



# The McKinney Vento Act:

## Homelessness, Foster & Students Experiencing Educational Instability

MANDATORY ANNUAL TRAINING

CCTI

Homeless Liaison/Foster Point of Contact- Christine Trovato



# Agenda

- A Brief Overview of the law & its history; Policy 251
- Homelessness, Foster, Unaccompanied Youth & Educational Instability defined
- The Scale of Homelessness
- Characteristics & Difficulties of homelessness
- Challenges for Educators
- Addressing the needs of students experiencing homelessness or foster care
- CCTI's Point of Contact; Additional Information

# A Brief Overview of the Law & its History

- A Federal Law dealing with homelessness in U.S.
- Named after Stewart McKinney and Bruce Vento
- Defines Homelessness
- Ensures homeless youth have equal access to the same **Appropriate Public Education** as others
- Focuses on eliminating barriers so youth experiencing homelessness can succeed in school
- PA's ECYEH program's goal is to educate schools about C&Y rights





# Policy 251 Overview

“...shall assign a Point of Contact.”

“.... Shall facilitate immediate enrollment; eliminate existing barriers to their attendance; education and graduation, in coordination with the school district of residence.”

“....shall develop a Graduation Plan to ensure timely graduation.”

“....shall ensure non-interruption of transportation to allow the student remain in his/her school of origin.”

“The Joint Operating Committee shall ensure that no student shall be discriminated against based on his/her instability status.”

(carboncti.org, 2023)

# Homelessness Defined

**An individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.**

- Sharing housing (doubled-up)
- Living in motels, hotels, trailers, or camping grounds
- Living in emergency shelters or transitional housing
- Unaccompanied Youth-Abandoned, Runaways
- Living in cars, parks, public places, abandoned buildings
- Migratory children (living in circumstances above)





# What events can lead up to homelessness

- ❖ Fire
- ❖ Flood
- ❖ Job Loss
- ❖ Eviction
- ❖ Domestic Violence
- ❖ Accident
- ❖ Illness
- ❖ Runaway



# Foster Care Defined

## Foster Care

Also known as out-of-home care.

A temporary service provided by states for children who cannot live with their parents/guardians

The child welfare agency has responsibility for placement and care.

Foster care can refer to placement settings such as unrelated foster parents, relatives, group homes, child-care institutions, residential care facilities, emergency shelters, pre-adoptive homes, and supervised independent living.

# Unaccompanied Youth Defined

- ❖ Any child who is not in the physical custody of a parent/guardian
- ❖ Runaways, children thrown out of their home, abandoned by parents or separated from parents for any other reason
- ❖ Fits the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless
- ❖ For Special Education students- A court ordered special temporary Surrogate parents must be assigned to unaccompanied youth to make special education decisions/advocate if the youth does not have an authorized person





# **Students Experiencing Educational Instability** Defined

- A student who has experienced one or more changes in school entity enrollment during a single school year as a result of any of the following:
  1. Homelessness
  2. Dependency relating to child protective services
  3. Delinquency as disclosed at the discretion of the parent/guardian
  4. As part of court-ordered services under a voluntary placement or custody agreement.



# The Scale of Homelessness

## Nationwide

1, 096, 669 (app.) homeless children were enrolled in public school districts during the 2020-2021 school year.

Note: Includes all enrolled homeless children and youth in grades PK through 12. COVID-19 operations impacted the identification of eligible students. Please use the data with caution.

## Pennsylvania

27,235 (app.) homeless children were enrolled in public school districts experiencing homelessness during the 2020-2021 school year.

2,843 children and youth experiencing homelessness in Region 7 (includes 17 counties)

(National Center for Homeless Education, 2023)





# Homelessness Characteristics

- Attendance at several schools
- More than one family at the same address
- Embarrassed
- Hunger and hoarding of food
- Sleeping in class
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate dress for weather
- Comments such as, “I am staying at my friend’s on his couch.”





# Difficulties for Homeless Students

- ❖ Ashamed of where they live
- ❖ Teased by other students about homelessness, hygiene and inabilities
- ❖ Misunderstood by parents & teachers
- ❖ Difficulty adjusting to new school
- ❖ Noisy environment- No place to do homework, resulting in incomplete/late assignments often
- ❖ Developmental delays augment feelings of failure
- ❖ Connectivity issues (virtual); High rates of Absenteeism





## **Difficulties for Foster Youth**

- When children are placed into foster care, lives are often changed very quickly; often taken from family home & placed in a home with strangers
- Thrust into a new school or multiple schools in a short time
- School/academic records may be difficult to obtain or may have gaps
- Often have significant difficulties in school performance and difficulty adjusting
- Attendance is often affected due to frequent moves
- Often have trust issues with adults due to not being able to develop relationships



# Challenges for Teachers

- ❖ Student attended many different schools with different teaching methods
- ❖ Incomplete school records
- ❖ Need to assess educational needs without prior records
- ❖ Student's instruction is interrupted due to absences
- ❖ Student might have difficulty trusting adults and other students
- ❖ Inability to contact parents
- ❖ Homework completion may be inconsistent





## What can you do?

- ❖ Notify the Homeless Liaison & Foster POC
- ❖ Refer the student to a SAP team member
- ❖ Don't bring special attention to the fact they are homeless or in foster care in front of other children
- ❖ Make the student feel welcome.
- ❖ Continue to *try and make contact with the parents*
- ❖ *Allow accommodations (extended time) **BUT** maintain high expectations*
- ❖ Avoid taking away the student's possessions as a disciplinary measure, as the item/s may be the only thing they can really call their own (e.g. hat, bookbag, notebook, item).





## Tips for Teachers/Staff continued...

- ❖ Work closely with staff and administration when behavioral and/or medical needs are observed
- ❖ Be aware homeless students may live in noisy, crowded conditions, such as those in a shelter; can result in difficulty completing homework, tuning others out, and difficulty in listening and responding to important information.
- ❖ In the case of foster students, be aware the students need to adjust to new surroundings.
- ❖ Be aware some assignments/projects may be difficult for the student (tapping on a personal level, things involving family, house, **internet access**, etc.)
- Contact the parent, foster parent, Liaison if a child is absent for three or more days





## **Tips for Teachers/Staff continued...**

- Be aware that some classroom assignments/projects may be embarrassing and difficult for a student placed in foster care or experiencing homelessness – activities involving a house, family, or neighborhood may be nearly impossible for the child to explain or address.
- Be aware that involvement in fundraisers, or getting permission slips or other papers signed and returned, may also be difficult for these children.
- Offer tutoring and after-school programming
- Always inform and involve your district's homeless liaison of these situations



## **At the School/District Level:**

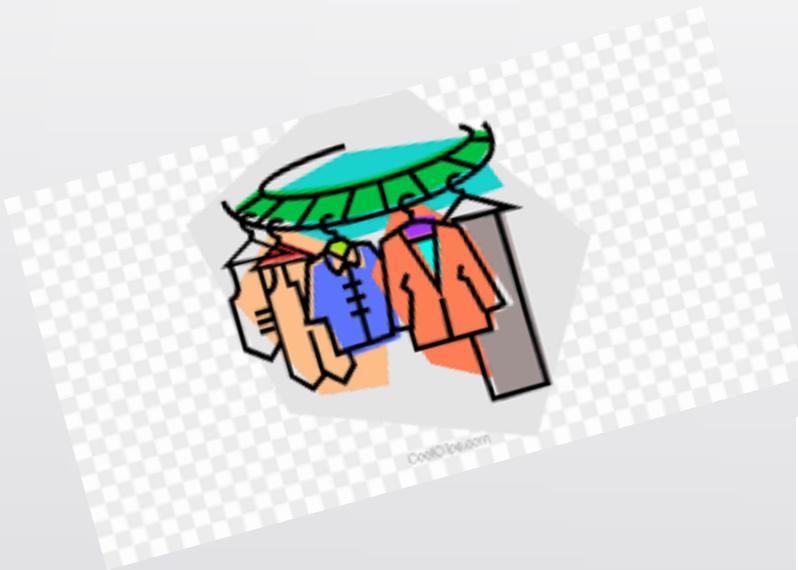
“The primary responsibility of the schools is to enroll and educate homeless children and youth in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act. Determinations of eligibility should be made on the student’s nighttime living arrangement, not the circumstances that caused the student to leave home.”

~National Center for Homeless Education



# School/District Responsibilities

- *Remove barriers that interfere with learning.*





## **School/District Responsibilities continued...**

- ❖ Ensure access to instructional support/resources, special education and gifted programs
- ❖ Provide homeless awareness training (about McKinney Vento Act)
- ❖ Alert teachers of a student's living situation (respecting privacy)
- ❖ Provide academic remediation and support interventions
- ❖ Offer Credit Recovery and assistance with post-secondary transitioning
- ❖ Publish homeless information on website, handbook (posters)
- ❖ Provide community resources to homeless parent/families





# CCTI's Homeless Liaison & Foster Point of Contact

- Christine Trovato
  - [ctrovato@carboncti.org](mailto:ctrovato@carboncti.org)
  - Ext. 1509

Other:

Region 7 Regional Coordinator- Jeffrey Zimmerman;  
570-718-4613; [jzimmerman@liu18.org](mailto:jzimmerman@liu18.org)





## For more information, go to:

- CCTI's Webpage- <http://carboncti.org/students/homeless/>
- [https://www.pec-cares.org/uploads/2/9/3/9/29391481/ehcy\\_summary\\_of\\_sy\\_2018\\_data\\_by\\_entity-2019-03-01.pdf](https://www.pec-cares.org/uploads/2/9/3/9/29391481/ehcy_summary_of_sy_2018_data_by_entity-2019-03-01.pdf)
- National Center for Homeless Education <https://nche.ed.gov/data-and-stats>
- <http://profiles.nche.seiservices.com/StateProfile.aspx?StateID=44>
- <https://mckinneyventoact.weebly.com/history.html>
- <https://www.nationalhomeless.org/publications/facts/McKinney.pdf>
- Carbon County Community resources guide- <https://cccfoundpa.org/carbon-county-resource-guides/>

