



Homeless Education 101:
Foundations for Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness

Welcome! We will begin momentarily.
Please say hello in the chat!

Your Presenters Today



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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 visit https://www.hetac.org/

Today's Agenda



- The Law
- Definitions
- Identification and Enrollment
- School of Origin
- Equal Access
- Coordination and Collaboration
- Local Liaisons
- Resources

Acknowledgement

Content for this presentation was informed by and adapted from *Homeless Education 101*, California Department of Education (CDE), Homeless Education Program, September 2025.

Acronyms (1)

- California Department of Education – CDE
- California Education Codes – *EC*
- California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System – CALPADS
- Consolidated Application and Reporting System – CARS
- Department of Housing and Urban Development – HUD
- Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act– FERPA
- Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center – HETAC

Acronyms (2)

- Housing Questionnaire – HQ
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act– IDEA
- Local Educational Agencies – LEAs, which includes county offices of education, school districts, and charter schools
- National Center for Homeless Education – NCHE
- PowerPoint – PPT
- School of Origin – SOO
- Unaccompanied Homeless Youth – UHY
- United States Code – U.S.C.



McKinney-Vento Act and California Education Codes

McKinney-Vento Act (1)

- The McKinney-Vento Act requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to ensure that each homeless child and youth has **equal access** to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as other children and youth.
- Homeless students must have access to the educational and related services that they need to enable them to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held.

McKinney-Vento Act (2)

- LEAs are also required to review and undertake steps to revise regulations, practices, or policies that may act as barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youth.
- LEAs must collaborate and coordinate with other federal and state educational programs, including Title I.
- It is also important to note that homeless students may not be separated from the mainstream school environment.

McKinney-Vento Act (3)

- The Education for Homeless Children and Youth program is authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 United States Code [U.S.C.] 11431 et seq.) (McKinney-Vento Act).
- The McKinney-Vento Act was originally authorized in 1987 and most recently re-authorized in December 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act.
- The complete legislation can be found at https://nche.ed.gov/legislation/mckinney-vento/

California Education Codes

- Over the years, California *Education Codes* (*EC*) have been amended to align to federal McKinney-Vento Act statute.
- Throughout the presentation, some California *EC* sections are cited, but here are other sections that are pertinent to homeless education:
  - Sections 48412, 48850, 48852.5, 48852.7, 48859, 48915.5, 48918.1, 49073, 49076, 51421, 51421.5, 51225.1, 51225.2, and 52052

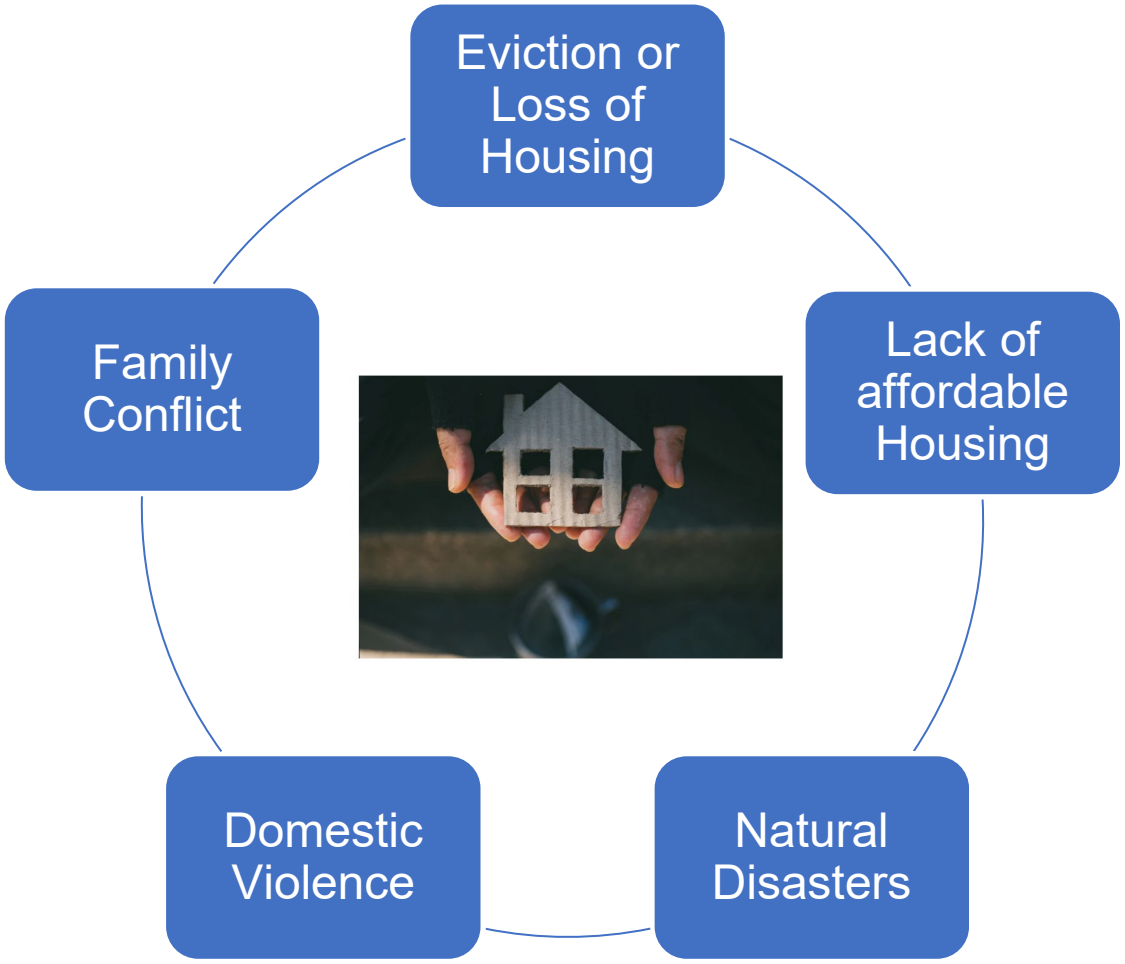


Causes and Impacts of Homelessness on Education

Causes of Homelessness

What are some other potential causes of Homelessness?

Please share in the chat



Impacts of Youth Homelessness

Homeless youth experience **disproportionately high rates** of

- unmet basic needs
- poor physical health
- untreated mental health issues
- substance use
- sexual, physical, or criminal exploitation
- school disengagement

Source: Congressional Research Service, *Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics and Programs*

The youth–adult pathway is the most common pathway to homelessness, with 35% of people experiencing homelessness as an adult having experienced homelessness in their formative years.

Source: Children and Youth Services Review, *Direct and Indirect Pathways Between Childhood Instability and Adult Homelessness in a Low-Income Population*

Challenges for Children and Youth

Children and youth experiencing homelessness may encounter several challenges, including:

- Lack of basic resources like a safe and stable place to live, food, and clothing
- Limited understanding of how to access available supports
- Stigma, bias, or misconceptions
- Ongoing fatigue, hunger, or the effects of trauma
- Parents' hesitation to share their situation due to fear
- Lack of a parent or guardian for unaccompanied youth

Barriers Faced

The McKinney-Vento Act addresses educational barriers and challenges that children and youth experiencing homelessness face when it relates to their right to enroll in and attend school, and provides supports needed for school success.

Some of the barriers these children and youth face are:

- Lack of identification
- Enrollment requirements
- Lack of school supplies and transportation

Educational Barriers

Difficulty Accessing School

- Limited or unreliable transportation
- Frequent moves or long distances to school

Barriers to Enrollment

- Missing immunization records
- Lack of birth certificates or other required documentation
- Limited access to basic school supplies

Academic Challenges

- Interrupted learning and credit deficiencies due to high mobility
- Difficulty keeping up with coursework during periods of instability

Attendance & Participation Issues

- Increased tardies and absences
- Challenges engaging in school activities due to fatigue, stress, or competing responsibilities



Definitions and Provisions

Homeless Definition (1)

- Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, which are defined as:
  - A **fixed** residence is one that is stationary, *permanent*, and not subject to change
  - A **regular** residence is one that is used on a normal, *standard*, and consistent basis
  - An **adequate** residence is one that is *sufficient* for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments

Homeless Definition (2)

Examples of homelessness include children and youth living in:

- Shared housing due to economic hardship
- Motels or hotels
- Public or private places not designed for sleeping
- Trailer parks or campgrounds
- Cars, parks, and abandoned buildings
- All shelters, including emergency or transitional shelters

Homeless Definition (3)

- Additional examples of homelessness include children and youth who are:
  - Abandoned in hospitals
  - Migratory children and unaccompanied youth who qualify as homeless
  - Living in substandard living conditions – please consider such things as health and safety concerns, number of occupants per square foot, the age of occupants, and state and local building codes

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Definition

- An UHY is a youth that is not in the custody of their parent or guardian and meet the definition of homelessness.
- Liaisons must help UHY choose and enroll in a school, give priority to the youth's wishes and inform the youth of his or her appeal rights.

Identification and Enrollment

How do LEAs identify and enroll students experiencing homelessness?

Please share in the chat



Identification and Enrollment (1)

- LEAs are required to identify, enroll immediately, and serve homeless children and youth.
- LEAs should identify through the initial registration process that includes the required Housing Questionnaire, along with a variety of other ways, such as:
  - Using the California Department of Education- (CDE-) developed Housing Questionnaire (HQ): https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/housingquestionnaire.pdf
  - Housing Questionnaire Guidance: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/guidanceforquestionnaire.docx

Identification and Enrollment (2)

- Make sure that educational rights are posted: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/homelesspostereng.pdf
  - Some of the locations should include schools, shelters, public libraries, and food pantries.
- View CDE's Identification Strategies PowerPoint (PPT) at: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/ehcyidstrategies.pptx



Identification and Enrollment (3)

Children and youth experiencing homelessness have the right to attend

- **The school of origin** [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(I)(i)]
  - The school that a child or youth attended when permanently housed, or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled
  - In California, can be school the student attended within the preceding 15 months with which student feels connected to
- **The local attendance area school** [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(A)(ii)]
  - Any public school that nonhomeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend

Identification and Enrollment (4)

- Once a student has been identified as homeless, the liaison must ensure that the student is immediately enrolled, regardless of documentation.
- Homeless students are to be enrolled, and complete enrollment requirements with the support of the homeless liaison in a timely manner. This includes support with school records, health records, proof of residency, guardianship, or other documents.

Identification and Enrollment (5)

- In addition, LEAs must develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, and retention of children and youth in homeless situations, including barriers due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.
- Enroll and enrollment means attending classes and participating fully in school activities.
- California *EC* Section 48850 aligns to the same provisions relating to immediate enrollment of homeless children and youth.

Identification and Enrollment (6)

- Lastly, any school records for students experiencing homelessness transferring from one LEA to another LEA should be transferred promptly and in a manner consistent with the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA).

- This will ensure that the records are made available in a timely manner when a child or youth enters the new LEA.

Preschool Enrollment

- Homeless liaisons are required to identify preschool-aged children experiencing homelessness through outreach and coordination activities with outside agencies.
- They are also required to ensure access to Head Start, early intervention (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act [IDEA], Part C), and other preschool programs administered by the LEA.
- Coordination with social service agencies, child development programs, early intervention programs, and other preschool programs is key to serve and support the younger children.

Charter Schools

- Charter schools that are LEAs or schools within LEAs must implement the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act to ensure that homeless students have access to and can succeed in their education.
- Services include those both for students who become homeless while attending a charter school as well as for homeless students who wish to enroll in a charter school.
- Charter school grants under Title IV, Part C, must work with charter schools on recruitment and enrollment practices to promote inclusion of all students, including eliminating any barriers to enrollment for foster youth and UHY.

Enrollment Reporting Requirements

- All LEAs are required to report the number of homeless students enrolled during a school year through the California Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System (CALPADS), annually.
- CALPADS is the longitudinal data system used to maintain individual-level data including student demographics, course data, discipline, assessments, staff assignments, and other data for state and federal reporting.
- It is important to upload as often as an LEA can to ensure homeless students are identified and receive services.



Questions?

School of Origin (1)

- 42 U.S.C. Section 11432[g] and California *EC* Section 48852.7 define school of origin (SOO) as the school the child/youth attended when permanently housed, the school last enrolled, or a school that the homeless child/youth has a connection to in the last 15 months.
  - This includes preschool and feeder school patterns
- Students can stay in their SOO the entire time they are homeless and until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing.

School of Origin (2)

- California *EC* Section 48852.7 aligns to this provision and allows a homeless youth, now permanently housed, to remain in their high school through graduation, if:
  - It is in the best interest of the student; and,
  - It is parent/guardian or UHY requested

School Stability (1)

- In determining best interest, the LEA shall:
  - Presume that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student's best interest, unless contrary to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth
  - Consider student-centered factors, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety
  - Give priority to the request of the parent/guardian
  - Give priority to the UHY's request

School Stability (2)

- If, after conducting the best interest determination, the LEA determines that it is not in the child's or youth's best interest to attend the school of origin or the school requested by the parent or guardian, or (in the case of an unaccompanied youth) the youth, the LEA shall provide the child's or youth's parent or guardian or the unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of the reasons for its determination, in a manner and form understandable to the parent, guardian, or youth, including information regarding the right to appeal.

Equal Access

- Gifted and Talented Education
- Special education
- Migrant education
- English learner programs
- Transportation
- Vocational education
- Title I
- State Meal Program
- Before and/or after school programs
- Higher Education

Policies (1)

- Policies should be put into place to ensure identification, enrollment, and access to educational services and supports.
- LEAs are required to develop and implement local policies that support identification, enrollment, and retention, including UHY.
- The policies should also include how the LEA removes barriers due to fees, fines, and absences.
- Credit accrual and full participation in academic and extra-curricular activities should be addressed as well as school stability, transportation, privacy, and collaboration.

Policies (2)

- LEAs and their liaisons must implement those policies.
- California *EC* Section 51225.1 is aligned to these requirements, as well.
- LEAs shall update these policies at intervals that shall not exceed three years EC Section 48851.3
- Policies should also be reviewed and revised after state and federal laws have changed pertaining to homeless children and youth.

Transportation (1)

- Local liaisons must ensure that the parent or guardian of a homeless child or youth, and any unaccompanied youth, is fully informed of all transportation services, including transportation to and from the school of origin, and is assisted in accessing transportation to the school selected in accordance with the best interest determination.
- In addition to providing transportation to the school of origin, LEAs must provide students in homeless situations with the same transportation services provided to all other students in the school. This would be considered a comparable service.
- Transportation is often a barrier to attendance even if the student is not accessing their school of origin.

Transportation (2)

- LEAs must provide transportation to and from the school of origin, including until the end of the year when the student obtains permanent housing, at the request of a parent or guardian (or at the liaison's request for UHY).
- If the LEA of origin and the LEA of residence cannot agree on who will pay the costs, the two LEAs must share the costs. Transportation and Homeless Education PPT at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/homelessedandtrans.pptx and a sample Transportation Agreement at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/transportationmou.pdf

College and Career Readiness

- All homeless youth must be able to receive assistance from counselors to advise such youths and prepare and improve the readiness of such youths for college.
- Liaisons must ensure UHY are informed of their status as independent students and may obtain assistance from the liaison to receive verification of that status.
- Homeless Education and School Counselors PPT at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/homelessschoolcounselor.pptx

Dispute Resolution (1)

- If a dispute arises over **eligibility, school selection, or enrollment** in a school:
  - The student shall be immediately enrolled in the school in which enrollment is sought, that is school of origin or local school, pending resolution of the dispute (including all available appeals)
  - The parent, guardian, or UHY must be provided a written explanation of decisions made and how to appeal the decisions

Dispute Resolution (2)

- If the dispute is appealed at the district level, then the appeal will be referred to the county office of education, and if dispute is appealed, again, then it is referred to the State Coordinator at the CDE.
- You can find information about California's Homeless Education Dispute Resolution Process at the CDE Resources for Homeless Children and Youth web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/disputeresolutionletter2020.docx



Questions?

Coordination Within the LEA

- LEAs must coordinate McKinney-Vento services with a variety of programs within the LEA such as Title I, Special Education, Migrant Education, Transportation, Food Services, even Data.
- Information about a homeless student's living situation is a student education record subject to the FERPA and should be kept within the LEA's boundaries.

Coordination with Title I (1)

- Homeless children are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of their current academic performance and their school of attendance.
- State report cards must disaggregate achievement and high school graduation data for homeless students.
- Local plans must be coordinated with McKinney-Vento programs and describe the services provided to homeless students, including any reserved funds, to support their enrollment, attendance, and success.

Coordination with Title I (2)

- All LEAs that receive Title I, Part A funds must reserve (set-aside) the funds necessary to provide homeless children services comparable to services provided in Title I, Part A schools:
    - The reservation amount must be based on the total LEA allocation prior to expenditures, may be determined based on a needs assessment, and should involve the liaison.

Coordination with Title I (3)

- Some of the allowable uses of these funds include:
  - Providing comparable services to homeless children and youth despite their school of attendance
  - Services not ordinarily provided to other students
  - Providing transportation to the school of origin and to fund the liaison
- Title I, Part A Reservation Funds for Homeless Education: https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/allowableexpenses.docx

Coordination with Title I (4)

- **HETAC Title I suite of tip Sheets**
  - Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness Under Title I, Part A (foundational knowledge)
  - Allowable and Strategic Uses of Title I, Part A Homeless Reservation Funds
  - Making the Case for Partnership Across Homeless Education and Title I, Part A Programs
  - Working Together Across Homeless Education and Title I, Part A: Cross-Program Partnership Strategies

Consolidated Application (1)

- Through the Consolidated Application and Reporting System (CARS), LEAs are required to indicate the reservation amount, and what Title I services were provided.
- CARS is a two-part application and reporting process for multiple state and federal, formula-driven, categorical program funds submitted by LEAs.
- There is a Winter Release and a Spring Release. Typically, the Winter Release is from January 15 through February 28, annually. The Spring Release is from May 15 through June 30, annually.

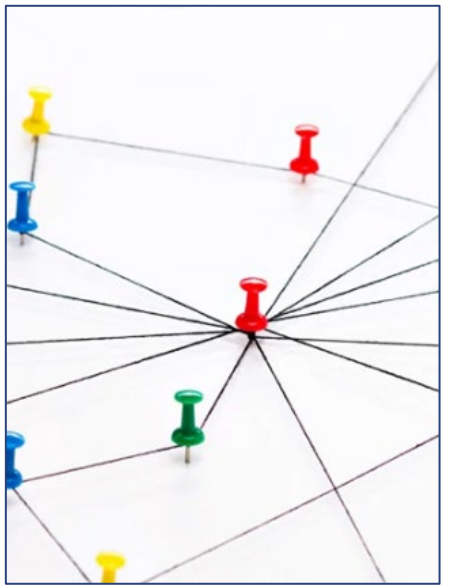
Consolidated Application (2)

- Effective coordination between Title I and Homeless Education programs (given the requirements in both programs to serve homeless children and youth) can have substantive impacts on many homeless students.
  - Title I and local liaison coordination including data sharing and resources
  - Include homeless education on LEA-level plans
- All About Data and Homeless Education PPT at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/documents/ehcydataandhe.pptx

Coordination and Collaboration

What other departments or programs might need to coordinate to support students experiencing homelessness?

Please share in the chat



Liaison Duties and Responsibilities (1)

Every LEA must designate a McKinney-Vento liaison able to carry out their legal duties. Liaisons must ensure that:

- Homeless students enroll in and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in school
- Children and youth in homeless situations are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other entities and agencies
- Access is provided to all and barriers to enrollment and retention are removed

Liaison Duties and Responsibilities (2)

- Public notice of educational rights is disseminated in locations frequented by parents, guardians, and UHY, in a manner and form understandable to them.
  - Posters can be accessed at the CDE's Resources for Homeless Children and Youth web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/
- Parents or guardians are informed of educational opportunities and transportation services.

Liaison Duties and Responsibilities (3)

- School personnel providing McKinney-Vento services receive professional development and other support
- Children, youth, and families have access to and receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, early intervention (IDEA, Part C), and other preschool programs
- Children, youth, and families receive referrals to health care, dental, mental health, substance abuse, housing, and other services

Liaison Duties and Responsibilities (4)

- Children and youth who do not have immunizations are assisted
- Liaisons participate in professional development and technical assistance as determined appropriate by the State Coordinator
- Liaisons coordinate and collaborate services for homeless children, youth, and their families
- Liaisons collaborate with the State Coordinator, community agencies, and school personnel

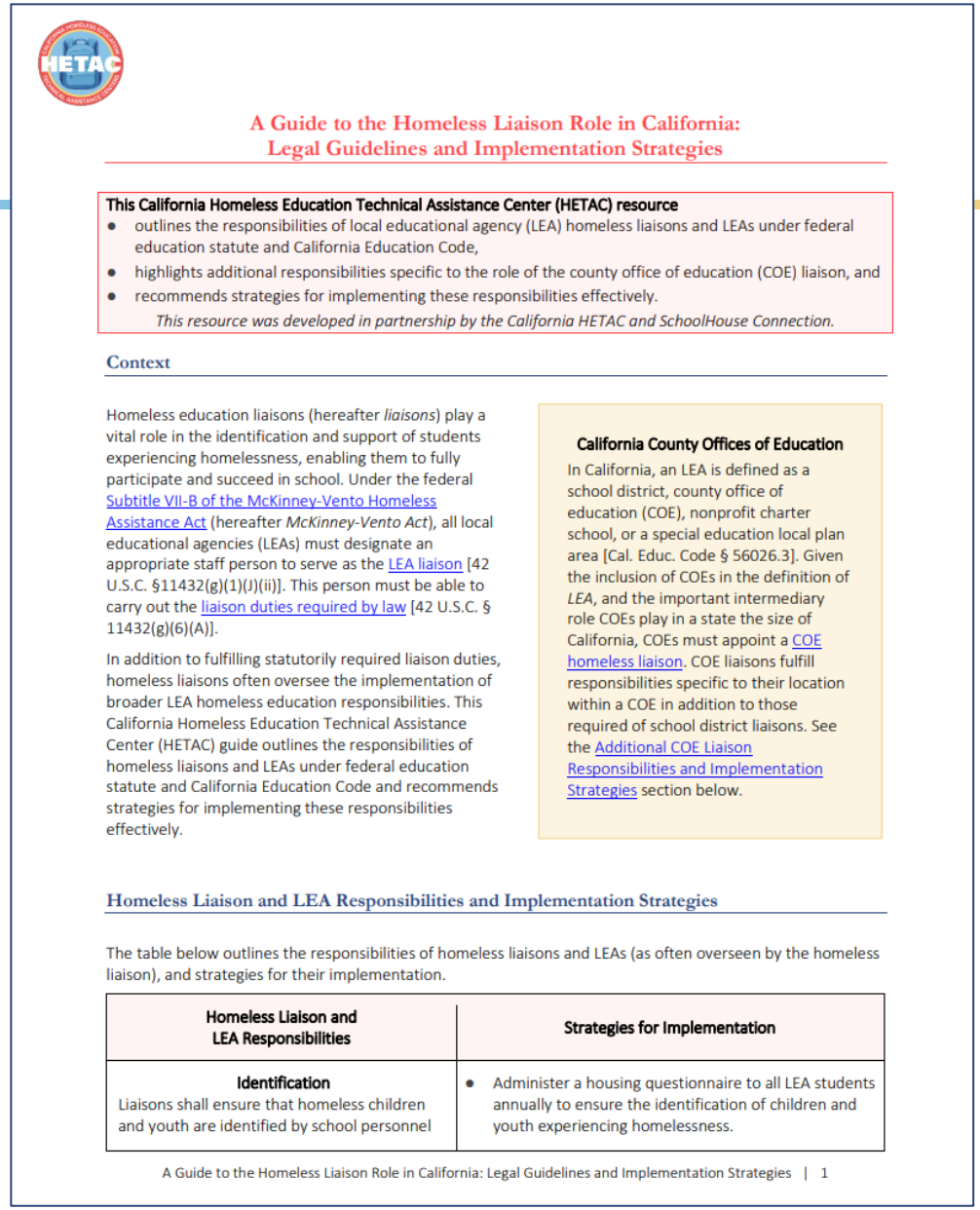
Liaison Duties and Responsibilities (5)

- Disputes are promptly resolved
- Assistance to access transportation is provided
- UHY are enrolled in school and that procedures are implemented to identify and remove barriers that prevent them from receiving credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed at a prior school, in accordance with state, local, and school policies

HETAC Resource

A Guide to the Homeless Liaison Role in California:

Legal Guidelines and Implementation Strategies



A Guide to the Homeless Liaison Role in California:
Legal Guidelines and Implementation Strategies

This California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC) resource

- outlines the responsibilities of local educational agency (LEA) homeless liaisons and LEAs under federal education statute and California Education Code,
- highlights additional responsibilities specific to the role of the county office of education (COE) liaison, and
- recommends strategies for implementing these responsibilities effectively.

This resource was developed in partnership by the California HETAC and SchoolHouse Connection.

Context

Homeless education liaisons (hereafter *liaisons*) play a vital role in the identification and support of students experiencing homelessness, enabling them to fully participate and succeed in school. Under the federal Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (hereafter *McKinney-Vento Act*), all local educational agencies (LEAs) must designate an appropriate staff person to serve as the LEA liaison [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)]. This person must be able to carry out the liaison duties required by law [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)].

In addition to fulfilling statutorily required liaison duties, homeless liaisons often oversee the implementation of broader LEA homeless education responsibilities. This California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC) guide outlines the responsibilities of homeless liaisons and LEAs under federal education statute and California Education Code and recommends strategies for implementing these responsibilities effectively.

California County Offices of Education

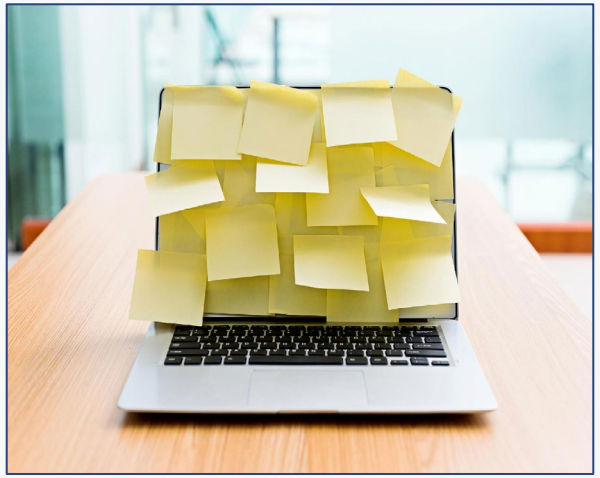
In California, an LEA is defined as a school district, county office of education (COE), nonprofit charter school, or a special education local plan area [Cal. Educ. Code § 56026.3]. Given the inclusion of COEs in the definition of *LEA*, and the important intermediary role COEs play in a state the size of California, COEs must appoint a COE homeless liaison. COE liaisons fulfill responsibilities specific to their location within a COE in addition to those required of school district liaisons. See the Additional COE Liaison Responsibilities and Implementation Strategies section below.

Homeless Liaison and LEA Responsibilities and Implementation Strategies

The table below outlines the responsibilities of homeless liaisons and LEAs (as often overseen by the homeless liaison), and strategies for their implementation.

Homeless Liaison and LEA Responsibilities	Strategies for Implementation
Identification Liaisons shall ensure that homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel	• Administer a housing questionnaire to all LEA students annually to ensure the identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

A Guide to the Homeless Liaison Role in California: Legal Guidelines and Implementation Strategies | 1



Resources

Liaisons and Listservs

- Join the Homeless Children and Youths Resources Listserv to receive information and updates relating to the education of homeless children and youths at the CDE's Homeless Education Resources Listserv web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/homelesslistserv.asp

- The listing of liaisons can be accessed at the CDE's Homeless Education web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/

Resources (1)

- General Homeless Education information can be found on the CDE's Homeless Education web page at https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/
- General Homeless Education email at HomelessEd@cde.ca.gov
- Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC) web site at https://www.hetac.org/

Resources (2)

- National Center for Homeless Education web site at https://nche.ed.gov/, which is the technical assistance center for the U.S. Department of Education.
- SchoolHouse Connection web site at https://schoolhouseconnection.org/, which is a national non-profit organization working to overcome homelessness through education.



Questions?

What Do You Think?



Please share in the chat:

What is one key takeaway from today's webinar?

What is one action step you'll take as a result of our time together today?

Thanks for Joining!



Visit our website at ***https://www.hetac.org/***

Next Webinar:

Chronic Absenteeism
Thursday, November 19, 2026
1:00-2:30 pm

Webinar Evaluation

Please take a few moments to fill out our webinar evaluation