



CALIFORNIA
DEPARTMENT OF
EDUCATION

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HOMELESS EDUCATION THE MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT

The California Department of Education (CDE) is pleased to provide you with important information and resources regarding homeless education, the federal law entitled McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Title 42 *United States Code* Section 11431 et seq.), and the relationship with Head Start and the CDE's Early Education and Support Division (EESD) contractors. Within the CDE this internal collaborative consisting of the Homeless Education program, the California Head Start State Collaboration Office (CHSSCO), and EESD have shared responsibilities by federal law to coordinate and collaborate at the state level to provide information and resources to best serve California's most vulnerable population, including children and families who are homeless. The outcome of this CDE internal partnership is to foster and encourage local connections by providing education and resources to the field.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is the primary piece of federal legislation that deals with the education for homeless children and youth. This includes a collaboration and coordination with various entities including, but not limited to, child development programs, preschool, Head Start, LEAs, and public education programs, including referrals and work with families. McKinney-Vento defines homeless children and youth as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This definition also includes:

- Children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Children who may be living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, shelters, or awaiting foster care placement
- Children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are children who are living in similar circumstances listed above

It is estimated that over 1.6 million children experience homelessness each year, and over 40 percent of children living in shelters are under the age of five. Infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are homeless are at grave risk of developmental delays due to a variety of physical and mental health factors such as a lack of prenatal and early health care, crowded and unsanitary living conditions, environmental contaminants like lead, and the trauma caused by poverty and instability. In fact, research indicates that young children experiencing

homelessness are four times more likely to have developmental delays and exhibit a higher frequency of physical and mental health problems than children with stable housing. Despite these needs only 15 percent of children in homeless situations receive any kind of early childhood education services, compared with almost 60 percent of low-income children of the same age. (National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE <http://center.serve.org/nche/>)

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (EHCY), under the McKinney-Vento Act, is a federal law designed to ensure that children experiencing homelessness receive the educational services they need, including early intervention and special education services. Every LEA, including county offices of education (COE), are required to have a homeless liaison who must identify children experiencing homelessness and connect them with early childhood programs. In the field some programs reference the McKinney-Vento Act as Homeless Education.

The Head Start Act of 2007 requires the provision to enhance coordination and collaboration for services provided to children who are homeless. In addition, the Head Start Act requires Head Start programs to establish communication between Head Start staff and McKinney-Vento Homeless liaisons to facilitate coordination of programs. In California, every LEA has a McKinney-Vento Homeless liaison. A listing of all homeless liaisons and their contacts as well as additional homeless education information can be accessed at the CDE's Homeless Children and Youth Education Web page at <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/>.

In the *Education Code* 8263(a)(1)(C), homeless families are included in a list of eligible populations to be served by subsidized child care and development programs. Homeless is defined in the *California Code of Regulations*, Title 5 (5 CCR), Section 18078(h); and documentation of homeless is provided in 5 CCR, Section 18090. In addition, the Child Care and Development Block Grant—the primary source of federal funding to support subsidized child care services in California—requires that funds be used to improve access for homeless children through collaboration, enrollment policies, and training.

As an ongoing collaborative effort it is our hope to disseminate additional resources and information to all programs that serve young children throughout California to best support children and families who are experiencing homelessness.

Resources

Kidsdata.org is a program of the [Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health](#) and fosters the health and well-being of the children in California by providing a resource that offers a wide variety of local data. Their Web site (<http://www.kidsdata.org>) publishes the number and percentage of homeless children and youth (birth–21 years of age) that are enrolled at any time in a given school year. The data provides information by grade level and nighttime residence at the state, county, and school district levels. Counts of very young homeless children (i.e., from birth through Kindergarten) also are presented for each county. The data comes from the Homeless Education Program in the School Turnaround Office at the CDE and is based on the McKinney-Vento Act definition.

Under the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act LEAs are required to post information on educational rights for homeless children and youth. It would be beneficial for Head Start programs and child care programs to post this information as well. Posters that include information about homeless educational rights are available for free in eight languages at the CDE's Education for Homeless Children and Youth Web page at, <http://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/>. You can also order them in English and Spanish by contacting the CDE's School Turnaround Office at 916-319-0833.