



**Student Outreach, Identification, and
Eligibility**

WI DPI EHCY Conference

About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.



Website

Federal and state policy advocacy

Q&A from our inbox

Webinars and implementation tools

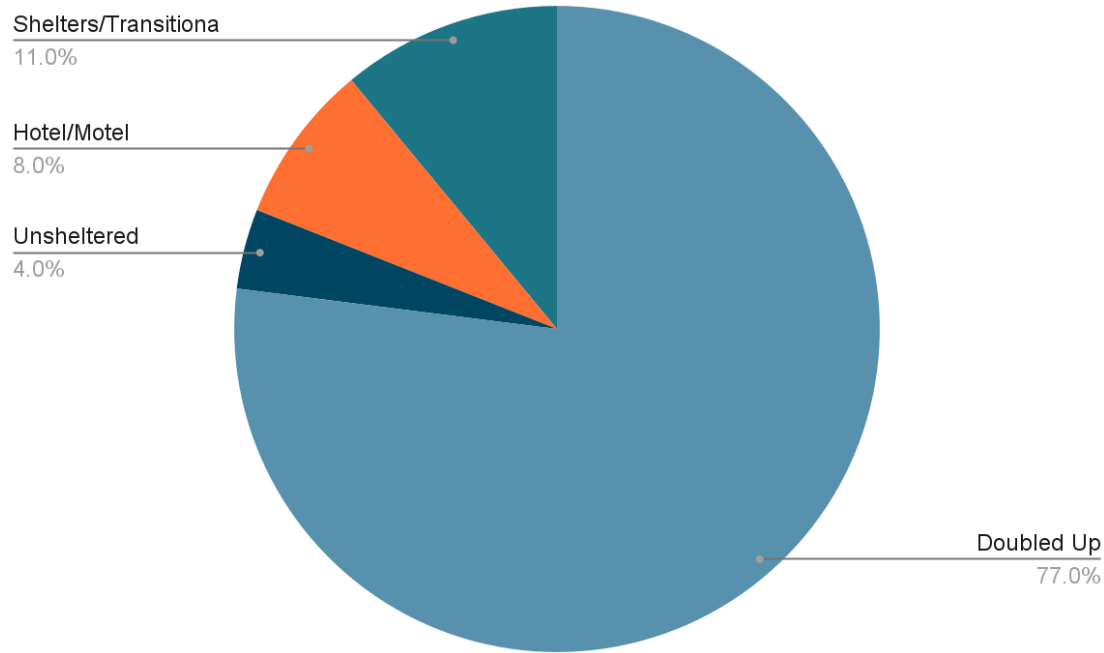
Youth leadership and scholarship

Learning Outcomes:



1. Participants will enhance their understanding of identification strategies and best practices for identifying students experiencing homelessness.
2. Participants will learn from colleagues by engaging in small group discussions involving scenarios and identification.

Living Situation When First Identified as Homeless by Public Schools (2020-2021 School Year)

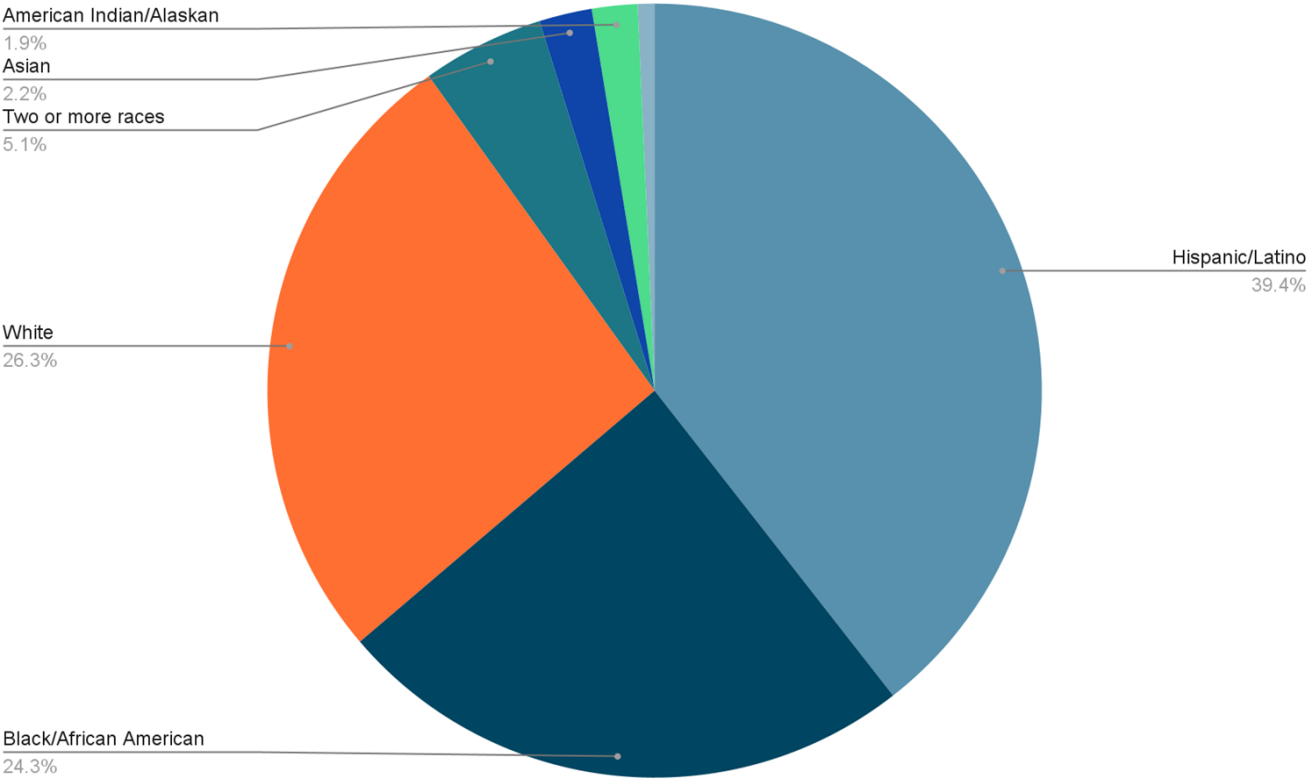


Doubled Up:

Sharing housing with others...

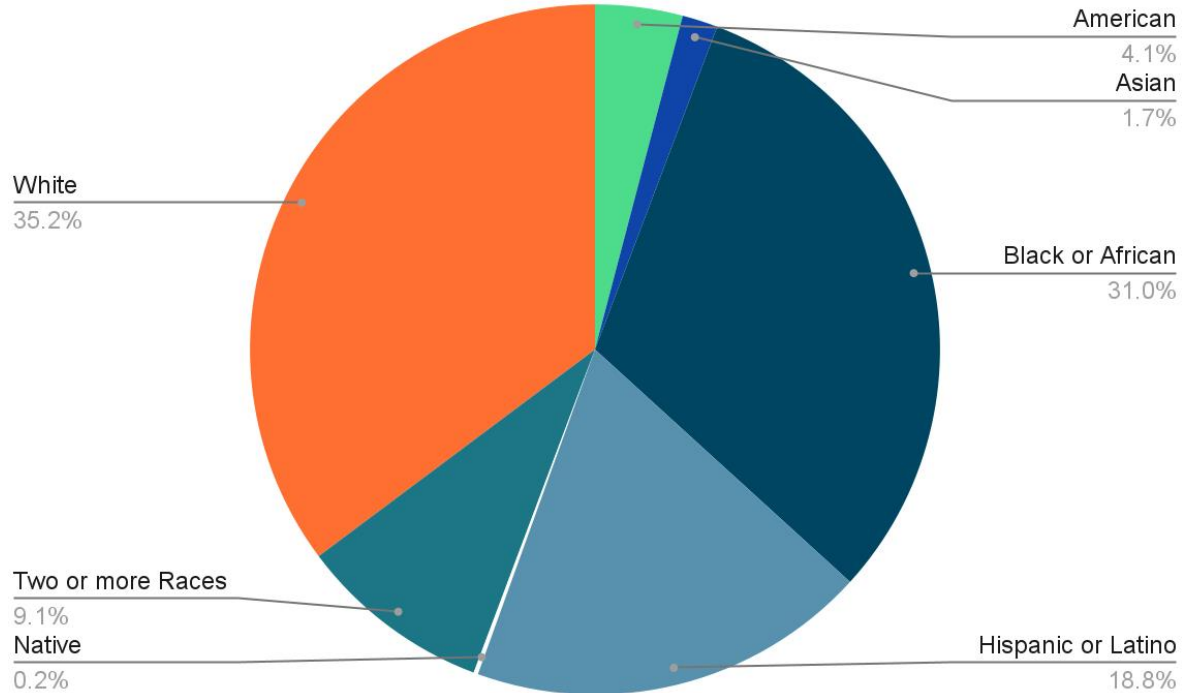
- due to loss of housing OR
- economic hardship OR
- similar reason

Race/Ethnicity of Students Experiencing Homelessness in the 2020-2021 School Year



Wisconsin Data 2020-21

13,450 Students Identified As Experiencing Homelessness (1.6%)



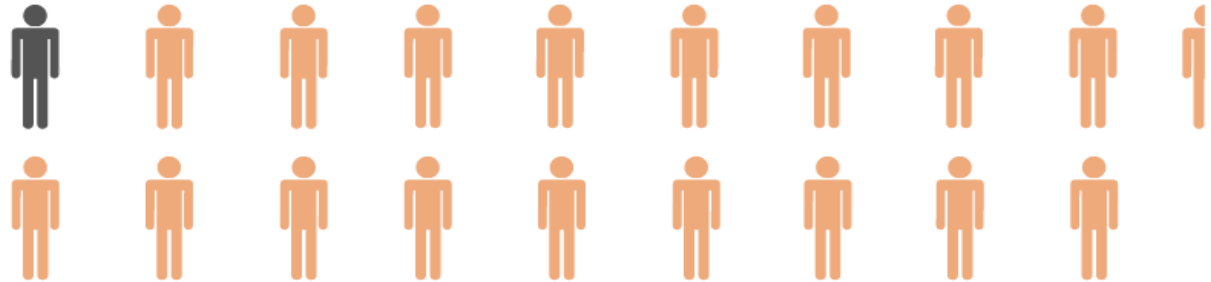
Youth Risk Behavior Survey Data Analysis



Survey results show:

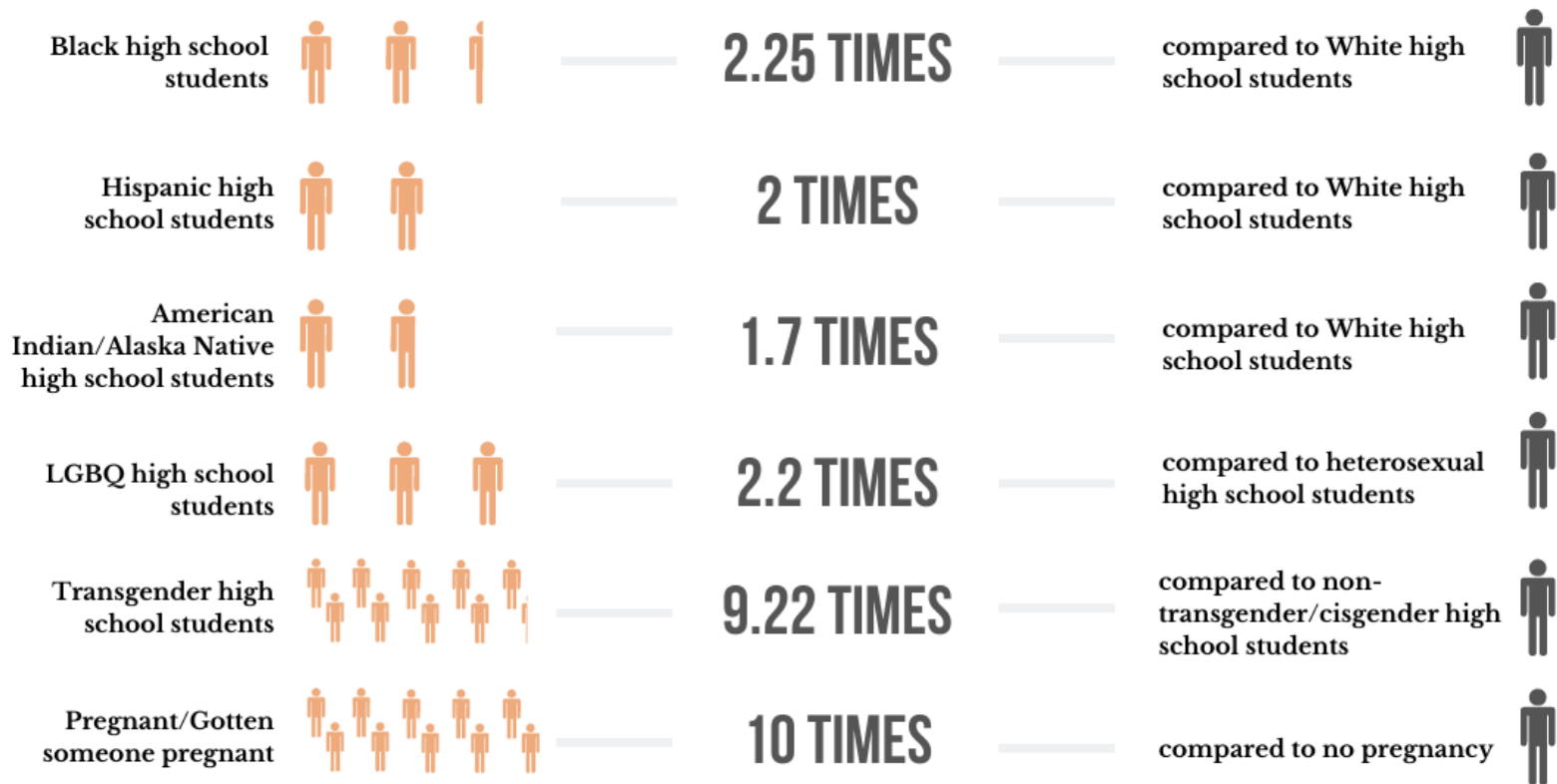
5.4% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS INDICATED THEY HAD EXPERIENCED HOMELESSNESS IN THE 2018-2019 SCHOOL YEAR

For every 18.5 high school students, 1 has experienced homelessness.



Data: SchoolHouse Connection's analysis of 2019 YRBS data from 27 states (AK, AR, CA, CO, CT, DE, HI, ID, IL, KS, KY, LA, ME, MD, MI, MT, NH, NM, NC, ND, PA, RI, SC, SD, VT, VA, WI)

Disproportionate incidence of homelessness



Identification: What is Required

- The McKinney-Vento Act requires liaisons to ensure that “homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other entities and agencies” [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(6)(A)(i)].
- The purpose of identification is to provide support and offer appropriate services to the family, child and/or youth. Coordination with schools, local social services agencies, and other agencies or entities providing services to homeless children and youth and their families is an essential identification strategy, as are professional development, awareness and training activities within school buildings, LEAs, and the community. See [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(5)(A)(i)].

Homelessness Defined

Under McKinney-Vento, the term
“homeless” children and youth
means:

**Children who lack a fixed, regular,
and adequate nighttime
residence.”**

What exactly is a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence?

Fixed, Regular, and Adequate

Fixed:

- Stationary, permanent, not subject to change


Regular:

- Used on a predictable, routine, consistent basis
- Consider the relative permanence

Adequate:

- Lawfully and reasonably sufficient
- Sufficient for meeting the physical and psychological needs typically met in a home environment

Can the student go to the
SAME PLACE (fixed) EVERY
NIGHT (regular) to sleep in a
SAFE AND SUFFICIENT
SPACE (adequate)?



A-3. What criteria may an LEA consider when determining if a child or youth lives in “substandard housing”?

In determining whether a child or youth is living in “substandard housing,” an LEA may consider whether the setting in which the family, child, or youth is living lacks one of the fundamental utilities such as water, electricity, or heat; is infested with vermin or mold; lacks a basic functional part such as a working kitchen or a working toilet; or may present unreasonable dangers to adults, children, or persons with disabilities. Each city, county, or State may have its own housing codes that further define the kind of housing that may be deemed substandard.

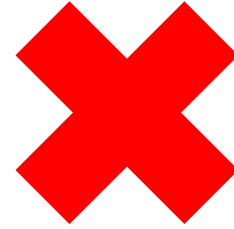
Eligibility

- **Sharing the housing** of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up)
- **Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, campgrounds** due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations
- **Living in emergency or transitional shelters**
- **Living in a public or private place** not designed for ordinary use as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans (cars, parks, bus or train stations, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, etc.).
- **Unaccompanied youth** living in the above circumstances

Understanding Doubled Up

Sharing housing with others...

- due to loss of housing OR
- economic hardship OR
- similar reason



NOT a doubled up situation:

- Mutual decision to live together for mutual benefit

Sharing the Housing of Others



- Implies that the child or youth is staying in someone else's residence
- Clarifying questions:
 - Does the family or youth have any legal right to be in the home?
 - Can the family or youth be asked to leave at any time with no legal recourse?
 - Where is the family or youth sleeping in the home?
 - Where would they go if they had to leave?

Due to Loss of Housing



- Implies that the student has no personal housing available
- Clarifying questions: Did the family or youth lose previous housing due to:
 - An eviction or foreclosure?
 - Destruction of, or damage, to the previous home?
 - Unhealthy or unsafe conditions?
 - Domestic violence?
 - Abuse or neglect?
 - Severe family conflict?
 - The absence of a parent or guardian due to abandonment, parental incarceration, or a similar reason?

Due to Economic Hardship



- Implies that limited financial resources have forced the family or youth to leave the personal residence and share housing due to an inability to pay the rent/mortgage and other bills.
- Clarifying question:
 - Did economic hardship due to an accident or illness, loss of employment, or a similar reason force the family or youth to share the housing of others temporarily?

Cultural Considerations of Doubled Up

Shared housing or multigenerational living situations:

- Who is included on the lease?
- Who is contributing to household costs?
- Does everyone have adequate space to sleep?
- Is the living arrangement for everyone's mutual benefit?
- Are any members of the household looking for their own place to live?
- Was one family already living in the space and another family moved in?

Just because multigenerational families may be a cultural value, homeless liaisons still must evaluate each situation individually.



Hotels/Motels

Eligible under McKinney-Vento

- If it is due to a lack of adequate alternative accommodations
- If it is not adequate to meet the student's needs

Not eligible under McKinney-Vento:

- If it is due to a family choice
 - Example: If a housed parent accepts a new job and moves to a new city, and the family has to stay in a hotel or motel while looking for new, permanent housing



Scenario - Fernandez Family

Consider:

- What should staff do first?
- What additional information might staff need?
- What additional questions would help with identification?
- How might a liaison or other staff member help the family understand the definition of homeless under McKinney-Vento?

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth



Youth who is experiencing homelessness **AND** is not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian.

Parents force youth out of the home due to conflicts, including:

- Pregnancy
- Sexual orientation and gender identity

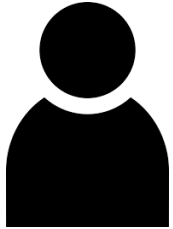
The circumstances of homelessness force families apart.

- Families become separated due to poverty, lack of space in living situations, or shelter policies.
- 47% of youth experience homelessness **both** with families and on their own.



Identification of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

- It is important to know that not all unaccompanied youth are unaccompanied homeless youth.
- An unaccompanied homeless youth is a student who meets the definition of homeless and is not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian.
- Unaccompanied homeless youth are eligible for:
 - McKinney-Vento services
 - All services under McKinney-Vento, including postsecondary planning and credit accrual
- Building trust is a key factor when working with unaccompanied homeless youth.
- An unaccompanied homeless youth can be a student of any age.



Kelly

- Should Kelly be identified as an unaccompanied homeless youth? Why or why not?
- What additional information do you need to make a determination?
- What supports does Kelly need?
- Does it matter if Kelly's mom says she should return home but Kelly chooses not to?

Kelly is a high school student who lives with her mom and three siblings in a two bedroom apartment. When Kelly shares she is pregnant, her mom gets angry and kicks her out of their apartment. Kelly has nowhere to go and there are no youth shelters in her area. Kelly begins couch surfing, sleeping wherever she can find a place. After awhile, Kelly's mom tells her to return to the apartment, but Kelly doesn't feel safe doing that. She continues to stay with friends, moving as often as necessary. Kelly visits the office of the school nurse to share that she is pregnant and needs medical care. The nurse refers Kelly to the homeless liaison.

Marcus is a senior in high school who lives with his parents. Marcus's dad transfers to a job out of state, but Marcus wants to finish high school at his current school. Before his parents move, they make arrangements for Marcus to live with his aunt and uncle in the same school district for the remainder of the year. Marcus's parents provide a monthly stipend to cover his expenses. Marcus's counselor finds out that Marcus is not living with his parents and refers him to the homeless liaison.



Marcus

- Should Marcus be identified under McKinney-Vento? Why or why not?
- What additional information do you need to make a determination?
- How does guardianship affect his eligibility?

Here are some signs to watch out for....

- Enrollment at multiple schools, lack of records, gaps in learning, poor/inconsistent attendance.
- Poor hygiene, unmet medical/dental needs, wearing the same clothes repeatedly, fatigue.
- Social and behavioral challenges, such as extreme shyness, withdrawal, or aggression; clinginess; difficulty with peer and/or adult relationships; poor attention span; anxiety late in the school day.
- Lack of participation in field trips and/or afterschool activities, lack of basic school supplies, inability to complete special projects.
- High rates of absences and tardies.



Remember:

Homelessness can be seen as "couch surfing," living on the street, sleeping in their car, living in a homeless shelter, moving from location to location without a set living space, or staying with different friends and family members.

Who makes the determination and how do they know?

- **McKinney-Vento requires each LEA to designate a homeless liaison.**
 - It is the responsibility of the liaison to identify students.
- **It is imperative to think critically about who is in the role of the homeless liaison.**
 - Consider having points of contact at each site.
 - Youth may not feel comfortable sharing their living situation with someone they don't know.
 - Relationships are KEY!
- **Know the LEA's process to refer to the homeless liaison or point of contact.**
 - Staff does not need to identify - just refer!
- **The homeless liaison or point of contact should ask questions to determine eligibility.**
 - Housing Questionnaire at enrollment
 - WI - Sample Questions for Information Gathering
 - NCHÉ's Determining Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Rights and Services

Identification Strategies

- Relationships are key!
- Avoid using the word "homeless" with school personnel, families, or youth.
 - Use person first language.
- Use enrollment forms to inquire about living situations.
- Have a process for other times during the school year.
- Be mindful that housing needs are fluid and can change throughout the school year, especially during the pandemic.
- Review data on absences and tardies and follow up with students.

"Our school/district has some resources available to parents and students. Can I tell you what they are to see if you're interested?"

67% of students say they were uncomfortable telling people at school about their homelessness and asking for help

Identification Strategies

- Make sure all staff have a basic understanding of McKinney-Vento.
- Make sure that outreach materials are posted where youth and families will see them.
- Know the process to refer to the homeless liaison.
- Provide resources and staff in the native language of students and parents.
- At enrollment, asking about younger siblings in the home.
- Use social media and school websites.

McKinney-Vento Learning:

SchoolHouse Connection
Webinars

NCHE Training

Best Practices

- Create a welcoming environment for all students and families.
- Use a housing questionnaire for families to self-identify.
- Consider providing resource packets for all students and families.
- Partner with the homeless liaison to monitor attendance and notify the liaison when there are attendance concerns.



Outreach

- The McKinney-Vento Act requires liaisons to ensure that “homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other entities and agencies” [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(6)(A)(i)].
- What can outreach include?
 - Posters
 - Training
 - Brochures
 - Social media
 - Media campaigns
 - Billboards
 - Meeting regularly with community partners
- Outreach is the key to identification!

Outreach Strategies

- Hang posters in schools and the communities
 - Be sure these are in the native languages of those in the community!
 - Think about the places families go - laundromats, gas stations, post office, ice cream shops, grocery stores, etc.
- Convene community partners regularly
 - School and community social workers, food pantry staff, local law enforcement, public library staff, etc.

What ideas do you have for community outreach? Think outside the box!

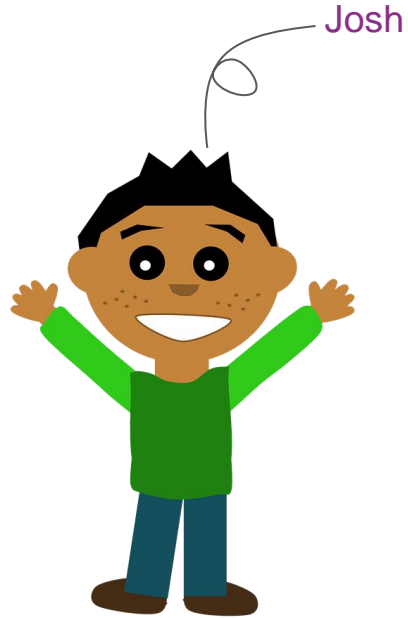
Removing Barriers

SEAs and LEAs **must develop, review, and revise** policies to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of McKinney-Vento students, including barriers due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.

- This is a “broad, on-going requirement... with regular input from homeless parents, youth, and advocates so that new barriers... do not prevent” students from full, immediate enrollment and services.

Scenario

- Josh is starting his 4th year of high school, although his credits put him as an early junior.
- He has attended 3 different high schools and just arrived to enroll in your school from a distant state.



- Josh is staying with an uncle and has no contact with his parents.
- At his last high school, Josh was a starter for the football team, and he would like to play at your school.

**What questions or
scenarios do you have?**

Question and Discussion

What are some identifiers that student may be housing unstable?

What other indicators are you seeing?

Examples:

- Tardiness or absences
- Poor hygiene
- Missing transportation due to mobility
- Sleeping in class

Question and Discussion

What are some open-ended questions to ask a student, "why are you late?"

Reframe the tardiness! "We are so glad you made it today; it is so nice to see you! I'd love to try to help make it easier to get to school tomorrow morning."

What key phrases have worked for you?

Examples:

- It seems like it might have been hard to get to school today - is there anything I can do to help make it easier tomorrow?
- We may be able to help with your transportation, would you like me to connect you to a social worker/counselor/homeless liaison?
- It seems like this morning might have been stressful for you. Is there anything I can do to help?

Question and Discussion

A parent calls their child off from school, how do we have the conversation about housing instability without making the family feel small?

What other questions could you ask to be sensitive to the family's situation?

Strategies:

- Withhold judgement - sometimes families are doing the best they can in the midst of chaos
- Using phrases like
- It seems like attendance has been a challenge, is there anything we can do to help?
- Would you be interested in talking to the social worker/counselor/homeless liaison about possible extra support we may be able to provide?
- Reframe! "We will miss your child today! Please know that we have additional support to help your family, if you are interested in learning more."

Question and Discussion

Food instability is a huge concern. We have a group that does weekend food bags but not all students want to take them. How do we support students who may not have food, but don't want the food bags?

What other strategies have been effective in navigating food insecurity?

Strategies:

- Make sure food bags are provided in a way that does not stigmatize students experiencing homelessness
- Provide referrals and connections to community food pantries
- Look for other opportunities to provide snacks

SchoolHouse Connection Scholarship

Deadline October 15

Eligible students:

- Under 20 years old
- Entering college for the first time

<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/youth-leadership/scholarship-program/>



SHC Resources & Contact Information

- [Learn from Our Inbox](#)
- [Strategies for Supporting Immigrant and Migrant Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [Immigrant Students Experiencing Homelessness: Liaisons' Strategies](#)
- [Facebook Group](#)
- [Newsletter](#)



Karen Rice

Senior Program Manager of
Education Initiatives

karen@schoolhouseconnection.org

www.schoolhouseconnection.org