



Head Start Referral App for Children Experiencing Homelessness SchoolHouse Connection and the National Head Start Association

I: Overview and Purpose

There are approximately 1.4 million children under the age of six who experience homelessness, and [data from the United States Department of Education](#) show that these young children are severely under-enrolled in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. The McKinney-Vento Act requires LEAs to designate a homeless education liaison, whose role is to “ensure that...homeless families and homeless children and youths have access to and receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs)....” The law also requires liaisons to “ensure that... homeless families and homeless children and youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services....” 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(6)(A). Based on this statutory mandate, liaisons should refer families with eligible children to Head Start as a means to ensure they receive those services. This app is being developed as a tool to aid LEA McKinney-Vento liaisons in the identification of young children experiencing homelessness and referral to Head Start.

II: Piloting the App

SEAs and LEAs are invited to participate in a pilot of the app in the fall of 2021. The purpose of this pilot is to assess how the app will work in real-life conditions, and to gather input about suggested improvements, changes, etc. Participating LEAs will also play a critical role in helping iron out the kinks and establishing a rollout protocol that can be used when the app is officially launched. The pilot process will include:

- An informational session and training for SEAs, LEAs, liaisons, and others who will be using the app. This training will take place virtually in May, 2021 and a recording of the session will be made available to pilot participants.
- Check-ins throughout the school year (once per quarter) to assess how the app is operating in the field, answer any questions that arise from liaisons or others, and make any adjustments that are necessary.
- An end-of-year analysis and feedback session.
- Ad hoc troubleshooting and consultation calls with the NHSA and SHC teams.

III: Frequently Asked Questions

Question	Answer
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<p>1. Will use of this app and sharing information across agencies violate student privacy rights?</p>	<p>No, using this app should not violate any rights under FERPA.</p> <p>FERPA protects the rights of parents of students, and of students 18 and older. The definition of student is "any individual who is or has been in attendance at an educational agency or institution and regarding whom the agency or institution maintains education records." 99 C.F.R §99.3. The Head Start referral app would be used to enroll children who are not "in attendance at an educational agency or institution." These are younger siblings of students, perhaps, or maybe even children of students. But the children whose information is being shared via the app are not students, as defined in FERPA.</p> <p>In addition, any information about children or families that is entered into the app is not an "education record" protected by FERPA, because it is not "maintained by an educational agency or institution or by a party acting for the agency or institution." 99 C.F.R §99.3. The app is a separate piece of technology that is not owned or contracted by the LEA. It is a technological tool a liaison or other individual may use to connect a parent to Head Start services. However, it does not create an education record under FERPA. Any information entered into the app is owned and maintained by the app and its developers, who are not subject to FERPA.</p> <p>Although the liaison is entering personally identifiable information about a child/family into the app, this action does not trigger FERPA limitations, because the children are not "students" and the information is not "maintained by an educational agency or institution."</p>
<p>2. Does the app obtain parental consent for entering information into the app?</p>	<p>The app does not request parental consent, since parental consent is not required under FERPA for liaisons to input the information into the app. However, the app does contain a checkbox indicating that the parent acknowledges the referral has been made. This helps ensure the parent is able to opt out of the referral if they do not wish to be connected to Head Start and that the parent is aware of the referral and prepared to receive outreach from the Head Start agency.</p>



<p>3. Can our state and/or LEAs use this app to refer children to community-based child care programs, in addition to Head Start?</p>	<p>Yes, while referrals to Head Start are the primary goal of this app, LEAs will have control over who the information is shared with, making it possible to refer children to child care providers other than Head Start. The app fields can be customized to allow for this.</p>
<p>4. What is the appropriate role of the liaison in making referrals to Head Start and other services?</p>	<p>As noted above, the McKinney-Vento Act requires liaisons to “ensure that...homeless families and homeless children and youths have access to and receive educational services for which such families, children, and youths are eligible, including services through Head Start programs (including Early Head Start programs)....” The law also requires liaisons to “ensure that... homeless families and homeless children and youths receive referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health and substance abuse services, housing services, and other appropriate services....” 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(6)(A). Based on this statutory mandate, liaisons should refer families with eligible children to Head Start as a means to ensure they receive those services. The app is a quick and easy way to make those referrals. Once the referral is made, the Head Start agency can contact the family and work with them to complete enrollment.</p> <p>In addition, connecting young children with Head Start often makes it easier for older students to attend school. Students may be providing child care for younger children, as their siblings or as their parents. By connecting the children to Head Start, the older students can be freed of that child care responsibility and better able to attend school. This would promote the McKinney-Vento Act’s requirement that LEAs “remove barriers to the... enrollment and retention of homeless children and youths in schools....” 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(I).</p>
<p>5. How much does it cost to participate in the pilot?</p>	<p>There is no cost to participate in the pilot. This app is made available free-of-charge from the National Head Start Association.</p>



IV: Data Variables Gathered through the App

1. Child's first name
2. Child's last name
3. Child's date of birth
4. Current location (i.e. shelter, motel, doubled-up, etc.)
5. City
6. State
7. Gender
8. Ethnicity
9. Race
10. Contact Name
11. Contact Phone
12. Contact Type (i.e. parent, friend, etc.)
13. Referral acknowledgement checkbox (does the parent acknowledge that this information will be shared with other programs and agencies?)
14. Agency (of the person filling out the referral form)
15. ID
16. Email (of the person filling out the referral form)



Using the Head Start Referral App

1. Background: this app is being developed for use by LEA McKinney-Vento liaisons. The goal is to have a tool that liaisons can use when identifying young children who are eligible for Head Start. Liaisons can use this app to refer young children to their local Head Start program for enrollment, and automatically share the information with the Head Start provider.

2. Login Instructions: you may access the app by:

- Going to <https://www.mvcertify.org/>
- Username: your email address
- Password: MVProject2020!

A screenshot of a web login page. At the top is a blue header with the word "Login" in white. Below the header are two input fields: "Username:" and "Password:". Below the password field is a checkbox labeled "Remember me". At the bottom of the form is a blue button labeled "SIGN IN". Below the form are two links: "FORGOT PASSWORD?" and "SIGN UP".

3. Instructions for liaisons:

- When you become aware that a K12 student who is eligible for McKinney-Vento services has a sibling under the age of 5, you should input that younger sibling's information into the app.
- In conversation with the parent/guardian, you can share the following:
 - I see that you have a younger child who is eligible to enroll in Head Start.
 - Head Start provides high-quality education services for children under the age of 5, as well as health services, social services, and other supports.
 - It is important for young children to participate in early childhood programs like Head Start so they are receiving the educational and developmental support they need, and can be ready for kindergarten when the time comes.



- I would like to share your child's information with our local Head Start program. They will contact you to share more information about the program and enrollment.
- In order to do that, I just have a few questions. (This is where liaisons will walk through the questions in the app):
 - Child's first name
 - Child's last name
 - Child's date of birth
 - Current location (i.e. shelter, motel, doubled-up, etc.)
 - City
 - State
 - Gender
 - Ethnicity
 - Race
 - Contact Name
 - Contact Phone
 - Contact Type (i.e. parent, friend, etc.)
 - Referral acknowledgement checkbox (does the parent acknowledge that this information will be shared with other programs and agencies?)
 - Agency (of the person filling out the referral form)
 - ID
 - Email (of the person filling out the referral form)
- Do you have any questions or concerns?