

# Chattahoochee County Schools

Educating Homeless Children & Youth

School Year 2019-2020

## 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

WE CAN OFFER A PLACE OF STABILITY IN THE LIVES OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

