



# Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness

October 5, 2021

# **ESSA, McKinney-Vento, and Title I**

- ESSA amended McKinney-Vento, Title I, and the entire Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2015.
- McKinney-Vento provides formula grants to states; States award competitive subgrants to LEAs.

# Today's Agenda

- State and local personnel
- Definitions and data
- Identification
- Overcoming homelessness through education
  - Removing barriers
  - School of origin
  - Immediate enrollment
  - Getting to graduation

# State Coordinators

- Every state educational agency (SEA) must have a State Coordinator who can “sufficiently carry out” their duties. 11432(d)(3)
  - Ensure McKinney-Vento students receive “the full protections and services provided by” the law. 11432(f)(7)
  - Monitor all LEAs. 11432(f)(5)
  - Gather and post homelessness data on the SEA website. 11432(f)(1)(A) & (f)(3)
  - Collaborate with broad array of educators, service providers, community organizations and policymakers. 11432(f)(4) and Guidance E8

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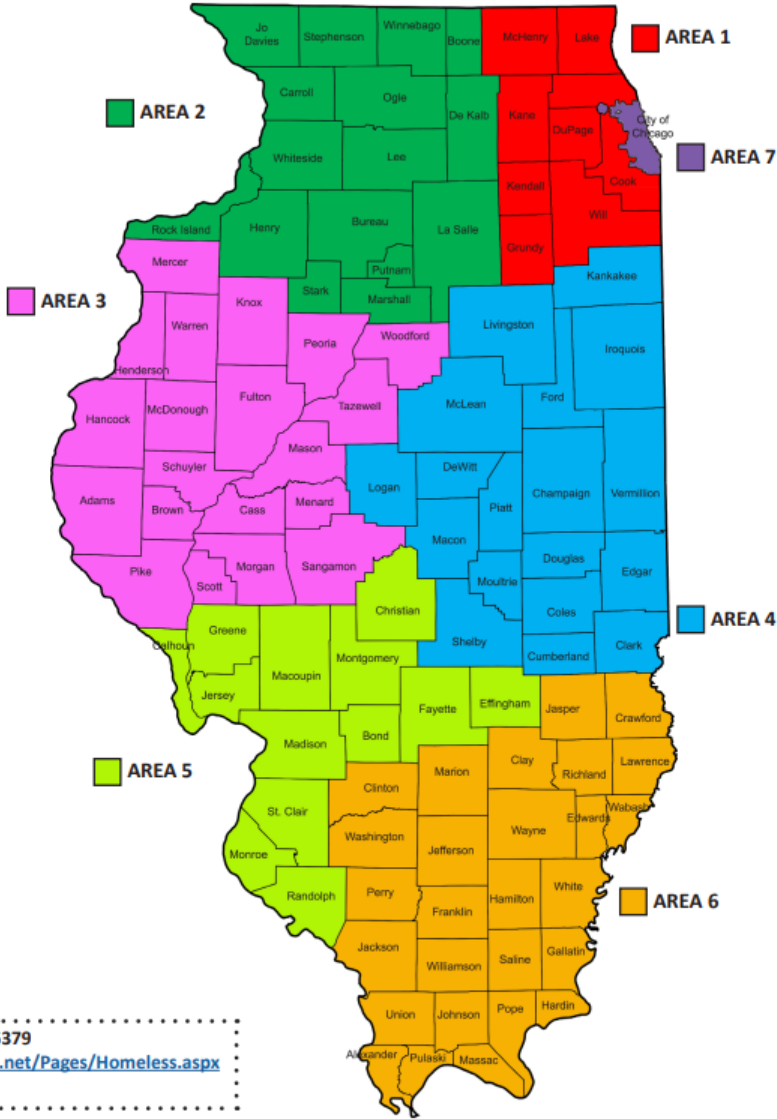
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Link to Illinois Department of Education McKinney-Vento Webpage -  
<https://www.isbe.net/pages/homeless.aspx>

# Local Liaisons

- Every local educational agency (LEA) must designate a liaison, whose duties include:
  - Identify McKinney-Vento students.
  - Post public notice of McKinney-Vento rights to parents and youth.
  - Provide professional development and support on McKinney-Vento to school staff.
  - Connect young children to preschool, Head Start, and early intervention.
  - Connect families and youth to housing, health, mental health and other services.

11432(g)(6)

# Local Liaisons

- Liaisons must be “able to carry out” their duties.

11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)

- [Hidden in Plain Sight](#) (2016) report found that over 90% of liaisons work in another official capacity; 89% spend half their time or less on liaison duties.
- What does it mean to be able to carry out their duties?
  - How can you tell if the liaison is able to carry out her/his duties?

# Local Liaisons & State Coordinators

- State coordinators must post an annually-updated liaison list on the SEA website. 11432(g)(6)(B)
- State Coordinators must provide professional development for liaisons.  
11432(f)(6)
- Liaisons must participate in that professional development as determined by the State Coordinator. 11432(g)(1)(J)(iv)



## Definition: Who is Eligible?

- Children and youth who lack a *fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence*. 11434a(2)

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason.

[76.7% of identified MV students in 2018–19]

- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.

[Motels: 7.1% of identified MV students in 2018–19]

## Who is Eligible? (cont.)

- Living in emergency or transitional shelters.  
[12.2% of identified MV students in 2018–19]
- Living in a public or private place not designed for or regularly used as accommodations.
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- What is substandard? Check utilities; infestations; mold; dangers Guidance A3

**Resource: “Determining Eligibility” brief:**

[https://nche.ed.gov/downloads/briefs/det\\_elig.pdf](https://nche.ed.gov/downloads/briefs/det_elig.pdf)



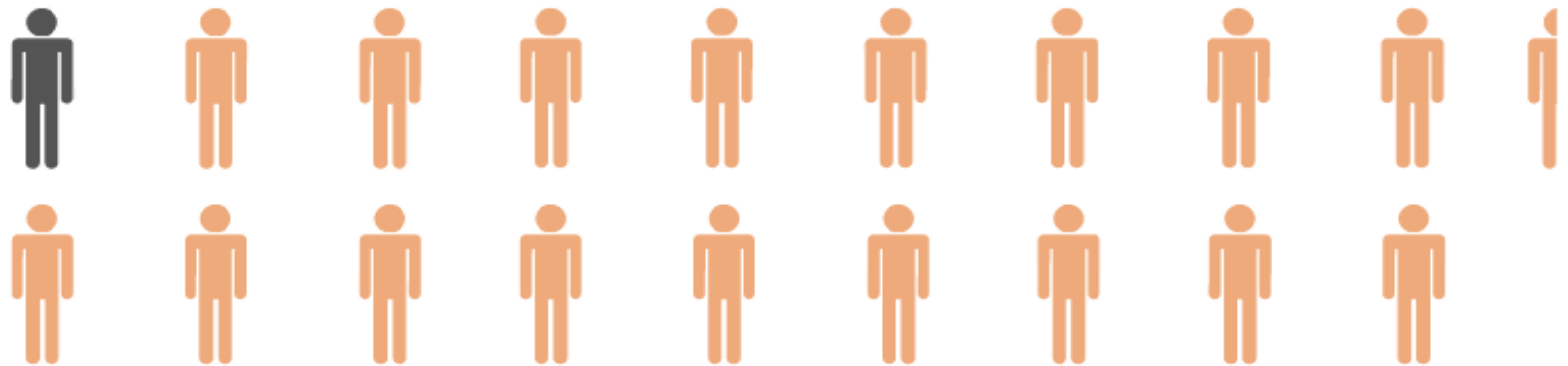
# Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Analysis



Survey results show:

**5.4% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS INDICATED THEY HAD EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS IN THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR**

For every 18.5 high school students, 1 has experienced homelessness.



Data: SchoolHouse Connection's analysis of 2019 YRBS data from 27 states (AK, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, HI, ID, IL, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MI, MT, NH, NM, NC, ND, PA, RI, SC, SD, VT, VA, WI)

# Causes

- Poverty
- Underemployment
- Lack of affordable housing
- Domestic violence
- Mental illness
- Unaccompanied youth: family conflict
- Natural disasters

# **Unaccompanied Youth**

Definition:

Child or youth who meets the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness and is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. 11434a(6)

# Unaccompanied Youth

- Youth run away due to abuse or neglect.
  - 40-60% of unaccompanied youth were abused physically at home.
  - 17-25% of unaccompanied youth were abused sexually at home.
  - Research links parental substance abuse and youth running away from home.
- Parents force youth out of the home due to conflicts.
  - Sexual orientation and gender identity
  - Pregnancy
- The circumstances of homelessness force families apart.
  - Families separate due to lack of space in living situations or shelter policies.
  - 47% of youth experience homelessness **both** with their families and on their own.

# Data

- 1.4 million children and youth, preK-12, identified and enrolled in school in the 2018--19 school year.
- Infancy is the period of life when a person is most at risk of living in a homeless shelter.
  - Over 1.3 million children under 6 years old were estimated to have experienced homelessness over the 2018-19 school year.
- Over 4 million youth and young adults, ages 14-24, experience homelessness on their own.
  - Prevalence is statistically the same in rural and urban areas.

# Identification

**67% of students say they were uncomfortable telling people at school about their homelessness and asking for help.**

**So how can schools effectively identify McKinney-Vento students?**

1. Don't say homeless!
2. Training, training, training.
  - School counselors, registrars, teachers, bus drivers, resource officers, nurses, drop out prevention specialists, attendance officers, principals, food service staff...
3. Educate students, parents and community partners.
  - Put information on the school and district websites.
  - Posters in school buildings, libraries, motels, camp grounds, service providers.
  - Meet with teen parent programs, LGBTQ youth organizations, youth organizations, homeless service providers, health, housing and social service agencies.
4. Use housing questionnaires upon enrollment.
5. Ask about preschool-aged siblings.



# **Educational Impacts**

- 42% of students who experienced homelessness say they dropped out of school at least once; 60% say it was hard to stay in school while they were homeless.
- Homelessness is associated with an 87% likelihood of dropping out of school.
- Over time, the achievement gaps between homeless and low-income elementary students tend to persist and may even worsen.

# What can we do?

- Overcoming Homelessness Through Education.
  - Poverty rate for college graduates is about a third of the poverty rate for high school graduates.
  - Two-thirds of all jobs in the current economy require education beyond high school.
  - More educated people are healthier.
- School is a refuge.

# Overcoming Homelessness Through Education

- The McKinney-Vento Act
  - Removing barriers
  - School of origin
  - Transportation
  - Immediate enrollment
  - Getting to graduation and beyond
- Title I

# Overcoming Homelessness: Removing Barriers

- SEAs and LEAs must develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of McKinney-Vento students, including barriers due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences. 11432(g)(1)(I)
  - This is a “broad, on-going requirement... with regular input from homeless parents, youth, and advocates so that new barriers... do not prevent” students from full, immediate enrollment and services.

Guidance A4

# School of Origin: Definition

- The school attended when permanently housed or the school in which last enrolled, including a preschool. 11432(g)(3)(I)
- What is a “preschool”?
  - Publicly-funded program for children 0-5 for which the LEA is a financial or administrative agent, or is accountable for providing early childhood education.
  - Preschools operated, administered or funded by an LEA, including funded by Title I or similar government grants.
  - Head Start programs receiving LEA funding or for which the LEA is the grant recipient.
  - Preschool special education.
  - LEA funded or administered home-based early childhood services.

Guidance N4; Fed. Data Guide

## **School of Origin Definition (cont.)**

- Includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools, when the student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin.
- Help with school of origin and preschool:

[www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/early-childhood/](http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/early-childhood/)

# Staying in the School of Origin

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

- Keep the student 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 the student in any public school that housed students living in the attendance area where the student is living are eligible to attend. 11432(g)(3)(A)

# Determining Best Interest

In determining best interest, the LEA shall:

- Presume that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student's best interest. 11432(g)(3)(B)(i)-(ii)
  - 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, & safety.
  - For preschool children, consider attachment to teachers; availability and quality of services in the new area; and travel time. Guidance N3
- Give priority to the request of the parent/guardian.
- Give priority to the request of an unaccompanied youth.



# Transportation to the School of Origin

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

- Even if transportation is not typically provided.
- If staying in the same LEA, that LEA must provide or arrange transportation to the school of origin.
- If crossing LEA lines, both LEAs must determine how to divide the responsibility and share the cost, or they must share the cost equally. 11432(g)(1)(J)(iii); Guidance J5

# Other Transportation

- LEAs must provide transportation to extra-curricular activities if lack of transportation is a barrier. Guidance J11
- LEAs also must provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students. 11432(g)(4)(A)
- Transportation must be arranged promptly to ensure immediate enrollment and not create barriers to attendance, retention or success. Guidance J1

# Immediate Enrollment

- 62% of McKinney-Vento students said that proof of residency requirements posed a major challenge for them when enrolling in a new school.
- 56% said lack of cooperation between their new and old schools (records transfer) posed a major challenge.
- 60% found changing schools difficult to navigate.

# Immediate Enrollment

- 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: 11432(g)(3)(C)
  - Students do not have 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 (cont.)

- “Enrollment” includes attending classes and participating fully in school activities. 11434a(1)
- The liaison must assist in obtaining immunization and other health records or screenings, and immunizations if needed; the student must be enrolled in the interim. 11432(g)(3)(C)(iii)
- Enrolling schools must obtain school records from the previous school; the student must be enrolled while records are obtained. 11432(g)(3)(C)(ii)
- Immediate enrollment applies even without parent or guardian. 11432(g)(1)(H)(iv)
  - Typically, unaccompanied youth enroll themselves.

# Preschool Enrollment

- Immediate enrollment applies to preschools, as long as there is space.
  - McKinney-Vento children should be prioritized on wait lists.
  - Some preschool programs holds slots open for McKinney-Vento children.
- State McKinney-Vento plans must describe procedures that ensure that homeless children have access to public preschool programs administered by the SEA or LEAs.

11432(g)(1)(F)(i)

# Preschool Enrollment (cont.)

- Head Start, Early Head Start and subsidized child care programs (CCDF) have special requirements for children experiencing homelessness:
  - Outreach
  - Prioritize
  - Enroll immediately
  - Collect and report data
- For more information: [www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/early-childhood/](http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/early-childhood/)

# Notice and Disputes

If a dispute arises over eligibility, school selection or enrollment (including full participation), or if the LEA determines that it is not in the student's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent, guardian or youth:

- 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, in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian, or youth.



## Notice and Disputes (cont.)

- The parent, guardian or youth must be referred to the liaison, who must carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.
- The student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, pending resolution of the dispute (including all available appeals).
- The liaison shall ensure unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled pending resolution of the dispute. 11432(g)(3)(E); Guidance K2; 11432(g)(3)(B)(iii)

# Getting to Graduation

State report cards must disaggregate achievement and high school graduation data for McKinney-Vento students.

20 USC 6311(h)(1)(c)

In 2019, students experiencing homelessness graduated high school at a rate of **67.8%**, compared to 85% of all students and 80% of students who are economically disadvantaged.

Students experiencing homelessness have the lowest graduation rate of all student sub-groups.

# Getting to Graduation: Earning Credits

- SEAs and LEAs must implement procedures to identify and remove barriers to McKinney-Vento students receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework completed at a prior school. 11432(g)(1)(F)(ii); 11432(g)(6)(A)(x); Guidance 02
  - Consult with prior school about partial coursework completed.
  - Provide priority enrollment in classes the student has partially completed, to allow for completion.
  - Evaluate students' mastery of partly completed courses.
  - Offer accelerated credit recovery.

# Getting to Graduation: Full Participation

States must implement procedures to remove barriers to academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs. 11432(g)(1)(F)(iii)

- LEAs should anticipate and accommodate the needs of McKinney-Vento students to enter these programs and consider giving them priority on waitlists. Guidance I6
- SEAs and LEAs should develop policies to expedite full participation in extracurricular activities and work with athletic associations to adjust policies to facilitate participation. Guidance p. 25

# Getting to Graduation: Basic Needs

- McKinney-Vento students are automatically eligible for free school meals.
- Local liaisons are authorized to affirm that students meet the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness, to qualify them for HUD homeless assistance programs. 11432(g)(6)(D)

# Getting to Graduation: Strategies

- Coordinate with Early Warning Systems for dropout prevention. They can help identify students experiencing homelessness.
- All McKinney-Vento youth must be able to receive individualized counseling from counselors to prepare and improve their readiness for college, including college selection, application, financial aid, and on-campus supports. 11432(g)(1)(K); Guidance Q1

# Getting Beyond Graduation: Financial Aid for College

- Liaisons must ensure unaccompanied youth are informed they qualify as independent students for the FAFSA and assist the youth in obtaining verification of that status. 11432(g)(6)(A)(x)(III); Guidance Q2
  - Unaccompanied youth can complete the FAFSA without parental signature or income information.
  - They need verification that they are unaccompanied and homeless from a liaison, shelter provider, or financial aid administrator.

# Assisting Youth in College

- Support System
  - Year round lodging
  - Financial Aid Office reverifying eligibility for continuing students
- 
- More information on higher education:  
[www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/higher-education/](http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/higher-education/)



# Resources

- SchoolHouse Connection
  - <http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/>
  - <https://www.facebook.com/SchoolHouseConnection/>
- Let's Educate Every Child – Two PSAs to help inform families and youth about their educational rights
  - [www.LetsEducateEveryChild.org](http://www.LetsEducateEveryChild.org)
- Hidden in Plain Sight
  - <http://www.americaspromise.org/report/hidden-plain-sight>
- National Center on Homeless Education
  - <https://nche.ed.gov/>
- National Network for Youth
  - <http://www.nn4youth.org>
- DVDs for awareness-raising: [vimeo.com/pjulianelle](https://vimeo.com/pjulianelle)
  - “The McKinney-Vento Act in Our Schools”
  - “Education and Homelessness: Young Children to Young Adults”