Local Educational Agencies' Guidance for Completing the Housing Questionnaire

California Department of Education – March 2020

Purpose of a Housing Questionnaire

A Housing Questionnaire is a highly recommended best practice to assist local educational agencies (LEAs) with the identification of homeless children and youth. The Education for Homeless Children and Youth program states that all LEAs and their homeless liaisons must ensure that homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other agencies. LEAs are defined as county offices of education (COEs), school districts, and charter schools. The California Department of Education is encouraging the use of a Housing Questionnaire.

LEAs need to take a proactive approach to identify homeless children and youth. It is the first step to connecting these students and their families with information, resources, and supports necessary to ensure that they have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschool education, as is provided to other children and youth.

Who Should Complete the Housing Questionnaire?

Every student, preschool through 12th grade, should complete the Housing Questionnaire, at least annually, upon enrollment. The Housing Questionnaire can be completed by the child's parent/guardian, caregiver, or in the case of an unaccompanied youth, by the student directly. If needed, the homeless liaison should be available to assist. Preschool programs include any LEA-administered, LEA-funded, and state preschool program, such as Head Start.

Information Sharing

Please inform parents/guardians, caregivers, and unaccompanied youth that this information will be kept confidential and will only be shared with those LEA/school staff that are responsible for providing services to the student and their families, as well as those staff responsible for keeping track of how many homeless students are identified in the LEA.

LEAs may share this information to LEA/school staff such as:

- Homeless liaisons;
- Enrollment staff or registrars;
- Student's teachers;

- Guidance counselors; and,
- Staff members that are responsible for reporting student-level data

Housing Questionnaires, and/or the information, gathered should not be a part of the student's permanent records such as Cumulative Folders.

Discussing the Housing Questionnaire with Students and Families

In reviewing the Housing Questionnaire with parents/guardians, caregivers, and unaccompanied youth, LEAs should emphasize that the purpose of gathering this information is to ensure that children and youth who are experiencing homelessness are provided the rights and services to which they are entitled to under the McKinney-Vento Act. These rights may include:

- Immediate enrollment in the school they last attended (school of origin) or the local school where they are currently staying, even if you do not have all the documents normally required at the time of enrollment.
- Continue to attend their school of origin, if requested by you and it is in the best interest.
- Receive transportation to and from their school of origin, the same special programs and services, if needed, as provided to all other children, including free meals and Title I.
- Receive the full protections and services provided under all federal and state laws, as it relates to homeless children, youth, and their families.

It is also important for the LEA to explain that the information provided on the Housing Questionnaire should be accurate and true. Verification is not always necessary. Homeless families or unaccompanied youth do not need to have the necessary paperwork required at registration. This includes proof of residency, medical records/immunizations, educational records, etc. However, if for some reason, the LEA needs to verify such information, the LEA will not contact a landlord or building superintendent without prior consent. Lastly, if the parent/guardian, caregiver, or unaccompanied youth declines to complete the Housing Questionnaire, the LEA should indicate that on the form.

Completing the Housing Questionnaire

If the parents/guardians, caregivers, and unaccompanied youth enrolling in school indicates that the student is living in one of the four categories (sheltered, doubled-up, unsheltered, or motel/hotel), the school/school district does not need to have proof that verifies their living arrangement. However, it is important that the school/school district have some sort of contact information for the parent/guardian, caregiver, or unaccompanied youth, especially for emergency situations.

It is essential to ask the parent/guardian, caregiver, and even the unaccompanied youth to indicate the other children that might be living with them. School and school districts

need to be identifying and serving preschool-age children, and this is the best opportunity to find out if there are younger children.

If you have any questions regarding this subject, please contact the CDE Homeless Education Program within the Integrated Student Support and Programs Office by phone at 866-856-8214 or by email at HOMELESSED@cde.ca.gov.