SERVING STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN CHARTER SCHOOLS
About the National Alliance

• The National Alliance for Public Charter Schools (National Alliance) is the leading national nonprofit organization committed to advancing the public charter school movement.

• MISSION: To lead public education to unprecedented levels of academic achievement for all students by fostering a strong charter sector.

publiccharters.org
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About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- Website:
  - http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org
- Facebook Group:
  - https://www.facebook.com/groups/SchoolHouseConnection/
- Newsletter:
  - https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up
- Q&A from Our Inbox
TODAY’S AGENDA

- Introduction to Student Homelessness
- Enrolling Students Experiencing Homelessness
- Supporting Success for Students Experiencing Homelessness
- Law Into Practice: Monte del Sol Charter School
The McKinney-Vento Act

- Federal law providing rights and services for students experiencing homelessness.
- Applies to all local educational agencies (LEAs) and public schools, including public charter schools.

Two-page overview of McKinney-Vento, One-page overview of Title I and Homelessness
https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/k-12/
Local Liaisons

- The McKinney-Vento Act requires every LEA to designate a liaison for homeless children and youth.
- Liaisons must be “able to carry out” ten specific duties.
  - Identification
  - Enrollment
  - Referrals
  - Disputes
  - Training
  - Unaccompanied youth
How Does the McKinney-Vento Act Define “Homeless”?

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason. [76% of identified MV students]
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations. [Motels: 6% of identified MV students]
How Does the McKinney-Vento Act Define “Homeless”?

- Staying in emergency or transitional shelters.  
  **[14% of identified MV students]**
- Sleeping in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
  - What is substandard? Check utilities; infestations; mold; dangers.
- This definition applies to migrant students.

“Determining Eligibility” brief:  
1.5 MILLION children and youth, preK-12, were identified and enrolled in school in the 2017-18 school year.

- Over 50,000 in LEA charter schools.
- 15% increase over the previous year.
OVER 4 MILLION

unaccompanied homeless youth ages 14-24.

- Prevalence is statistically the same in rural and urban areas.

Source: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, Voices of Youth Count, 2017
Over 1.3 million children under 6 years old were estimated to have experienced homelessness over the 2015-16 school year.

- Infancy is the period of life when a person is most at risk of living in a homeless shelter.

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2017
Identification.

How can charter schools effectively identify McKinney-Vento Students?

67% of students say they were uncomfortable telling people at school about their homelessness and asking for help.
1. Don’t say ”homeless.” Use descriptive language; ask questions with discretion:
   a. Where would you go if you couldn’t stay here?
   b. What led you to move in to this situation?

2. Training, training, training.
   a. School counselors, registrars, teachers, bus drivers, resource officers, nurses, dropout prevention specialists, attendance officers, principals, food service staff

3. Recognize possible signs of homelessness.
   a. Poor attendance
   b. Enrollment at multiple schools, gaps in learning
   c. Social and behavioral challenges
   d. Lack of participation in field trips and after school activities
   e. Poor hygiene, unmet medical/dental needs
   f. Hunger

4. Educate students, parents and community partners.
   a. Put information on the school and district websites.
   b. Posters in school buildings, libraries, motels, campgrounds, service providers.
   c. Meet with teen parent programs, LGBTQ youth organizations, youth organizations, homeless service providers, health, housing and social service agencies.
How does Monte del Sol Charter School identify its McKinney-Vento students?

1. Student Housing Questionnaire at registration
2. Cultivate awareness among entire staff: registrar, attendance specialist, counselors, teachers, etc.
Educational Impacts of Homelessness

- **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.
Overcoming Homelessness Through Education

- Lack of a high school diploma or GED is the top risk factor for young adult homelessness: **346% more likely**.
- By 2020, 65% of all jobs will require education beyond high school.
- The McKinney-Vento Act is an important strategy to overcome homelessness.
Enrolling Students Experiencing Homelessness
Enrolling Students Experiencing Homelessness

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:

- 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

- “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.
Enrollment in Charter Schools

- States must have procedures to ensure students experiencing homelessness who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing charter schools, including unaccompanied homeless youth.
- Charter schools are not required to enroll McKinney-Vento students if the applicable class is full.
Immediate Enrollment in Charter Schools

- Charter schools should “anticipate and accommodate the needs of McKinney-Vento-eligible students to enter charter schools... despite missing application and enrollment deadlines due to a period of homelessness.”
- Charter schools “should consider giving homeless children and youths priority if there is a waitlist”
- Charter schools may weight their lotteries in favor of homeless students.
How does Monte del Sol Charter School ensure immediate enrollment of its McKinney-Vento students?

1. Work closely with the Registrar.
2. Be proactive if you are first to learn of a homeless student who wishes to enroll at your school.
Supporting Success for Students Experiencing Homelessness
Supporting Success: School of Origin

- Students experiencing homelessness have the right to remain in their school of origin for the duration of homelessness, and until the end of the academic year in which the student becomes permanently housed.
- “School of origin” is the school the student attended when permanently housed, or the school in which last enrolled.
Students can remain in their school of origin if it is in their 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.
- Consider student-centered factors, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, & safety.
- Give priority to the request of the parent/guardian.
- Give priority to the request of an unaccompanied youth.

Best interest checklist:
https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/interview-checklists-for-supporting-school-selection/
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).
  - Including LEA charter schools.
  - 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.
Supporting Success: Full Participation

- Provide transportation to and from activities. The U.S. Department of Education has established that “to the extent that lack of access to transportation is a barrier to extracurricular activities for a particular student, an LEA would be required to provide this student with transportation to or from extracurricular activities.”
Supporting Success: Full Participation

- Provide students experiencing homelessness with necessary equipment and uniforms for activities. Local businesses, faith communities, civic organizations, and parent groups may be willing to sponsor students’ participation.
- Pair new students with a peer mentor to explain available activities and help integrate the student into the school culture and spirit.

Full Participation Brief: https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/full-participation-in-extra-curricular-activities-for-students-experiencing-homelessness/
Supporting Success: 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.

Quick Guide for Counseling Staff:
https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/quick-guide-for-counselors-working-with-students-experiencing-homelessness/
Supporting Success: Trauma-Informed Care

- Provide students experiencing homelessness with a mentor for quick daily check-ins and more in-depth conversations as needed.
- Monitor attendance and provide interventions when students have excessive absences.
- Connect families and students to services such as food and clothing banks, employment programs, shelter, housing, health and mental health care, and social services.
How does Monte del Sol Charter School support success for its McKinney-Vento students?

1. Ongoing needs assessment.
2. Provide for material needs: food pantry, backpacks, snacks, school supplies, clothing, fees, transportation, etc.
3. Monitor attendance and grades. Accentuate the positive. If chronically absent, determine why, and what supports the family may need.
4. Be culturally sensitive.
5. Support parents.
6. Full integration into school community: athletics, extra-curricular activities, school social events (prom, dances, field trips, camping trips).
7. Partner with and refer to community organizations.
8. Wrap-around services when appropriate: parents/guardians, school counselors, tutors, teachers, Special Services, ELL, volunteers.
9. Support transition to college or vocational training.
SchoolHouse Connection
Youth Leadership and Scholarship Program

- Next Deadline: November, 2020
- Eligible students:
  - Born on or after November 9, 2000
  - Entering college for the first time during the 2021-2022 school year.

https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/youth-leadership/scholarship-program/
Resources

- National Center on Homeless Education: [https://nche.ed.gov](https://nche.ed.gov)
- National Network for Youth: [http://www.nn4youth.org](http://www.nn4youth.org)
- DVDs for awareness-raising: [www.vimeo.com/pjulianelle](http://www.vimeo.com/pjulianelle)
  - “The McKinney-Vento Act in Our Schools”
  - “Education and Homelessness: Young Children to Young Adults”
THANK YOU!

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