

Information for Parents

Polk County Public Schools HEARTH Project

1915 South Floral Avenue ~ Bartow, Florida 33830

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If your family lost housing and lives in any of the following situations:

- Doubled up with friends or relatives because you cannot find or afford housing
- Motel, vehicle, or campground due to loss of housing or economic hardship
- In a shelter
- In an abandoned building, inadequate trailer, or similar accommodations, or
- On the street

Then, your preschool-aged and school-aged children have certain rights or protections under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.

Your children have the right to:

- Go to school. They must be given access to the same public education, including preschool education, provided to other children.
- Attend either the local school or the school of origin, if this is in their best interest. The school of origin is the school the child attended when he/she was permanently housed or the school in which the child was last enrolled.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin (if over 2 miles; K-12).
- Enroll in school immediately, even if missing records and documents normally required for enrollment, such as birth certificates, proof of residence, previous school records, or immunization/medical records.
- Enroll, attend classes, and participate fully in all school activities while the school or parent gathers records.
- Enroll and attend classes even while the school and you seek to resolve a dispute over enrollment.
- Have access to the same programs and services that are available to all other students, including transportation, educational services and free meals.

When you move, you should do the following:

- Contact the school's HEARTH Advocate or PCPS HEARTH staff for help in enrolling your child in a new school or arranging for your child to continue in his or her former school.
- Consider the following regarding continuing attendance at the school of origin: age, distance of commute, length of anticipated stay in new living arrangement, safety issues, your child's attachment to their school and time remaining in the school year.

Possible additional assistance provided by the PCPS HEARTH Project:

- Backpacks, school supplies, hygiene products.
- Funding for school related fees and expenses such as required uniforms, field trips and specific class required items.
- Bus and/or gas vouchers to obtain enrollment documents, support parental involvement in school events and to support attendance in the school of origin while transportation route is being arranged.
- Referrals to appropriate community agencies to meet basic needs.

Community Resources:

- 2-1-1 : United Way's free, 24 hour information and referral helpline which links people in need of assistance to local health and human service programs.
- Aunt Bertha:
<http://heartland.auntbertha.com>

***Unaccompanied youth (not in the care of a parent or legal guardian), students awaiting foster care placement and migratory students living in the listed circumstances, also qualify for all protections and services.**

Polk County Public Schools District Liaison: DeeDee Wright

School-Based HEARTH Advocate: _____