# Determining Best Interest

Local homeless liaisons may use the following interview questions and checklist as a guide through the best interest determination and school selection process for students experiencing homelessness. Liaisons should explain school selection rights under McKinney-Vento, provide information on which schools the student may attend, and help the parents/guardian or youth consider the options.

**\*Please note:** This form is only to be used for best interest determinations for students experiencing homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Act.\*

## Housing

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| How stable does the family’s current living arrangement appear to be? Does the family/youth anticipate moving out of the area again soon, or will they be able to remain where they are for some time?  |
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## Education

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| Where does the parent/guardian want the student to attend school? Where does the student want to attend?  |
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| How much time is left in the school year?  |
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| How long has the student attended the school of origin? Were meaningful social and educational relationships established?  |
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| How is the student performing academically? Has the student transferred schools before, and if so, how did the transfer impact academic performance?  |
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| What is the student’s history of attendance? What factors most impacted attendance? |
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| Are there programs (gifted, English language, special education, extracurricular activities, etc.) in which the student has been participating at the school of origin? Are these programs also available at the local school? Please list activities: |
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## Commute/transportation

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| What is the distance and travel time from the student’s current residence to school of origin?  |
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| Would the length of the commute to/from the school of origin impact the student’s education? How? |
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## Safety

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| Are there any safety concerns related to staying in the school of origin or attending the local school of residency? |
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# Checklist of School Selection Considerations

After discussing the questions above with the family or youth, local homeless liaisons may use the following checklist to support the school selection determination.

The following checklist is intended to act as a guide; in making this determination, LEAs must:

* presume that staying in the school of origin is in the best interest of the child or youth;
* consider specific student-centered factors;
* prioritize the wishes of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth; and
* include a written explanation and notice of the right to appeal if the LEA determines that remaining in the school of origin is not in the best interest of the child or youth

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| **School of origin** | **School of local attendance area** |
| [ ]  It is likely that the child or youth will have to move again very soon; the family/youth is unsure of how long they can stay in the current location | [ ]  The family/youth expects that they will be able to stay where they are now for a while |
| [ ]  The student has attended the school of origin for a long time | [ ]  The student has attended the school of origin for only a brief time |
| [ ]  It is late in the school year/there is only a short time left | [ ]  It is early in the school year/there is considerable time left |
| [ ]  The student has developed close relationships with friends and teachers; maintaining contacts with friends at the school of origin is critical to the student’s well-being and a meaningful school experience | [ ]  The student would benefit from developing relationships with school peers who live in their new school community and/or maintaining contacts with peers at the school of origin is not critical to the student’s well-being  |
| [ ]  The student seems to be suffering from the effects of mobility (changing housing or schools) and wants to stay in the school of origin; changes in routine provoke anxiety for the student | [ ]  The student is coping adequately with mobility, does not feel strong ties to the school of origin, and/or would not mind transferring to a new school |
| [ ]  The student is struggling academically and it’s likely that the student would fall behind if transferred to another school | [ ]  The student’s academic performance is strong, and the student is likely to recover academically if they transfer |
| [ ]  If the student is receiving special education or related services (or evaluation for those services), it would be best for them to continue receiving those services at the school of origin; there are programs or services offered at the school of origin that meet the student’s unique needs and interests that are not offered at the local school | [ ]  If the student is receiving special education or related services (or evaluation for those services), it would be best for them to receive those services/complete evaluation at the local school; there are programs or services offered at the local school that meet the student’s unique needs and interests that are not offered at the school of origin |
| [ ]  The commute to school of origin is not long or the advantages of attending the school of origin outweigh any potential disadvantages of a lengthy commute | [ ]  A shorter commute would help the student’s concentration, attitude toward, and/or readiness for school |
| [ ]  It is likely that tardiness and/or absences would become a problem at the school of origin because of inconvenient transportation/a lengthy commute | [ ]  It is likely that tardiness and/or absences would be minimal because of the proximity of the school and more convenient travel |
| [ ]  The school of origin has advantages for the safety of the student | [ ]  The local attendance area school has advantages for the safety of the student |
| [ ]  Other considerations (e.g., access to extra-curriculars, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ | [ ]  Other considerations (e.g., access to extra-curriculars, etc.): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ |