



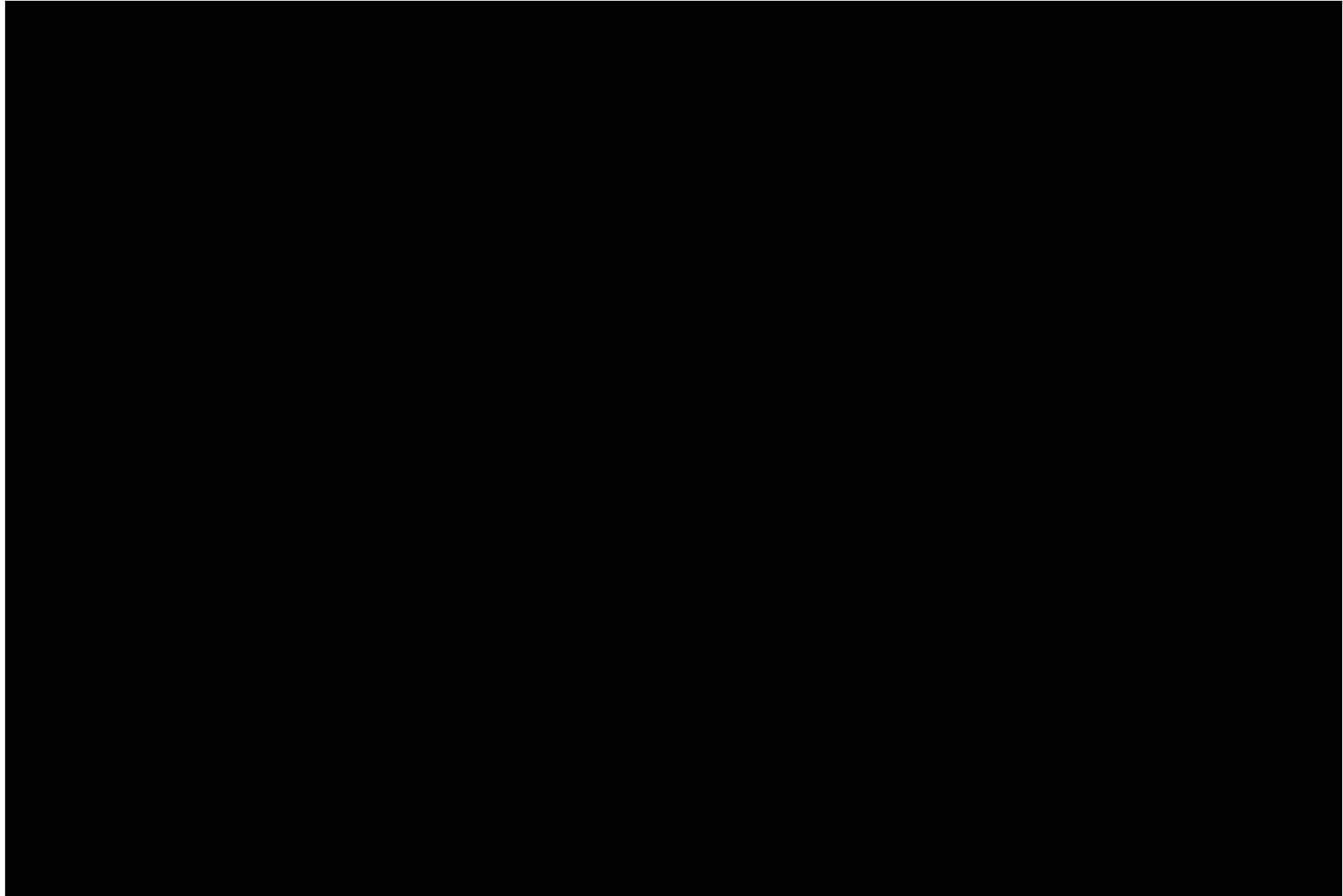
Homelessness and Education

McKinney Vento 101

Who is Homeless?

- There are varying definitions depending on which agency is defining homelessness. The definition used by the US Dept. of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) is far more narrow than the US Dept. of Education (USDE).
- Homeless Families comprise approximately 1/3 of the total homeless population.
- It is estimated that there are between 1.6 million-2.5 million children a year that face homelessness.

Who is Homeless?



Who is Homeless?

The McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title X, Part C defines homelessness as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This includes children and youth who are:

- Sharing the Housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (often referred to as **doubled up and accounts for about 75% of students identified in Region 4**)
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- Living in **emergency** (typically 60-90 days in length) or **transitional** (can be up to 2 years in length) shelters
- Abandoned in hospitals
- Using a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

Who is Homeless?

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

An Unaccompanied Homeless Youth is any child or youth **who meets the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless** and is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

- Many children become separated from parents due to lack of space in living situations or shelter policies.
- Many flee abuse: 20-50% sexual; 40-60% physical
- Many flee family dysfunction: Over 2/3 Hotline callers report at least one parent abuses drugs or alcohol.
- Roughly 1/3 of homeless identify as LGBTQ.
- 10% of currently homeless female teens are pregnant.
- Many are not enrolled in school.

Who is Homeless?

Region 4 Data 2018-2019

	Number of Students Identified	Percent Unaccompanied Youth
Allegheny	3,451	11%
Beaver	814	14%
Bedford	130	22%
Fayette	280	14%
Fulton	**	**
Greene	40	18%
Somerset	100	20%
Washington	322	20%
Westmoreland	503	18%

** Denotes the exclusion of data and corresponding proportions because there were 10 or fewer children in that category.

Causes of Homelessness

Click on the link below for a video and article about causes of homelessness (**be sure to unmute the video**).

<https://www.ksby.com/news/national-politics/the-race-2020/when-it-comes-to-homelessness-in-america-there-is-no-single-cause>

Causes of Homelessness

- Poverty
- Domestic Violence
- Eviction/Foreclosure
- Health Issues
- Fires
- Natural Disasters
- Job Loss/Loss of Income
- Incarceration of a parent or family member
- Divorce/Separation
- Lack of Affordable Housing
- Mental Illness
- Drug and Alcohol Abuse

Homeless Families

- Most homeless families are comprised of single mothers (71%)
- 42% of children in homeless families are under the age of 6
- Homeless families usually have limited education
- Families of color are overrepresented in the homeless population
 - 52% African American
 - 35% White
 - 2.5 % Native American
 - 2.3% Pacific Islanders

Check out this article on racial inequality and homelessness:

<https://endhomelessness.org/homelessness-in-america/what-causes-homelessness/inequality/>

Homeless Mothers

Homeless mothers:

- Experience 3X the rate of PTSD
- Are 2X more likely to dependent on drugs or alcohol
- 63% report a history of domestic violence
- Experience disproportionately high rates of major depressive disorder in comparison to the general population.
- Have an increased risk of chronic physical health conditions such as asthma, chronic bronchitis, and hypertension

Homeless Children

- 25% have witnessed violence within their family
- By age 12, 83% have witnessed 1 serious violent event
- 1 in 9 homeless children has an asthma related condition
- Sick 4X more often than their housed peers
 - 4X as many respiratory infections
 - 2X as many ear infections
 - 5X more gastrointestinal problems

Homeless Children

- Experience hunger at twice the rate of housed children
- 3X the rate of emotional and behavioral problems
 - 35% of homeless preschoolers exhibit emotional and behavioral problems (depression, withdrawal, aggression, hoarding belongings)
 - 20% extreme emotional distress warranting professional intervention
- 4X more likely to show delayed development
 - 75% of homeless preschoolers exhibit at least one major developmental delay
 - 40% exhibit two or more developmental delays
- 2X the rate of learning disabilities
- Significantly less likely to be involved in quality early learning programs or early intervention

Consequences



Consequences

For additional information on ACES and homelessness, please check out the fact sheet below from the National Health Care for the Homeless Council.

(You may have to exit the slide show in order to see the fact sheet)

<https://nhchc.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/08/aces-fact-sheet.pdf>

Impacts of Homelessness on Education

- Homelessness in early childhood is associated with poor classroom engagement and poor social skills in early elementary school.
- Homeless children often have high rates of mobility. Research shows that students with higher mobility rates have lower test scores and worse overall academic performance than peers who do not change schools.
- The achievement gaps between homeless and low-income elementary students tend to persist, and may even worsen, over time.

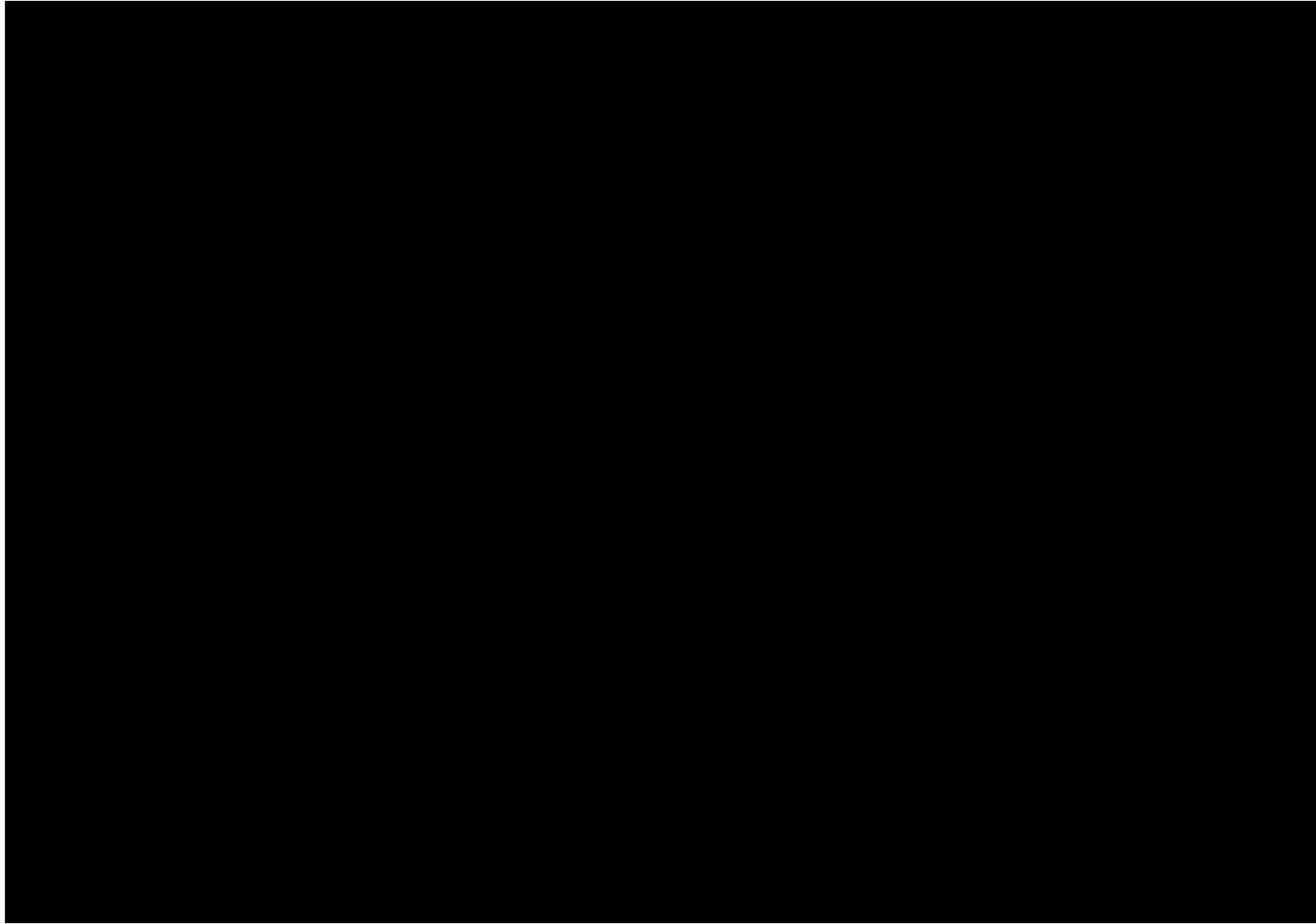
Impacts of Homelessness on Education

- Mobility also hurts non-mobile students; a study found average test scores for non-mobile students were significantly lower in high schools with high student mobility rates.
- Students who change high schools even once during high school were less than half as likely as stable students to graduate.
- A youth who experiences homelessness is 87% more likely to drop out of school.

What Do We Do?

- Identify
- Remove Barriers to Education
- Monitor Progress
- Connect families and students to resources

Identification



Identification

All public school districts and public charter schools must designate a homeless liaison who has the capacity (time, knowledge and resources) to fulfill the position.

Below is a link to the statewide directory where you can search for district liaisons.

<https://directory.center-school.org/homeless/liaison/search>

Common Signs of Homelessness

- Attendance at many schools
- Missing records needed to enroll
- Gaps in skill development
- Missing immunization and medical records
- Health issues including respiratory problems and skin rashes
- Chronic hunger and fatigue
- Erratic attendance and tardiness
- Inability to contact parents
- Poor personal hygiene
- Developmental delays
- Anxiety, especially late in the school day
- Extreme shyness and poor self esteem
- Statements such as:
 - “We’ve been moving around a lot.”
 - “We’re going through a bad time right now.”

Signs of Potential Homelessness in a Virtual Learning Environment

- Frequent changes in the background of where the student is working; the student appears to be changing location frequently
- Many different people in the background beyond just the students immediate family
- Background in a motel/hotel, outdoors or public areas
- Student/parent unreachable for periods of time
- Unwilling to turn on camera; inconsistent internet

Identification

- **Listen**—Listen carefully to what the family/student is saying. Homelessness is often revealed through conversations, especially by children.
- **Observe**—Has the child started wearing the same clothes multiple times a week? Are they dirty? Are they missing homework or school supplies? Does something just seem different today?
- **Investigate**—If you suspect a child is homeless; attempt to find out more information. Speak to the parent. Enlist the help of the homeless liaison.
- **Don't judge!**—This is the most important thing to remember. Homeless families are going through enough. They are often scared and embarrassed by their situation. Be a helper!

Barriers



Click on the link below to launch video

[Homeless Unaccompanied Youth Discusses Challenges to Education](#)

Barriers to Education for Homeless Students

- Lack of Documentation (Birth Certificate, Immunization Records, School Records)
- High Mobility
- Transportation
- Lack of Awareness
- Lack of Access to Basic Supports (food, clothing, shelter, medical care)
- Lack of Access to Technology
- Lack of Needed School Supplies

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act entitles student's experiencing homelessness to a free, appropriate public education, including pre-school education by providing for:

- School Stability
- Immediate Enrollment
- Support for Academic Success

Overview



**Although this video includes data for another state, the information provided is a great general overview of McKinney Vento. McKinney Vento is federal legislation and therefore the same law covers all students throughout the United States.

School Stability

Each LEA shall, according to each child's or youth's best interest:

- Continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, and until the end of the academic year in which the student becomes permanently housed; OR
- Enroll in any public school that housed students living where the student is living are eligible to attend.

School Stability

- **School of origin** is defined as the school attended when the student was permanently housed or the last school attended, including preschool.
- **School of origin** includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for feeder school patterns, when the student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin.

School Stability

In determining best interest, the LEA shall:

- **PRESUME** that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student's best interest.
 - Unless contrary to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.
- **Consider student-centered factors, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety.**
 - For preschoolers, attachment to teachers; availability and quality of services in the new area; travel time.
- Give priority to the parent's/guardian's request.
- Give priority to unaccompanied youth's request.

Transportation

LEAs must provide transportation to and from the school/preschool of origin, including until the end of the year when the student obtains permanent housing, at the parent's or guardian's request (or at the liaison's request for unaccompanied youth).

- If staying in the same LEA, that LEA must provide or arrange transportation to the school of origin.
- If crossing district boundaries, the school of origin and the district of residency must determine how to divide the transportation cost and responsibility, or they must share the cost equally.

Immediate Enrollment

When remaining in the school of origin is not in the student's best interest or not what the parent, guardian or youth requests, McKinney-Vento students are entitled to immediate enrollment in any public school that students living in the same attendance area are eligible to attend; even if:

- Students do not have the required documents, such as school records, **records of immunization and other required health records**, proof of residency, guardianship, or other documents; or
- Students have missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.

Immediate Enrollment

- “Enrollment” includes attending classes and participating fully in school activities.
- SEAs and LEAs must develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to identification, enrollment and retention of children and youth in homeless situations, including barriers due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.
- If a student does not have immunizations, or immunization or other health records or screenings, the liaison must immediately assist the family in obtaining them; the student must be enrolled in the interim.

Enrollment of Unaccompanied Youth

- Immediate enrollment applies, even without a parent or legal guardian present.
- The liaison or enrollment personnel should have a best interest conversation with the unaccompanied youth and assist with enrollment as appropriate, giving priority to the wishes of the unaccompanied youth.
- For older students where we are talking about credit accrual, it is important to evaluate if changing schools will affect the ability to meet graduation requirements and therefore graduate on time.

Dispute Resolution

If a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection or enrollment in a school (including full participation):

- The student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute (including all available appeals).
- The parent, guardian or unaccompanied youth must be provided a written explanation of decisions **made by the school, LEA or SEA**, and how to appeal them.

Dispute Resolution

If a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection or enrollment in a school (including full participation):

- The parent, guardian or youth must be referred to the liaison, who must carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.
- Transportation and other needed supports must be provided to the student throughout the dispute process.
- The liaison shall ensure unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled pending resolution of the dispute.

Support for Academic Success: Free School Meals

- Students identified as homeless under McKinney Vento are automatically eligible for free school meals, even if otherwise they would not be eligible.
- Students remain eligible through the end of the school year in which they find permanent housing.
- Students can be directly certified by the homeless liaison, so families do not have to complete the application for free meals.

Support for Academic Success: Credit Accrual

- LEAs must have procedures to ensure McKinney-Vento students receive appropriate full or partial credit, for coursework completed such as: consulting with prior school about partial coursework completed; evaluating students' mastery of partially completed courses; offering credit recovery options.

Support for Academic Success: Transitioning to Higher Education

- All McKinney-Vento youth must be able to receive individualized counseling from school personnel to prepare and improve their readiness for college, including college selection, application processes, financial aid, and on-campus supports.
- Liaisons (or their designee) must ensure unaccompanied homeless youth are informed of their status as independent students with regards to the FAFSA application and assist students in verifying this status.

Support for Academic Success: Title 1A

McKinney-Vento students attending any school in the LEA are automatically eligible for Title 1A services due to their homeless identification, even if they were not eligible prior to the homeless determination.

LEA Title 1 plans must:

- Be coordinated with the district's McKinney-Vento program.
- Describe what services are provided to support homeless students' enrollment, attendance and academic success.
- Must include a homeless set-aside at address the unique needs of homeless students.

Title 1A: Reservation of Funds

US Department of Education's guiding principles for using Title 1A funds:

- Services must be reasonable and necessary to enable homeless students to take advantage of educational opportunities.
- Funds must be used as a last resort when services are not reasonably available from another public or private source.

Title 1A: Reservation of Funds

USDE Examples of Allowable Uses of Title 1A funds:

- Clothing, particularly if necessary for dress code or physical education classes
- Fees to participate in the general ed program
- School supplies
- Birth certificates necessary to enroll in school
- Food (in connection with educational programming)
- Medical and dental services, immunizations, glasses, hearing aids
- Counseling services
- Outreach services
- Extended learning time; Tutoring services
- Fees for AP, IB, GED Testing

Resources

Pennsylvania Department of Education—Homeless BEC

<https://www.education.pa.gov/Policy-Funding/BECS/uscode/Pages/EducationforHomelessYouth.aspx>

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)

<https://nche.ed.gov/>

National Association for Education for Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)

<https://naehcy.org/>

School House Connections

<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/tips-for-teachers-staff-how-to-support-students-experiencing-homelessness/>

Contact Information

Do you have questions? Please reach out!

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