Educating Children and Youth in Homeless Situations

NAEHCY

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

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Barbara Duffield, bduffield@naehcy.org
Patricia Julianelle, pjulianelle@naehcy.org

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Our Agenda

- Background and context
- Eligibility and identification
- School of origin
- Immediate enrollment
- Unaccompanied Youth
- Title I
- Early childhood

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Causes of Homelessness

- Lack of affordable housing
  - Foreclosures
- Poverty
  - Economic recession
  - Unemployment
- Health problems
  - Lack of health insurance
  - Addiction disorders, Mental health
- Domestic violence
- Natural and other disasters
- Abuse/neglect/family dysfunction (unaccompanied youth)

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How many children and youth experience homelessness?

- Public schools identified 1,258,182 homeless students in the 2012–13 school year.
  - 34 states reported an increase over previous year
  - An 8% increase nationally over previous year.
  - An 85% increase since 2007.
- PA schools served 22,628 homeless children and youth in the 2012-13 school year.

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Barriers to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

- Lack of awareness; under-identification
- High mobility resulting in lack of school stability and educational continuity
- Poor health, fatigue, hunger
- Prejudice and misunderstanding
- Enrollment requirements (school records, health records, proof of residence and guardianship)
- Lack of transportation
- Lack of school supplies, clothing, etc.

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McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

- Reauthorized 2002 by NCLB
- Main themes:
  - Identification
  - School stability
  - School access
  - Support for academic success
  - Child-centered, best interest decision making

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Local Homeless Education Liaisons

- Every LEA must designate a liaison for students in homeless situations.
- Responsibilities—
  - Ensure that children and youth in homeless situations are identified.
  - Ensure that homeless students enroll in and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in school.
  - Link with educational services, including preschool and health services.
  - Resolve disputes and assist with transportation.

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Eligibility—Who is Covered?

- Children who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**—

  - Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
    [76% of identified homeless students nationally: 59% in PA]
  - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations
    [Motels: 6% of identified homeless students nationally; 8% in PA]

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Eligibility— Who is Covered?

- Children who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**—

  - Living in emergency or transitional shelters
    [16% of identified homeless students nationally; 31% in PA]
  - Living in a public or private place not designed for humans to live
  - Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
  - Migratory children living in above circumstances
  - Awaiting foster care placement

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Determining Eligibility

- Case-by-case determination
- Get as much information as possible (with sensitivity and discretion)
- Look at the MV definition (specific examples in the definition first, then overall definition)
- Shared housing considerations:
  · Where would you go if you couldn't stay here?
  · What led you to move in to this situation?
- *NCHE's Determining Eligibility brief is available at* http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/det_elig.pdf

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Identification Strategies

- Avoid using the word "homeless" with school personnel, families, or youth.
- Provide awareness activities for school staff (registrars, secretaries, counselors, nurses, teachers, tutors, bus drivers, security officers, drop out prevention specialists, administrators, etc.).
  · http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/videos
  · http://center.serve.org/nche/web/online_tr.php
- Coordinate with community service agencies, such as shelters, soup kitchens, public assistance and housing agencies, and public health departments.

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Identification Strategies (cont.)

- Post outreach materials and posters in all schools and where there is a frequent influx of low-income families and youth in high-risk situations, including motels, campgrounds, libraries, youth centers.
  · http://www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/Posters.aspx
- Use enrollment and withdrawal forms to inquire about living situations.
  · www.utdanacenter.org/theo/downloads/factsheets/RP14_SRQ.doc

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Identification Strategies (cont.)

- Make special efforts to identify preschool children, including asking about the siblings of school-aged children.
- Develop relationships with truancy officials and/or other attendance officers.
- Enlist youth to spread the word.
- "MV-FAFSA Week":
  - http://www.naehcy.org/toolkit-high-school-counselors
- Make sure data entry and database managers know how to enter, maintain and report information.

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Research on School Stability

- Demonstration project in WA showed that school stability for homeless students increases assessment scores and grades.
- Mobility also hurts non-mobile students; study found average test scores for non-mobile students were significantly lower in high schools with high student mobility rates.
- Students who changed high schools even once during high school were less than half as likely as stable students to graduate, even controlling for other factors.

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The Law: School Selection

Each LEA shall, according to each child's or youth's best interest:

- Continue the student's education in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness, and until the end of the academic year in which the student becomes permanently housed.   11432(g)(3)(A)(i)
  - Applies when students lose housing during the year or during the summer   11432(g)(3)(A)(i)(I)
  - School of origin: school attended when permanently housed or school in which last enrolled.   11432(g)(3)(G)

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The Law: School Selection (Contd.)

OR:

- Enroll in any public school that housed students living where the student is living are eligible to attend.

11432(g)(3)(A)(ii)

In Pennsylvania, 72% of homeless students remain in the same LEA all year; 64% in the same school.

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The Law: School Selection (Contd.)

In determining best interest, the LEA shall:

- Keep the student in the school of origin
  - Unless against the wishes of the student's parent or guardian, and
  - To the extent feasible.

11432(g)(3)(B)(i)

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The Law: School Selection (Contd.)

Determining the extent to which it is feasible to educate a student in the school of origin is a student-centered, individualized determination.

US Dept. of Education Guidance (2004), Question G-4.

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The Law: School Selection (Contd.)

Feasibility factors an LEA may consider include:
- Age
- Distance and the commute's impact on the student's education
- Safety
- Need for special instruction
- Anticipated length of stay in temporary location
- Time remaining in the school year

US Dept. of Education Guidance (2004), Question G-4.

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The Law: School Selection (Contd.)

In determining the best interest of an unaccompanied youth, the liaison must:

- Assist in placement or enrollment decisions,

- Consider the views of the youth, and

- Provide youth notice of their right to appeal.

11432(g)(3)(B)(iii)

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The Law: School Selection (Contd.)

- Financial responsibility: The McKinney-Vento Act does not assign responsibility for tuition.
- PA BEC (2011) assigns responsibility.
  - For all homeless students not in shelters: The LEA providing the education receives federal/state funding and assumes the financial responsibility.
  - For students in shelters: PDE 4605 (unless school of origin is the school attended when permanently housed)
  - Once permanently housed: New district of residence assumes financial responsibility.
- Transportation may be different.

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Transportation—Key Provisions

1. LEAs must provide transportation to and from their school of origin, at a parent's or guardian's request (or at the liaison's request for unaccompanied youth).

   - If staying in the same LEA, that LEA must provide or arrange transportation to the school of origin

   - If crossing LEA lines, the two LEAs must determine how to divide the responsibility and share the cost, or they must share the cost equally.

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Transportation—Key Provisions

2. LEAs also must provide students in homeless situations with transportation services comparable to those provided to other students.

3. LEAs must eliminate barriers to the school enrollment and retention of students experiencing homelessness (including transportation barriers).

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Transportation Strategies

- Develop close ties among local liaisons, school staff, pupil transportation staff, and shelter workers.
- Use school buses (including special education, magnet school and other buses).
- Develop formal or informal agreements with school districts where homeless children cross district lines.
- Use public transit where feasible.
- Use approved carpools, van or taxi services.
- Reimburse parents and youth for gas.
- Pursue inter-agency solutions

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School Enrollment— Key Provisions

- If remaining in the school of origin is not feasible, children and youth in homeless situations are entitled to immediate enrollment in any public school that students living in the same attendance area are eligible to attend.
- PA's BEC specifies this includes where the parent/student spends the greatest percentage of time or has a substantial connection.
- The terms "enroll" and "enrollment" include attending classes and participating fully in school activities.

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Enrollment— Key Provisions (cont.)

- Enrollment must be immediate, even if students do not have required documents, such as school records, health records, proof of residency or guardianship, or other documents.
- If a student does not have immunizations, or immunization or medical records, the liaison must immediately assist in obtaining them, and the student must be enrolled in the interim.

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Enrollment— Key Provisions (cont.)

- Enrolling schools must obtain school records from the previous school, and students must be enrolled in school while records are obtained.
- Schools must maintain records for students who are homeless so they are available quickly.
- SEAs and LEAs must develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of children and youth in homeless situations.

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Immediate Enrollment— Strategies

- Request all records from the previous school immediately, including immunization records.
  - Parental signature is not required for transfer students (FERPA).
  - The vast majority of students have been enrolled in school before and have received immunizations.
- Speak with parents and youth about the classes the student was in, previous coursework and special needs.
- Call the counselor, teachers or principal at the previous school for information.
- Ensure enrollment staff on every campus are aware of the law and procedures.

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Unaccompanied Youth-- Who Are They?

- Definition: child or youth who meets the definition of homeless and is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
  - 2,943 identified in PA in 2012-13.
- Some youth become homeless with their families, but end up on their own due to lack of space in temporary accommodations or shelter policies that prohibit adolescent boys.
  - 60% of homeless mothers live apart from at least one of their minor children; 35% live apart from all their children.
  - 93% of homeless fathers live apart from all their children.

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Who Are They? (cont.)

- Studies have found that 20 to 50 percent of unaccompanied youth were sexually abused in their homes, while 40 to 60 percent were physically abused.
- Over two-thirds of callers to Runaway Hotline report that at least one of their parents abuses drugs or alcohol.
- Over half of youth living in shelters report that their parents either told them to leave, or knew they were leaving and did not care.

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Who Are They? (cont.)

- Over 20% of homeless youth identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender (compared to 3–5% of the overall population).
- 25–40% of youth who emancipate from foster care will end up homeless.
- Many youth have been thrown out of their homes due to pregnancy.
  - 48% of street youth have been pregnant or impregnated someone.
  - 10% of currently homeless female teens are pregnant.

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Unaccompanied Youth— Key Provisions

- Immediate enrollment applies, even without parent or guardian.
  - Youth self-enrollment
  - Caregiver form
- Liaisons must help unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, after considering the youth's wishes, and inform the youth of his or her appeal rights.
- School personnel must be made aware of the specific needs of runaway and homeless youth.

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Parental disapproval / school liability

- Liability: based on the concept of negligence, or a failure to exercise reasonable care.
  - Following federal law and providing appropriate services are evidence of reasonable care.
  - Violating federal law and denying services are evidence of negligence.
  - Be reasonable based on the circumstances
  - Talk with the youth

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Contacting Police and Child Welfare

- MV requires eliminating barriers to enrollment and retention in school.
  - Arrest, custody and foster care are threats and barriers to unaccompanied youth.
  - Schools must enroll youth immediately. School is the safest and best place for youth.
- Educators are mandated to report suspected abuse and/or neglect (homelessness alone is not abuse/neglect) to child welfare.
- Build relationships with law enforcement, juvenile justice and local child welfare.

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Unaccompanied Youth—Strategies

- Develop clear policies for enrolling unaccompanied youth immediately, whether youth enroll themselves, liaisons do enrollment, caretakers enroll youth in their care, or another procedure is in place.
- Train local liaisons and all school enrollment staff, secretaries, counselors, principals, school security staff, attendance officers, and teachers on the definition, rights, and needs of unaccompanied youth.
- Coordinate with youth-serving agencies, such as shelters, soup kitchens, drop-in centers, street outreach, child welfare, juvenile courts, law enforcement, legal aid, teen parent programs, public assistance, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender youth organizations, mental health agencies...

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Unaccompanied Youth—Strategies (cont.)

- Offer youth an adult and peer mentor.
- Establish systems to monitor youth's attendance and performance, and let youth know you'll be checking up on them.
- Help youth participate fully in school (clubs, sports, homework help, etc.)
- Build trust! Be patient, and ensure discretion and confidentiality when working with youth.

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Resolution of Disputes—
Key Provisions

- Every state must establish procedures: BEC (2011).
- When a dispute over enrollment arises, the student must be admitted immediately to the school of choice while the dispute is being resolved.
- The parent or guardian must be provided with a written explanation of the school's decision, including the right to appeal.
- The school must refer the child, youth, parent, or guardian to the liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as expeditiously as possible.

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Title I and Homelessness

- A child or youth who is homeless is automatically eligible for Title IA services, regardless of whether his or her school is a Title IA school.
- LEAs must reserve (or set aside) the funds necessary to serve homeless children who do not attend Title IA schools, including educationally related support services.
  - Liaison should be involved in determining the set-aside.
  - Funds may be used for children attending any school in the LEA.

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Strategies for Determining the
Title IA Set-Aside Amount

- Review needs and costs involved in serving homeless students in the current year and project for the following year.
- Multiply the number of homeless students by the Title IA per pupil allocation.
- For districts with subgrants, reserve an amount greater than or equal to the McKinney-Vento subgrant funding request.
- Reserve a percentage based on the district's poverty level or total Title IA allocation.

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USED Guidance on Using Title IA Funds for Homeless Students

- Title I funds may be used for services not ordinarily provided to other Title I students.
  - Services must be reasonable and necessary to enable homeless students to take advantage of educational opportunities.
  - Funds must be used as a last resort when services are not reasonably available from another public or private source.
  - Title I may fund all or part of the homeless liaison, even if he/she has no Title I duties.

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Title IA funds and transportation

- Title I funds may be used to fund transportation to the school of origin while a student is homeless and once permanently housed.
- But LEAs still must set aside sufficient Title I funds to provide comparable services to homeless students.
  - i.e., LEAs cannot fail to provide comparable services to homeless students and use the entire set-aside for transportation.
- Title I also can fund supplemental transportation such as to extra-curricular activities, preschool programs, parent meetings, etc.

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USED Guidance (cont.)

- Examples of Uses of Title IA funds:
  - Items of clothing, particularly if necessary to meet a school's dress or uniform requirement
  - Clothing and shoes necessary to participate in physical education classes
  - Student fees that are necessary to participate in the general education program
  - Personal school supplies such as backpacks and notebooks
  - Birth certificates necessary to enroll in school
  - Immunizations
  - Food

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USED Guidance (cont.)

- Uses of Title IA funds (cont.):
  - Medical and dental services
  - Eyeglasses and hearing aids
  - Counseling services
  - Outreach services
  - Extended learning time
  - Tutoring services
  - Parental involvement
  - Fees for AP and IB testing
  - Fees for SAT/ACT testing
  - GED testing for school-age students

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Young Homeless Children: National Numbers and Trends

- 53% of all children in HUD homeless shelters are under the age of 6.

- The age at which a person is most likely to stay in a homeless shelter in the United States is infancy (under age 1).

- Nearly 30,000 homeless children ages 3-5 (not kindergarten) were enrolled in public preschool programs in 2008-2009; this is only 4% of all students identified as homeless by public schools.

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Impacts of Homelessness on Young Children

- Homeless children begin Head Start at age three with poorer socio-emotional, cognitive, and physical development than their low-income classmates.

- Homelessness during infancy and toddlerhood has been linked to later child welfare involvement and early school failure.

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Impacts of Homelessness on Young Children, Contd.

- Homelessness in early childhood is associated with poor classroom engagement and poor social skills in early elementary school.
- The achievement gaps between homeless and low-income elementary students tend to persist, and may even worsen, over time.

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Early Care and Education Landscape

- Child Care
- State Pre-Kindergarten Programs
- McKinney-Vento and Preschool
- Head Start & Early Head Start
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- Maternal, Infant and Early Child Home Visiting (MIECHV)– Affordable Care Act

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McKinney-Vento and Preschool

- School district McKinney-Vento liaisons must ensure that families and children have access to Head Start, Even Start, and other public preschool programs administered by the LEA.
- State McKinney-Vento plans must describe procedures that ensure that homeless children have access to public preschool programs.
- School districts are required to remove barriers to the enrollment of homeless children, including preschool children.

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Head Start: A Perfect Match for Homeless Families

- Head Start provides comprehensive services that homeless children may not otherwise receive.
- The Head Start focus on entire family means parents receive assistance in reaching their goals.
- Homeless children are categorically eligible for Head Start.
- Head Start programs are required to identify and prioritize homeless children for enrollment; allow homeless children to enroll while required paperwork is obtained; and coordinate with LEA liaisons and other community agencies.

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Early Childhood Programs: Strategies for Awareness and Identification

- Early childhood programs can incorporate questions on housing status on applications.
- McKinney-Vento liaisons can inquire about young siblings of school-age children.
- Homeless service providers can document ages of all children at intake, and make referrals to Head Start and other ECE programs.

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Early Childhood Programs: Strategies for Awareness and Identification

- Early childhood programs can include information on how to recognize homelessness in staff development/trainings/in-services.
- Shelters can make sure that young children are assessed for developmental delays.
- New HUD contacts can be trained in assessment programs (Ages and Stages, Early Intervention programs, and Special Education Child Find) that provide indicators of potential developmental delays.

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Early Childhood Programs:
Strategies for Responding to Mobility

- Obtain parental consent for release of information from providers or liaison in order to share information between agencies, and obtain new addresses and continue to provide services when families move.
- In anticipation of mobility, develop joint procedures to expedite services and provide continuous services for highly mobile children.

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Early Childhood Programs:
Strategies to Expedite Access

- Liaisons and homeless service staff can provide Head Start applications to identified families and help them fill them out.
- Expedite records by working together; e.g. liaisons can get immunization records, etc. for young siblings of school-age children.
- Develop joint or streamlined procedures and forms (e.g. housing intake forms).
- Many programs have changed their enrollment criteria to put homeless families at the top of the list.

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Early Childhood Programs:
Strategies to Facilitate Attendance

- Train family advocates to provide information on housing resources, emergency shelters, DSHS services, domestic violence and substance abuse support, counseling, & medical.
- Transportation – some programs don't have program-wide transportation, but do provide it for homeless families.

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PA Contact Information

Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program
Pennsylvania Department of Education
Sheldon Winnick, State Coordinator
(717) 783-6466
swinnick@pa.gov
www.pde.state.pa.us/homeless

Center for Schools and Communities
Lynda Becker, Youth Development Coordinator
(717) 763-1661 x156
lbecker@csc.csiu.org
http://homeless.center-school.org

For a full listing of school district liaisons, shelters for children and families, and state and regional contacts, visit:http://homeless.center-school.org/homelessdirectory

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General Resources

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

National Center on Homeless Education
http://center.serve.org/nche/

National Network for Youth
http://www.nn4youth.org

DVDs for awareness-raising
- "The McKinney-Vento Act in Our Schools": pjulianelle@naehcy.org
- "Real Students, Real Schools": naehcy.org/videos
- http://www.hearus.us

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School Stability Resources

- School of origin vs. Local school:
  http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/sch_sel_checklist.pdf
- Transportation:
  http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/incr_sch_stab.php
  www.utdanacenter.org/theo/downloads/factsheets/RP33b_Transportation_Rural.pdf

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School Enrollment Resources

- Immediate enrollment without documents:
  - http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/assessment.pdf
- Immediate enrollment without parent/guardian:
  - http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/guardianship.pdf
- Immediate enrollment without immunizations:
  - http://www.naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/elders-memo.pdf

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School Enrollment Resources (cont.)

- Full participation in school activities:
  - http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/extra_curr.pdf
- Ensuring credit accrual and recovery:
  - http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/credit.pdf

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Title I Part A Resources

- http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/titlei.pdf
- http://www2.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/titlei-reform.pdf

(Examples of permissible uses of funds)

- http://center.serve.org/nche/legis/2014-omnibus.php

(July 2014 guidance on transportation/liaisons)

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Early Childhood Resources

- http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/expanding-early-care-and-education-for-homeless-children

(Guidance, tip sheets, and more from US HHS)

- http://naehcy.org/educational-resources/early-childhood

(Fact sheets, policy briefs, and more from NAEHCY)

- http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_preschool.php

(Resources from NCHE)

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Early Childhood Statistics

- Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness, *Head Start and Housing (In)stability: Examining the School Readiness of Children Experiencing Homelessness,* 2013.
- Perlman, S. & Fantuzzo, J. (2013). Predicting to placement: A population-based study of out-of-home placement, child maltreatment, and emergency housing. *Journal of the Society for Social Work Research, 4.* Retrieved from: http://www.jsswr.org/rt/printerFriendly/10701/0
- Perlman, S. & Fantuzzo, J. (2010). Timing and influence of early experiences of child maltreatment and homelessness on children's educational well-being. *Children and Youth Services Review, 32,* 874-883.
- Obradovic, J., Long, J.D., Cutuli, J.J., Chan, C.K., Hinz, E., Heistad, D. & Maston, A.S. (2009). Academic Achievement of homeless and highly mobile children in an urban school district: Longitudinal evidence on risk, growth, and resilience. *Development and Psychopathology, 21*(2), 493-518.

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Unaccompanied Youth Resources

- http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/youth
- http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/higher-ed
- http://www.naehcy.org/letendre-scholarship-fund/about-the-fund
- http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_youth.php
- http://www.1800runaway.org/
- http://www.youtube.com/user/itgetsbetterproject
- http://www.thetrevorproject.org/

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Unaccompanied Youth Statistics

- *Toro, P., Dworsky, A. and Fowler, P. (2007).* "Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches." *Toward Understanding Homelessness: The 2007 National Symposium on Homelessness Research.*
- Benoit-Bryan, J. (2011). *The Runaway Youth Longitudinal Study*.
- The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the National Coalition for the Homeless (2007). *Lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender youth: An epidemic of homelessness*.
- Hammer, H., Finkelhor, D., & Sedlak, A. (2002). "Runaway / Thrownaway Children: National Estimates and Characteristics." *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children*.
- Greene, J. (1995). "Youth with Runaway, Throwaway, and Homeless Experiences: Prevalence, Drug Use, and Other At-Risk Behaviors." *Research Triangle Institute.*

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