



Project Connect: Homeless Facts

Definition of Homelessness

Children and youth experiencing homelessness lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes children and youth who are:

- sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship;
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds;
- abandoned in hospitals
- awaiting foster care placement
- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing;
- migratory children (if they are living in conditions described above).

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

The McKinney-Vento Act was enacted in 1987 and reauthorized most recently in January 2002. The Act contains nine titles, which provide a range of services to people experiencing homelessness. The Act requires educational access, attendance and success for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Educational Rights under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Children experiencing homelessness have the right to:

- receive a free public education
- receive transportation to school just like the other students
- begin school even if he/she does not have all of the necessary documentation
- attend the last school he/she went to or attend the school in the new area where he/she is living
- receive the same special programs and services that the other children receive

Did you know that...

- families experiencing homelessness comprise 40% of the homeless population
- poverty and lack of affordable housing are key causes of family homelessness
- half of all women and children experiencing homelessness are fleeing domestic violence
- children experiencing homelessness change school seven to eight times per year.
- children experiencing homelessness are usually two to three years behind in school.
- the average age of a homeless individual is nine.



Project Connect: Possible Signs of Homelessness

These characteristics could be attributed to students with other issues as well as those students experiencing homelessness.

Lack of Continuity in Education

1. Attendance at many different schools
2. Lack of records needed for enrollment

Poor Health/Nutrition

1. Unmet medical and dental needs
2. Chronic hunger (may hoard food)
3. Fatigue (may fall asleep in class)

Transportation and Attendance

1. Erratic attendance or tardiness
2. Inability to contact parents
3. Avoidance of class field trips

Poor Hygiene

1. Inappropriate dress for the weather
2. Wearing the same clothes for several days

Not Ready for Class

1. Lack of basic school supplies
2. Concern for the safety of belongings
3. Incomplete or missing homework

Social and Behavioral Cues

1. Change in behavior
2. “Old” beyond years
3. Protective of parents
4. Poor self-esteem
5. Poor/short attention span
6. Difficulty making friends
7. Need for immediate gratification

Reactions/Statements by Parent, Guardian or Child

1. Anger or embarrassment when asked about current address
2. Mention of staying with grandparents, other relatives, friends
3. Comments such as:
 - “We’ve moved a lot.”
 - “We’re staying with relatives.”
 - “We’re going through a bad time.”