

Chattahoochee County Schools

Educating Homeless Children & Youth



Who are our homeless children?

The McKinney Homeless Assistance Act defines a homeless individual as one who:

- ❖ lacks a fixed, regular and adequate residence,
- ❖ has a primary nighttime residence in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter for temporary accommodations (hotels, shelters and transitional housing), or a public or private place not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping habitat for human beings.



How do we tell when children are homeless?

Guidelines from the U.S. Department of Education and the Georgia Department of Education describe the following situations in which a child lacks a fixed, regular and adequate residence and is considered homeless.

The child or youth :

- ❖ sleeps at night in a shelter for the homeless,
- ❖ sleeps at night in a shelter for runaway/throwaway youth,
- ❖ sleeps at night in a shelter for victims of domestic violence,
- ❖ sleeps at night in a tent, car, abandoned building or other place not ordinarily used as a sleeping accommodation for humans and
- ❖ sleeps at night in a shelter or other temporary arrangement while awaiting certain types of placement.

How can we be sure?

- ❖ McKinney-Vento eligibility is determined on a case-by-case basis by examining the living arrangement of each student.
- ❖ Some instances will be clear-cut; others will require further inquiry and then a judgment call.
- ❖ If the living arrangement does not meet all three criteria (*fixed, regular, and, adequate*), it is considered a homeless situation.
- ❖ The examples of homeless situations listed in the definition address some of the more common situations of homelessness; the list of examples is not exhaustive.

Is an unaccompanied youth homeless?

- ❖ An unaccompanied youth's living arrangement must meet the Act's definition of homeless for him/her to qualify for McKinney-Vento services.
- ❖ The McKinney-Vento Act defines unaccompanied youth as a child or youth "not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian".
- ❖ There is no lower age limit for unaccompanied youth; the upper age limit (*as with all McKinney-Vento eligible students*) is your state's upper age limit for public education (*usually 21, sometimes older for IDEA*).
- ❖ A youth can be eligible regardless of whether he/she was asked to leave the home or chose to leave; remember that sometimes there is "more than meets the eye" for youth's home life situations.



What are the responsibilities of the school district in enrolling homeless children and youth?

- ❖ Homeless children shall be allowed to remain enrolled in the school the child attended prior to homeless status or enroll in school where child is located.
- ❖ Schools cannot prevent enrollment through residency requirements.
- ❖ Schools are required to enroll homeless children not living with parents or legal guardians.
- ❖ Schools cannot require caregivers of homeless children to obtain legal guardianship.
- ❖ Schools cannot refuse enrollment due to lack of immunization forms, but may grant 30/90-day waiver.



What kind of services must the school district provide to homeless children and youth?

- ❖ The school district must provide services to homeless children that are comparable to services provided to other students.
- ❖ The school district must offer transportation, meals and district programs as comparable services.



What are the identified needs of homeless children and youth?

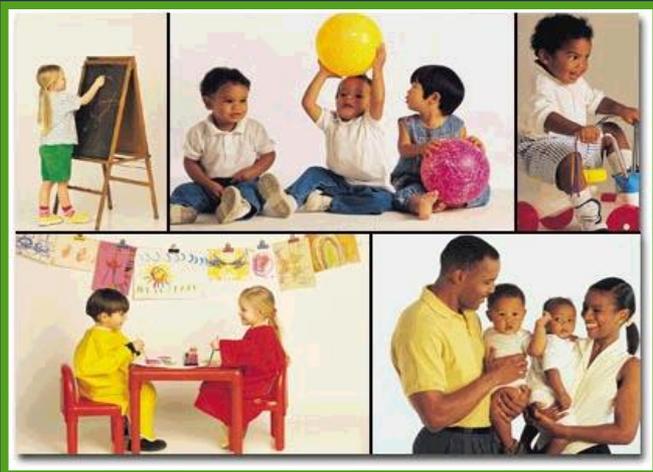
- ❖ Enhanced sensitivity and awareness among school personnel
- ❖ Assistance in obtaining necessary school records for enrollment
- ❖ Educational assessments
- ❖ Tutorial and remedial education
- ❖ Adequate transportation
- ❖ Adequate resources for school supplies and clothing
- ❖ Social work and counseling services

Can Chattahoochee County Schools make a difference?

- ❖ 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.
- ❖ Schools do not need to understand and/or agree with all aspects of a student's home life to educate him/her but we can make a difference.

How can we make a difference

Homelessness can be very stressful and demanding on children causing emotional as well as academic difficulties. However, school sometimes offers a place of stability in the lives of homeless children and youth. Therefore, addressing the identified needs and providing services to our children will help foster a stable learning environment.



For questions, concerns, referrals or resources for
homeless children and youth in Chattahoochee
County, please contact:

School Social Work Services
Gwenetta Sullivan- Echols
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