

Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program

Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness
Have the Right to a Free Appropriate Public
Education

The Scale of Homelessness

- Up to two million people will experience homelessness this year.
- Approximately half of these people will be children and youth.
- Families are the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population.

Source: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. (1990). *Out of sight–Out of mind? A report on anti-homeless laws, litigations, and alternatives in 50 United States*. Washington, DC: Author.

How vulnerable are you to becoming homeless?

- FIRE
- FLOOD
- LOSS OF A JOB
- ACCIDENT
- ILLNESS
- EVICTION
- DOMESTIC ABUSE

Who is homeless?

An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth who are:

- Sharing housing
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds
- Living in emergency or transitional housing
- Abandoned, Runaways
- Awaiting foster care
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in the circumstances described above

Possible Signs of Homelessness

Homeless children characteristics:

- Attendance at several schools
- More than one family at the same address
- Attention-seeking behavior
- Hunger and hoarding of food
- Poor hygiene and grooming
- Sleeping in class
- Inappropriate dress for the weather
- Some common statements used by homeless students include:
 - "We've moved a lot."
 - "We're staying with relatives/ friends while looking for a place."
 - "We're going through a bad time now."

McKinney-Vento Homeless Act

- 2001 Reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act originally enacted in 1987.
- Requires educational access, attendance, and success for children and youth experiencing homelessness.
- Provides states with funding to support statewide initiatives.
- Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program is now statewide and covers all 499 school districts, 29 intermediate units, 144 public charter schools, and 12 full-time career-technical centers.

McKinney-Vento Act: Enrollment

Requires public schools to immediately enroll students experiencing homelessness even when lacking:

- Proof of residency
- Guardianship
- Birth certificates, school records, or other documents
- Medical records, including immunization records
- Required dress code items, including uniforms

McKinney-Vento Act: Enrollment

- School placement in:
 - School of origin, if the parent wishes and it is feasible
 - School in area of current residency
- Educational rights posted in:
 - All public schools
 - The community
- Access for unaccompanied youth
- A dispute resolution process

McKinney-Vento Act: Success

- Comparable services
- Parental involvement
- Liaison collaboration between social service agencies and school districts
- Restriction of the segregation of homeless students
- Student Achievement
- Pennsylvania System For School Assessment

State and Local Policies

Pennsylvania Department of Education
BASIC EDUCATION CIRCULAR
Education For Homeless Youth
42 U.S.C. §11431 et seq.

Addressing Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness

School District

- Set aside Title I funds.
- Reserve slots in Head Start and Even Start.
- Ensure enrollment.

Schools

- Enroll students in free breakfast and lunch programs.
- Ensure access to appropriate instructional supports/resources, including those available through Title I set asides, gifted programs, and special education.
- Conduct an educational assessment.
- Provide homeless awareness training.
- Alert teachers of a student's living situation (respecting privacy).

Addressing Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness

Teachers

- Make the student feel welcome.
- Assign a peer buddy to help the student get acquainted with the school and classroom.
- Make contact with the parents.
- Give the child ownership of school space (locker, etc.).

Working With Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

- Reduce school entry stress.
- Promote academic success through encouraging words and actions that recognize the gains made.
- Use tutoring and after-school programs to provide academic support.
- Increase access to services and activities.

Working With Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

- Encourage supportive relationships.
- Establish consistent boundaries.
- Have high expectations.
- Recognize stressful environments outside of school, and provide accommodations for homework. (For example, the child may not have the means to be able to make a collage or do a science project outside of school.)
 - Provide needed supplies.
 - Provide time and space in the school.
 - Modify homework.

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PDE Search: Homeless Children