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Tips for Counselors & Social Workers

HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOUSING INSECURITY

Know the Law

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law that protects the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Eligible students lack a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" or are "Unaccompanied minors" (no caregiver or guardian available.) The law requires that all LEAs ensure that eligible students have access to the same free, appropriate public education, including preschool, as provided to other students.

Examples of eligible housing include:

- "Doubled Up" housing (Sharing housing of others due to loss of housing, or economic hardship)
- Motels or hotels
- Shelters or transitional housing
- Living in parks, streets, cars, camping trailers, or other structures not suitable for habitation.

Basic Rights include:

- Immediate enrollment – enrollment documents can be submitted at a later date
- Right to attend school of origin (last school attended or when permanently housed) OR neighborhood school
- Right to remain in current school for remainder of school year even if housing is stabilized
- Right to confidentiality regarding their living situation

Know the Signs

Signs of housing instability may include:

- Enrollment at multiple schools, lack of records, gaps in learning
- Frequent absences or tardiness
- Poor hygiene, unmet medical/dental needs, wearing the same clothes repeatedly
- School refusal or fear of separating from family, anxiety late in the school day
- Sleeping in class, appearing drowsy or inattentive in class
- Inability to complete special projects or homework
- Food hoarding or taking food
- Social and emotional challenges such as extreme shyness, withdrawal, or aggression; difficulty with social relationships or acknowledging adult authority
- Lack of basic school supplies
- **No access to technology devices and internet connections or unable to participate in remote learning**

Know How to Help

Use a trauma informed approach. Take time to meet with your student and/or their caregiver in a private and supportive setting. Tend to physical and emotional safety issues first. (see other side for more tips)

Allow that person to educate you about their situation and how best to help. Consider having district material on Mc Kinney- Vento rights and services available (a poster or brochure).

Discuss your plan for help with the student and a caregiver; be careful not to overpromise.

Contact your local Mc Kinney- Vento Liaison for guidance and resources.

Examples of ways a liaison can help include:

- Help with enrollment, assisting with decisions regarding what is in a student's best interest
- Arranging transportation if appropriate
- Assistance in obtaining needed supplies (eg. Backpacks, school supplies, technology, uniforms)
- Referrals to community resources including emergency and long-term housing, food, resources and counseling

Your local McKinney-Vento Liaison:

Orange County Department of Education:
HOPES Collaborative, Contact list of all OC Liaisons
https://ocde.us/mv

California Department of Education
Homeless Education Team |
HomelessEd@cde.ca.gov

Requirements Under the Law

Per AB 1806 of the California Ed Code, Schools must accept completed coursework from an eligible student obtained while the student was attending another school and issue full or partial credit for work already completed.
All eligible high school students will receive information and individualized college and career counseling.

Homelessness increases the likelihood of experiencing multiple adverse childhood experiences (ACES), consider using a trauma informed approach when working with students and caregivers.

Children and youth experiencing homelessness are 3x more likely to attempt suicide 20% vs. 6% than their housed peers.

More than 40% of homeless teens struggle with depression, and LGBTQ youth experiencing homelessness are 2x as likely to die by suicide compared to heterosexual youth who are homeless.

TIPS FOR INTERVENTION

- Offer techniques for dealing with overwhelming emotional reactions, such as: self-calming, safety/support plans and assess for possible triggers (i.e. School arrival, disruption to routine, adults exerting authority, home assignments)
- Teach skills- reach out to teachers, notetaking and organization; ensure students have needed tools and supplies.
- Coordinate closely with your Mc Kinney Vento Liaison to obtain needed resources or support and to access community resources for students and caregivers.
- Provide individual college and career counseling. Beginning freshman year or as soon as possible, ensure eligible students have short and long-term goals.
- Listen without judging or assuming you will know what is needed. Focus on strengths but be watchful that this is not perceived as minimizing their worries. For high school students, address any lack of understanding or concerns they have about going to college or career training.
- Tend to safety, emotional and physical well-being first- when concrete and social- emotional needs are not met, learning and behavior will be impacted.
- Contact the liaison and give contact information to the parent or student, provide resources if available and appropriate. Balance the need for privacy with the need to collaborate with other support systems.
- Tell the caregiver or student after you've done what you said you'd do. Predictability and consistency will help establish trust. Following through with the delivery of needed items is a concrete demonstration of support.