

U.S. Department of Education



Identifying and Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness from Pre-School to Post-Secondary Ages

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) is a core member of the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (<https://www.usich.gov/>) and supports the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness—*Opening Doors Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* (http://usich.gov/opening_doors/)—for all people experiencing homelessness in the United States by 2020. This webpage includes information about ED programs that serve homeless children and youth as well as programs in other Federal agencies that serve these young people. Furthermore, ED has been involved in many inter-agency initiatives through the implementation of *Opening Doors* since 2010. More information on these initiatives is available below.

In December 2015, Secretary of Education John King was elected Vice-Chair of the USICH and works in collaboration with USICH Chair, Health and Human Services Secretary Sylvia Mathews Burwell, to champion deeper cross-sector collaboration and coordination, including data-sharing agreements with strong privacy protections in compliance with federal and state law, in order to improve education and systems of support for homeless students.

The State of Homeless Students in the United States

Since 2008, the number of homeless students identified by public schools each year has increased by 90%, from approximately 680,000 to 1,305,000 students in the 2013-14 school year (http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_data.php). As a result, ED has fielded an increasing number of requests for technical assistance not only for homeless students in kindergarten through 12th grade, but also for assistance to support young children in early childhood education programs and youth in post-secondary education programs during this time period. The purpose of this webpage is to help the public understand the major Federal resources and initiatives for the pre-school to post-secondary population of students experiencing homelessness.

DID YOU KNOW?

- Since the 2011-12 school year, U.S. public schools have enrolled and served more than a million homeless children and youth each year.
- Every public school district must designate a local homeless education liaison to serve as the key

homeless education contact for the school district. With more than 17,000 U.S. public school districts, this constitutes a network of more than 17,000 local liaisons, who are also sometimes referred to as McKinney-Vento liaisons.

- Students experiencing homelessness have the right (http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_eligibility.php) to enroll in school immediately, even if they are missing paperwork that is normally required for enrollment, such as a birth certificate, proof of residence, previous school records, or immunization or other medical records.
- Students experiencing homelessness have the right to enroll in their local school or stay in their school of origin, if this is in their best interest. If attending their school of origin, they have the right to receive transportation to and from the school of origin.

Pre-K-12 Education Programs and Initiatives that specify homeless students for eligibility or priority for services

- **The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (/programs/homeless/index.html) (EHCY)** program authorized by Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

All public school districts must comply with the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act to identify and serve school-age children and youth experiencing homelessness. Program office staff can be reached at HomelessED@ed.gov (<mailto:HomelessED@ed.gov>)

Every State educational agency (SEA) has an Office of the Coordinator of Education for Homeless Children and Youth. A directory of State Coordinators for Homeless Education is available at http://center.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php

(http://center.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php) The SEA must competitively award 75% of its annual allocation to local educational agencies at least once every three years. The State Coordinator can verify the contact information for the designated local liaison for your school district or let you know which school districts receive subgrants.

- **The National Center for Homeless Education (<http://center.serve.org/nche/>) (NCHE at SERVE at UNC-Greensboro)**

The National Center for Homeless Education offers many written technical assistance products on how State departments of Education and school districts can implement the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act as well as spotlights States and school districts with good practices for supporting the enrollment, retention and school success of students experiencing homelessness. NCHE staff offer many webinars, present at conferences around the country, and operate a hotline for inquiries. Parents, guardians, youth, and advocates are encouraged to contact NCHE at 1-800-208-2145 (<http://center.serve.org/nche/index.php%20or%20by%20calling%201-800-208-2145>) or homeless@serve.org (<mailto:homeless@serve.org>) for more information.

- **Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), Title I, Part A, Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies (/programs/titleiparta/index.html)**

All students experiencing homelessness are eligible for Title I services even if they are not enrolled in Title I schools. To find out what kind of Title I program is available in your district, you can contact the State Director to find out who the school district coordinator is. A list of Title I State Directors is available at <http://www.titlei.org/about/state-titlei-leaders> (<http://www.titlei.org/about/state-titlei-leaders>)

- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Parts B and C**
(</about/offices/list/osers/osep/policy.html>)

Children and youth experiencing homelessness are at a disproportionately high risk for disabilities and developmental delays and thus are prioritized for screening and identification in the IDEA. The State Director of Special Education can connect you with local special education coordinators in your area. A map to locate your Special Education State Director is available at

<http://www.nasdse.org/MeettheDirectors/tabid/60/Default.aspx>

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- ***Every Student, Every Day: A National Initiative to Address and Eliminate Chronic Absenteeism*** (</about/inits/ed/chronicabsenteeism/index.html>)

Led by the U.S. Departments of Education (ED), Health and Human Services (HHS), Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and Justice (DOJ), the Obama Administration is calling on states and local communities across the country to take immediate action to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism by at least 10 percent each year, beginning in the current school year (2015-16). *Every Student, Every Day* is focused on the estimated 5 to 7.5 million students who are chronically absent each year—or missing at least 10 percent (approximately 18 days) of school days in a school year for any reason, excused or unexcused—which puts those students at heightened risk of falling behind and dropping out of school. Homeless students are particularly at risk for becoming chronically absent from school. As part of this initiative, the Administration is partnering with states, local communities, and nonprofit, faith, and philanthropic organizations to support local, cross-sector efforts to address and eliminate chronic absenteeism. For more information on *Every Student, Every Day*, including a downloadable toolkit that includes information and resources for homeless services providers, please click on the link above.

Additional Federal Programs and Resources that may support homeless students

Other Federal education offices and programs that fund services for vulnerable populations of students who may also be experiencing homelessness include OESE's Offices of Migrant Education, Indian Education, Early Learning, and Impact Aid, as well as the Title I, Part D Neglected or Delinquent education programs, 21st Century Learning Centers, Alaskan Native and Native Hawaiian education programs, and Rural Education Assistance Program. Visit the OESE program page (</about/offices/list/osee/programs.html>) for more information.

Postsecondary Education and Training

With a growing population of homeless youth needing to access or continue post-secondary education, ED technical assistance and guidance has expanded in these areas:

- **Independent Student Status for Purposes of Federal Student Aid for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth**

Under the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, unaccompanied homeless youth qualify for independent student status on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Independent students can apply for federal aid without including a parent signature or parent financial information on their FAFSA. Further, their federal aid package is calculated based solely on their own income

and assets, and not those of their parents. For more information about verifying independent student status and other post-secondary supports for unaccompanied homeless youth, visit <https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/> (<https://studentaid.ed.gov/sa/>), http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php (http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php) or <http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/higher-ed> (<http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/higher-ed>).

Other post-secondary preparation or support programs

- Other programs that may serve students experiencing homelessness include the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEOA)'s Federal TRIO Programs (including the Upward Bound and Talent Search Programs), Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR UP), as well as other Student Service grant programs such as the Child Care Access Means Parents in School (CCAMPIS) Program. More information including grant contacts are available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/student-service.html> ([/about/offices/list/ope/student-service.html](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ope/student-service.html))
- **The Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education includes programs that serve homeless youth and adults.** This office leads the Federal government's efforts on reconnecting youth (<http://youth.gov/youth-topics/reconnecting-youth>) and is the Department's lead on coordination efforts with the Department of Labor on the implementation of the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act set-aside for out of school or disconnected youth who include youth who have had juvenile justice or child welfare system involvement or have experienced homelessness. More information including grant contacts are available at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/programs.htm> ([/about/offices/list/ovae/programs.htm](http://www2.ed.gov/about/offices/list/ovae/programs.htm))

Blog Posts

- <http://www.ed.gov/oese-news/national-meeting-improving-educational-stability-children-foster-care> (<http://www.ed.gov/oese-news/national-meeting-improving-educational-stability-children-foster-care>)
- <https://www.ed.gov/edblogs/ovae/2013/04/05/bridging-the-opportunity-gap-helping-vulnerable-students-succeed/> (<https://www.ed.gov/edblogs/ovae/2013/04/05/bridging-the-opportunity-gap-helping-vulnerable-students-succeed/>)

Other Federal Agencies Serving Homeless Children and Youth

- **The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness: www.usich.gov (<http://www.usich.gov>)**
To find out about Federal inter-agency efforts that focus on homeless children and youth, visit <http://usich.gov/population/youth> (<http://usich.gov/population/youth>) or <http://usich.gov/population/families> (<http://usich.gov/population/families>)
- **The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: <https://www.hudexchange.info/> (<https://www.hudexchange.info/>)**
HUD's homeless assistance grants are awarded annually to cities, counties and States as well as local projects. The main programs are the Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grant programs. To locate a point of contact for programs serving homeless individuals in your city, county,

or State, visit <https://www.hudexchange.info/grantees/?granteesaction=main.searchresults&programid=3> (<https://www.hudexchange.info/grantees/?granteesaction=main.searchresults&programid=3>)

- **The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services:** <http://www.hhs.gov/homeless/> (<http://www.hhs.gov/homeless/>)

Runaway and Homeless Youth grantees operate basic centers for short-term emergency shelter, longer-term transitional living programs and street outreach programs for homeless youth who are not in the physical custody of an adult. Find a Runaway and Homeless Youth grantee in your State or community at <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/grants/fysb-grantees> (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/grants/fysb-grantees>).

Head Start programs prioritize seats for pre-school aged children experiencing homelessness (<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/resource/policies-resources-for-expanding-ecce-services-for-homeless-children>). To find a program near your community at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices> (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices>) or contact your State Collaboration Office at <http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration/map/index.html> (<http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration/map/index.html>). This office can help you connect to Federal child care subsidies prioritized for homeless families also.

- **The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs:** <http://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/veteran-homeless.asp> (<http://www.benefits.va.gov/persona/veteran-homeless.asp>)

Local liaisons should always ask if a child's parent or guardian ever served in the U.S. military as there are additional Federal homeless assistance resources for veterans. For more information about services and supports for veterans experiencing homelessness, contact the VA's National Call Center for Homeless Veterans at 1-877-4AID-VET (1-877-424-3838).

- **The U.S. Department of Agriculture:** <http://www.nutrition.gov/food-assistance-programs/school-lunch-and-breakfast-programs> (<http://www.nutrition.gov/food-assistance-programs/school-lunch-and-breakfast-programs>)

Federal school lunch and breakfast programs are an important resource for which homeless children and youth are automatically eligible through a streamlined process known as *direct certification*. The State coordinator for Homeless Education can put you in touch with a local liaison who can let you know the programs available in your school district, including summer and after-school meal programs.