

*Will you lose your child's preschool if you lose your housing and must move?*

Families with unstable housing are protected by the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act and the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act. These laws require that public schools provide students with the chance to remain at their school when the family loses its housing. School districts should provide transportation to enable your child to stay.

Under the McKinney-Act, the State must ensure that the PFA plan provides a way for all homeless families to access and retain preschool. If your preschool slot is not operated by a school district and is not a State pre-kindergarten program but does receive funding from the Illinois State Board of Education, the preschool should work with you to help you obtain similar services.



*What if I did not enroll my child on time or I don't have the papers I need?*

The Education for Homeless Children Act and the McKinney-Vento Act both require that schools immediately enroll children without papers, transfers, immunizations, birth certificates or similar requirements. These laws apply to all Illinois *public* schools. The McKinney-Vento law also requires that school districts and the State remove “barriers” to the enrollment and attendance of homeless preschool-age children. Therefore, enrollment deadlines or requirements that are difficult for homeless families to comply with should not be used to prevent your child from attending preschool.

**For further information or assistance with securing preschool and preschool services, you can call the Law Project of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless at 800-940-1119.**

**For Every Child –  
A Preschool Chance  
(Even if you lack stable housing)**



**The Law Project of the Chicago Coalition  
for the Homeless**

**1-800-940-1119  
[www.chicagohomeless.org](http://www.chicagohomeless.org)**



## Do you have a child not yet old enough for kindergarten?

To enter preschool, a child must be at least 3 years old but not older than 5 on September 1st. Are you considering preschool but haven't enrolled your child because you don't have a stable place to live? Are you losing your housing and wondering if you can keep your child in preschool?

For children who are not in stable housing (for example, doubled-up in the housing of another because you can't afford housing on your own, living in a shelter, emergency or transitional housing, living temporarily in a motel\*) preschool can be especially important. All Illinois public schools have an obligation to help families who lack stable housing to access preschool services.

## Why is preschool good for my child?

Children who participate in quality preschool programs develop better language, math and social skills; are more likely to graduate high school, less likely to become involved in the criminal justice system, and more likely to be productively employed adults. The benefits of preschool for your child are great. Preschool programs can reduce the possibility of academic failure and developmental delay for children at risk.

\* These constitute "homelessness" within the meaning of state and federal law.

## How do I find a preschool for my child?

### Start with your nearby public school:

Every Illinois school district must have a "liaison" for the education of homeless children and youth. It is the liaison's job to ensure that families with unstable housing secure access to preschool. If the school has a preschool program, you should ask about the program and ask for help enrolling your child. If the school does not have a preschool program, the liaison should be able to refer you to a program in the community.

### If you live outside of the city limits of Chicago, you can:

Go to <http://www.isbe.net/earlychi/html/directories.htm> to find a Preschool For All program in your area or call the Illinois State Board of Education at **1-866-262-6663**.



Contact your local Child Care Resource and Referral Agency by going to the Illinois Network of Child Care Resources and Referral Agencies website at:

<http://www.inccrra.org>

-or-

call **(877)20-CHILD** to find programs near you.

If you live in the City of Chicago, you can: Go to the Chicago Early Childhood Program Locator website at

<http://schoollocator.cps.k12.il.us/ECE/index.htm> to locate an early childhood program near you. Or call the Chicago Public Schools at **773-553-2010**.

You can also contact Illinois Action for Children, the Child Care Resource and Referral Agency serving Cook County by going to <http://www.actforchildren.org/> or by calling **312-823-1100** to find programs near you.

Illinois is now implementing a new program called "Preschool For All" (PFA). This program is State-funded and designed to provide high-quality preschool for all Illinois 3 and 4-year-olds in every part of the State by 2011.



#### Legal Handprint:

*Each State Educational Agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth has access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths.*

#### McKinney-Vento Act

**42 U.S.C.S § 11431 (1)**