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**School Districts &  
the Pennsylvania  
Education for  
Children & Youth  
Experiencing  
Homelessness  
Program**



# Homeless. . .

- What do you think of?



# Did you know?

- Program funds and guidance are provided by the **McKinney-Vento Act**, originally passed in 1987.
- Each of the **school districts** in the state has a **Homeless Liaison** to serve their homeless students.
- The average age of a homeless individual in the United States is **7 years**.



## Pennsylvania's Regional Model

Region 5: 10 counties, 73  
LEA's, 24 shelters, 4  
Intermediate Units

**2,826** children & youth  
experiencing homelessness in  
2019-2020

Where were they?  
1,808 Doubled-up, 433 Shelter,  
132 Hotels/Motels,  
112 Unsheltered

**In Pennsylvania: 37,930  
students were identified  
as experiencing  
homelessness in  
2019-2020**

### **In Northwestern PA:**

Approximately 70% of  
students identified as  
experiencing homelessness  
are living in “doubled-up”  
situations.

22% are “unaccompanied  
youth.”

There were approximately  
3,000 additional students in  
the Foster Care system in  
Region 5 in 2019-2020

# Role of the Homeless Liaison

- Identification and reporting
- Ensuring immediate enrollment and access to services
- Referrals to health care, mental health, substance abuse, housing and other needed services
- Students, parents/guardians informed of educational rights
- Inform public of the rights of students experiencing homelessness (posters, webpage, letters, outreach)
- Attend professional development opportunities and also provide training to district staff
- Dispute resolutions



# How Schools Determine Homelessness:

## ■ Was there an event?

- ☐ Flood
- ☐ Fire
- ☐ Mold
- ☐ Domestic Violence
- ☐ Thrown Out
- ☐ Eviction
- ☐ Runaway



Or. . .is it

## ■ Substandard Housing?

Legal Definition:

“fixed, regular, adequate”

# Substandard Housing?

- No utilities (heat, water, etc.)
- Tarp over roof
- Boards on windows
- Overcrowded
- Dirt Floor
- Holes to outside
- Motel
- Hotel
- Camper
- Tent
- Pest Infestation





# Eligibility – Who is Homeless?

- Sharing housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (“Doubled up”)





## Is the situation temporary?

- Has the family tried to access other services to find housing?
- Do they talk about wanting “a place of their own”
- Do the children have their own bedrooms?
- Can the family afford other housing, but are choosing not to move?



# Who is Homeless?

- Living in motels, hotels





# Who is Homeless?

- Trailers, camping grounds, tents



# Who is Homeless?

- Barns, sheds, hunting cabins, storage units





# Who is Homeless?

## ■ Garages





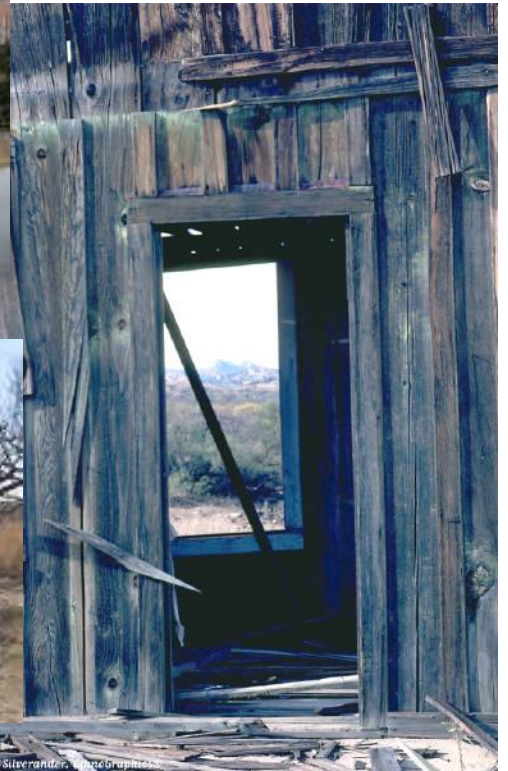
# Who is Homeless?

## ■ Cars



# Who is homeless?

- Abandoned buildings





# Who is Homeless?

- Living in emergency or transitional shelters



# Who is Homeless?

- Migratory children living in homeless circumstances



# Who is Homeless?

- Abandoned, throw-away, runaway children not living with a parent or legal guardian





# Defining “Unaccompanied Youth”:

- Unaccompanied: children and youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- Many children **under the age of 18** who temporarily reside with someone who is not a parent or legal guardian falls under this definition.
- The Homeless BEC states that this can be for “any reason.”
- Children **over the age of 18** who have been “kicked out” of their home, or left due to safety reasons or who are “doubled up” will also meet this definition.
- There is no age range or citizenship requirement.





# “Host” Families:

- Schools cannot require that a family who “takes in” a student obtain guardianship.
- Legal guardianship can only come from a judge.



# Key Provisions- Schools

- Students can stay in their **school of origin** the entire time they are homeless and
- until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing.



# Key Provisions- Transportation

- Schools will (when deemed reasonable and in the child's "best interests") provide students experiencing homelessness with transportation to and from their school or origin, at a parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth's request.
- This is a shared responsibility between the district of origin and the district of residence.



# Key Provisions- Enrollment

- Children and youth in homeless situations can stay in their school or origin (presumed to be “best interest”) or enroll in the public school that the student is living.
- The terms “enroll” and “enrollment” include attending classes and participating fully in school activities, including extracurricular.



# Enrollment- continued

- Children can be enrolled immediately, even without school records, medical records, proof of residency, notarized proof of educational guardianship, or other documents.
- If a student does not have immunization or medical records, the liaison must immediately assist in obtaining them. The student will be enrolled without them.



# Food and Nutrition

- All students experiencing homelessness are automatically entitled to free **meals**.





# Title 1

- **Title 1 Homeless Set-Aside** monies must be used to support students with academic-related needs (tutoring, medical, counseling, supplies, uniforms, clothing, shoes, enrichment, extracurricular activities). The funds can also be used to pay for transportation and the Homeless Liaison salary.



# How Can the PA ECYEH Program Help?



- Assist with school enrollment and placement
- Provide referrals for clothing, food, shelter, rent, medical services, preschool, housing, advocacy, counseling, etc
- Provide technical assistance to districts
- Implement tutoring and enrichment services in shelters and other settings
- Distributing literature related to homeless children
- Providing training and in-service related to the McKinney-Vento Federal Act
- Assist students with obtaining clothing, school supplies, fees, etc



# Resources

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth -  
<http://www.naehcy.org>

National Center on Homeless Education -  
<http://www.serve.org/nche>

National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty -  
<http://www.nlchp.org>

Horizons for Homeless Children -  
<http://www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org>

Pennsylvania's Homeless Children's Initiative –  
<http://homeless.center-school.org/index.cfm>

Pennsylvania Department of Education –  
<http://www.pde.state.pa.us/>

Center for Schools and Communities –  
<http://www.center-school.org/>

