

April 2025

Dear District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

Educating Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

The San Diego County Office of Education (SDCOE) would like to remind local educational agencies (LEAs) about the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program. With the future of the U.S. Department of Education uncertain, we want to ensure you are aware that the McKinney-Vento Act remains law. The EHCY program is a crucial part of federal legislation concerning the education of over 270,000 California children and youth experiencing homelessness, from early childhood through high school graduation. Every LEA is required to implement these provisions. The core themes of EHCY include identification, school access and stability, and support for educational success.

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youth as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition also encompasses:

- Children and youth who are living with others due to housing loss, financial difficulties, or similar reasons
- Children and youth who may be living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or shelters
- Children and youth whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not intended or typically used for regular sleeping accommodations for people
- Children and youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar locations, or
- Migratory children qualify as homeless if they are living in similar circumstances as those mentioned above.

It is essential to remind LEAs that children and youth experiencing homelessness must receive the full protections and services offered under all federal and state laws regarding homeless education. Homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including public preschool education, as other children and youth. LEAs must evaluate and take steps to amend laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may hinder the identification, enrollment, attendance, or success of homeless children and youth in school.

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LEAs and their homeless liaisons must ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness are identified by school staff through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies. To guarantee that students in homeless situations are recognized, homeless liaisons, in partnership with school and LEA personnel, should:

- Post notices about the rights of homeless students in community locations where families and young people in homeless situations are likely to see them. This includes places like schools, shelters, public libraries, and food banks, and these notices should be presented in a way that is clear and understandable to parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth.
- Ensure a housing questionnaire is part of the LEA's enrollment packet to assess potential eligibility.
- Raise awareness and provide professional development opportunities across LEAs and the community regarding the definition of homelessness and the rights afforded to eligible students
- Include information about McKinney-Vento eligibility and services in student handbooks, on the LEA's website, and in brochures.

The CDE offers "You Can Enroll in School" posters for homeless education on its [Resources for Homeless Children and Youth](#) web page, allowing LEAs to download them in various languages.

For more information and implementation strategies, visit the California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC) website's [Guide to the Liaison Role in California](#) page. The HETAC website also features a page on the [Educational Rights of Students Experiencing Homelessness](#) and several other relevant resources.

If you have any questions about this subject, please reach out to the Homeless Education Services Program at SDCOE, either by phone at 858-298-2062 or by email at Susanne.terry@sdcoe.net.

Sincerely,

Joseph Clevenger
Assistant Superintendent: Student Services and Programs
San Diego County Office of Education