

Legislative Requirements for Collaboration in Support of Children, Youth, and Families Experiencing Homelessness

This resource:

- is part of the California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center’s (HETAC) [School-Community Partnerships: A Toolkit for Working Together to Serve Children, Youth, and Families Experiencing Homelessness](#);
- shares legislative requirements related to school-community partnerships in support of children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness; and
- links to additional resources for more information.

Context

The needs of children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness often span multiple human service systems, including education, housing, homeless response, behavioral and mental health, public benefits, and more. Lack of coordination across these systems can result in challenges for system staff and lead to children, youth, and families not getting the help they need. Many federal statutes include requirements for human service systems to collaborate to help ensure a more coordinated support network for youth and families. This resource shares federal statutory requirements related to school-community partnerships in support of children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness and links to additional resources for more information.



Statutes covered in this resource include

- [The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act](#) (Subtitle VII-B, the education subtitle)
- [The Child Care and Development Block Grant \(CCDBG\) Act](#)
- [The Head Start Act](#)
- [The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing \(HEARTH\) Act](#)
- [The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act](#)
- [The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#)

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Subtitle VII-B, the education subtitle)

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is the primary federal statute that authorizes assistance to people experiencing homelessness, including housing interventions and supportive services. [Subtitle VII-B, the education subtitle](#), establishes the [definition of homeless used by U.S. public schools](#) and authorizes rights and services to address the unique educational and related barriers and challenges faced by children and youth experiencing homelessness. The Act also requires schools to partner with providers of other services to children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness as follows.



State Coordinator Collaboration

To improve the provision of comprehensive education and related services to children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness, State Coordinators for Homeless Education (hereafter *State Coordinators*) must coordinate activities and collaborate with

- A. educators, including teachers, special education personnel, administrators, and child development and preschool program personnel;
- B. providers of services to children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness, including public and private child welfare and social services agencies, law enforcement agencies, juvenile and family courts, agencies providing mental health services, domestic violence agencies, child care providers, runaway and homeless youth centers, and providers of services and programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act;
- C. providers of emergency, transitional, and permanent housing to children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness, including public housing agencies, shelter operators, operators of transitional housing facilities, and providers of transitional living programs for youth experiencing homelessness;
- D. local homeless education liaisons (hereafter *local liaisons*); and
- E. community organizations and groups representing children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness [42 U.S.C. §11432(f)(4)].

Local Liaison Referrals to Assistance

Local liaisons must ensure that children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness receive referrals to health care, dental, mental health and substance abuse, housing, and other appropriate services [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(6)(A); Ca. Educ. Code § 48851.5].

Coordination by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) Receiving McKinney-Vento Subgrant Funds

Local educational agencies (LEAs) that serve children and youth experiencing homelessness and receive McKinney-Vento subgrant funds must

- coordinate the provision of services with local social services agencies and other agencies or entities providing services to children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness, including services and programs funded under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(5)(A)(i)]; and
- coordinate with local housing agencies to minimize educational disruption for children and youth experiencing homelessness [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(5)(B)].

The purpose of this coordination is to

- i. ensure that all children and youth experiencing homelessness are promptly identified;
- ii. ensure that all children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to, and are in reasonable proximity to, available education and related support services; and
- iii. raise the awareness of school personnel and service providers of the effects of short-term stays in a shelter and other challenges associated with homelessness [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(5)(C)].

Additionally, one of the allowable usages of McKinney-Vento subgrant funds includes the provision of referral services to children and youth experiencing homelessness for medical, dental, mental, and other health services [42 U.S.C. §11433(d)(4)].

In addition to the federal McKinney-Vento act requirements, which apply to all California LEAs, LEAs receiving California Community Schools funding must partner across education, county, and nonprofit entities to provide integrated health, mental health, and social services to its students, including students experiencing homelessness (Ca. Educ. Code § 8900 *et seq.*).

For more information on supporting the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Act, visit the [HETAC website](#).

The Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) Act

The [Child Care and Development Block Grant Act \(CCDBG\)](#) authorizes the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) program, which provides financial assistance to low-income families to access child care so they can work or attend a job training or educational program. The CCDF program helps fund child care assistance for 1.4 million children under age 13 each month. The CCDBG includes specific provisions related to ensuring access to affordable child care for families experiencing homelessness, including through requiring CCDF State Lead Agencies to coordinate with State Coordinators and, to the extent practicable, with local homeless education liaisons when developing state CCDF plans (45 C.F.R. § 98.14).



For more information on CCDF requirements for serving families experiencing homelessness, download the National Center for Homeless Education’s [CCDF Program: Final Rule - With References to Homeless Families with Children Highlighted](#). For more information on addressing the early care and education needs of children experiencing homelessness, visit the [HETAC early care and education webpage](#).

The Head Start Act

The [Head Start Act](#) authorizes Head Start programs, which promote the school readiness of infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children from low-income families. Services are provided in a variety of settings including centers, family child care, and children’s own homes. Head Start programs are available at no cost to children ages birth to 5 from low-income families. Head Start programs deliver services through more than 1,600 agencies in local communities, providing services to more than a million children every year in every U.S. state and territory. The Head Start Act includes specific provisions related to ensuring access to Head Start programs for families experiencing homelessness, including through partnering with schools, as follows.



- Head Start programs must conduct a needs assessment at least every 5 years. This assessment must reflect the needs of children experiencing homelessness and be conducted in collaboration with local liaisons. The needs assessment must be reviewed and updated annually to reflect changes in rates of child and family homelessness [45 C.F.R. § 1302.11(b)].
- Head Start programs must collaborate with a variety of community partners, including local liaisons and providers of services to homeless families and children. The purpose of this collaboration is to facilitate access to community services that are responsive to children’s and families’ needs [45 C.F.R. § 1302.53(a)].

For more information on Head Start program requirements for serving families experiencing homelessness, download the National Center for Homeless Education’s [Head Start Program Performance Standards - With References to Homeless Children Highlighted](#). For more information on addressing the early care and education needs of children experiencing homelessness, visit the [HETAC early care and education webpage](#).

The Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, most recently reauthorized in 2009 by the [Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing \(HEARTH\) Act](#), establishes the definition of homelessness used by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and authorizes assistance to people experiencing homelessness — including housing interventions and supportive services. This assistance is provided through HUD-administered programs such as the [Continuum of Care \(CoC\)](#) and [Emergency Solutions Grant \(ESG\)](#) programs.



The HEARTH Act includes four “education assurance” requirements focused on partnership between CoCs and schools as follows.

- CoC-funded projects must establish policies and practices that support children’s educational rights under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act and other federal laws [42 U.S.C. § 11386(b)(4)(C)].
- CoC-funded projects that serve families must designate a staff person to ensure that children receiving CoC services are enrolled in school and connected to school and community services, such as early care and education supports [42 U.S.C. § 11386(b)(4)(D)].
- CoC collaborative applicants must place families with children as close as possible to their school of origin to the maximum extent practicable [42 U.S.C. § 11386(b)(7)].
- CoC collaborative applicants must collaborate with schools to help identify children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness and inform them of their educational rights under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act [42 U.S.C. § 11386a(b)(1)(B)(iii)].

For more information on school-CoC partnerships, visit the National Center for Homeless Education’s [collaboration webpage](#).

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA)

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) authorizes [RHYA programs](#), including street outreach, basic center, and transitional living. These programs provide services to runaway, homeless, and disconnected youth, including short-term shelter, longer-term transitional housing, and supportive services. The Act includes requirements for RHYA grantees to partner with schools to support young people’s education as follows.



Basic Center and Transitional Living programs must develop and implement a plan to assist youth to stay connected with their schools or obtain appropriate educational services, training, or employment

services. This includes coordination with local liaisons to ensure that runaway and homeless youth are provided information about services available under the Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act. This also includes coordination with local employment and employment training programs, coordination with local college placement services, and providing access to the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) [45 C.F.R. § 1351.26(c)].

For more information on supporting the education of young people being served in RHYA programs, download the National Center for Homeless Education's [Partnering to Support Educational Success for Runaway and Homeless Youth](#).

The Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act (WIOA)

The [Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act \(WIOA\)](#) is designed to strengthen and improve our nation's public workforce system by helping get Americans, including youth and those with significant barriers to employment, into high-quality jobs and careers and helping employers hire and retain skilled workers. Under the [WIOA Youth Program](#), communities receive funds to deliver a comprehensive array of services to help prepare in-school and out-of-school youth ages 14-24 for educational, skills training, and employment opportunities, and secure employment with career/promotional opportunities.



The WIOA includes a requirement for local workforce development boards (WDBs) to partner with schools, public housing authorities, and programs that serve youth experiencing homelessness in designing local youth workforce programming to ensure these youth have access to the programming [20 C.F.R. § 681.420(c)]. Further, the U.S. Departments of Labor (DOL) and Education (ED) recommend that local WDBs collaborate with school districts, including homeless education programs, to support the development of workforce skills and career readiness for local in-school youth (ED & DOL, 2017, p. 2).

For more information on workforce development for youth experiencing homelessness under WIOA, download WorkforceGPS' [Providing Employment Services to Homeless and Runaway Youth](#) or HUD's [WIOA fact sheet](#).

References

U.S. Department of Education & U.S. Department of Labor. (2017). *Supporting education and career goals of in-school youth under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act*. Retrieved from https://youth.workforcegps.org/resources/2017/01/18/13/58/EKFA_isy



A California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC) Resource
Funded by the California Department of Education
May 2023
hetac.org