

SUPPORTING THE
EDUCATION OF
UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS
YOUTH:
WHAT HEALTH PROVIDERS
NEED TO KNOW



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GET TO KNOW NCHE...

- The National Center for Homeless Education is the U.S. Department of Education's homeless education technical assistance and information center
- NCHE has:
 - A comprehensive website: www.serve.org/nche
 - A toll-free helpline: Call 800-308-2145 or e-mail homeless@serve.org
 - A listserv: visit www.serve.org/nche/listserv.php for subscription instructions
 - Free resources : Visit www.serve.org/nche/products.php



SESSION OUTLINE

- How does the McKinney-Vento Act Define Unaccompanied Homeless Students?
- What are the educational rights of homeless children and youth?
- How can healthcare workers serve unaccompanied homeless students best?
- Process scenarios
- Group Q&A and discussion

WHO'S IN THE ROOM?

- Do any of you work with homeless youth?
- Are they in school?
- What obstacles do they face in school?

- Finally, who helped you stay in school?

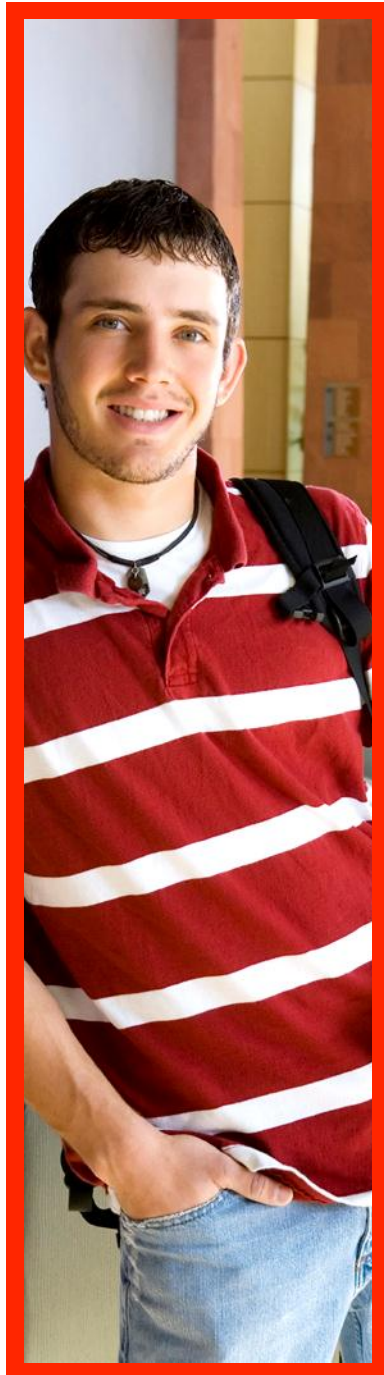
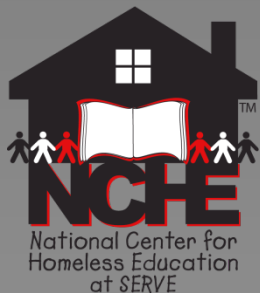
VOICES OF YOUTH

- “...Through it all, school is probably the only thing that has kept me going. I know that every day that I walk in those doors, I can stop thinking about my problems for the next six hours and concentrate on what is most important to me. Without the support of my school system, I would not be as well off as I am today. School keeps me motivated to move on, and encourages me to find a better life for myself.”

Carrie, 2002 LeTendre Scholar and formerly homeless youth



BACKGROUND
INFORMATION: WHAT ARE
THE NUMBERS AND WHAT
DOES IT MEAN?



DEMOGRAPHICS

Source: *Homeless Youth in the United States: Recent Research Findings and Intervention Approaches*,

<http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/homelessness/symposium07/toro/index.htm>

- Multiple studies estimate that 1+ million youth ages 12-17 will become homeless unaccompanied homeless youth each year
- Show a disproportionate representation of minority ethnic groups, GLBT youth, and pregnant/parenting teens
- Generally aged 13 or older, but can be younger

PATHS TO BEING “ON YOUR OWN”

- Longstanding patterns of family conflict: blended family issues, pregnancy, sexual activity or orientation, school problems, alcohol/drug use
- Abuse and/or neglect within the home
- Parental incarceration, substance abuse, illness, hospitalization, or death



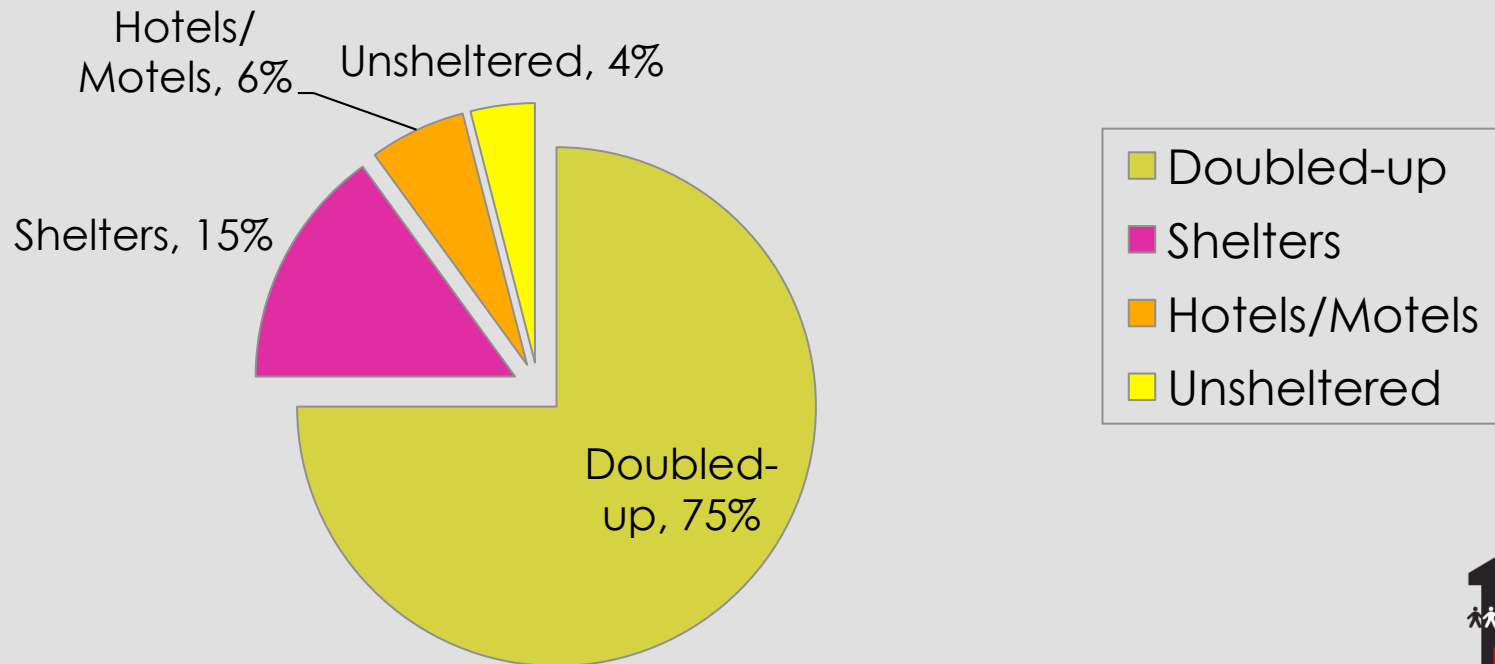
PATHS TO BEING “ON YOUR OWN” (CONT)

- Foster care issues: running away from a foster care placement, aging out of the foster care system; significant correlation between involvement with the child welfare system and experiencing homelessness as an adult
- Some students 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

NATIONAL DATA

SY 2011-2012 Total enrollment:
1,166,436 students experiencing homelessness

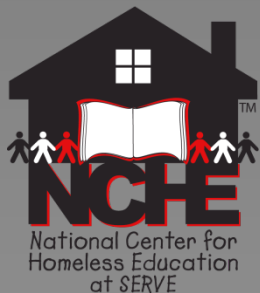
Enrolled by Primary Nighttime Residence



NATIONAL DATA (CONT)

- **Shelters** are defined as supervised publicly or privately operated facilities designed to provide temporary living accommodations. Included in the sheltered definition are the following:
 - i. Transitional Housing is temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and families, as a step to permanent housing. Residents of transitional housing continue to be considered homeless until they move into permanent housing.
 - ii. Awaiting Foster Care: children who are awaiting foster care placement are considered homeless and eligible for McKinney-Vento services. (See Section 725(2)(B) (i) of the McKinney-Vento Act.) Children who are already in foster care, on the other hand, are not considered homeless.
- **Unsheltered** includes cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailers, abandoned buildings and substandard housing. Substandard housing may be determined by local building codes, community norms, and/or a case-by-case determination as to whether the accommodation is a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”
- **Doubled-Up** The McKinney-Vento Act defines this term as “sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason” [725(2)(B)].

HOW DOES THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT DEFINE UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS STUDENTS?



THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT

- Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; reauthorized by Title X, Part C of Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
- Main themes of the McKinney-Vento Act
 - School access
 - School stability
 - Support for academic success
 - Child-centered, best interest decision making
 - Critical role of the local homeless education liaison



STEP 1: UNDER THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT, WHO IS HOMELESS?

- Children or youth who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**, including:
 - Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (“doubling up”)
 - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, and camp grounds due to the lack of adequate alternative accommodations
 - Living in emergency or transitional shelters

STEP 1: WHO IS HOMELESS? (CONT)

- Awaiting foster care placement
- 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 a similar setting
- Migratory children living in the above circumstances
- Unaccompanied youth living in the above circumstances



“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 home environments

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

“SHARING THE HOUSING OF OTHER PERSONS...”

- 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?

“...DUE TO LOSS OF HOUSING...”

- Implies that the student has no personal housing available
- 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?
 - The absence of a parent or guardian due to abandonment, parental incarceration, or a similar reason?

“...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, loss of public benefits, or a similar reason force the family or youth to share the housing of others temporarily?

THE DYNAMICS OF DOUBLING UP

- A shelter stay is not always an option:
 - Shelters don't exist in every community
 - Shelters often are full
 - Shelter policies may create barriers
 - Shelters may generate safety concerns
 - Shelters may have stay limits
 - Some shelters choose not to accept adolescent boys

THE DYNAMICS OF DOUBLING UP (*CONT*)

- Doubled-up arrangements often serve as temporary shelter, but may not last or may place the family or youth in danger
 - Youth may be asked to do illegal things as a condition to stay including participate in sex trafficking
 - Living in a doubled up situation is very precarious and could change at any time

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS

- Plyler v. Doe: Undocumented students are eligible for McKinney-Vento services to the same extent as documented students; this would include undocumented unaccompanied homeless students
- This decision was spelled out further in the May 8, 2014 Dear Colleague Letter from the Department of Justice and the Department of Education

STEP 2: WHO IS UNACCOMPANIED?

- According to the McKinney-Vento Act, an unaccompanied homeless student is a child or youth “not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian”
- The Act refers to *physical custody*, not *legal custody*; in practical terms, this usually means that the student is living apart from his/her parent(s) or guardian(s)

AGE LIMIT?

- “Age limits”
 - Lower: There is no lower age limit for unaccompanied homeless youth
 - Upper: The upper age limit (*as with all McKinney-Vento eligible students*) is your state’s upper age limit for public education; this is usually 21, but is sometimes older for special education

“BUT, THE STUDENT CHOSE TO LEAVE...”

- A youth can be eligible regardless of whether he/she was asked to leave the home or “chose” to leave
- Sometimes there is “more than meets the eye” for youth’s home life situations



THE SCHOOL'S CHARGE

- Schools first and foremost are educational agencies
- The school's primary responsibility and goal is to enroll and educate, in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act (*federal*); federal law supersedes state and local law

IMPLEMENTATION

- Every state is required to have a State Coordinator who operates their Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program. Sometimes these are contracted out.
- Every Local Education Agency is required to have a Local Homeless Education Liaison who is responsible for overseeing the EHCY program on the local level.



LOCAL LIAISONS

- Local liaisons play a critical role in the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act
- Every school district must designate a local homeless education liaison.
- Local liaisons:
 - Identify homeless children and youth
 - Ensure that homeless students can enroll immediately and participate fully in school

LOCAL LIAISONS (CONT.)

- Inform parents, guardians, or youth of educational rights
- Support unaccompanied youth in school selection and dispute resolution
- Link homeless students with educational and other services, including preschool and health services
- Ensure the public posting of educational rights through the school district and community
- Ensure that disputes are resolved promptly
- Collaborate with other district programs and community agencies

SCENARIO



Jeremy, a senior in high school, shows up at your healthcare center. He says he left home because his stepdad is a jerk and he can't stand living with him anymore. He is currently living with his grandmother, but isn't sure if he can stay long.

- Is Jeremy homeless?
- Is Jeremy unaccompanied?
- Other questions?

WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS OF MCKINNEY-VENTO ELIGIBLE STUDENTS?



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

- Lack of stable housing (affects access to bathing facilities, laundry facilities, etc.)
- Lack of a parent or guardian (support, guidance, signing, etc.)
- Lack of school records and other paperwork
- Emotional crisis / Mental health issues
- Employment: Many are self-supporting and have to balance school and work

BARRIERS TO EDUCATION *(CONT)*

- Lack of transportation
- Lack of school supplies, clothing
- Fatigue, poor health, hunger
(difficulty meeting basic needs)
- Credit accrual policies,
attendance policies
- Concerns about being
apprehended by authorities



RIGHTS FOR ALL HOMELESS STUDENTS

- Immediate enrollment, even if lacking paperwork normally required
- School selection: Local attendance area school or school of origin, according to the student's best interest
- Transportation to/from the school of origin
- Comparable services, including transportation



RIGHTS FOR ALL HOMELESS STUDENTS (CONT)

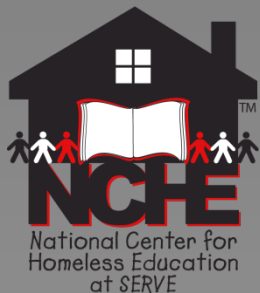
- Access to educational programs for which they are eligible (Title IA, IDEA, ELL, migrant education, vocational/technical education, gifted and talented, etc.)
- Free school meals (USDA's Child Nutrition Act)



SPECIFIC M-V PROVISIONS ON UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS STUDENTS

- Enrollment without proof of guardianship
- Assistance from the local liaison in selecting a school of attendance and enrolling
- Assistance from the local liaison in receiving transportation to the school of origin
- Can initiate the dispute resolution process for himself/herself
- Assistance from the local liaison in resolving any disputes that arise
- Student receives written notice in disputes

STRATEGIES FOR IDENTIFYING AND ENGAGING UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS STUDENTS



IDENTIFICATION STRATEGIES

- Develop relationships with dropout prevention programs, truancy officials, and other attendance officers.
- Enlist other students to help spread the word
- Post outreach materials at your center

BUILD TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS

- Be sensitive, honest, and trustworthy
 - Keep in mind the challenges that unaccompanied homeless students are facing as you work with them and provide support as you are able
 - Encourage unaccompanied homeless students to stay in school; support them and advocate for them in getting their education
 - Talk to them about how they're doing in school

“Your reputation precedes you. Students start to bring friends in. If you help them, they will come.”

Jonathan Zook, Teacher/Homeless Liaison

Project Return, Portland Public Schools, Oregon



OUTREACH MATERIALS TO USE

- NCHE youth outreach materials:
 - Youth educational rights poster (K-12):
http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/er_poster.php
 - Higher education poster:
http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/he_poster.php
 - *Surviving on Youth Own* youth booklet:
http://center.serve.org/nche/pr/youth_booklet.php



ENROLLMENT STRATEGIES

- Three common methods for enrolling unaccompanied homeless students in school
 - The student can enroll himself/herself
 - A caregiver can enroll the student (see http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/toolkit/app_d.pdf for sample enrollment forms)
 - The local liaison can enroll the student

ENROLLMENT REMINDERS



- A school district cannot require a caregiver to obtain legal guardianship at any point prior to or following an unaccompanied homeless student's enrollment
- A school district cannot discontinue a student's enrollment due to an inability to identify a caregiver, guardian, or parent following enrollment or to produce guardianship or other paperwork

PARTICIPATION IN EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

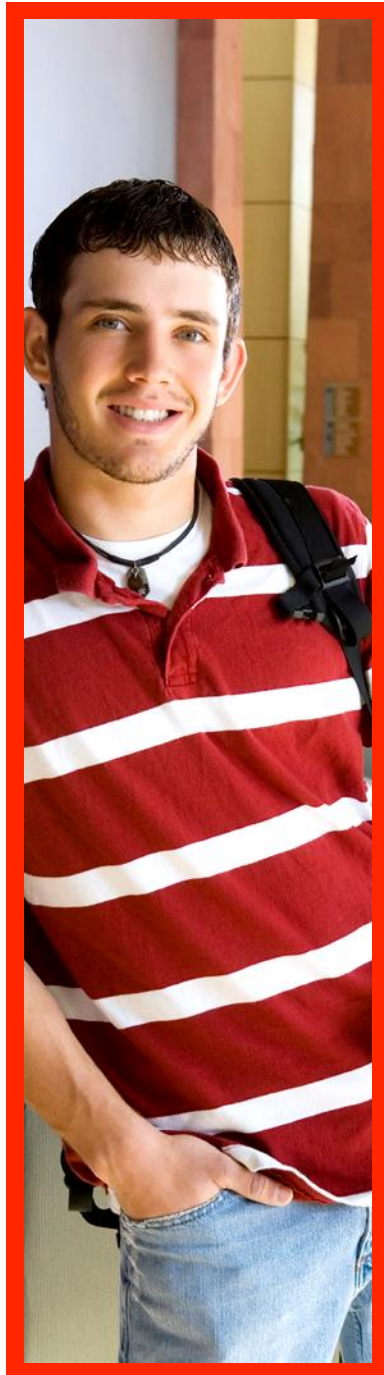
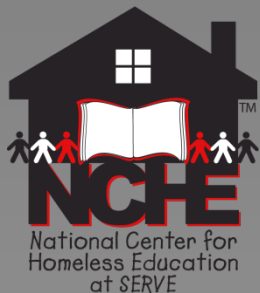
- McKinney-Vento defines enrollment as “attending classes *and participating fully in school activities*”; this includes extra-curricular activities offered through the school
- States have implemented a variety of policies regarding signing/decision-making for UHY to participate in school activities
 - Youth sign for themselves
 - Local liaison signs for the youth
 - Caregiver signs for the youth



WHAT ABOUT COLLEGE?

- Unaccompanied Homeless Youth can go to college!
- These people can verify a student's status for the FAFSA:
 - A school homeless education liaison
 - A director or designee of a HUD-funded shelter
 - A director or designee of a RHYA-funded shelter
 - A financial aid administrator
 - <http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/higher-ed>

HOW CAN HEALTHCARE
WORKERS HELP
UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS
YOUTH STAY IN SCHOOL?



REFERRALS

- Get in contact with the State Coordinator for Homeless Education in your state
 - Go check out their website
 - Find out if they have a listserve and get on it

http://center.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php
- Get in contact with the Local Homeless Education Liaison in your area
 - Build a relationship with your local liaison. This will help you to be able to make referrals when a need arises and it will help them to know who you are as well. Perhaps there's a project you can both work on together.

WORKING WITH YOUTH

- Ask them if they are in school
 - If they are not currently enrolled in school, ask them if they know they have a right to stay in school
 - Get them in contact with the Local Homeless Education Liaison. Facilitate this connection if needed.
- Ask them how they are doing in school
 - Encourage them to stay in school. Find out if they are having obstacles. Can your agency do a school supplies drive or any other program that can help youth stay in school?

WORKING WITH YOUTH (*CONT*)

- Become familiar with your state's laws and policies regarding runaway youth
- Find out what you are required to report. When working with youth, inform them of this upfront
- Refer them to safe, stable housing
- Have basic toiletry and hygiene items on hand

SCENARIO



Remember Jeremy? You feel that he is both homeless and unaccompanied. What can you do to help him stay in school?

FINAL QUESTIONS?



FOR MORE INFORMATION

- Karen Madrone, kmadrone@serve.org; 336-315-7417
- State Coordinator for Homeless Education:
www.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php
- NCHE website: www.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_youth.php
- NCHE helpline: 800-308-2145 or homeless@serve.org

NCHE National Partners:

- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEH CY): www.naehcy.org
- National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP): www.nlchp.org

