

# TIPS FOR TEACHERS/STAFF: SUPPORTING STUDENTS IN HOMELESS SITUATIONS DURING THE COVID-19 CLOSURE



For many students experiencing homelessness, school is the only place of stability in their lives. Teachers play a critical role in creating classroom environments that provide safety, security, and acceptance for all students; especially students who have experienced trauma due to homelessness and other factors.

Covid-19 school closures have placed homeless students in even more precarious situations as they lack access to basic needs, live in unstable housing or overcrowded situations, and lack the technological resources to complete school work.

WHO IS HOMELESS UNDER THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT? STUDENTS THAT LACK A **FIXED, REGULAR, AND ADEQUATE** NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE AND LIVE IN ONE OF THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS:

HOTEL/MOTEL



SHELTER



CAR/PARK/TENT



TRAVEL TRAILER



DOUBLED-UP/OVERCROWDED



UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH:



## WHAT DO TEACHERS/STAFF NEED TO KNOW ABOUT STUDENT HOMELESSNESS & THE COVID-19 CRISIS?

- Homeless students rely heavily on school meal programs as a vital source of food.
- Majority of parents are in the service industry and have either lost their jobs or are considered Essential Workers.
- Child care options are limited. Older students are often caregivers for younger siblings or are working to support their family or themselves, if unaccompanied.
- Unaccompanied Youth may have a more difficult time finding temporarily places to stay due to Covid-19 (layoffs, fears, etc.) and are more susceptible to abuse or human trafficking.
- Doubled-up families are also more likely to lose their housing for fears of COVID-19, loss of jobs, and children not in school. Overcrowded conditions limit student ability to do school work.
- Social Services programs are maxed out. Shelters in surrounding areas are filled.
- Many students have Special Education needs, language barriers, and/or may be struggling academically due to frequent moves. Lengthy school closures exasperate these concerns.
- With stress, comes increases in domestic violence and/or abuse.

## WHAT CAN TEACHERS/STAFF DO TO SUPPORT MCKINNEY-VENTO STUDENTS DURING THE CLOSURE?

- Build trust with all your students and their parents/guardians and reach out to them regularly.
- Collaborate with school staff to check in with students with a history of absenteeism, high mobility or have indicated the need to move soon.
- Learn more about the McKinney-Vento and collaborate with your liaison to help identify students experiencing homelessness and use the McKinney-Vento Referral Form to connect students/parents to needed services.
- Avoid using the word “homeless” when talking to families. Use terms such as temporarily living arrangement, in transition, or in-between housing.
- Be flexible and understanding of students’ access to technology, familial academic support, childcare responsibilities, need to support self (unaccompanied), and work demands.
- Be cognizant of increased potential for abuse and look out for warning signs.
- Take an informed and caring approach to students and parents as homelessness is traumatic and even more so coupled with a national crisis.

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[McKinney-Vento Referral Form](#)