

## Homeless Students: Program Examples

Available data indicate that the number of homeless youth is growing. Estimates suggest that 75% of homeless students do not graduate high school, with all this harbingers for their future and for society.

Passage of the McKinney-Vento Act in 1987 established a source of dedicated funding to assist schools in providing for homeless students. As specified in the Act, students are considered homeless “if they are living doubled up due to economic hardship or loss of housing, living in an emergency or transitional shelter, living unsheltered in a place not meant for human habitation, or living in non-publicly funded hotels or motels due to a lack of alternative accommodation.”

McKinney-Vento funds are the only source of federal funding dedicated to the identification and support of homeless students. Districts do not receive grants directly, but must apply to their state for a subgrant. The amount of money a state receives is not directly based on its number of homeless students, but a district's count is often a key part of the subgrant application. The difficult task of identifying homeless students in rural areas, due to geographic sprawl and a larger proportion of doubled-up students, can affect a district's likelihood of receiving McKinney-Vento funds.

From: *Student Homelessness in Rural America* <https://www.icphusa.org/reports/ruralreport/undefined>

In a previous resource, the Center highlighted facets of homeless youth and schooling (see *About Homeless Youth* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/pdfdocs/homeless.pdf>). The present resource provides a few examples (culled from website descriptions) of programmatic efforts to serve homeless young people in schools.

### Los Angeles Unified School District

LAUSD is the second largest public school system in the nation (over 600,000 students enrolled in over 1,000 schools). Their Homeless Education Program affects thousands of children.

*Purpose:* The program was designed to provide assistance to homeless students and families in compliance with the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Program personnel work in collaboration with school personnel and community service agencies in an effort to maximize access to various educational, social and enrichment programs which promote academic success.

#### Program Objectives:

- Provide ongoing training, technical assistance and advocacy district wide to ensure federal statutes and district policy are being followed in regards to homeless students in the LAUSD.
- Remove barriers to academic success for McKinney Vento eligible students by providing needed supplies such as backpacks, school supplies, clothing, transportation, etc.
- Educate students and parents on their educational rights.
- Promote parent participation in school related activities.

---

\*The material in this document reflects work done by Samantha Scoppettone as part of her involvement with the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA.

The center is co-directed by Howard Adelman and Linda Taylor and operates under the auspices of the School Mental Health Project, Dept. of Psychology, UCLA,  
Website: <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu> Send comments to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

**Feel free to share and reproduce this document.**

*Staffing:* There are 29 full time employees, including a program coordinator, district pupil attendance and service counselors, counselors specifically for homeless youth, and a parent community facilitator who targets outreach to families of homeless youth.

*Services:* The program educates parents/guardians on what they and the child are entitled to under the McKinney-Vento Act. It provides services for transportation to the child's school of origin to create stability and includes advocates who help students enroll. Students are provided essential school supplies, hygiene kits, and clothing. Parent participation in school activities is promoted. Special events and projects are designed to inspire and encourage homeless youth to stay in school.  
<https://achieve.lausd.net/cms/lib/CA01000043/Centricity/Domain/577/PAC/February%202017/HomelessEd.pdf>

## **Long Beach Unified School District**

The Long Beach Unified School District educates over 3,000 students district wide every year. The district's Mary McLeod Bethune Transitional Center has earned a national "Recognition of Excellence" award from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for creating "an innovative facility to serve and educate homeless children." The center is part of a 26 acre lot that provides housing and many services to veterans. The facilities include classrooms, administrative offices, restrooms, a lunch area, playground, storage sheds that contain donated items for the youth, a food serving area and a laundry facility. Financial support comes from federal money and from local corporate partners.

The Bethune Center serves about 400 homeless students each year, providing hot meals, transportation and necessities such as school uniforms, backpacks, hygiene packs, school supplies and books, as well as referrals for health exams, tutoring and mental health counseling. The success of this program is largely attributed to creating an inclusive environment for homeless youth.

[http://www.lbschools.net/Departments/Education\\_Foundation/programs.cfm](http://www.lbschools.net/Departments/Education_Foundation/programs.cfm)

## **New York State Education Department**

Available data indicate that the number of homeless students in New York City reached an all time high of 114,000 in 2018. The City added an additional \$12 million to its budget for homeless students, bringing the investment up to \$28 million. As they improve their homeless programs in schools, the State's Education Department is employing a user friendly website to inform parents and students about the resources available to those students who qualify under the McKinney-Vento Act. Examples include free immunizations, clothes, school supplies, waiving of all school fees, school lunches, medical and dental services, eyeglasses, tutoring, transportation to school, and counseling services. To promote college attendance, the state department ensures that fees are waived for AP, IB, SAT/ACT, GED testing and for college entrance exams and applications.

<http://www.nysed.gov/common/nysed/files/2017-18-homeless-allowable-unallowable.pdf>

## **Monarch School, San Diego**

Monarch School serves homeless students (grades K-12) living in shelters, motels, single room occupancy housing, double- or tripled-up with other families, at camp sites, in cars, or on the streets. in San Diego County. The school is a public school operated under the San Diego County Office of Education's Juvenile Court and Community Schools educational program. It operates as a public-private partnership between the San Diego County Office of Education and the nonprofit Monarch School Project. The school has served San Diego for over three decades.

Monarch can serve up to 350 students daily. Students are referred through shelters and other social service agencies, school districts, and word of mouth. On average, students attend for 11 months. However, many students are enrolled for years and even attend until graduation.

Monarch's program is designed to provide a safe, stable environment for learning, with wraparound services to meet basic needs. It emphasizes students gaining the skills they need to improve their lives, develop awareness of their emotions, explore their passions and plan for a life of self-sufficient living. <https://monarchschoools.org/about/>

Homeless students in rural areas tend to be given short shrift. Reports indicate that only 42% of rural homeless students are covered by federal funding, meaning they attended school in a district that received McKinney-Vento subgrants, compared to 67% of non-rural students.

## **Embedding Interventions for Homeless Students into a Unified, Comprehensive, and Equitable System for Addressing Barriers to Learning and Teaching**

Besides assisting with housing, it remains unclear as to the degree to which subgroups of homeless students require supports that differ from other students who also need effective caretaking and special assistance. In general, schools need to understand that many of the concerns about homeless students are similar to other students experiencing factors interfering with well-being at school. Such an understanding has significant system development and policy implications.

From our perspective, it is essential for policy makers always to think beyond discrete interventions if they are to ensure equity of opportunity for every student to succeed at school. Given sparse resources, we stress that schools must embed their focus on homeless students into a unified, comprehensive, and equitable system of student/learning supports. And in doing so, they must outreach to the community and weave school and community resources together. (See *Improving School Improvement* – [http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving\\_school\\_improvement.html](http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/improving_school_improvement.html) .)

## **Concluding Comments**

Addressing the problem of homelessness requires community-wide efforts with strategic support from local, state, and federal policy makers. A sense of this can be gleaned from *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* (<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opening-doors> ).

In connection with the strategic plan, a *Guidebook Series on Ending Youth Homelessness* was developed. See

- *Guidebook Series Overview Fact Sheet* – describes what the guidebooks are, gives an explanation of their purpose, and provides a brief overview of each guidebook. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-Overview.pdf>
- *Ending Youth Homelessness: System Planning* – provides an overview of Federal Partners' expectations and promising strategies for system planning to end youth homelessness. Ultimately, the system design will connect community partners and resources via an intentional strategy and the youth homelessness system will meet the core outcomes for youth as described in the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Federal Framework to End Youth Homelessness. This Guidebook focuses on engaging key community partners, establishing a decision-making and management structure, leveraging data across systems, and designing an organized youth housing and services array. <https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-System-Planning.pdf>
- *Ending Youth Homelessness: Mainstream System Collaboration* – reviews the various mainstream systems needed to partner with homelessness system stakeholders in order to design and implement an effective system to prevent and end youth homelessness: Child Welfare, Education, Workforce, Justice, Housing, Healthcare, Early Childhood Education, Community Organizations, and Mainstream Benefits. For each system, the guidebook reviews: how the system impacts and contributes to positive outcomes for youth; what resources are available within each system; who to connect with and engage;

and examples of successful collaborative efforts from across the country.

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-Mainstream-System-Collaboration.pdf>

- *Ending Youth Homelessness: Promising Program Models* – designed to help CoCs, youth-serving organizations, and other stakeholders effectively serve the youth in their communities who are experiencing or at-risk of homelessness. This Guidebook describes key features of emerging program models to prevent and end youth homelessness; highlighting promising practices and possible funding sources to help communities plan, develop, and improve their own youth-appropriate services. With a well-coordinated and proportionate housing and service delivery system, communities can prevent and end youth homelessness.

<https://www.hudexchange.info/resources/documents/Ending-Youth-Homelessness-Promising-Program-Models.pdf>

## A Few Recent References

Clemens, E., Hess, R.S., Strear, M.M., Rue, L., Rizzolo, S., & Henniger, J, (2018). Promoting resilience in youth experiencing homelessness through the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act, *Preventing School Failure: Alternative Education for Children and Youth*, 62, 105-115.

<https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/pdf/10.1080/1045988X.2017.1387756?needAccess=true&>

Madison Metropolitan School District (2018). *Potential warning signs of homelessness*.

<https://studentservices.madison.k12.wi.us/node/360>

Pavlakakis, A.E, (2018). Reaching all families: Family, school, and community partnerships amid homelessness and high mobility in an urban district. *Urban Education*, 53, 1043-1073.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0042085915613547>

Pavlakakis, A.E. (2018, March). Spaces, places, and policies: Contextualizing student homelessness. *Educational Researcher*, 47, 134-141.

<https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.3102/0013189X17742645>

## Resource Links

>*youth.gov* (addresses the six main issues that homeless students face, such as housing, employment and education attainment, connecting students to supportive adults [such as an informal mentorship], providing independent living skills and training, connecting homeless youth to mainstream resources, and providing individual plans for the goals that this population has) –

<https://youth.gov/youth-topics/runaway-and-homeless-youth/education>

>*The National Center for Homeless Education* – <https://nche.ed.gov/>

>*Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness* – <http://www.icphusa.org/>

>*National Alliance to End Homelessness* – <http://www.endhomelessness.org/>

>*National Association for the Education of Homeless Children & Youth* – <http://www.naehcy.org/>

>*National Coalition for the Homeless* – <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/>

>*National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty* – <http://www.nlchp.org/>

For more on this matter, see the resource links provided in the Center’s Quick Find on

>*Homeless Children and Youth* – <http://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/qf/homeless.htm>