by the District. Additionally, the homeless child must remain in the public preschool of origin, unless a determination is made that it is not in the child's best interest. When making such a decision on the student's best interest, the District takes into account the same factors as it does for any student, regardless of age. It also considers preschool age specific factors, such as 1) the child's attachment to preschool teachers and staff; 2) the impact of school climate on the child, including school safety; the quality and availability of services to meet the child's needs, including health, development, and social-emotional needs; and 3) travel time to and from school.

The District must also provide transportation services to the school of origin for a

homeless child attending preschool. It is the District's responsibility to provide the child with transportation to the school of origin even if the homeless preschooler who is enrolled in a public preschool in the District moves to another district that does not provide widely available or universal preschool.

IX. Records

The local liaison will assist the homeless students and their parent(s) or guardian(s) or unaccompanied homeless students in their efforts to provide documentation to meet State and local requirements for entry into school. All records of homeless students are subject to the protections of the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and Policy 8330 and are kept in such a manner so that they are held confidential, non-directory information, and available in a timely fashion to be transferred promptly to the appropriate parties, as required when a child or youth enters a new school.

The District shall incorporate practices to protect student privacy in accordance with the provisions of the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and the Family Violence Prevention and Services Act (FVPSA).

No Board policy, administrative procedure, or practice will be interpreted or applied in such a way as to inhibit the enrollment, attendance, or school success of homeless children.

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Legal References:

F.S. 1001.42(28)

F.S. 1003.21

F.S. 1003.22

42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.

20 U.S.C. 9101 et seq.

Adoption Date: 05.11.2011

Project UP-START Student Eligibility

Project UP-START services are available to students enrolled in Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) from Head Start through 12th grade who are experiencing unstable housing. Any student who lacks fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, as defined by the Stewart B. McKinney-Bruce Vento Homeless Assistance Act, qualifies for Project UP-START. Eligible students can apply for the program by filling out the Project UP-START Student Eligibility Questionnaire (**Appendix A, FM-7378**).

A student who is residing in the following circumstances is qualified for Project UP-START:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason, also known as “doubled-up;”
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters; or
- Living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, train station, or other public or private place that is not designed for ordinary use as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.



Definition and Rights of Unaccompanied Youth

Unaccompanied youth often face unique barriers in enrolling and succeeding in school. These barriers include school attendance policies, credit accrual, and legal guardianship requirements. Without a parent or guardian to advocate for them and exercise parental rights, they may be denied enrollment and remain out of school for extended periods of time. Unaccompanied youth also may not understand their educational rights or know how to acquire this information.

Project UP-START staff members assist unaccompanied youth in accessing educational services through the following activities:

- Helping unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youth's best academic interests;
- Providing unaccompanied youth with notice of their appeal rights in a language they can understand or in an accessible format;
- Informing youth of their right to transportation to and from the school of origin, and assisting unaccompanied youth in accessing transportation; and
- Ensuring that unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled in school pending the resolution of disputes.

Unaccompanied youth include young people who have run away from home, been thrown out of their homes, and/or been abandoned by parents or guardians. These young people are separated from their parents for a variety of reasons. Over half report being physically abused at home, and over one-third report sexual abuse. Over two-thirds report that at least one of their parents abuses drugs or alcohol. For many of these young people, leaving home is a survival issue. Other youths are thrown out of their homes because they are pregnant, gay or lesbian, or because their parents believe they are old enough to take care of themselves. Over half of youth living in shelters report that their parents either told them to leave or knew they were leaving and did not care. Once out of the home, unaccompanied youth are frequently victimized. As many as half have been assaulted or robbed, and one in ten runaway youths reports being raped.

School may be the only safe and stable environment available to unaccompanied youth. Yet unaccompanied youth often face unique barriers to enrolling and succeeding in school. Without a parent or guardian to advocate for them and exercise parental rights, they are sometimes denied enrollment and remain out of school for extended periods of time. Unaccompanied youth also may not understand their educational rights or know how to acquire this information.

Key Provisions

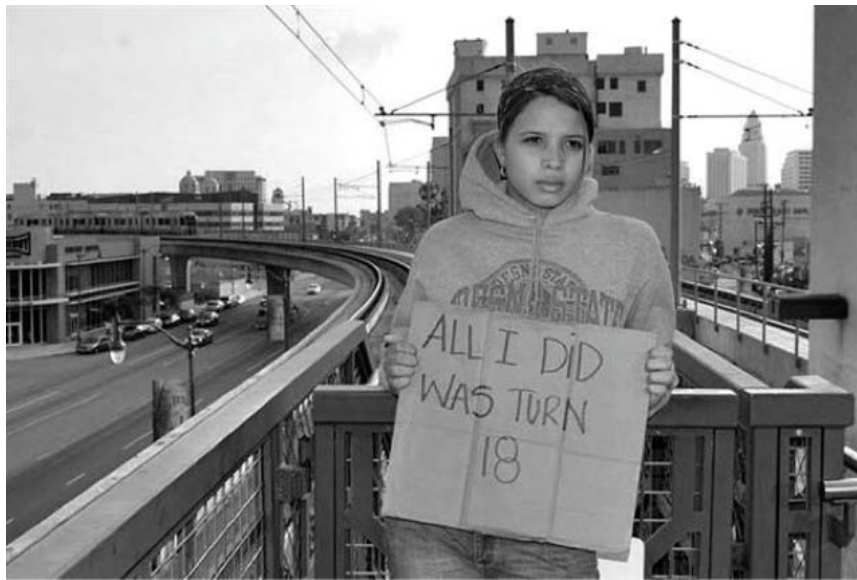
- The term "unaccompanied youth" includes youth in unstable housing situations who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
 - Unaccompanied youth have the same rights as other students experiencing unstable housing. Specifically, they have the right to:
 - Remain in their school of origin (when in the youth's best interest)
 - Transportation to and from the school of origin
 - Immediately enroll in a new school serving the area in which they are currently living even if they do not have required documents (e.g., proof of guardianship)
 - Equal access to programs and services such as gifted and talented education, special education, and vocational education.

- Each Local Education Agency (LEA), otherwise known as the School District, must appoint an UP-START Liaison, whose duties include:
 - Helping unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youth's wishes.
 - Informing unaccompanied youth of their rights to transportation and assisting youth in accessing transportation.
 - Providing unaccompanied youth with notice of their right to appeal school or school district's decisions and ensuring that youth are immediately enrolled in school pending resolution of disputes.
 - School personnel must be made aware of the specific needs of runaway and youth living in unstable housing .

Resources and Services Provided for Unaccompanied Youth

Project UP-START is a proud leader in a community effort to provide safe and stable housing to all youth in Miami-Dade County under the age of 25 years old. Through the Helping Our Miami-Dade Youth (HOMY) Collective, Project UP-START partners with over 100 community agencies to help the youth in our community through the Collective Impact Model.

Unaccompanied Youth currently attending any Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS) who are without safe and stable housing, living without a parent/guardian, and are not in the foster care system, may contact Project UP-START for assistance and support. We can help while the student is attending a M-DCPS' high school to transition to college and university. Project UP-START Program partners with the M-DCPS Technical Colleges, Miami-Dade College, and Florida International University to assist with the transition to post-secondary education. Also, if Unaccompanied students are interested in attending other schools throughout the country, Project UP-START staff members are available to assist with the application process to schools outside of South Florida. Unaccompanied students who are eligible for Project UP-START services can also qualify for a verification letter that assists with the completion process of a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).



Websites for housing assistance:

[HOMY Collective](#)

[Youth Resource Guide: The HOMY Collective - Helping Our Miami Dade Youth](#)

Project UP-START Program Services

- Project UP-START staff works with School UP-START Liaisons and other school staff on the identification, enrollment, transportation requests, and supporting the overall needs of students living in transition.
- Project UP-START staff assists with case management for students identified as having unstable housing.
- Annual training is provided to the designated School UP-START Liaisons regarding the McKinney-Vento Act and all policies and procedures related to students living in unstable housing.
- Training is provided to School Registrars on the procedures of registering students living in transition.
- Training is provided to school counselors, school social workers, and all M-DCPS staff who request technical assistance and support regarding the social and academic needs of UP-START students.
- Tutoring is available to students living at selected shelters.
- Virtual tutoring is available on a first-come, first-serve basis.
- Counseling is available to students living at selected shelters.
- Parenting groups and workshops are provided in collaboration with the Parent Academy at selected shelters.
- Transportation is provided to students who remain at their school of origin and have a nighttime residence over two miles from the school of origin.
- Presentations regarding Project UP-START are available at school and agency sites at the request of the administration.
- Students will be provided with school supplies, educational materials, and other necessary items such as food and clothing.
- Referrals from UP-START can be made to The Shop, operated by the Office of Community Engagement, by emailing TheShop@dadeschools.net or calling 305 579-0300.

- Project UP-START staff members can provide verification to those families who meet the criteria for the Presentation Rental Assistance programs through outside agencies.



Community and Student Assistance

- Project UP-START is fortunate to have many community partners who have come together to help our UP-START students succeed both in and out of the classroom. community partners interested in making a monetary contribution may visit The Foundation for New Education Initiatives' website at <https://secure.squarespace.com/checkout/donate?donatePagelId=55f871aae4b0f3c9b993bcef>
- The community partner will need to indicate that the contribution is for "Project UP-START," and if there is a specific request for where the funds should be spent (e.g., school uniforms or senior-sponsored events), the partner will have an opportunity to do so.
- To donate items, community partners may contact "The Shop," by emailing TheShop@dadeschools.net or calling 305 579-0300. The following new items are accepted:
 - New clothing & shoes;
 - Toiletries (e.g., toothbrush, toothpaste, shampoo, conditioner, shaving cream, etc.);
 - Non-perishable foods;
 - Backpacks;
 - School Supplies (e.g., notebooks, loose-leaf paper, pens, pencils, etc.);
 - New Toys; and
 - Gift Card Donations



Awareness Initiatives About Project UP-START

- In line with the mission of Project UP-START, staff continues to partner with student leadership to organize a Districtwide Homeless Awareness Campaign. This initiative began in 2015 with the M-DCPS Young Women's Prep alumna Cristina Cantero, with a campaign that encouraged collaboration with schools and the community in order to open the doors to academic opportunities, remove barriers, and promote a healthy sense of self for all students participating in the Project UP-START Program.
- The goal of this campaign is to raise awareness of the definition of "homeless" under the McKinney-Vento Law so that more eligible students in Miami-Dade County are identified and receiving the support services they need.
- Students who are interested can lead their school in hosting drives throughout the academic year. Each school will be responsible for the collection of specific items (i.e. canned foods, new clothing, toiletries) for a given amount of time to be donated primarily to The Shop and secondarily to other local shelters, organizations, and/or schools in need.
- The M-DCPS student body is one of the largest and most powerful in the nation, and with students serving our communities for a better Miami-Dade community, this project will be incredibly successful.

What to do next to join the Districtwide Awareness Campaign for Project UP-START?

1. Identify a club or organization in your school that would be willing to take charge of the drives (i.e., Key Club, Student Government, National Honor Society).
2. Contact the Project UP-START Program at 305 995-7318 or at projectupstart@dadeschools.net to start a drive in your school.
3. With a joint effort, we will coordinate a calendar for your school to adhere to, and the kickoff to a great drive begins!

Community Partnerships

The Shop

Community members and organizations donate items to the “The Shop.” The Shop provides backpacks, school supplies, toiletries, non-perishable food, clothing, and shoes to qualifying families. Families with children enrolled in Project UP-START should call 305 995-7558 to schedule an appointment to pick up items. If you would like to make a donation to The Shop, donations can be made by emailing TheShop@dadeschools.net. All items must be new in regard to clothing, shoes, and toiletries and non-expired and non-perishable food items.

Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust

Each year, in November, Miami-Dade County Public Schools acknowledges National Homeless Awareness Month in collaboration with the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust. School site administrators and the designated School UP-START Liaisons are encouraged to partake in activities during the month of November through the Miami-Dade County Homeless Trust. The information can be found by visiting <http://www.homelesstrust.org/teachers.asp>, which provides specific ideas for events to host at the school, how to apply to the annual poster and essay contests, and other ways to draw attention to homelessness in our community.

Collaboration Between Project UP-START and Schools

Project UP-START program staff members, along with the School UP-START Liaisons, support the identification, school enrollment, attendance, and opportunities for the academic success of students experiencing unstable housing. Some of these activities may be accomplished by the School Liaison himself or herself, while others are accomplished by coordinating with Project UP-START staff members. By linking students and their families to school and community resources, School Liaisons play a critical role in stabilizing students and promoting academic achievement at the individual school and district-level. Every school in M-DCPS has a School UP-START Liaison to assist in obtaining school and immunization health records, identification, enrollment, attendance, and all other needs an UP-START student or family may have.

The duties of the School UP-START Liaison include:

- Attending the School UP-START Liaisons training session at the beginning of the school year.
- Conducting outreach within schools to identify students who are living in unstable housing.
- Once students are identified, ensuring appropriate referral forms from Records and Forms Management, specifically “The Project UP-START Student Eligibility Questionnaire (**Appendix A, FM-7378**),” are faxed to the Project UP-START office at 305 579-0370 or emailed to projectupstart@dadeschools.net.
- Once students are enrolled in the Project UP-START Program, ensuring that the official Parent Notification Letter informing about the student’s enrollment in the program is sent to parents/guardians.
- Providing services to UP-START students or linking them with providers who can assist.
- Promoting sensitivity awareness at school among employees and students in order to decrease the stigma of homelessness.

- If possible, overseeing different drives to raise awareness and/or review the Homeless Awareness and Sensitivity Curriculum with all students.

School UP-START Liaisons will be provided with brochures and posters of the public notice for the educational rights of students living in unstable housing. These should be displayed in areas at the school where families and students may frequent (e.g., Registrar’s office, main office, etc.). Training dates and registration for liaison trainings will be accessible through the My Learning Plan Professional Development Management System. All School UP-START Liaisons are strongly encouraged to visit the Project UP-START’s website at <http://projectupstart.dadeschools.net>. for further information.



Ways for School Staff to Identify Qualifying Students

As school employees, we must be aware of the following silent signals our students bring. These characteristics could be attributed to students with other issues, as well as those students/families experiencing unstable housing:

- Attendance at several schools;
- More than one family at the same address;
- Poor hygiene and grooming;
- Hunger and hoarding food;
- Vague when asked about proof of residency; and
- Some common statements used by students/families living in unstable housing may include: "We've moved a lot." "We're staying with relatives/friends while looking for a place." "We're going through a bad time right now."

If unstable housing is suspected, possible follow-up questions:

- Are you living in this household because you do not have stable housing?
- Do you live in any of these situations?
 - _____ sharing housing with relatives or others due to lack of housing
 - _____ in a shelter or transitional living program
 - _____ in a motel, hotel, park, or campground due to lack of adequate housing
 - _____ in a car or RV or in a public place (such as a bus station)
 - _____ in substandard housing, such as an abandoned building
 - _____ without a parent or guardian, or a teen (up to age 21) living alone
 - _____ awaiting foster care placement
 - _____ parents are migrant workers
 - _____ lacking a fixed, regular, or adequate nighttime residence
- Would you be willing to talk/meet with the School UP-START Liaison to discuss resources available to you?

Other Ways of Identifying Students Experiencing Unstable Housing

Children and youth living in unstable housing are difficult to identify for many reasons, and thus often go unnoticed by school personnel. In order to identify students experiencing unstable housing both in and out of school, the District Liaison coordinates with community service agencies, local shelters, street outreach teams, and faith-based organizations. In addition, the District Liaison provides awareness trainings to all school registrars, school counselors, and school social workers. Communication with the Food and Nutrition Department assists in identifying students in M-DCPS who live in unstable housing. Additionally, students who are eligible for Project UP-START may be identified in the following ways:

- Self-report: A family or student may notify the school counselor or teacher and report their living situation. Or upon enrollment, they will report their situation to the school registrar.
- Shelter Referral: The local shelters send reports of all the school-aged children that are living in their shelters.
- Referral from the Department of Food and Nutrition: When students/families complete the Free and Reduced Lunch Application, there is a box at the top of the form that checks if the student is “homeless.” The Food and Nutrition Department will send the program a report of all students who reported under this category.
- Referrals from other school districts.
- Referrals from social workers doing home visits for other family issues. Many families who are living in a doubled-up situation are identified this way.
- Referrals from the Truancy Program.
- Referrals from other District offices, such as the Superintendent’s office.



Resources for School Staff

School staff can access the following UP-START forms via the Records and Forms Management's website at <http://forms.dadeschools.net>

- Project UP-START Student Eligibility Questionnaire (**Appendix A, FM-7378**)
- Caregiver's Authorization Form (**Appendix B, FM-7402**)
- Dispute Resolution Intake Form (**Appendix C, FM-7403**)
- Special Transportation Request Referral (**Appendix D, FM-7405**)

All completed forms should be faxed to 305 579-0370 or emailed to projectupstart@dadeschools.net.

Trainings for UP-START school staff will be announced through Weekly Briefings disseminated to school administrators and through email messages by Project UP-START's staff members.

Florida Public Health Centers Immunization Services

Free vaccines for children 0 through 18 years excluding travel vaccines.

The Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade provides free vaccines to all children that visit their clinics because of the Vaccines for Children (VFC) Program. VFC is a public/private partnership that is federally financed while administered by the State of Florida. Since 1994, VFC has distributed over \$100 million in vaccines to Florida private physicians, hospitals, and other public and private healthcare providers in order to reduce cost as a barrier to vaccinating children on time. VFC also evaluates the safety of vaccines and monitors compliance within the program's guidelines. The Florida Department of Health in Miami-Dade ensures that every child is given vaccines regardless of financial status.

The vaccines that are offered free of charge for children 0 through 18 years of age are: DT, DTaP, TD, TDAP, Hepatitis A and B, Hib, HPV-9, Influenza, IPV, MCV4, Meningococcal B, MMR, PCV13, Rotavirus, and VZV.

Call the appointment line at 786 845-0550 to schedule an appointment.

Parents who would like to expedite their child's clinic visit, must fill out the [Pre-Registration Forms](#) (one per child) and bring them to the scheduled appointment.

The nearest community health clinic may be found at:

<http://miamidade.floridahealth.gov/locations/index.html>



Important Resources

<p style="text-align: center;">Project UP-START Phone: 305 995-7558 Email Address: projectupstart@dadeschools.net Website: http://projectupstart.dadeschools.net/</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Department of Title I Administration Phone: 305 995-1253 Website: http://title1.dadeschools.net/</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Health Services for Homeless Individuals Camillus Health Concerns Phone: 305 577-4840 336 NW 5th Street Fax: 305 372-1402 Miami, FL 33128</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Jewish Community Services of South Florida (Switchboard) 305 576-6550 2-1-1</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Miami-Dade Advocates for Victims 305 758-2546 or 305 245-5011</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Miami-Dade County Hotline 305 468-5900</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Miami-Dade Health Department 305 324-2400</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Miami-Dade Homeless Helpline 1 877-994-HELP</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Missing Children Information 1 888-FL-MISSING 1 888-356-4774</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">National Parent Hotline 1 855-427-2736</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">National Runaway Switchboard 1 800-RUNAWAY 1 888-786-2929</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">Runaway Hotline (Florida) 1 800-621-4000</p>

Social Media Pages



@projectupstart



@projectupstart



@projectupstart



Project UP-START
 @ProjectUPSTART
 The homeless education program of Miami-Dade County Public Schools.
 © Miami, Florida
title1.dadeschools.net/ProjectUPSTART...
 Joined December 2015
 235 Following 563 Followers
 Not followed by anyone you're following

Tweets Tweets & replies Media Likes

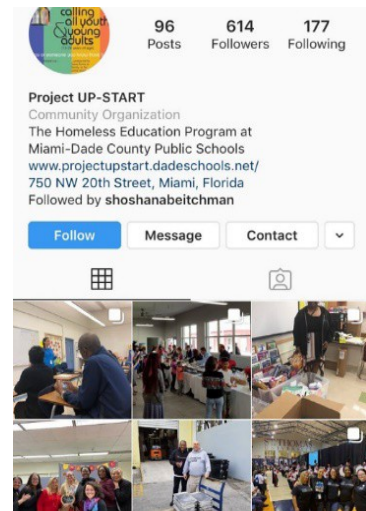
Project UP-START Retweeted **Miami-Dade Schools** @MDCPS · 4d
 Are you someone between the ages of 13-24 who is experiencing housing struggles? Take the #iCountMiami and make your voice heard! Visit icountmiami.com for more information...



Project UP-START
 Community Organization
 228 people like this

About

750 NW 20th Street, Miami, Florida 33132
 Get Directions



Project UP-START
 Community Organization
 The Homeless Education Program at Miami-Dade County Public Schools
www.projectupstart.dadeschools.net/
 750 NW 20th Street, Miami, Florida
 Followed by shoshanabeitchman

96 Posts 614 Followers 177 Following


Follow Message Contact

Grid of photos showing students and staff in a classroom setting.


APPENDIXES

Appendix A

[\(click here to access the online form, including the Haitian-Creole and Spanish versions\)](#)



Miami-Dade County Public Schools
 Department of Title I Administration
Project UP-START Program
 2024-2025 Project UP-START Student Eligibility Questionnaire



This questionnaire is intended to help determine eligibility of services under the federal McKinney-Vento Act. Florida Statute 837.06 provides that whoever knowingly makes a false statement in writing with the intent to mislead a public servant in the performance of his official duty shall be guilty of a misdemeanor of the second degree.

Project UP-START Services are confidential and this form is not to be shared with outside agencies.

QUESTION 1: WHAT IS YOUR FAMILY CURRENT NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE? (SELECT ONE OPTION)

- | | | |
|---|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Shelter (A) | <input type="checkbox"/> Sharing the home of others/
Doubled-up (B) | <input type="checkbox"/> Car/Park/Trailer/Substandard Housing (e.g., no water,
no electricity, mold infestation) [D] |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Hotel/Motel/Airbnb (E) | <input type="checkbox"/> Rent home* | <input type="checkbox"/> Own home* |

***If you select Rent Home/Own Home, please go to Question #7.**

QUESTION 2: WHAT IS THE REASON YOUR FAMILY DOES NOT HAVE A PERMANENT NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE? (SELECT ONE OPTION)

- | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|--|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pandemic (P) | <input type="checkbox"/> Hurricane (H) | <input type="checkbox"/> Flooding (F) | <input type="checkbox"/> Lack of affordable housing/eviction, domestic
violence, mental illness, unemployment, etc. (N) | <input type="checkbox"/> Parent/Caregiver is Incarcerated | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Man-Made
Disaster (D) | <input type="checkbox"/> Mortgage Foreclosure (M) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tropical Storm (S) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tornado (T) | <input type="checkbox"/> Wildfire (W) | <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown (U) |

QUESTION 3: WHAT ARE THE NAMES, BIRTHDATES, SCHOOLS, AND GRADES OF EACH CHILD OR YOUTH IN THE HOUSEHOLD?

Student First Name, Middle Initial, Last Name	Student ID Number	Date of Birth	Grade Level	School Name/Location #

QUESTION 4: ARE YOU SEEKING SUPPORT SERVICES FOR YOUR CHILD AT THIS TIME? (SERVICES ARE ONLY APPLICABLE TO ELIGIBLE FAMILIES)

- Yes, I am requesting services at this time.* No, I am not requesting services at this time.

***If "Yes" is selected, your child's school will contact you to obtain information about the specific service(s) that you are seeking for your child.**

Attention School Staff: Please submit a Referral for Services (FM-7404) and/or Transportation Request (FM-7405) if the family is requesting services.

QUESTION 5 AND 6: TO BE COMPLETED BY UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH ONLY (SELECT ONE OPTION)*

- 5) Are you living alone without an adult? 6) Are you living alone with an adult that is NOT a parent/guardian?

Caregiver's Name: Date:

Unaccompanied Youth Signature: Phone Number:

***Please ask your caregiver to complete the Caregiver's Authorization Form (FM-7402), and submit it with this form.**

QUESTION 7: WHAT IS YOUR ADDRESS/CONTACT INFORMATION?

Current Address: <input style="width: 350px;" type="text"/>	Length of time at Current Address: <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/>
Former Address: <input style="width: 350px;" type="text"/>	Phone Number: <input style="width: 150px;" type="text"/>
Parent Name: <input style="width: 150px;" type="text"/>	Parent/Guardian Signature: <input style="width: 150px;" type="text"/>
	Date: <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/>

FOR SCHOOL/AGENCY USE ONLY

School/Agency Name : <input style="width: 300px;" type="text"/>	Location # : <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/>
School Contact Name : <input style="width: 300px;" type="text"/>	Position : <input style="width: 100px;" type="text"/>
Contact Number/Ext : <input style="width: 150px;" type="text"/>	Email Address : <input style="width: 200px;" type="text"/>

Please fax the completed forms to 305 579-0370, or via email at projectupstart@dadeschools.net or send forms to the respective location site, to the attention of **Project UP-START**: South - Loc #7021; Central - Loc #8005, & North - Loc #9571.

Appendix B

[\(click here to access the online form, including the Haitian-Creole and Spanish versions\)](#)

Clear Form



Miami-Dade County Public Schools Department of Title I Administration Project UP-START



CAREGIVER AUTHORIZATION FORM*

This form is to be completed by the caregiver of a child or youth who is "homeless" and does not reside with his/her parent or guardian, to authorize enrollment and school-related needs for the Unaccompanied Homeless Youth.

***Prior to completing this form, the Project UP-START Student Eligibility Questionnaire (FM-7378) must be completed to determine if the student qualifies for Project UP-START.**

Please fax the completed form to Project UP-START at 305 579-0370 or email to projectupstart@dadeschools.net.

Per the McKinney-Vento Act and School Board Policy 5111.01, this form is intended to ensure that "homeless" children have access to public education and to eliminate barriers for school enrollment and for the overall education of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth.

Instructions: Please answer the questions below, complete all fields, sign, date and submit the completed form to the child/youth's school:

1- Does the student below live in your home? Yes No

2- Are you 18 years of age or older? Yes No

Student's Name: _____ Student's ID #: _____

Student's Date of Birth: _____

Caregiver's Name (adult giving authorization): _____ Date of Birth: _____

Home Address Where the Student is Currently Residing: _____

Caregiver's State Driver's License or Identification Card Number: _____

Caregiver's Telephone Number: _____ Caregiver's Email Address: _____

Please check one of the boxes below:

I have advised the parent(s) or other person(s) having legal custody of the student of my intent to assist the student with school needs and have received no objection.

I am unable to contact the parent(s) or legal guardian(s) at this time to notify that individual of my intent to assist the student with school needs.

By signing below, I confirm and certify that the information provided on this form is current and accurate.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

FOR PROJECT UP-START OR SCHOOL STAFF USE ONLY:

School Name: _____ Location #: _____

School Contact's Name: _____ Position: _____

Contact Number: _____ Extension: _____

Is the student a minor under the age of 18 years old? Yes No

Has a contact by school staff been made with the parent/guardian? Yes No

Have you documented attempts to contact the parent/guardian? Yes No

Has the Department of Children and Families been contacted for services? Yes No

If yes, please indicate the date, time, and confirmation number given by the Hotline:

Date: _____ Time: _____ Confirmation #: _____

Is there already an open DCF case for this student? Yes No

Was the caregiver provided with information on how to begin the guardianship process. Yes No

FM-7402E Rev. (05-21)

Appendix C

[\(Click here to access the online form\)](#)



Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Department of Title I Administration
Project UP-START Program
2024-2025 Referral for Services

Clear Form



This form must be used by school staff only. Please fax the referral to Project UP-START at 305 579-0370 or email it to projectupstart@dadeschools.net. To process this request, please ensure this form accompanies FM-7378 if the student(s) has/have not been identified for the program.

Today's Date :

STEP 1: IDENTIFY STUDENTS

Student Name #1: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Student ID #: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
School Name: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Location #: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
Student Name #2: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Student ID #: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
School Name: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Location #: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
Student Name #3: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Student ID #: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>
School Name: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>	Location #: <input style="width: 90%;" type="text"/>

STEP 2: PLEASE IDENTIFY STUDENTS' CURRENT NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE

Shelter
 Doubled-up/Sharing the home of others
 Hotel/Motel/Airbnb
 Car/Park/Trailer/ Substandard Housing

STEP 3: PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTACT INFORMATION

Parent Name: Phone Number:

STEP 4: SERVICES NEEDED

The Shop
 Emergency Shelter
 School Supplies
 Mental Health Referral
 Dental
 Physical Health
 School Uniforms (upon availability/limited color choices) - complete chart below

Student #1		Student #2		Student #3	
Shirt Size	Pants Size	Shirt Size	Pants Size	Shirt Size	Pants Size
Shirt Color	Pants Color	Shirt Color	Pants Color	Shirt Color	Pants Color

****IF STUDENTS NEED A TRANSPORTATION REQUEST, PLEASE COMPLETE FM-7405.**

School Name: Location #:
 School Contact Name:
 Contact Number/Ext: Email Address :

If you have any questions or need additional assistance, please feel free to contact Project UP-START at 305 995-7558; 305 572-2800; or 305 242-8426.

FOR PROJECT UP-START STAFF USE ONLY

Contact Made By: Date:

Appendix D

[\(Click here to access the online form\)](#)



Miami-Dade County Public Schools Department of Title I Administration Project UP-START Program 2024-2025 Transportation Request

Clear Form



This form must be used by school staff only. Please fax referral to Project UP-START at 305 579-0370 or email to projectupstart@dadeschools.net. The student's current address must be two or more miles away from the school to process this request. All requests take at least 3 business days for processing and route information.

Today's Date :

■ STEP 1: IDENTIFY STUDENTS

Name :	<input type="text"/>	Student ID # :	<input type="text"/>
School Name :	<input type="text"/>	Location # :	<input type="text"/>
Name :	<input type="text"/>	Student ID # :	<input type="text"/>
School Name :	<input type="text"/>	Location # :	<input type="text"/>
Name :	<input type="text"/>	Student ID # :	<input type="text"/>
School Name :	<input type="text"/>	Location # :	<input type="text"/>

■ STEP 2: ENSURE STUDENTS' CURRENT ADDRESS IS REFLECTED ON DSIS

Current Address :

City : Zip Code :

■ STEP 3: STUDENTS' NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE

Shelter Doubled-up/Sharing the home of others Hotel/Motel/Airbnb Car/Park/Trailer/ Substandard Housing

■ STEP 4: PARENT/GUARDIAN CONTACT INFORMATION

Parent Name : Phone Number :

School Name : Location # :

School Contact Name :

Contact Number/Ext : Email Address :

If you have any questions or need additional assistance, please feel free to contact Project UP-START at 305 995-7558; 305 572-2800; or 305 242-8426.

FOR PROJECT UP-START STAFF USE ONLY

Contact Made By :	<input type="text"/>	Date :	<input type="text"/>
Contact Made To :	<input type="text"/>	Job Title/Relationship to Student :	<input type="text"/>

FM-7405 Rev. (07-24)

Appendix E

[\(click here to access the online form, including the Haitian-Creole and Spanish versions\)](#)



**Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Department of Title I Administration, Project UP-START Program
Dispute Resolution Process Form (FM-7403)**



Dispute Resolution Procedures

School enrollment of a homeless child or youth should be immediate, and in the child's or youth's best interest in either the School of Origin or the Home School to the current nighttime residence. The School of Origin is defined as the school last attended by the student when the student was permanently housed or the last school in which the student was enrolled. The Home School is defined as the school serving the address where the student is currently residing.

Homeless families and Unaccompanied Homeless Youths (UHY) have the right to challenge eligibility, placement and enrollment decisions. If a disagreement arises between a school and a parent/guardian or an UHY regarding the student's eligibility in the Homeless Education Program (Project UP-START), school selection, or enrollment of a homeless student, the District must follow its dispute resolution procedures consistent with the State's procedures. **The best interest of the student must always be the priority.**

If a parent/guardian or UHY does not agree with the initial eligibility, school selection, or enrollment determination, he/she first may contact the Miami-Dade County Public Schools' Project UP-START Program District Homeless Liaison, Fred J. Clermont at 305 995-7558 for assistance.

The parent/guardian or UHY must be notified by the District Homeless Liaison that he/she has the right to appeal the decision. If a dispute develops regarding the enrollment options available under the McKinney-Vento Act, the child or youth will immediately be admitted to the school in which enrollment is sought by the parent/guardian or UHY, pending resolution of the dispute.

Steps to Be Taken by Schools Prior to Initiating the Dispute Resolution Process

Eligibility Determination: If the school administrator does not agree with the initial eligibility, he/she should first review and complete the "Best Practice Questions to Answer Before Submitting Dispute," found on page two (2) of this form. If after completing the form, it is determined that the student meets the eligibility criteria, no further action is required.

School Selection or Enrollment Determination: If the school administrator does not agree with the school selection or enrollment determination of the student, he/she should first review and complete the "Best Practice Questions to Answer Before Submitting a Dispute," found on page two (2) of this form. Additionally, the school administrator must complete the "Best Interest Determination Checklist for the Student: School Placement Criteria for School Selection" found on page three (3) of this form. If after completing these two (2) pages, it is determined that the student meets the selection and enrollment criteria, no further action is required.

Dispute Resolution Process

If after completing the required forms to determine whether a Dispute Resolution is necessary, and considering the best interest of the student, the school administrator still disagrees with the initial eligibility, school selection, or enrollment determination, then he/she should complete the "School-site Dispute Resolution Intake Form," found on page four (4). The completed form, along with the corresponding form(s) completed prior to initiating the dispute process, must be submitted to the District Homeless Liaison, via email or fax, as indicated below. At this point, the school must also provide the "Parent/Guardian or Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Dispute Resolution Intake Form", found on page five (5), to the parent/guardian or UHY for submission to the District Homeless Liaison.

Mr. Fred J. Clermont

E-mail Address: iamfjc@dadeschools.net Fax Number: 305 579-0370

The District's Homeless Liaison will review the information submitted by the school-site administrator and the parent/guardian or UHY, make a determination, and issue a written notification of the dispute resolution to school administrator and to the parent/guardian or UHY. If the parent/guardian or UHY is not satisfied with the decision made by the District Homeless Liaison, he/she may appeal the determination with the Administrative Director, Title I Administration and Federal/State Fiscal Operations, within ten (10) days from the Dispute Decision Letter. The appeal will be presented to the Assistant Superintendent, Division of Students and Family Support Programs. A written Notice of Outcome of the appeal will be furnished to the parent/guardian or UHY and school administrator. If that individual feels that the dispute with the District has not been resolved to his/her satisfaction, he/she may contact the Florida Department of Education, providing the basis for the dispute.

A resolution of the dispute will be facilitated by the District Homeless Liaison in accordance with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act and School Board Policy 5111.01 as expeditiously as possible.



Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Department of Title I Administration
Project UP-START



Best Practice Questions to Answer Before Submitting a Dispute

When a student is living in unstable housing and would like to continue at the School of Origin, please answer the following questions before starting a dispute resolution process:

1. What is the reason the student has unstable housing?

Four horizontal text input fields for providing the reason for unstable housing.

2. How long will the student be residing at their current nighttime residence, if known?

One horizontal text input field for the duration of residence.

3. How far away is the student's current address from the School of Origin?

One horizontal text input field for the distance from the school.

4. Does the student need transportation to and from school?

Yes No

5. If the student's current address does not meet the transportation qualifications (i.e. the address is under two miles), will they have a means of getting to and from school?

Yes No

6. If the student's current address is not within a school bus route, is it in the best interest of the student for he/she to get to school with an assigned Miami-Dade Metro Transit bus pass?

Yes No

7. Do you believe it is in the best interest of the student to continue to attend the School of Origin?

Yes No

8. Has a meeting been held with the parent/guardian or Unaccompanied Homeless Youth prior to completing the Dispute Resolutions forms? If so, please list the date(s) of the meeting(s).

Yes No

Three horizontal text input fields for listing meeting dates.



**Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Department of Title I Administration
Project UP-START**



**Best Interest Determination Checklist for the Student:
School Placement Criteria for School Selection**

School of Origin Considerations	Home School Considerations
<input type="checkbox"/> Continuity of Instruction <i>Student is best served due to circumstances that look to his or her past.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Continuity of Instruction <i>Student is best served due to circumstances that look to his or her future.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Age and grade placement of the student <i>Maintaining friends and contacts with peers is critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has been in this environment for an extended period of time.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Age and grade placement of the student <i>Maintaining friends and contacts with peers in the School of Origin is not particularly critical to the student's meaningful school experience and participation. The student has attended the School of Origin for only a brief time.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Strength <i>The child's academic performance is weak, and the child would fall further behind if he/she is transferred to another school.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Academic Strength <i>The child's academic performance is strong and at grade level, and the child would likely recover academically from a school transfer.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Social and emotional state <i>The child is suffering from the effects of mobility, has developed strong ties to the current school, and does not want to leave.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Social and emotional state <i>The child seems to be coping adequately with mobility, does not feel strong ties to the current school, and does not mind transferring.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs <i>The advantages of remaining in the School of Origin outweigh any potential disadvantages presented by the length of the commute.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Distance of the commute and its impact on the student's education and/or special needs <i>A shorter commute may help the student's concentration, attitude, or readiness for school. The local Home School can meet all of the necessary educational and special needs of the student.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Personal safety of the student <i>The School of Origin has advantages for the safety of the student.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Personal safety of the student <i>The local Home School has advantages for the safety of the student.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Student's need for special instruction <i>The student's need for special instructions, such as Section 504 or special education IEP and related services, can be met better at the School of Origin.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Student's need for special instruction <i>The student's need for special instruction, such as Section 504 or special education IEP and related services, can be met better at the local Home School.</i>
<input type="checkbox"/> Length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location <i>The student's current living situation is outside of the School of Origin attendance zone, but his/her living situation or location continues to be uncertain. The student will benefit from the continuity offered by remaining in the School of Origin.</i>	<input type="checkbox"/> Length of anticipated stay in a temporary shelter or other temporary location <i>The student's current living situation appears stable and unlikely to change suddenly; the student will benefit from the developing relationships with peers in schools who live in his local community.</i>



**Miami-Dade County Public Schools
Department of Title I Administration
Project UP-START**



School-site Dispute Resolution Intake Form

Directions: This page should only be completed if the school administrator completes the second page of FM-7403 (for Eligibility Determination) and/or the second and third pages of the form (for School Selection or Enrollment Determination), and still believes that a Dispute Resolution Process should be initiated. Both the Best Practice Questions to Answer Before Submitting a Dispute and the Best Determination Checklist should be completed, along with this intake form by a school-site administrator and submitted to the District Homeless Liaison, via email to iamfjc@dadeschools.net or by fax at 305 579-0370.

School Name: _____ Location #: _____

Administrator Completing Form: _____ Today's Date: _____

Title: _____ Phone #: _____

Email address: _____

Name of Student: _____ Student ID #: _____

Grade of Student: _____ Age of Student: _____ Student's Date of Birth: _____

Student Living with:
Please select all that apply.

Father's Name: _____ Mother's Name: _____

Legal Guardian's Name: _____ Caregiver's Name: _____

PLEASE IDENTIFY STUDENT'S CURRENT NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE:

Shelter Hotel/Motel Doubled-up Public Place/Trailer/Substandard Housing

ISSUE:

Project UP-START Eligibility Based on FM-7378 School Enrollment Challenging Current School Place

Other: _____

Please write a brief explanation of your dispute:

Sample Letter Regarding Dispute Decision

[Date]

[Name of Parent/Guardian or Unaccompanied Homeless Youth]
[Address]
[City], FL Zip Code]

Regarding: Dispute Decision

Dear [name of recipient]:

I have reviewed your concern regarding the issue of [type of dispute] and a decision has been made after careful consideration of information provided by yourself as well as the school-site administrator and most importantly, looking at what is in the best interest of the student [name of student].

If the dispute is regarding placement:

At this time, it has been decided that [name of student] not be enrolled in [name of School of Origin], but rather in [name of school], which is the home school of the address in which the student is currently zoned. The reasons for this decision are [provide a detailed explanation here].

If you do not agree with this decision, you have the right to dispute and appeal the decision. Please contact the Miami-Dade County Public Schools' District Homeless Liaison, [name of current Liaison], within ten (10) days of receipt of this letter. The District Homeless Liaison may be contacted via telephone at 305 995-7558.

During the dispute resolution process, your child may remain at [name of School of Origin], until a school placement decision is finalized.

Thank you.

[Name of Sender]
[District Homeless Liaison or Title of Sender]
[Address of District Homeless Liaison or Sender]
[City], FL [Zip Code]
[Phone Number of District Homeless Liaison or Sender]

cc:

[Name of Sender's Supervisor], [Title of Sender's Supervisor]
[Name of Principal of School of Origin], Principal, [Name of School of Origin]
[Name of Principal of Current Home School], Principal, [Name of Current Home School] (When Applicable)

Appendix F

[\(Click here to access the flyer in English, Haitian-Creole and Spanish\)](#)

PROJECT UP-START



Are you currently living in housing that is not stable?

If so, you may qualify for the following services through Project UP-START:

- Enrollment assistance to home school
- College transition support for high school seniors
- Case management/social work services (e.g. referrals for housing assistance)*
- Transportation requests to the school of origin
- Tutoring at selected shelter sites
- Referrals to "The Shop" (e.g. school supplies, food, clothing, & toiletries)



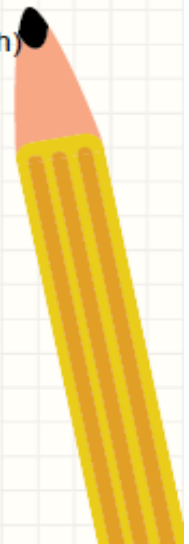
*The Project UP-START Program does not have direct access to housing or shelters. Therefore, Project UP-START staff members only provide referrals to community partners.

For more information, email projectupstart@dadeschools.net or call 305 995-7558 (Central) | 305-242-8426 (South) | 305-572-2800 (North)

Fax: 305 579-0370

Visit us: <http://projectupstart.dadeschools.net/>
for more information about the program and to access Board Policy 5111.01.

Follow us: [@projectupstart](#)



Appendix G

[\(Click here to access the brochure in English, Haitian-Creole and Spanish\)](#)

What does the McKinney-Vento Act require schools to do for children who have lost housing?



Schools must keep children and youths in the school of origin (the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or where last enrolled) to the extent feasible, except where contrary to the wishes of the parent or guardian.

Children or youths' right to attend their school of origin extends throughout the duration of homelessness.

Schools must remove any barriers that contribute to exclusion or enrollment delay. This means schools are required to enroll immediately students experiencing homelessness, and then follow up to retrieve missing information, school records, immunization records, etc.

Each school must post the contact information of the District's McKinney-Vento Program (MVP) Liaison.

Each school must post public notice of educational rights of children and youths experiencing homelessness.

Schools must ensure enrollment with full and equal opportunity for students to succeed in school, including participation school district programs, such as: Title I, Exceptional Student Education, Vocational and Technical, Head Start, Early Head Start, Preschool, etc.

Local Contacts

Department of Title I Administration
Project UP-START Program

305-572-2800 (North)
305 995-7558 (Central)
305-242-8426 (South)

<http://projectupstart.dadeschools.net>

The School Board of Miami-Dade County Bylaws & Policies

Visit

<http://projectupstart.dadeschools.net> for more information about the program and to access Board Policy 5111.01.

State Information:

State Homeless Education Program
Florida Department of Education
Bureau of Federal Educational Programs
Tallahassee, Florida 32399
Email Address: bfep@fldoe.org
Phone Number: 850 245-0479

State's Website

<http://www.fldoe.org/bsa/title1/titlex.asp>

Florida's McKinney-Vento Program

Homeless Education Program
Bureau of Federal Educational Programs
Florida Department of Education



Serving Students and Families in Unstable Housing



Bridging the Gap between Home and School

Every Child Has the Right to an Education

If you lost your housing due to economic hardship, natural disaster, or other similar reason, and are living temporarily with friends or relatives, or in a shelter, motel, vehicle, campground, or on the street, in an abandoned building, then you are eligible to receive services provided under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Your children have the right to:

- Go to their school of origin or zoned school, no matter where they live or how long they have lived there.
- Continue in the school they last attended before they lost their housing, if that is the parent/guardian's choice, and it is feasible and in the child's best interest, or the school for which they are zoned due to their current living situation.
- Enroll in school without giving a permanent address.
- Enroll and attend classes while the school arranges for the transfer of school and immunization records and any other documents required for enrollment.
- Enroll and attend classes in the school where they are seeking enrollment (school of origin or zoned school) even while the school and the parent/guardian are seeking to resolve a dispute over which school is in the best interest of the child or youth.
- Receive transportation to the school they last attended before they lost their housing (if a parent/guardian submits).
- Participate in any school programs and receive any school services for which they qualify.

Questions for Parents to Ask at School



Children can be encouraged by your interest in their day at school, their homework, and the papers they bring from school.

They also benefit when you take time to ask questions about school and visit their school.

Here are some questions for you to ask at your child's school:

- Who is the the District's MVP Liaison for homeless education?
- What transportation is available for my child to stay in the sameschool?
- If we have to change schools, who can help us quickly transfer records?
- Is there a preschool program?
- Is there a summer school program?
- What tutoring services are available for my child?
- If I think my child needs special education services, what do I need to do to get him/her evaluated?
- If my child has a certain talent, are there special classes to benefit that talent?
- What extracurricular activities are offered by this school? How can my child participate?
- How can my child receive free meals at school?
- Where are school supplies available?
- How will my child be able to go on class field trips if we are unable to pay?

Free Lunch and Breakfast Program

Public school children benefit from federal school nutrition programs that provide nutritious meals. Free breakfast and lunch are available to students.



Special Education Services

Florida children between ages 3 and 22, who are eligible for Exceptional Student Education (ESE) Programs, may receive a variety of services provided through the public school system. If a homeless child or youth has an identified disability, he or she may be eligible for special education services.

Parents who believe their child may qualify for special education should request an education evaluation at the child's school. If eligible, the student will then receive special education instruction and related services according to his/her Individual Education Plan (IEP). You may contact either the District's Department of Exceptional Student Education or the Division of Student Services for additional information about programs for ESE students.

Appendix H

[\(Click here to access the poster in English, Haitian-Creole and Spanish\)](#)



INFORMATION FOR SCHOOL-AGE YOUTH

IF YOU LIVE IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS:



- o In a shelter
- o In a motel or campground due to the lack of an adequate alternative accommodation
- o In a car, park, abandoned building, or bus or train station
- o Doubled-up with other people due to loss of housing or economic hardship



You may qualify for certain rights and protections under the federal McKinney-Vento Act.



Eligible students have the right to:

- o Receive a free, appropriate public education.
- o Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment.
- o Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.
- o Enroll in the local school; or continue attending their school of origin (the school they attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled) if that is their preference and is feasible.
 - o If the school district believes that the school selected is not in his/her best interest, then the District must provide the student with written explanation of its position and inform the student of his/her right to appeal its decision.
- o Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested.
- o Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to the students' needs.

If you believe you may be eligible, contact the Local District McKinney-Vento Program Liaison to find out what services and supports may be available.

<p>Local Contacts: Project UP-START, Miami-Dade County Public Schools</p> <p>Central: 305 995-7558 South: 305 242-8426 North: 305 572-2800</p> <p>Fax: 305 579-0370 Email: projectupstart@dadeschools.net</p>	<p>The School Board of Miami-Dade County Bylaws & Policies</p> <p>Visit http://projectupstart.dadeschools.net for more information about the program and to access Board Policy 5111.01.</p>	<p>State Homeless Education Program</p> <p>Florida Department of Education Bureau of Federal Educational Programs Tallahassee, Florida 32399</p> <p>Email: bfep@fldoe.org Phone Number: 850 245-0479</p>
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If you need further assistance with your education needs,
contact the National Center for Homeless Education:



Non- Discrimination Policy

The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida, adheres to a policy of nondiscrimination in employment and educational programs/activities and programs/activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Education, and strives affirmatively to provide equal opportunity for all as required by:

Title VI of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 - prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin.

Title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as amended - prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, or national origin, for programs or activities receiving Federal financial assistance from the Department of Education.

Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 - prohibits discrimination on the basis of gender.

Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967 (ADEA), as amended - prohibits discrimination on the basis of age with respect to individuals who are at least 40.

The Equal Pay Act of 1963, as amended - prohibits sex discrimination in payment of wages to women and men performing substantially equal work in the same establishment.

Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 - prohibits discrimination against the disabled.

Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) - prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities in employment, public service, public accommodations and telecommunications.

The Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 (FMLA) - requires covered employers to provide up to 12 weeks of unpaid, job-protected leave to "eligible" employees for certain family and medical reasons.

The Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978 - prohibits discrimination in employment on the basis of pregnancy, childbirth, or related medical conditions.

Florida Educational Equity Act (FEEA) - prohibits discrimination on the basis of race, gender, national origin, marital status, or handicap against a student or employee.

Florida Civil Rights Act of 1992 - secures for all individuals within the state freedom from discrimination because of race, color, religion, sex, national origin, age, handicap, or marital status.

School Board Rules 6Gx13-4A-1.01, 6Gx13-4A-1.32, and 6Gx13-5D-1.10 - prohibit harassment and/or discrimination against a student or employee on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, ethnic or national origin, political beliefs, marital status, age, sexual orientation, social and family background, linguistic preference, pregnancy, or disability.

Veterans are provided re-employment rights in accordance with P.L. 93-508 (Federal Law) and Section 205.07 (Florida Statutes), which stipulate categorical preferences for employment.