



Coming Home to School: Support for Students Experiencing Homelessness After a Disaster





**Coming Home to School:
Support for Students
Experiencing
Homelessness After a
Disaster**

**California Homeless Education Statewide Conference
March 2026**

YOUR PRESENTERS

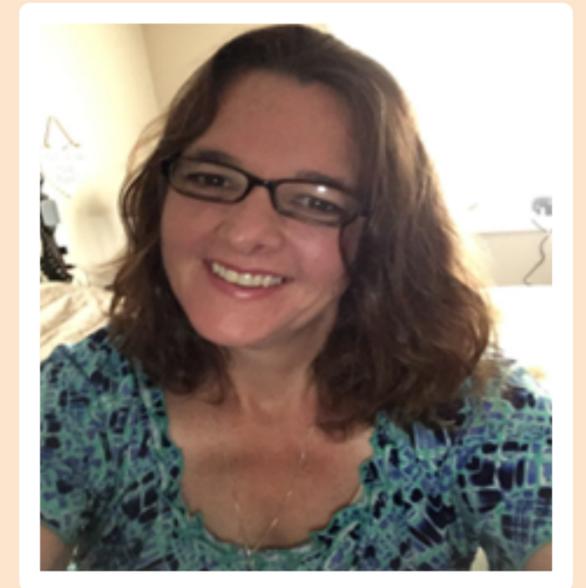


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Take care of YOU!

- You've likely been affected by this topic personally or secondarily.
- Do what you need to do to take care of you.
- Ground in the moment.
- Breathe.
- Step out / Zone out if you need to.
- Afterward, find someone who can listen to your story for five minutes if that seems helpful.

Breathe

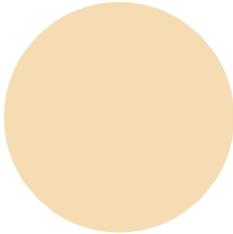


What disasters have impacted you personally?



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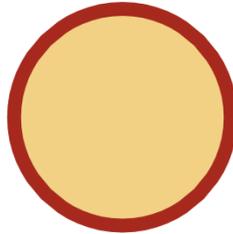
Timeline of Events



2018

Camp Fire

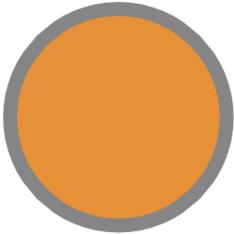
Butte County



2021

Caldor Fire

El Dorado
County



2025

Palisades & Easton Fire

Los Angeles County



Three COEs- One Goal:

Bringing our Students Home to School

*“I just want to go home to my school”
J. Tyler, displaced 2nd grader*





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Butte County Camp Fire Experience and Lessons Learned

About the Camp Fire



- November 8, 2018, started in community of Pulga at 6:30 a.m.
- Named after Camp Creek Road, its place of origin in Butte County.
- Took 12 hours to consume most of Paradise and Concow.
- 19,000 buildings destroyed (95%)
- 5,600 firefighters, 622 engines, 101 fire crews, 103 bulldozers, 24 helicopters.
- 50,000 residents displaced. 85 casualties.





School Impacts



- 93% of students lost homes or were displaced from their homes; 100% identified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act.
- 260 staff homes were destroyed.
- 4 out of 9 schools entirely destroyed.
- Another 4 were damaged severely.
- 9 campuses, 3,409 students, 440 employees, 4 charter schools.
- Already had highest ACES scores in California.
- 100% Free and Reduced Lunch.

[The Lost Bus \(2025 movie trailer\)](#)





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**CALDOR Fire, COVID, and
Learning to Expect the Unexpected**

CALDOR -

August 2021



Community and School Impacts

- ❑ Second fire known to ever cross the Sierra Nevada
- ❑ 221, 835 Acres burned
- ❑ 1100 Building destroyed:
 - ❑ One school
 - ❑ Local Post Office
 - ❑ 711 private residences
- ❑ Evacuations over 4 days
 - ❑ 20,000 people evacuated
- ❑ 100 Students lost their homes





Jennifer Kottke

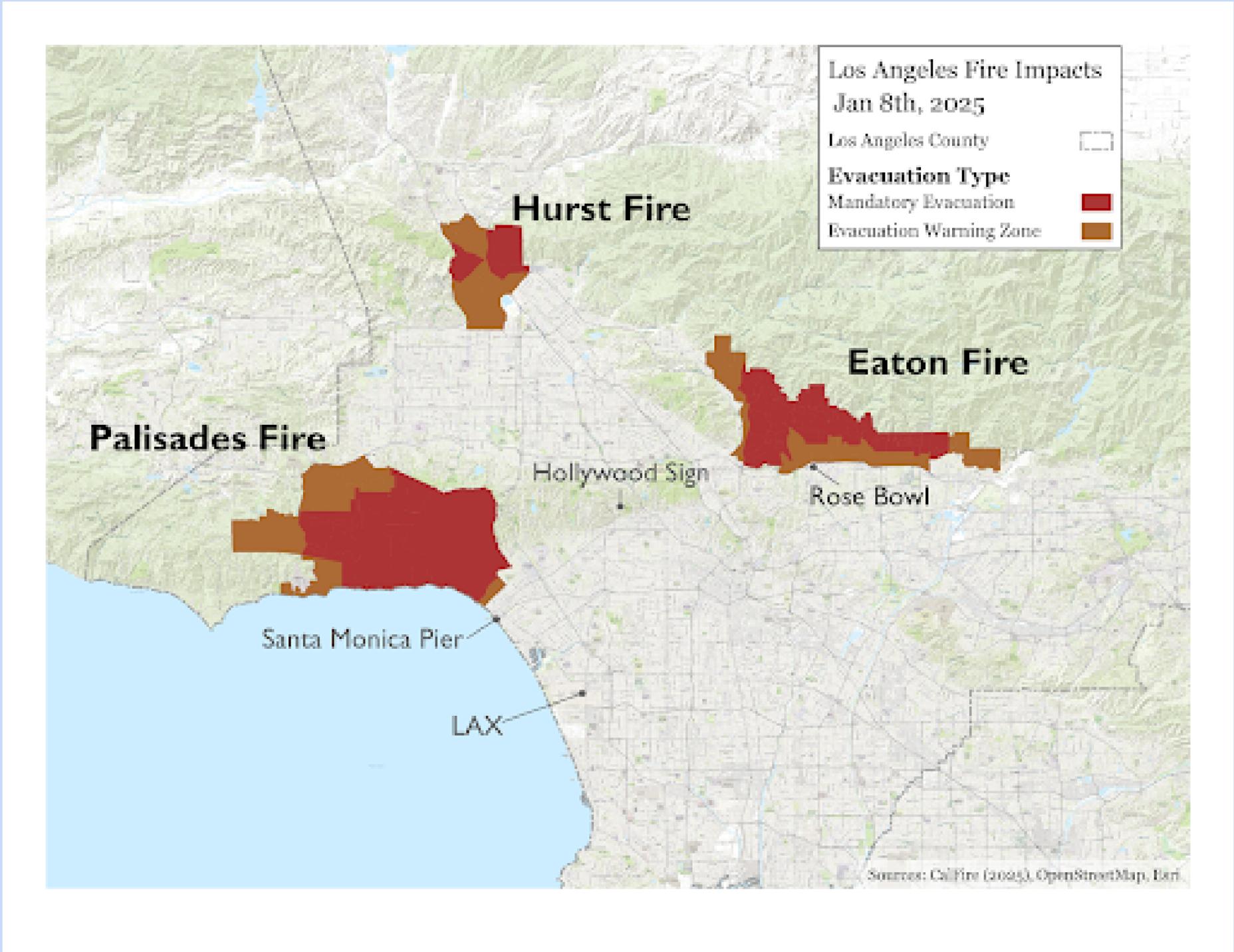
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HISTORICAL & DYNAMIC COMMUNITIES



The Hurst Fire was in Sylmar (LA County) - “smaller fire” - started at 10:30pm on Jan. 7, 2025 - limited damage (2 mobile homes). There were also numerous other fires occurring during this same time period.

LA COUNTY

- Prior to January 7, 2025 Red Flag Warnings had been issued. This was a significant **Red Flag Warning of Santa Ana Winds**. Considered a “life threatening” wind storm - 90 miles per hour.
- Santa Ana Winds are strong, extremely dry winds that affect southern coastal and northern baja areas . January is not a common month for Santa Ana Winds. Winds during this time were up to 100 miles per hour.
- Palisades Fire began in the **morning** of January 7, 2025, approx 10:30am, growing to over 11,000 acres by 24 hours later
- Eaton Fire began in the **evening** on January 7, 2025, approximately 6:18pm

Eaton Area

- Burned over 14,000 acres
- 100,000 evacuated
- 9,000 structures buried - 4356 single family homes, 77 multi family, 123 commercial, 1071 other buildings
- Possible cause - powerlines
- Evacuation notices inconsistent
- Historically Black Neighborhood
- 19 lives lost
- 1 PUSD Magnet Arts School, 3 Authorized Charter Schools, 2 large private schools were destroyed
- Of 1500 staff, 300 staff lost their home & an addition 150 LAUSD (Eaton & Palisades)
- Initially impacted over 10,000 students

Palisades Area

- Burned 23,000 acres
- 37,000 evacuated
- 6,000 structures burned, mostly homes
- Possible cause - reignited campfire
- Water issues
- 12 lives lost
- 2 LAUSD schools were lost & a large charter high school that serves the area was damaged. Many other preschools and private schools were also destroyed
- Over 700 students lost their schools and Pali HS was moved to a new location due to damage on site

Reflective Activity



- *“What feelings came up as we reviewed the information about these fires?”*
- *“What helps you feel steady when events like this happen?”*
- *“What part of these wildfire stories stayed with you most?”*
- *“Did you notice any changes with your body as we discussed this difficult topic?”*



Immediate Response

El Dorado	Paradise	Eaton/Palisades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Worked with schools to “find” our students by creating a shared datasheet ● Visited emergency shelters; formal and informal ● Assessed immediate need using CalFire GIS maps overlaying district maps (Evacuation order, warning, or readiness) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Superintendent held a county-wide summit. • We outreached extensively to all emergency shelter sites. • We had a school table at the FEMA Center. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reached out to schools to determine needs ● Sent out ongoing resources and updates ● Send info to “Higher Up” who served as the “Face of LACOE”. ● Reached out to others COEs for support

Short-Term Response

El Dorado	Paradise	Eaton/Palisades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IT rolled mobile hot spots to evacuation centers ● Family specialists set up “learning centers” in evacuation sites and local gathering places ● Facilitated enrollment in neighboring schools ● Worked with community response teams ● Facilitated transportation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HE department focused on enrollment & school transportation. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up a text line for school enrollment with Butte 211. • We were granted 20K for bus passes and gas cards. • Other districts shared space and offered classrooms to PUSD/Golden Feather students. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Navigating the Executive Order that was issued (EO - N-6-25), including training LEAs ● Field calls from families and LEAs as students started spreading out - very complex types of housing and community loss ● Creating or locating tools for LEAs ● Providing supplies to impacted schools. ● Connecting schools to large non-profits

Long-Term Response

El Dorado	Paradise	Eaton/Palisades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Collaborated with interagency fire recovery team for two years ● Mental Health Supports ● Specific McKinney-Vento support to the district where the vast majority of newly McKinney-Vento students were enrolled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integrating HE into school safety planning ● Mental health supports, including recovery counselors at schools around the county 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Connecting with non-profits to continue to provide support later in the 1st year post fire ● Continuing to navigate EO and interdistrict permits ● Helping to message the long term impact and that we will be here for the long term support ● Very slow recovery - 10 hours in Eaton area as of 1/26

Enrollment



El Dorado	Paradise	Eaton/Palisades
<ul style="list-style-type: none">● “Enrollment” at schools neighboring the evacuation centers.● Worked with CDE on “presumptive best interest” prior to enrollment as long term attendance at the impacted schools would be untenable.● Available SOO teachers shared space with other schools/districts	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● HE department focused on enrollment & school transportation.● Set up a text line for school enrollment with Butte 211.● We were granted 20K for bus passes and gas cards.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● The Executive Order (EO - N - 6-25) suspended the need to issue interdistrict permits.● Allowed students who were “impacted by the fire” to enroll where ever they needed to.● Suspension of interdistrict permits was for the 24-25 SY only

Transportation

El Dorado	Paradise	Eaton/Palisades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Superintendent worked with educational leaders to establish CA Kids Fire Relief, which provided gift cards, many for gas and transportation to impacted schools. ● Local and regional non-profits also provided gift cards ● Post fire SOO transportation concerns were addressed with standard protocol 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● We applied for funds for bus passes and gas cards from the North Valley Community Foundation ● Received 20K ● Case Managers distributed to families in need 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Most transportation issues came post the fire as students were trying to return to SOO (lots of SpEd. cases). ● Lots of case consultations, conversations about mode and comparable services.

Mental Health

El Dorado	Paradise	Eaton/Palisades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The most impacted district had recently hired two staff for student mental health and outreach services. ● In the shorter term, mental health staff were present at shelters and local schools 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health supports, including recovery counselors at schools around the county • Chico State Playbook: How to Support Children & Youth During and After a Wildfire Chico State Playbook Link 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LACOE sent counseling staff out to both communities for support. ● The Eaton area schools have continued to request more mental health support.

Common Challenges

El Dorado	Paradise	Eaton/Palisades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Integration of HE with the overarching systems/COE response ● Supporting staff ● Recognizing compounding factors for students who are already in high vulnerability situations and/or compounding traumas ● Personal self-care - doing the work in the midst of the emergency 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Students may be separated from caregivers. ● School records lost or destroyed. ● Students need mental health supports. ● Staff need mental health supports. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wish I had been more involved in the process ● Data was and still is a huge issue ● Honoring the differences of these two very different communities ● More transparency ● Our students are still working through the trauma of this event ● Staff was highly affected

Practical Strategies

El Dorado	Paradise	Eaton/Palisades
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Hindsight is 20/20 - reach out to your HE/COE partners ● When people ask how they can help - let them - but be specific (yes gift cards - no clothing) ● Communicate ● Post fire <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Read the manuals Meet with your teams Disaster plan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Staff will need support too! • Don't get bogged down with donations. • Reach out to your COE School Safety Officer and be sure that your HE team is part of any disaster planning. • Silver lining – Trauma Informed Schools became a priority. Also raised awareness about homelessness and impacts on education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Reach out to others - do not do this on your own ● Make sure to take care of yourself ● Look for ways to support long term ● Celebrate the wins.

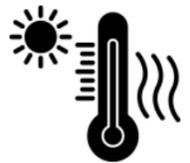
Other Natural Disasters



Avalanche/Snow related activities



Flooding



Cold/Heat wave



Earthquake



Landslide



Winds



Tsunami



Power Outage - planned & unplanned



Other such as the COVID-19 Pandemic

Resources

- [Disaster Preparation and Response - California Homeless Education and Technical Assistance Center](#)
- [Supporting Children and Youth Displaced by Disasters | SchoolHouse Connection](#)
- [Disaster Preparation and Response – National Center for Homeless Education](#)
- [Final Playbook_1.30.23](#)
- [BCOE Community Recovery](#)





Coming Home to School:

Supporting Homeless Students After Disaster with Transportation

Reflection & Action Pledge Activity





TRAUMA CONTINUES AND

HOPE REMAINS...

COMMUNITIES REBUILD AND

GRIEF NORMALIZES...

BEAUTY REEMERGES

AND

**WE GROW RESILIENCY FOR OURSELVES AND WITH OUR
STUDENTS**

Please....

- Grab your phone
- Go to the Conference App
- Find the conference session
- Complete the conference survey for this session



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