Signs of Homelessness

It can be hard to tell if a child is experiencing homelessness. However, thousands of children experience homelessness each year. Below are some signs that might help you determine if a child in your classroom or school is experiencing homelessness.

◊ The child has attended many schools
◊ There is more than one family living in the child’s residence
◊ The child seems extremely hungry or hoards food
◊ The child has poor hygiene and is not properly groomed
◊ The child sleeps in class
◊ The child does not have appropriate attire for the weather
◊ The child makes statements about moving often, staying with friends or relatives, or that their family is going through a difficult time

Resources


Internet Resources

1. National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
   http://naehcy.org
2. National Center for Homeless Education
   http://www.serve.org/nche
3. One Childhood Lasts a Lifetime
   http://www.onechildhood.org/
4. Project HOPE –Virginia
   http://www.wm.edu/hope
5. Mobile HOPE Loudoun
   http://www.mobilehopeloudoun.org

Department of Student Services
Office of Student Services
McKinney-Vento Program

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Have questions or concerns? Call us:
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What is the McKinney-Vento Act?

The McKinney-Vento Act was established in 1987 to protect the rights of homeless students in the United States. It was revised in 2002, with the No Child Left Behind legislation, and reauthorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act in 2015 to focus on the educational rights of homeless students. The McKinney-Vento Act was designed to ensure that homeless students receive an equal education and have the same rights as other children. The McKinney-Vento Act provides homeless students with:

- The right to remain at the “school of origin,” or the school the child attended when they had a permanent residence
- The right to receive transportation provided by the school district to the “school of origin”
- The right to immediate enrollment, even if missing normally required registration documentation
- The right to receive free standard meals at school during the school day
- The right to access all school programs made available to other students
- The right to dispute disagreements about services related to McKinney-Vento

Who is Considered Homeless?

Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence are considered homeless under federal law. This includes children and youth who are:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (i.e. “doubled-up”)
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds, cars, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Unaccompanied youth, meaning youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, such as runaways and youth denied housing by their families

What You and Your School Can Do to Help:

- Make students feel welcome
- Ensure the McKinney-Vento eligible student or family completes the necessary program enrollment forms and submit the forms to the McKinney-Vento program for review
- Select a student to be their “buddy” on the first day of class
- Create an atmosphere that welcomes parents to participate in school activities
- Coordinate an educational plan with the school counselor
- Ensure that the homeless student has every opportunity that a non-homeless student has for before-school, in-school, and after-school programs
- Do not bring special attention to the fact that they are homeless in front of others
- Provide the school supplies necessary for the student to be successful
- Offer tools to complete any required task
- Try to give the child something that he/she can call their own or a class job
- Ensure that homeless children can participate in field trips, school-wide activities, and class projects even if they do not have the transportation or necessary fees
- Communicate with parents about the student’s school performance
- Hold the child accountable for what they can control (behavior, attitude, etc.); not for what is not in the child’s control (purchase of materials for a project, etc.)
- Have necessary toiletry items available to assure proper hygiene at school

Have questions or concerns? Email us:

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