



# Identifying Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Eligibility and Strategies for Outreach



# Meet Your Presenters



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# Learning Objectives

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- Understand the importance of identification
- Gain an understanding of the McKinney-Vento definition and how to assess eligibility
- Apply understanding of the nuances of the definition of homeless through scenarios and discussion
- Explore identification strategies including:
  - Notices and Outreach
  - Housing Questionnaire
  - Data Analysis



# Importance of Identification

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- Homelessness is a devastating circumstance for anyone, especially children and youth, which creates significant **educational barriers** for students
- Students may lack basic resources which impacts their ability to attend and succeed in school
- Families may not be **aware of their right to enroll** and remain in school, or of the supports available to them
- School often represents a consistent and safe environment for students where they can escape some of the stress of daily life, where people know them and where their needs can be met

# Importance of Identification

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- It is critical that LEAs take **proactive** steps to identify students.
- This is the first step to connecting students with the information, resources and supports they need
- Through identification, eligibility confirmation, and enrollment, schools and districts can help students experiencing homelessness achieve **stability and consistency**
- When students are identified and receive additional supports, they will be more successful in school



# The McKinney-Vento Definition of Homelessness

# McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

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The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento) was enacted in 1987 and reauthorized in 2015 under the Every Student Succeeds Act

It establishes the ***definition of homeless*** used by U.S. public schools, and the educational rights to which children and youth experiencing homelessness are entitled

This includes:

- Removing barriers to enrollment, attendance and success in school
- Including barriers related to fees, fines or absences

42 USC 11432 (g)(1)(I)



# McKinney-Vento Definition of Homelessness

**Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including:**

- Sharing the housing of other persons, due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters, or abandoned in hospitals
- Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children living in the above circumstances



# McKinney-Vento Definition of Homelessness



## Fixed

Stationary,  
permanent- not  
subject to change



## Regular

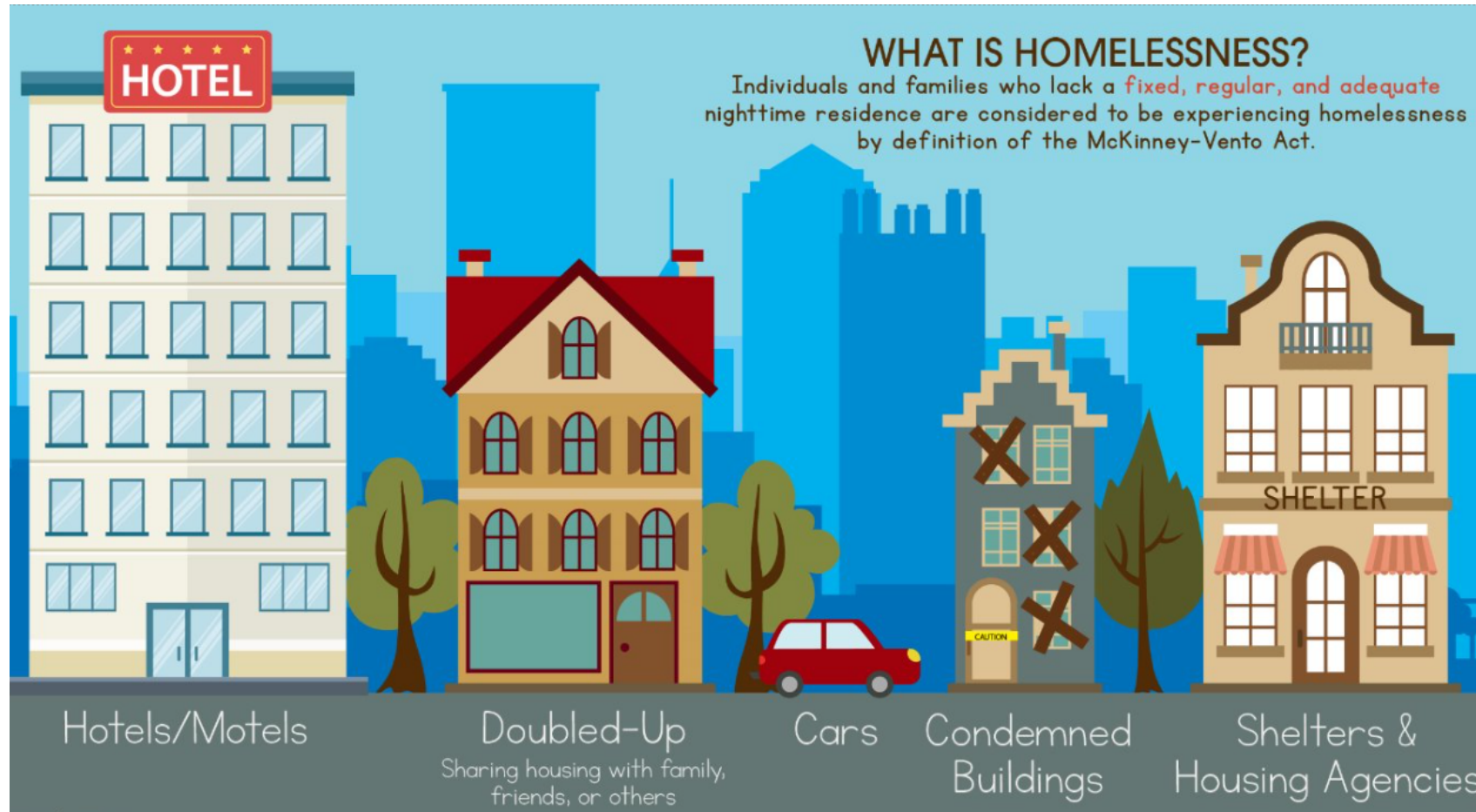
Used on a regular,  
routine, consistent basis



## Adequate

Sufficiently meets the  
physical and  
psychological needs  
for shelter

# Nighttime Residence



# Determining Eligibility

## Determining eligibility is...

- the process of considering whether a student is eligible for McKinney-Vento rights and services
- based on whether the student's primary nighttime living arrangement meets the **McKinney-Vento definition of homeless**
- a decision made by the district's local homeless education liaison and, in some cases, trained liaison designees

# Eligibility – Helpful Hints

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- The **local liaison** has the authority and responsibility to make determinations of eligibility
- Determinations should be made on a **case-by-case basis**, considering what is known about each individual child's or youth's circumstances
- Some determinations will be clear-cut, while others may require further inquiry
- Pay close attention to the legislative wording and definition of homelessness, which may help in determining eligibility
- Requests for additional information from parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth should be conducted privately and diplomatically





# Understanding and Applying the Definition of Homelessness

# Doubled Up

**“Sharing housing of other persons.....”**

- Implies that the student is staying in someone else’s residence

**Considerations:**

- Do they have any legal rights to be in the home?
- Can they be asked to leave at any time?



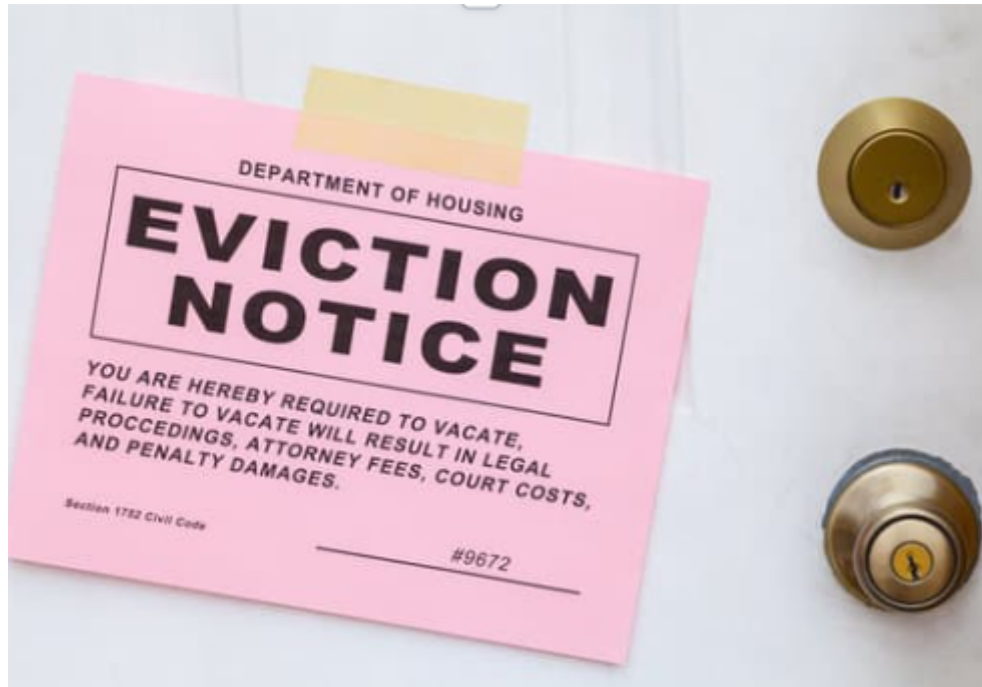


# Dynamics of Doubling Up

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- **Staying in a shelter may not be an option**
  - Not every community has a shelter
  - When shelters are present, they may be full or have stay limits
  - Parents and youth may have concerns about the shelter environment
  - Some shelters have policies that may create barriers
- **Families and youth often avoid unsheltered locations and may not have money to stay in a hotel/motel**
- **Doubled-up arrangements often serve as temporary shelter and may be unstable or unsafe**

# A Closer Look at Doubled Up



## “Due to loss of housing or economic hardship”

- Implies that limited financial resources have forced the family or youth to leave the residence due to inability to pay rent, mortgage and other bills
- Did student/family lose housing due to:
  - eviction or foreclosure?
  - destruction of or damage to previous home?
  - unhealthy or unsafe conditions - domestic violence, abuse or neglect, abandonment, parental incarceration, or similar reasons?



# A Closer Look at Doubled Up

## Shared housing of multi-generational living situations:

- Who is included on the lease?
- Who is contributing to household costs?
- Does everyone have an adequate place to sleep?
- Was one family already living in the space and another moved in?

While multigenerational families *may* be a cultural value, liaisons must still evaluate each situation individually.



# Clarifying Questions

- What circumstances led to the shared housing?
- What is the intention of the people sharing housing?
- What are the family's or youth's housing options if not sharing housing?
- Is the shared housing arrangement fixed, regular, and adequate?



# Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

1. Meets the definition of homelessness under McKinney-Vento (lacking fixed, regular or adequate) and...
  2. Is not in the company of a parent or guardian
- Eligibility should be determined on a case-by-case basis, focusing on whether the student's circumstances meet the definition of *homeless and unaccompanied*

## Can be most difficult to identify

- Fears about school knowing
- Trauma

42 USC 11434a(6)





# Scenarios

# What do you think?



- Christine, a fourth-grade student, arrived with her mother to complete the enrollment process. She also has a younger brother who is four years old.
- When asked for proof of residence, Christine's mother said she was staying with a friend. She just moved from the next town over.
- **Would you consider Christine to be McKinney-Vento eligible?**





# Doubled-Up

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## **Staying with a friend is a red flag for homelessness**

- We know that Christine and her mother are sharing housing with a friend.

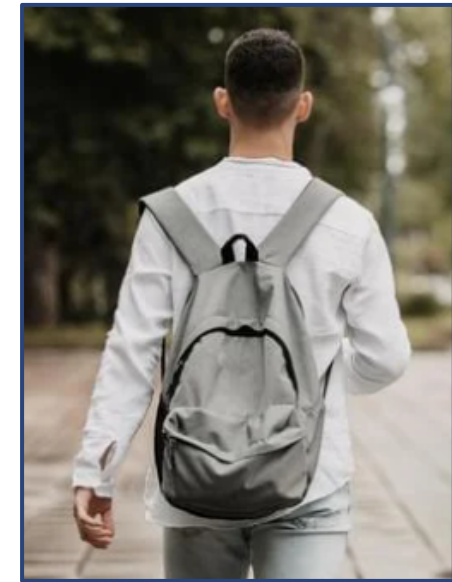
## **What are the other considerations:**

- What circumstances led to them to this living situation?
- Where would they go if they could not stay there?
- Are they sharing the cost of rent or other household expenses?

# What do you think?



- Josh is starting his 4<sup>th</sup> year of high school, although his credits put him as an early junior.
- He has attended 3 different high schools and just arrived to enroll in your school from a another state.
- Josh is staying with an uncle and has no contact with his parents.
- **Would you consider Josh to be McKinney-Vento eligible?**





# Unaccompanied Youth

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**Josh is staying with an uncle and has no contact with his parents.**

- Josh is “unaccompanied”

## **What are the other considerations?**

- Determine stability of this situation – is this couch surfing (doubled up)?
- Ask some gentle questions to ensure Josh’s uncle is providing him with a place to stay and is not actually a trafficker or other victimizer.
- There is no need to determine **why** Josh is not in contact with parents.



# What do you think?



- Elizabeth and her daughter Sara show up to enroll in middle school in your district.
- She says they are staying with a family member nearby, but their names are not on the lease and she's not sure how to prove how they are living there.
- **Would you consider Sara to be McKinney-Vento eligible?**



# Doubled-Up

**Based on the information we have it would be difficult to determine McKinney-Vento eligibility for Sara.**

We know that they are sharing housing with a family member, but we don't know the surrounding circumstances. We need more information.

**Consider:**

- What circumstances led to them to this living situation?
- Where would they go if you could not stay here?
- Are there other factors such as childcare or a mutual long-term living situation?
- Do they have adequate space and regular access?



# Identification Strategies

# Step 1: Housing Questionnaire

A **Housing Questionnaire** is now required to assist LEAs with the identification of homeless children and youth.

Let's start with the name:

- Has been referred to as:
  - Residency Form, Residency Affidavit
  - McKinney-Vento affidavit
  - Homeless Affidavit
- Why 'Housing Questionnaire'?

Avoid using the word “homeless” on school forms.

Housing Questionnaire for																				
<table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Student Last Name</th><th>First</th><th>Middle</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></tbody></table>					Student Last Name	First	Middle													
Student Last Name	First	Middle																		
Name of School: <input type="text"/>																				
<p>The information provided below will help the LEA determine what services you and/or your child may be eligible to receive. This could include additional educational services through Title I, Part A and/or the federal McKinney-Vento Assistance Act. The information provided on this form will be kept confidential and only shared with appropriate school district and site staff.</p> <p>Presently, are you and/or your family living in any of the following situations?</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Staying in a shelter (family shelter, domestic violence shelter, youth shelter) or Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) trailer</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Sharing housing with other(s) due to loss of housing, economic hardship, natural disaster, lack of adequate housing, or similar reason</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Living in a car, park, campground, abandoned building, or other inadequate accommodations (i.e. lack of water, electricity, or heat)</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Temporarily living in a motel or hotel due to loss of housing, economic hardship, natural disaster, or similar reason</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Living in a single-home residence that is permanent</p> <p>I am a student under the age of 18 and living apart from parent(s) or guardian <input type="radio"/> Yes <input type="radio"/> No</p> <p><i>The undersigned parent/guardian certifies that the information provided above is correct and accurate.</i></p> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Print Parent/Guardian Name</th><th>Signature</th><th>Date</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></tbody></table> <table border="1"><thead><tr><th>Phone Number</th><th>Street Address</th><th>City</th><th>State</th><th>Zip</th></tr></thead><tbody><tr><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td><td></td></tr></tbody></table>					Print Parent/Guardian Name	Signature	Date				Phone Number	Street Address	City	State	Zip					
Print Parent/Guardian Name	Signature	Date																		
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# Housing Questionnaire

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## **Who should fill it out?**

- Every student, preschool through 12th grade, should complete the Housing Questionnaire, at least annually, upon enrollment
- Can be completed by the child's parent/guardian, caregiver, or by unaccompanied youth directly
- If needed, the homeless liaison should be available to assist

## **Include the form with:**

- Enrollment/registration packets
- Caregiver affidavits
- Lunch applications

# Housing Questionnaire

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- LEAs should emphasize that the purpose of this information is to ensure rights and services to which they are entitled to under the McKinney-Vento Act are provided
- The LEA does not need proof that verifies their living arrangement
- However, it is important that the school/LEA have some sort of contact information for the parent/guardian, caregiver, or unaccompanied youth, especially for **emergency situations**

## Common situations/questions:

- Having a host signature for doubled up families?
- Investigations and inaccurate information

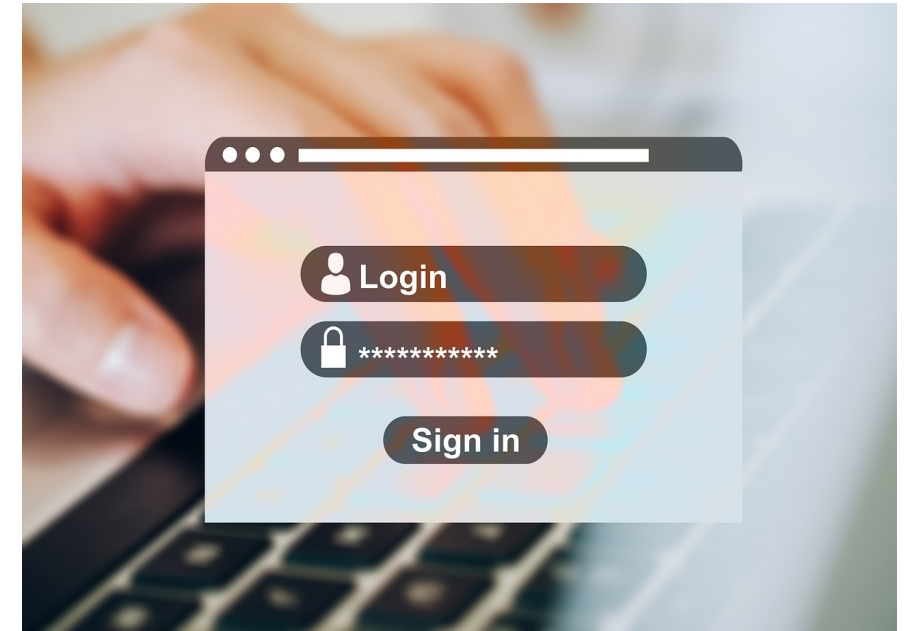


# Online Registration

The right to enroll immediately is one of the core protections of the Act.

Online registration can create its own barriers to enrollment that will disproportionately impact families experiencing homelessness including:

- Limited access to technology and connectivity
- Enrollment barriers such as lack of information about the McKinney-Vento Act
- Lack of a pathway to enroll without documents
- Language barriers





# Online Registration

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- Include information on website about MV rights and enrollment
  - **Prominently** on school pages/ home pages
- Ensure your **housing questionnaire** uses language from the law
  - Have an easily accessible pathway for students to enroll without parent or guardian
- Keep instructions brief and simple (reading level less than high school)
  - In additional languages
- Have alternatives to online enrollment
- Streamline initial enrollment process for quick completion even with slow or limited data and *ensure that the website is mobile device friendly*
- Look for steps that create barriers like having to upload documents or needing to be sent a PIN



# Step 2: Get the Facts

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- Now that you have gathered information using the **Housing Questionnaire**, the next step is to determine whether the living arrangement meets the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless.
- Does the student's living arrangement fit into one of the specific examples listed in the definition?
- If not, consider whether the living arrangement would be considered **fixed, regular, and adequate**.

# Protecting Confidentiality

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- **Be clear about your intention:**
  - To request only the information needed to determine eligibility
  - That sensitive information will be protected
  - That schools don't use MV information to report to any external agencies, i.e. CPS or Immigration
- Information about living situation of a student experiencing homelessness is considered an education record and must be provided applicable confidentiality protections. It is not deemed directory information. (42 USC 11432(g)(3)(G))
- Have discreet and private conversations

# Step 3: Seek Additional Information

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- If, after gathering and reviewing available information you are not sure if the student would be considered McKinney-Vento eligible, **seek additional information.**



# Information Sharing

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- Inform parents/guardians, caregivers, and unaccompanied youth that this information will only be shared with those staff responsible for providing services to the student, and those responsible for keeping track of homeless student data.
- LEAs may share this information to LEA/school staff such as:
  - Homeless liaisons
  - Enrollment staff or registrars
  - Student's teachers
  - Guidance counselors
  - Staff members that are responsible for reporting student-level data



# Identification Opportunities

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## Start of School

- First round of housing questionnaires during enrollment process

## Mid-Year

- Things may have changed since start of school - consider a “has your housing changed” letter with the housing questionnaire

## Other Opportunities

- Parent-Teacher conferences
- Back to School night

## End of Year

- End of year letter can help inform families of their rights and let them know they may still qualify for the next school year, or that their student can matriculate with their peers



# Notices & Outreach

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- Each LEA has a local liaison for homeless education who is responsible for ensuring the **identification of homeless students through coordinated activities with other school personnel and community agencies**
- Public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth must be disseminated in areas frequented by parents, guardians, and unaccompanied homeless youth... in a manner and form understandable to them and include the Homeless Liaison contact information. (42 USC 11432(g)(6)(A)(vi))



# Notices & Outreach

Posters available for download at:  
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/homelesspostereng.pdf>

Editable “Know Your Rights” posters available at:  
<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/editable-know-your-rights-flyers/>



# Notices & Outreach

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Poster locations:

- School front office, parent center, resource center, counseling office, website
- Community locations where families may see them
  - Laundromat
  - Medical/dental neighborhood clinics, Family resource centers
  - Hotels/motels, campgrounds
  - Library
  - Shelters, drop in outreach centers
- School group faculty awareness - LGBTQ student groups, pregnant/parenting programs





# Notices & Outreach

## Website

School districts, charter schools, and COEs shall create a webpage or post to its existing website both of the following:

- A list of the **liaisons** in that district, charter school, or COE, and the **contact information** for those liaisons
- Specific information on homelessness, including information regarding the **educational rights and resources available** to persons experiencing homelessness

Ca. Educ. Code § 48852.6 (COE and LEA websites)



# What are signs of homelessness?

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- Enrollment at multiple schools, lack of records, gaps in learning, poor/inconsistent attendance, talking about frequent moves
- Poor hygiene, unmet medical/dental needs, wearing the same clothes repeatedly, fatigue, hoarding food
- Social and behavioral challenges, such as extreme shyness, withdrawal, or aggression; clinginess, difficulty with peer and/or adult relationships, poor attention span, anxiety late in the school day
- Lack of participation in field trips and/or afterschool activities, lack of basic school supplies, inability to complete special projects

# Warning Signs

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Think about.... Ask about....

**What is the process when a teacher or staff suspects a student may be homeless?**

- Does your site/LEA have one?
- Do staff know who to contact? Homeless Liaison, school social worker
- Is there information readily available for staff? One-pager, information on school or LEA website



# Data

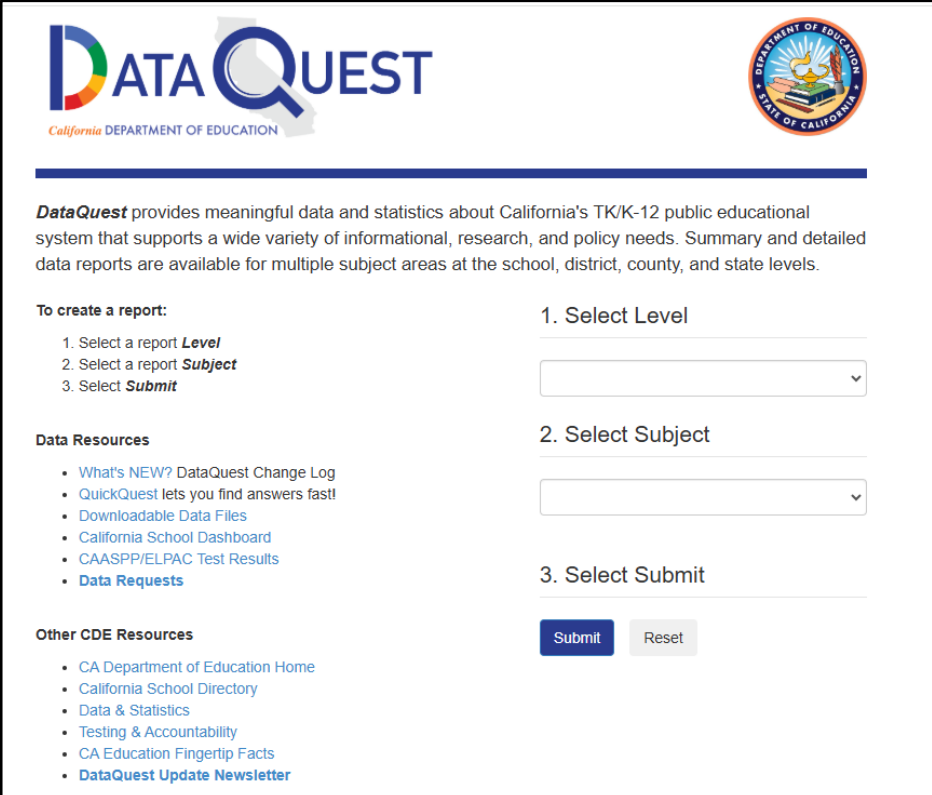
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- The liaison is responsible for working with the LEA's data staff and the State Coordinator to ensure the LEA provides accurate data that meets the required elements outlined by the Secretary of Education.
- All LEAs are required to report the number of homeless students enrolled at any time during a school year through CALPADS, annually.
  - Compare previous years counts
  - Utilize your student information system to sort students by address
  - Follow up on known hotel/motel or other known addresses

42 USC 11432(f)(1)(A)

# Data

- Review absenteeism data
- Compare to your Free & Reduced Price Meal (FRPM) counts
- Experts, at the national level, estimate that five to ten percent of economically disadvantaged youth, those eligible for FRPM, experience homelessness during an academic year
- **Data and Donuts:** view previous recordings: <https://www.hetac.org/resources/data-donuts>



The screenshot shows the DataQuest website interface. At the top, there is a header with the "DATAQUEST" logo, the "California DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION" text, and the state seal. Below the header, a paragraph describes DataQuest as a tool for providing meaningful data and statistics about California's TK/K-12 public educational system. The main content area is divided into three sections: "To create a report:", "Data Resources", and "Other CDE Resources". The "To create a report:" section includes a list of steps: "1. Select a report Level", "2. Select a report Subject", and "3. Select Submit". To the right of these steps are three dropdown menus for selecting Level, Subject, and Submit. Below the dropdowns are "Submit" and "Reset" buttons. The "Data Resources" section lists links for "What's NEW? DataQuest Change Log", "QuickQuest lets you find answers fast!", "Downloadable Data Files", "California School Dashboard", "CAASPP/ELPAC Test Results", and "Data Requests". The "Other CDE Resources" section lists links for "CA Department of Education Home", "California School Directory", "Data & Statistics", "Testing & Accountability", "CA Education Fingertip Facts", and "DataQuest Update Newsletter".

**DATAQUEST**  
California DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

*DataQuest* provides meaningful data and statistics about California's TK/K-12 public educational system that supports a wide variety of informational, research, and policy needs. Summary and detailed data reports are available for multiple subject areas at the school, district, county, and state levels.

**To create a report:**

1. Select a report **Level**
2. Select a report **Subject**
3. Select **Submit**

**Data Resources**

- What's NEW? DataQuest Change Log
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- DataQuest Update Newsletter

1. Select Level

2. Select Subject

3. Select Submit

Submit Reset

# Plan Ahead

## Creating a plan:

Success requires ongoing monitoring.

See [HETAC Identification Tip Sheet](#) and the included sample plan at the [hetac.org website](https://hetac.org)

- includes sample “has your housing changed” letter

### Sample Plan for Implementation

Developing a plan can help take the guesswork out of implementing a comprehensive and effective approach to identification. Consider the sample plan below.

Month(s)	Activities
Jul/Aug	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include a <a href="#">housing questionnaire</a> in the school enrollment process, including via online registration and as part of the registration/walk-through/residency verification process.</li><li>• Make follow-up phone calls to students flagged for McKinney-Vento eligibility on housing questionnaires if more information is needed.</li><li>• Update local liaison contact information on homeless education awareness materials (posters, flyers, brochures, etc.) and LEA and school websites.</li><li>• Post “<a href="#">You Can Enroll in School Posters</a>” at all school sites and in relevant places throughout the community; share posters in English and other languages, as needed, to support local student populations.</li></ul>
Sept	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Provide homeless education training for all LEA, charter, and school site local liaisons and other relevant LEA and school staff, such as registrars, teachers, and school counselors.</li><li>• Ensure that all elements of <a href="#">program record 191</a> are flagged correctly in CALPADS (California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System) for all students experiencing homelessness.</li></ul>
Oct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Plan for <a href="#">National Homeless Youth Awareness Month</a> (November).</li></ul>
Nov	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Share information and make presentations throughout the LEA and community for National Homeless Youth Awareness Month.</li></ul>
Dec/Jan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Send the housing questionnaire home with all students, reminding families to update their emergency contact information and address and inform the school if their housing situation has changed.</li><li>• Send an email to all LEA and school staff about strategies for identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness. <a href="#">Sample email language</a> is available from CDE.</li></ul>
Feb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Include a housing questionnaire and homeless education information as part of the enrollment process for Transitional Kindergarten and Kindergarten.</li><li>• Provide another homeless education training for all LEA, charter, and school site local liaisons and other relevant LEA and school staff to refresh understanding and ensure that new staff are trained.</li></ul>
Mar/Apr/May	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review homeless education data in CALPADS for the current school year, compare current and previous year data, and reach out to schools with low McKinney-Vento identification numbers.</li></ul>
Jun	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Send an end-of-year letter (<a href="#">see sample letter</a>) to McKinney-Vento families to remind them of whom to contact next school year if they need assistance.</li><li>• Share information with families about summer resources, including <a href="#">free meals</a> and other programming available in the community.</li></ul>

# Resources – Identification

## [Identifying Students Without Stable Housing: A Critical First Step \(www.hetac.org\)](http://www.hetac.org)

- HETAC tip sheet outlines state education department and LEA responsibilities under federal and California state law relating to identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness and strategies for identification.

## [Identifying Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness webpage \(www.hetac.org\)](http://www.hetac.org)

- HETAC webpage links to a variety of informational and practical resources related to identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness.

## [California Department of Education \(CDE\) Model Housing Questionnaire and Related Resources \(www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/\)](http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/)

- The Under California Education Code § 48851, LEAs must administer a housing questionnaire to all students annually to ensure the identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness. These CDE resources include a model housing questionnaire for use in California LEAs, guidance for completing the questionnaire, and a frequently asked questions (FAQ) resource.





# Resources - Enrollment

## [Enrolling Students Experiencing Homelessness in School webpage \(www.hetac.org\)](http://www.hetac.org)

- HETAC webpage links to a variety of informational and practical resources related to enrolling children and youth experiencing homelessness in school immediately

## [Prompt and Proper Placement: Enrolling Students Experiencing Homelessness without Records \(www.hetac.org\)](http://www.hetac.org)

- HETAC tip sheet that outlines McKinney-Vento Act requirements related to immediate enrollment and suggests strategies to help LEAs with initial student assessment when complete records are not present

## [Enrolling Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in School – \(nche.ed.gov\)](http://nche.ed.gov)

- The National Center for Homeless Education webpage links to a variety of informational and practical resources related to enrolling children and youth experiencing homelessness



# Shared Responsibility

**Remember - Identification is a team effort!**

Beyond just the liaison...

- principals
- registrars and enrollment staff
- teachers
- bus drivers
- nurses
- meal service staff
- social workers
- counselors

... all have the opportunity to identify students experiencing homelessness.







Thank you for joining us!

