



Expanded Graduation Options for Students Experiencing Homelessness in California

California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC)

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Meet Your Presenters



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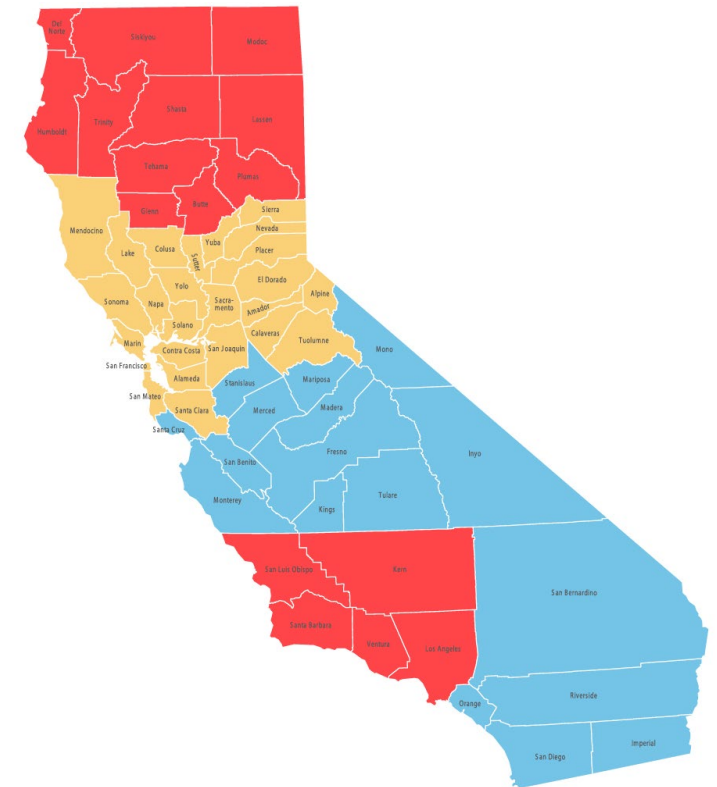
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About the HETAC

- The California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC)
- Is funded by the California Department of Education to serve as the state's homeless education technical assistance center
- Is operated jointly by the Contra Costa, Los Angeles, and San Diego County Offices of Education
- [Learn more](#) about the HETAC that serves your county



-  Served by the Contra Costa County Office of Education
-  Served by the Los Angeles County Office of Education
-  Served by the San Diego County Office of Education



About Today's Webinar

Today's webinar is based on the HETAC's Expanded Graduation Options for Students Experiencing Homelessness in California tip sheet and

- Makes the case for the importance of supporting high school graduation for students experiencing homelessness
- Reviews expanded high school graduation options available under California Education Code for students experiencing homelessness
- Tours practical implementation tools included in the HETAC expanded graduation options tip sheet
- Provides opportunities for Q&A and discussion throughout





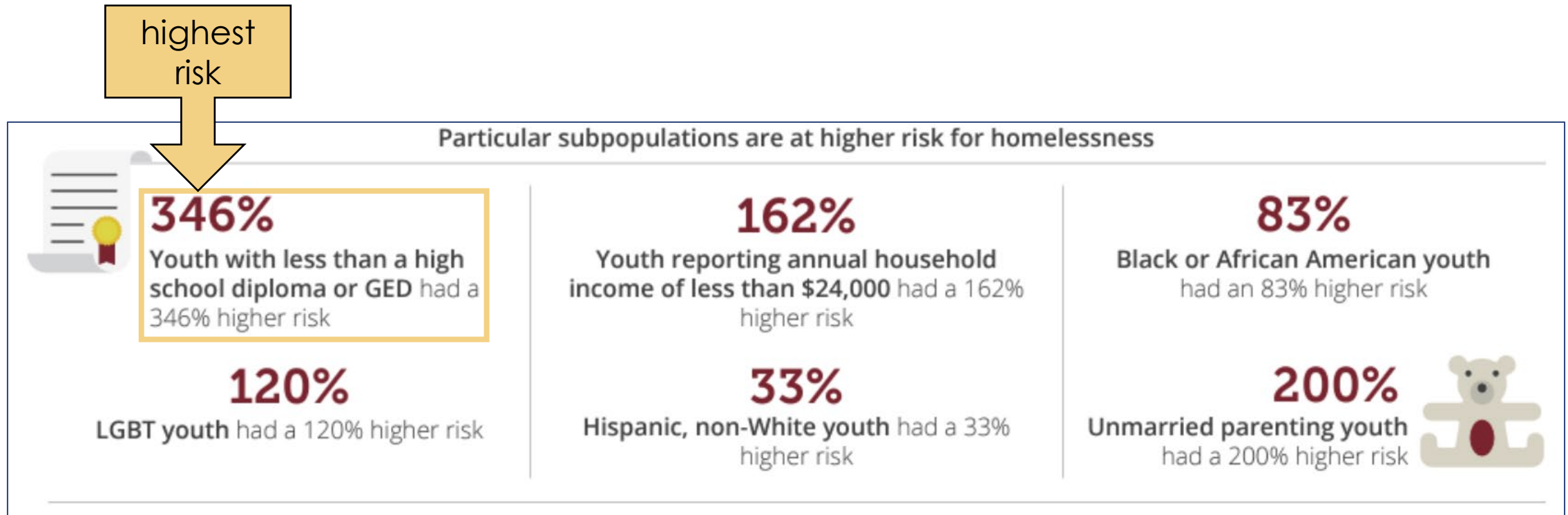
The Importance of High School Graduation for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Poll: Risk for Homelessness

According to research by the University of Chicago, which youth subpopulation is at the highest risk for experiencing homelessness?

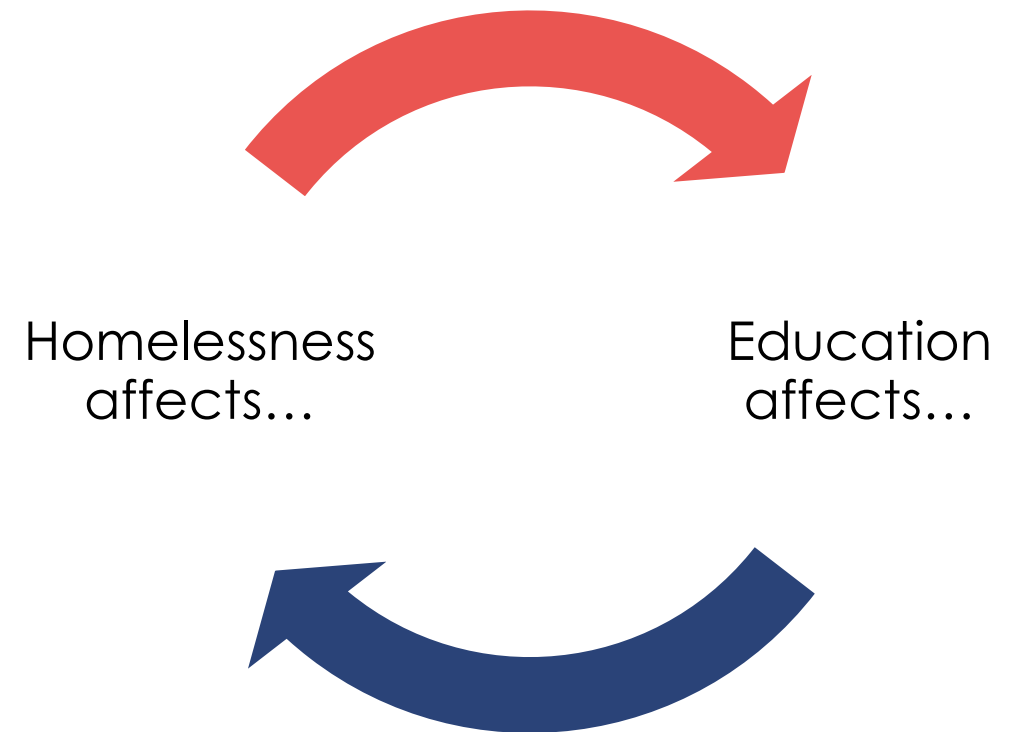
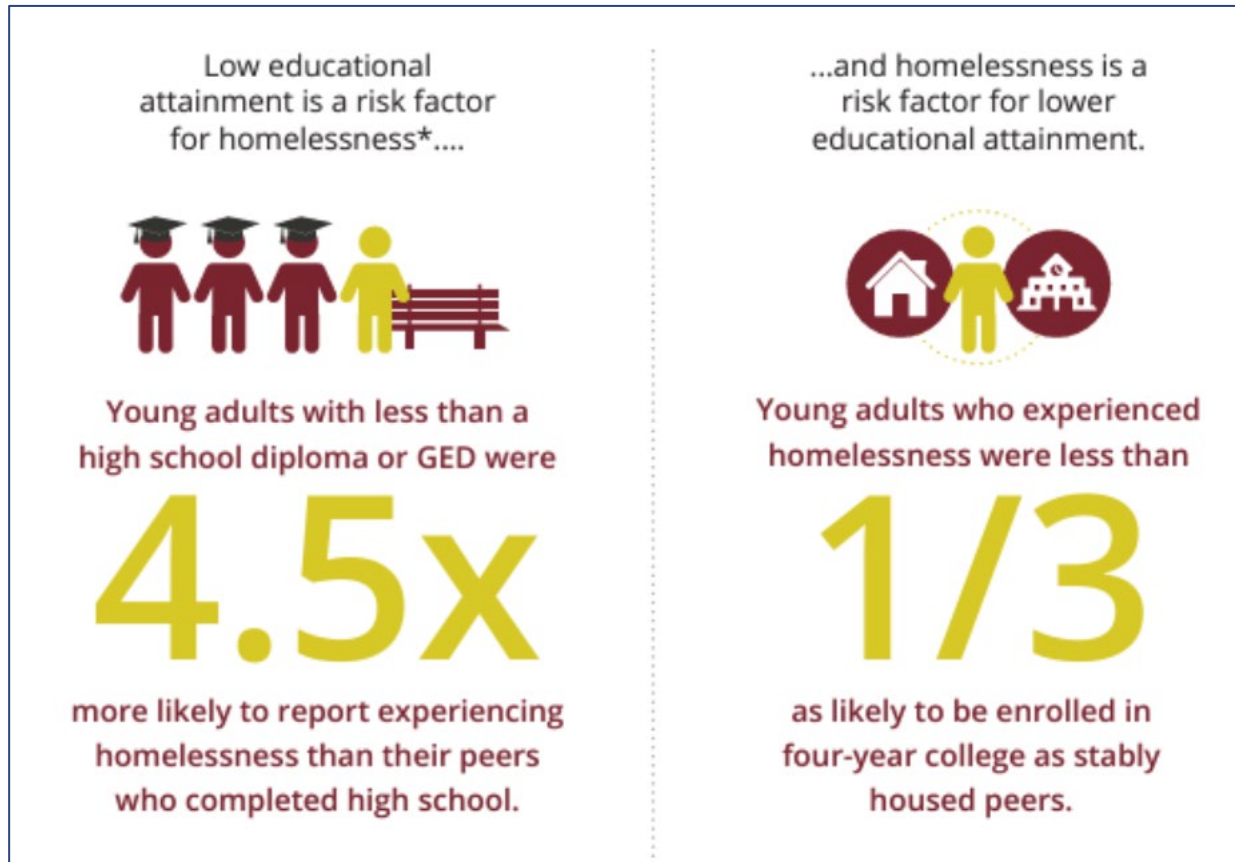


Risk for Homelessness



Source: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, [Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America, National Estimates](#)

A Bidirectional Relationship



Source: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago, [Missed Opportunities: Education Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America](#)

Poll: Graduation Rates

According to the California School Dashboard, what percentage of students experiencing homelessness graduated high school in 2023?



2023 California Graduation Rates

All Students



Orange

86.4% graduated

Declined 1% ⬇️

Number of Students:
503,548

Socioeconomically Disadvantaged



Orange

83.7% graduated

Declined 1.4% ⬇️

Number of Students:
361,130

Homeless



Orange

73.7% graduated

Maintained -0.7%

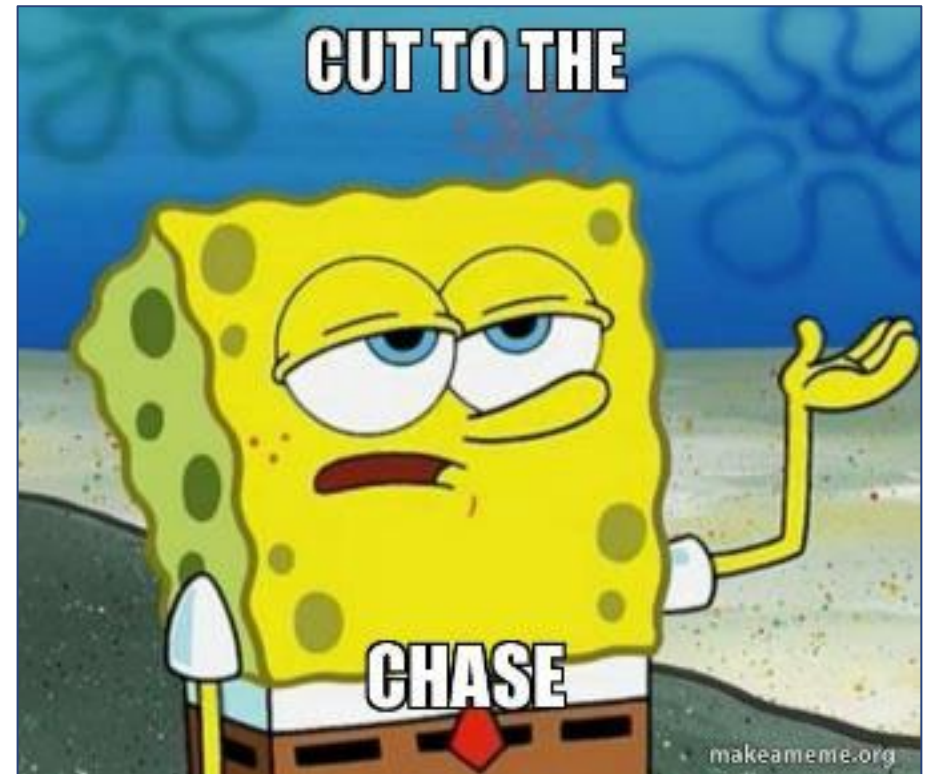
Number of Students: 35,069

Source: [California School Dashboard](#)

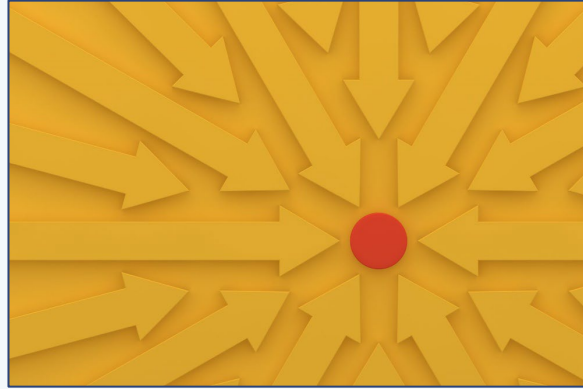


Takeaway Points

- Students experiencing homelessness face unique challenges that make them less likely to graduate from high school than their housed peers
- And yet, high school graduation is key to breaking cycles of homelessness and poverty
- School efforts to support high school graduation will have an important return on investment for schools and the students they serve







Expanded Graduation Options Under California Education Code



What Do You Think?

Please share via Q&A/chat:

California Education Code provides students experiencing homelessness who transfer schools after their 2nd year of high school with flexible options for graduating from high school.

Why might this flexibility be needed?



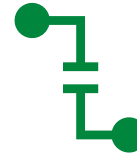
Why Expanded Graduation Options?



Despite federal and state statutory provisions related to school stability, students experiencing homelessness experience higher than average rates of school mobility



Many McKinney-Vento students find themselves transferring schools, often across local educational agency (LEA) lines, multiple times over the course of their educational career



Each school or LEA transfer may result in different class offerings and graduation requirements, creating educational discontinuity and interrupting student progress toward high school graduation



Acknowledging this, the California Legislature enacted California Education Code § 51225.1 to expand high school graduation options for students experiencing homelessness

Exemption from LEA Graduation Requirements

Under Cal. Educ. Code § 51225.1, LEAs must

- Exempt a McKinney-Vento student who transfers schools any time after the completion of the student's second year of high school from all coursework and other requirements adopted by the LEA that are in addition to [statewide requirements](#), unless the LEA finds that the student is reasonably able to complete the LEA's additional requirements in time to graduate from high school by the end of the student's fourth year
- Make a determination of exemption eligibility within 30 days of the date that a McKinney-Vento student transfers into a school within the LEA [Cal. Educ. Code § 51225.1(d)(2)(A)].

Educational Decision Makers

- Cal. Educ. Code § 51225.1 references the “person holding the right to make educational decisions for the pupil”
- In most cases, a student’s parent or legal guardian serves as educational decisionmaker
- Cal. Educ. Code § 51225.1 grants the following students the right to serve as their own decision maker
 - A student who is 18 years of age or older
 - An unaccompanied minor who holds their own education rights
 - Unaccompanied youth as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act as “a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian”

Exemption Eligibility

To be eligible for the exemption, the student must



- Be experiencing homelessness as defined by the McKinney-Vento Act
- Have transferred schools after their second year of high school
- Be unable to reasonably complete the LEA's graduation requirements (that are in addition to state requirements) in time to graduate by the end of the student's fourth year of high school

Determining the Student's Year of High School

To determine whether a student is in their 3rd or 4th year of high school (i.e. transferred schools after their 2nd year), the LEA may use whichever of the following will qualify the student

- The number of credits the student has earned to the date of transfer,
- The length of the student's school enrollment, or
- For students with significant gaps in school attendance, the student's age as compared to the average age of students in the 3rd or 4th year of high school



Graduation Exemption Options

Under Cal. Educ. Code § 51225.1, eligible students can

1. Graduate in four years meeting only state graduation requirements (exempt from additional LEA requirements)
2. Graduate in five years meeting state and additional LEA graduation requirements
3. Graduate in five years meeting only state graduation requirements

The graduation exemption option selection is informed by a required consultation between the LEA, the student, and the student's educational decision maker

Notification of Exemption



Within 30 calendar days of the date on which a McKinney-Vento student who may qualify for the exemption from LEA graduation requirements transfers into a school, the LEA must notify the student, the student's educational decision maker, and the LEA liaison of the availability of the exemption and whether the student qualifies



If the LEA fails to provide timely notice, the student will be eligible for the exemption once notified, even if notified after the student is no longer experiencing homelessness if the student otherwise qualifies for the exemption



What Do You Think?

Please share via Q&A/chat:

LEAs must consult with eligible students to help them make an informed decision as to whether to pursue a graduation exemption option.

What might some of the pros and cons be for students who pursue a graduation exemption option?



Graduation Exemption Consultation



Once a student is deemed eligible to be exempted from completing LEA graduation requirements by the end of the student's 4th year, the LEA must consult with the student and the student's educational decisionmaker about available graduation options

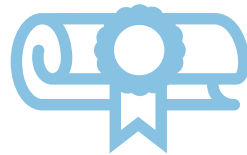
- **Option 1:** Graduate in 4 years meeting only state requirements
- **Option 2:** Graduate in 5 years meeting state and additional LEA requirements
- **Option 3:** Graduate in 5 years meeting only state requirements

Which Students Might Benefit?



Option 1: Graduate in 4 years meeting only state requirements

May be good for students who want to graduate in 4 years but are unable to reasonably complete additional LEA requirements in that timeframe



Option 2: Graduate in 5 years meeting state and LEA requirements

May be good for students who want to complete additional LEA graduation requirements but are unable to reasonably complete them in 4 years, including students who want to attend a 4-year university



Option 3: Graduate in 5 years meeting only state requirements

May be good for students who need 5 years to graduate high school and can only reasonably complete state graduation requirements in that timeframe

Option 1 Consultation:

Graduate in 4 Years Meeting Only State Requirements

The LEA must consult with the student and the student's educational decision maker about

1. How waived graduation requirements may affect the student's postsecondary education or vocation plans;
2. Other options available to the student, including a 5th year of high school, possible credit recovery, and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; and
3. The student's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to pursue this option

Option 2 Consultation:

Graduate in 5 Years Meeting State and LEA Requirements

The LEA must consult with the student and the student's educational decision maker about

1. The student's option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete LEA graduation requirements
2. How remaining in school for a fifth year will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution
3. Transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; and
4. The student's option to remain in the school of origin under [Cal. Educ. Code § 48852.7](#)

Option 3 Consultation:

Graduate in 5 Years Meeting Only State Requirements

The LEA must consult with the student and the student's educational decision maker about

1. The student's option to remain in school for a fifth year to complete state graduation requirements
2. How waiving local graduation requirements and remaining in school for a fifth year to complete LEA graduation requirements will affect the student's ability to gain admission to a postsecondary educational institution
3. Any other options available to the student, including possible credit recovery and any transfer opportunities available through the California Community Colleges; and
4. The student's academic data and any other information relevant to making an informed decision on whether to pursue this option

Reevaluation of Exemption Eligibility

If a student is not eligible for an exemption from LEA graduation requirements in the year in which the student transfers schools because the student is reasonably able to complete LEA requirements in time to graduate in the fourth year, the LEA must within 30 calendar days of the following academic year

- Reevaluate the student's exemption eligibility,
- Provide written notice to the student and the student's educational decision maker as to whether the student qualifies for an exemption
- If the student deemed eligible, provide the required consultation about any expanded graduation option(s) available to the student



Continued Exemption Eligibility

If a student initially is not exempted from LEA graduation requirements or has previously declined the exemption, the LEA shall exempt the student at any time if the student qualifies for the exemption and it is requested by the student or the student's educational decision maker

If a student at one time qualified for the exemption but was not properly notified of or declined the exemption, the LEA must exempt the student within 30 days of a request by the student or the student's educational decision maker, even if the student is no longer experiencing homelessness

The exemption continues to apply after the student is no longer experiencing homelessness while the student is enrolled in school or if the student transfers to another school or LEA

Adult Education Students

- Expanded graduation options under Cal. Educ. Code § 51225.1 apply to
 - Students experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in an adult education program, regardless of the student's age
 - Students enrolled in an adult education program who experienced homelessness while enrolled in high school



Prohibited Actions

- Under Cal. Educ. Code § 51225.1, LEAs may not
 - Require or request a student to transfer schools to qualify for the exemption
(neither can a student, a student's educational decisionmaker, or the LEA homeless liaison request a transfer solely to qualify the student for the exemption)
 - Require students who are eligible for the exemption from LEA graduation requirements to accept the exemption
 - Deny students who are eligible for the exemption enrollment in or the ability to complete courses for which the student otherwise is eligible, including courses needed to attend an institution of higher education, regardless of whether those courses are required for statewide graduation requirements
 - Revoke a student's exemption once a student is deemed eligible



Additional Statutory Provisions

- View the [full text of Cal. Educ. Code § 51225.1](#) for additional information on implementing California's expanded graduation options, including
 - Filing a complaint of noncompliance
 - LEA responsibilities to report data annually to the California Department of Education (CDE) on the number of students exempted from the LEA's graduation requirements
 - definitions of terms used in statute





HETAC Expanded Graduation Option Implementation Tools Tour



HETAC Implementation Tools

The HETAC's Expanded Graduation Options for Students Experiencing Homelessness in California tip sheet includes

- LEA-Level Guiding Questions for Implementing California's Expanded Graduation Options for Students Experiencing Homelessness
- Student-Level Strategies for Implementing California's Expanded Graduation Options
- California Expanded Graduation Options Credit Worksheet
- Notification of Eligibility for California Expanded Graduation Options (customizable)
- Notification of California Expanded Graduation Option Selection (customizable)

**Let's
take a
look!**





Thanks for Joining Us!



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