COVID-19 and Unaccompanied Homeless Youth: School-Based Strategies for Support

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We Believe...

In the transformational power of the health and education intersection

HEALTHY STUDENTS
make better learners
REMINDERS

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OBJECTIVES

- Understand the unique experience of unaccompanied youth who experience homelessness, and the barriers they face during the pandemic.
- Understand the federal education rights afforded to unaccompanied homeless youth, as well as the state laws related to minors’ ability to consent to COVID-19 resources.
- Be equipped to find resources to implement federal and state laws related to unaccompanied homeless youths’ education and health care.
TODAY’S PRESENTERS:

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SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

Federal and state policy advocacy
Q&A from our inbox
Webinars and implementation tools
Youth leadership and scholarship

www.schoolhouseconnection.org
Today’s Agenda

→ Understanding Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness
→ Basic Overview of Federal K-12 Educational Rights
→ Promoting Access to Vaccines
→ Promoting Access to COVID-19 Testing
→ Promoting Access to Education and Safety During Quarantines
Who is Considered Homeless Under Federal Education Law?

The McKinney-Vento Act definition: Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason. 
  
  78% of identified M-V students in 2019–20

- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations. 
  
  Motels: 7%

- Living in emergency or transitional shelters. 
  
  11%

- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings. 4%

  - What is substandard? Check utilities; infestations; mold; dangers.
Homelessness Among PreK-12 Students

Figure 1. Enrolled students experiencing homelessness by state, School Years 2004-05 through 2019-20: Ungraded, 3- to 5-year olds, and Kindergarten to Grade 12

- 1.2 million students K-12 in the 2019-20 School year
- Virtual schooling decreased ability to identify and enroll
- National survey found 28% drop in fall of 2020
- Anecdotally, many schools are on pace to exceed pre-pandemic levels

Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Analysis

Survey results show:
**5.4% of high school students indicated they had experienced homelessness in the 2018-2019 school year**

For every 18.5 high school students, 1 has experienced homelessness.

Data: SchoolHouse Connection’s analysis of 2019 YRBS data from 27 states (AK, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, HI, ID, IL, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MI, MT, NH, NM, NC, ND, PA, RI, SC, SD, VT, VA, WI)
Definition: Unaccompanied youth

A child or youth without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

- Youth run away from home due to abuse or neglect.
  - 40-60% of unaccompanied youth were abused physically at home.
  - 17-25% of unaccompanied youth were abused sexually at home.
  - Research links parental substance abuse and youth running away from home.
- Parents force youth out of the home due to conflicts.
  - Sexual orientation and gender identity
  - Pregnancy
- Loss of parent/caregiver
  - 35% of youth experienced death of parent or caregiver

BEFORE COVID-19:
Homelessness Among Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adults
*https://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/national-estimates-of-youth-homelessness/

3.5 million young adults
About 3.5 million young adults (18-25 year olds), about 1 in 10 experienced homelessness on their own over the course of a year.

700,000 minors
1 out of 30 youth between the ages of 13-17.

112,822 identified by public schools
were identified by public schools in 2019-2020 (9% of all identified homeless students K-12)
Disproportionate Incidence of Homelessness: Analysis of CDC's Youth Risk Behavior Survey

- Black high school students: 2.25 times compared to White high school students
- Hispanic high school students: 2 times compared to White high school students
- American Indian/Alaska Native high school students: 1.7 times compared to White high school students
- LGBQ high school students: 2.2 times compared to heterosexual high school students
- Transgender high school students: 9.22 times compared to non-transgender/cisgender high school students
- Pregnant/Gotten someone pregnant: 10 times compared to no pregnancy
Vulnerabilities: CDC’s Youth Risk Behavior Survey

24 States
- Suicidality
- Substance Use
- Alcohol Abuse
- Risky Sexual Behavior
- Poor Grades

12 Districts
- Suicidality
- Substance Use
- Alcohol Abuse
- Risky Sexual Behavior
- Poor Grades

Note. Odds ratios describe association of homelessness with poor outcomes, controlling for race/ethnicity, sex, age, and victimization. Lines represent 95% confidence intervals. All models control for demographics and victimization.

High School Students Experiencing Homelessness, Nemours Children’s Health System
National High School Graduation Rates 2018-2019

- Students Experiencing Homelessness: 67.8%
- Economically-Disadvantaged Students: 80%
- All Students: 85.8%

2021 Building a Grad Nation Report
Homelessness and Education

Homelessness causes:
- Chronic health problems
- Trauma
- Mobility

Leading to:
- High rates of chronic absenteeism
- Double the rates of punitive discipline
- Lower graduation rates

And the lack of a high school degree is the Greatest single risk factor for young adult homelessness.
Impact of COVID-19

- More homelessness (evictions, family stress)
- More mobility (fewer shelter options)
- More isolation
- More basic needs and mental health issues
- Drop in school enrollment and attendance, lack of transportation, devices/connectivity
- Barriers to vaccines/tests
Basic McKinney-Vento Rights

- School of origin
- Transportation
- Immediate enrollment
- Removing barriers

https://schoolhouseconnection.org/mckinney-vento-act/
McKinney-Vento Liaisons

- Required to be designated in every LEA.
- Ten specific duties
  - Identification
  - Enrollment
  - Early childhood services
  - Referrals to outside agencies
  - Public notice
  - Professional Development within the LEA

- Directory of State Homeless Education Coordinators and Local Homeless Liaisons
Main purposes of American Rescue Plan—Homeless Children and Youth program

Areas of focus include supporting the

Identification

School engagement and

Provision of wrap-around services

to children and youth experiencing homelessness

Particularly for underserved populations
ARP-HCY Funds

• $800 million in ESSER funds “set-aside” for homeless children and youth under ARP section 2001(b)(1)

• ARP Homeless I: $199,750,000 disbursed to SEAs in late April
  • Distributed primarily to local educational agencies (LEAs) already receiving McKinney-Vento subgrant funds

• ARP Homeless II: $599,250,000 disbursed to SEAs in late July
  • Distributed to LEAs via a formula established via emergency rulemaking

• ARP-HCY State Plans under review and revision
  • 28 state plans by mid-December
The opportunities and priorities for ARP-HCY

• Collaborating and contracting with state and local agencies and community-based organizations to plan for and provide wrap-around services

• Engaging CBO’s that are well-positioned to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness from historically underserved communities:
  • rural children and youth  
  • tribal children and youth  
  • students of color  
  • pregnant, parenting, or caregiving English learners

  • LGBTQ+ youth  
  • justice-involved youth  
  • children and youth with disabilities

• Innovative practices to support unaccompanied homeless youth
  • State or regional systems navigators for housing and higher education
  • State and school district advisory councils incl. people with lived experience of homelessness
Promoting Access to Vaccines
Understanding state law

- **34 states and DC** provide rights for minors who are living on their own, including unaccompanied minors experiencing homelessness, to consent for routine health care without a parent or legal guardian.
- This should include vaccinations unless explicitly exempted.
- Additional state laws also exist regarding consent for infectious diseases, reproductive health care, STIs, mental health care, and substance abuse treatment.
- Note: Local jurisdictions can enact their own broader emergency ordinances, see San Francisco’s [here](#).
Promoting Access to Vaccines

Ensure health care providers, especially school nurses, and school officials know these laws and fully implement them:

- Explain state laws (don’t just link to them) on school district and health provider websites and other outreach materials.
- Create forms and other tools to help implement.

Ensure youth know about these laws:

- Work with youth to create youth-facing outreach/materials.
- Partner with CBOs and faith-based organizations that serve marginalized populations.
Note: Child welfare referrals are not appropriate.

- Being UHY should not be construed as de facto abuse and neglect. Research shows youth avoid services if they believe they will be reported.

Offer vaccines at schools and prioritize unaccompanied youth for access at school, where school nurses and others administering vaccines may be more likely to understand both MV and state minor consent laws.

Offer transportation and support accessing off-site vaccination clinics for UHY in particular.
Promoting Access to Testing
Promoting Access to Testing

Understand state laws on minor consent to testing.

Help youth, providers, and educators understand and implement these laws.

Make necessary testing available immediately at schools at no cost.
- Allow the youth, school district liaison or other caretaker to sign any necessary paperwork, consistent with state law.
- Permit over-the-counter tests to satisfy testing requirements if other tests are not immediately available.
- Allow unaccompanied homeless youth who are not able to consent on their own for a vaccine, but who can consent to a test, to be tested at school and at no cost, and return to the classroom with a negative test, so that they are not relegated to virtual learning, or shut out of school altogether.
Quarantines and Homelessness
Children and youth who experience homelessness often have no safe, stable place to quarantine.

Access to education, health and safety are jeopardized during these periods.

Virtual learning creates many challenges for homeless students:, including accessing wifi and devices, no quiet place to do schoolwork, greater isolation, more mobility, and fewer opportunities to disclose needs confidentially to trusted adults.
Promoting Access to Education, Health, and Safety During School Quarantines
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- Provide access to needed testing at schools and at no cost to children and youth experiencing homelessness.
- Assist families and youth with any needed transportation to testing sites.
- Work with McKinney-Vento liaisons to establish a district-wide plan for communicating with and supporting students experiencing homelessness during any necessary quarantines.
Promoting Access to Education, Health, and Safety During School Quarantines

- Check in on identified children and youth experiencing homelessness daily throughout their quarantine period, to ensure that they can access testing, help them find safe/stable places to stay, food, and all that they need to participate in virtual learning.
- Publicize information about the definition of homelessness, and make available youth- and parent-facing information about McKinney-Vento rights and services.
- Work with community-based youth homelessness and housing partners to ensure that students experiencing homelessness are able to continue accessing their classes virtually or otherwise.
QUESTIONS?
THANK YOU!

Additional Questions? Contact us at: info@sbh4all.org