



# McKinney-Vento & Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (UHY) Overview

**Vanessa Waters**

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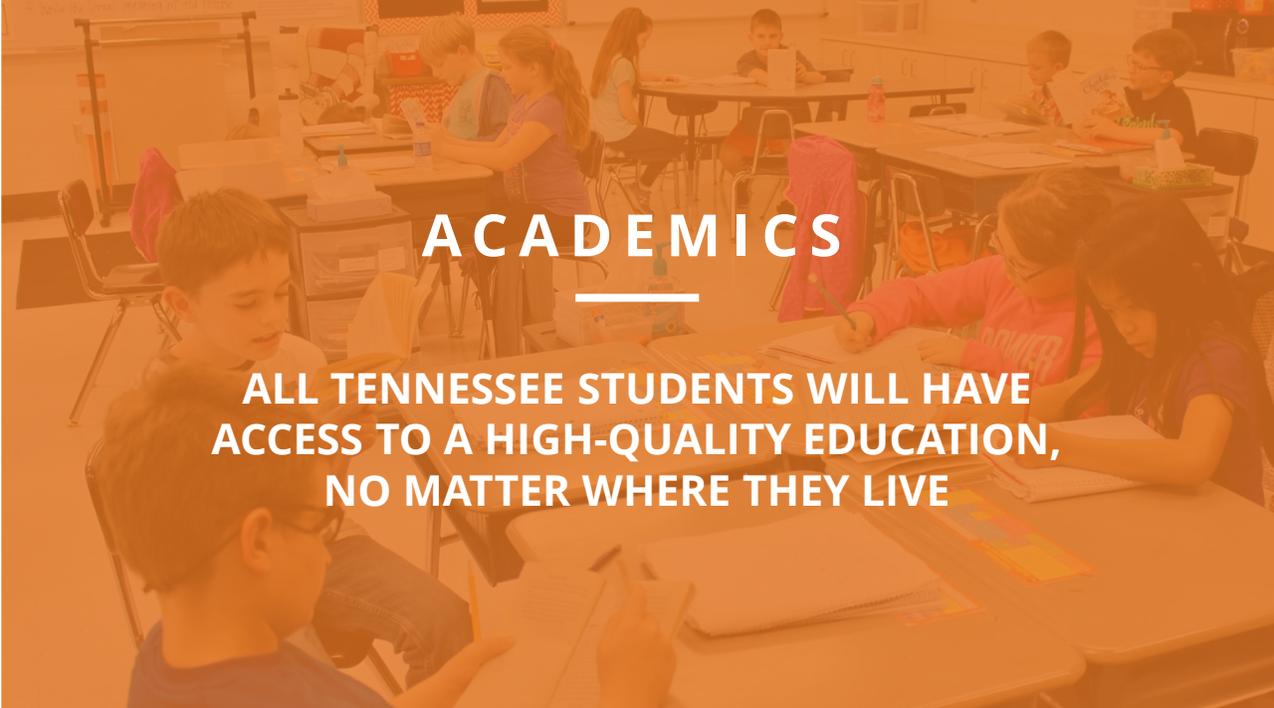
Jan. 26, 2024





**BEST** FOR  
**ALL**

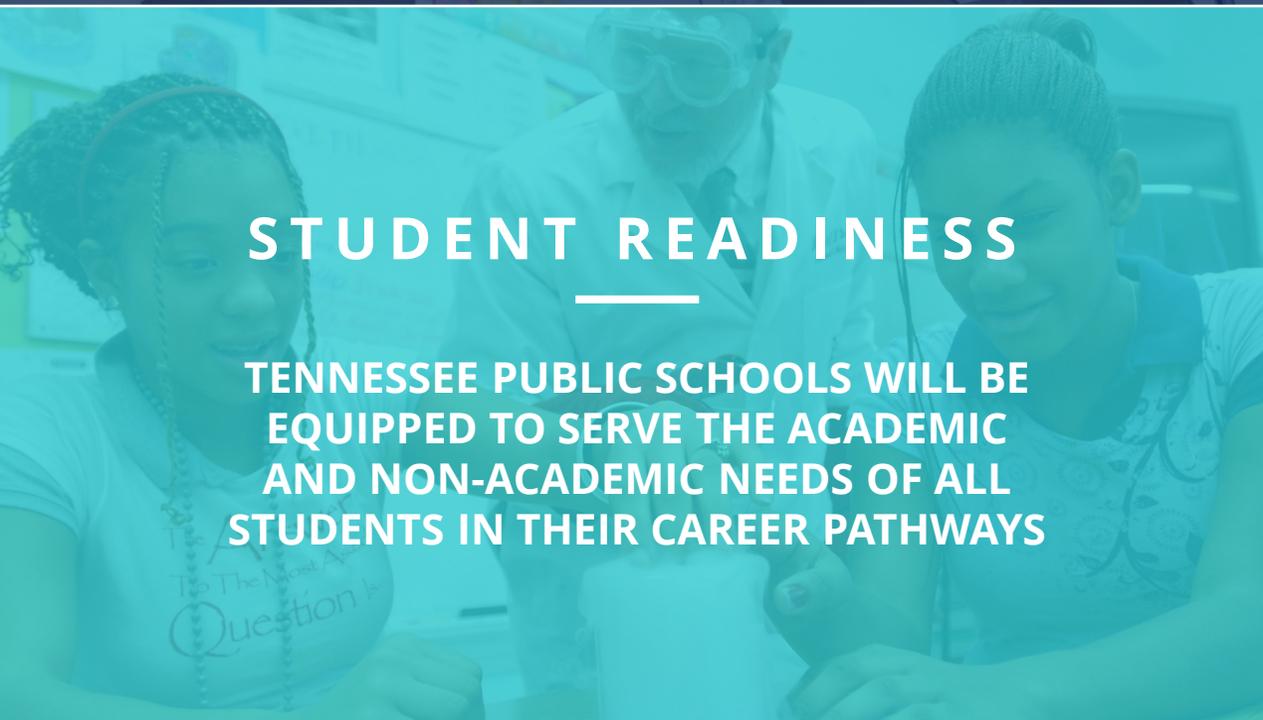
We will set all students on a path to success.



## ACADEMICS

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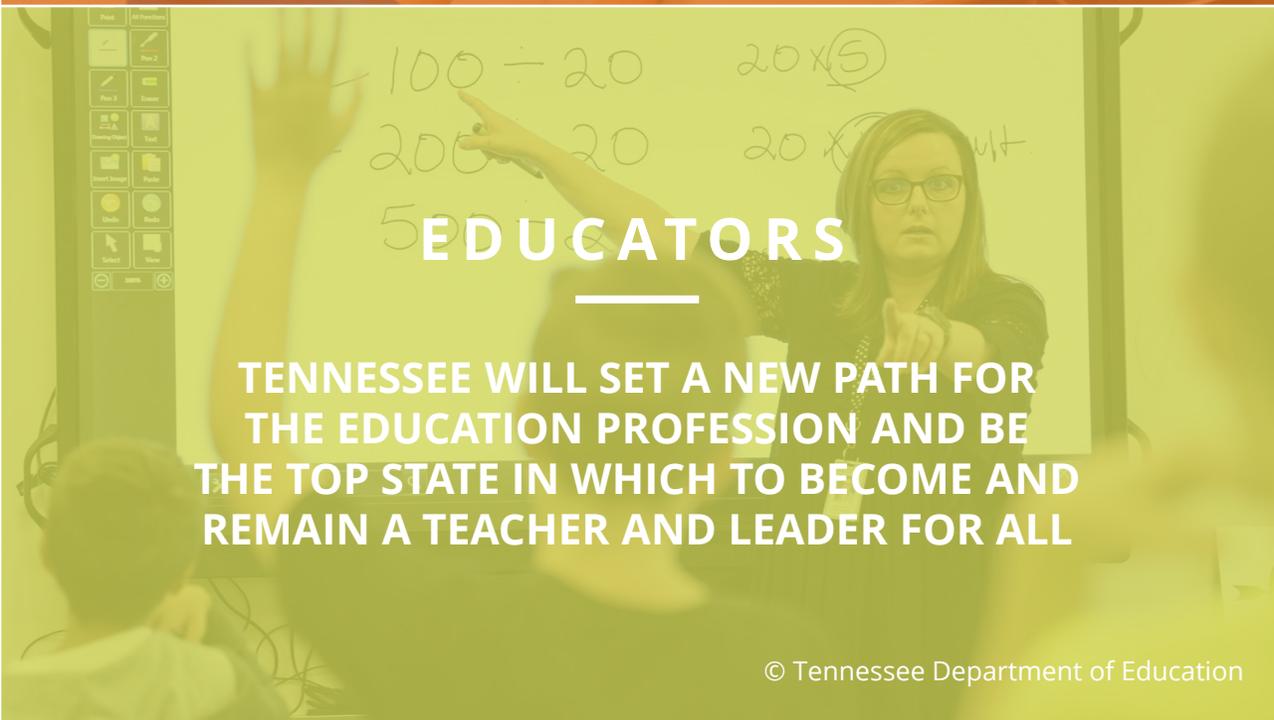
**ALL TENNESSEE STUDENTS WILL HAVE ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY EDUCATION, NO MATTER WHERE THEY LIVE**



## STUDENT READINESS

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**TENNESSEE PUBLIC SCHOOLS WILL BE EQUIPPED TO SERVE THE ACADEMIC AND NON-ACADEMIC NEEDS OF ALL STUDENTS IN THEIR CAREER PATHWAYS**



## EDUCATORS

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**TENNESSEE WILL SET A NEW PATH FOR THE EDUCATION PROFESSION AND BE THE TOP STATE IN WHICH TO BECOME AND REMAIN A TEACHER AND LEADER FOR ALL**



# Agenda

- Program Purpose, Definitions, & Eligibility
- Who Are Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (UHY)?
- Identifying UHY
- Educational Rights & Supports
- Transportation & Best Interest
- Higher Education & the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Important Reminders & Resources



# Program Purpose, Definitions & Eligibility



# Purpose of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program

The purpose of the McKinney-Vento EHCY program is to ensure that each homeless child or youth **has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education**, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths.

# Defining Homelessness

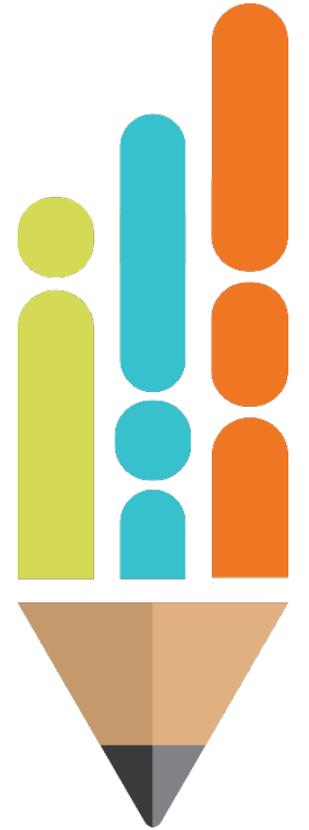
- Children or youth who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**:
  - sharing the housing of other persons;
  - living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds;
  - living in emergency or transitional shelters, or are abandoned in hospitals;
  - living in a public or private place not designed for regular sleeping accommodation;
  - living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
  - who are migratory children living in the above circumstances.

## Key Definitions

- **Fixed**: stationary, permanent, not subject to change
- **Regular**: used on a nightly basis
- **Adequate**: sufficient for meeting the physical, psychological, and safety needs typically met in a home environment

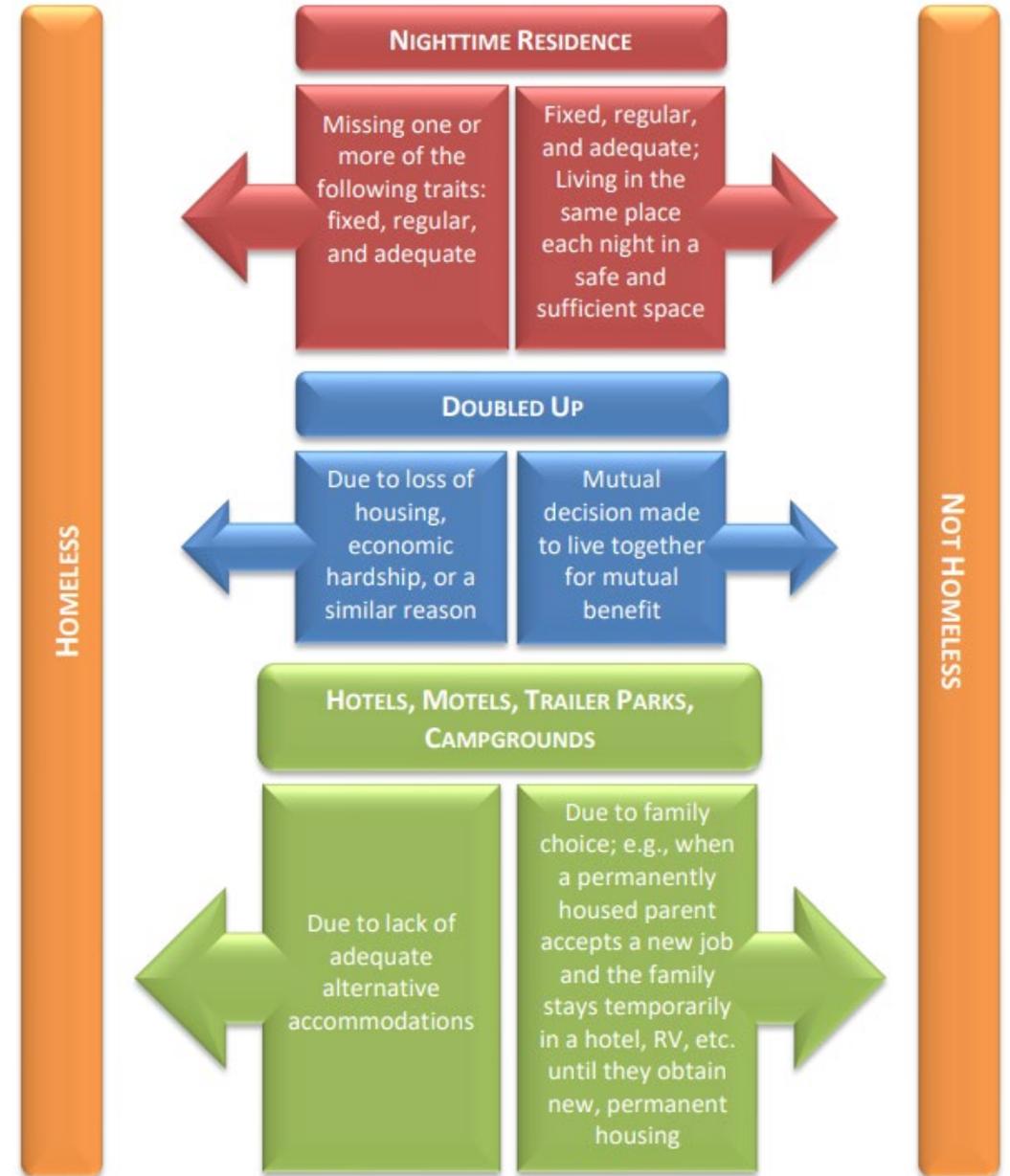
# Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

- The term *unaccompanied youth* includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian [42 U.S.C. § 11434a(6)].
- Liaisons must assist UHY with enrollment, school selection, and dispute resolution.
- UHY have the same right to immediate enrollment and educational services as other students.



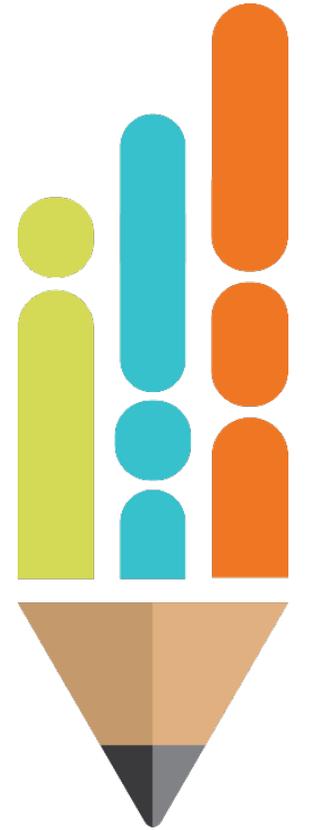
# McKinney-Vento Eligibility Determinations Flowchart

- This flowchart is meant to aid you in making decisions about a student's eligibility as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.).
- See the [National Center for Homeless Education \(NCHE\)](#) for additional resources.



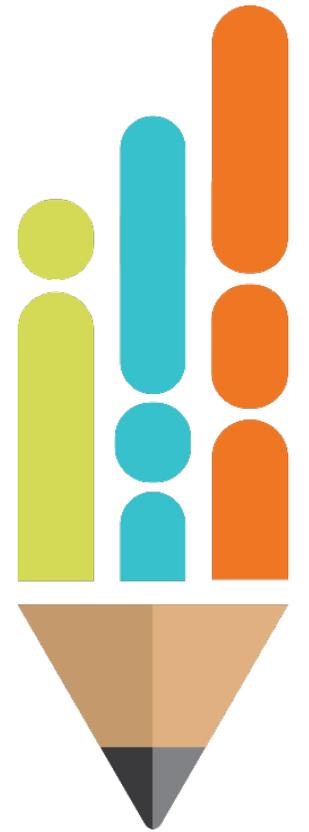
# The Dynamics of Doubling Up

- 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.
- Doubled-up arrangements often serve as temporary shelter but may not last or may place the family or youth in danger.



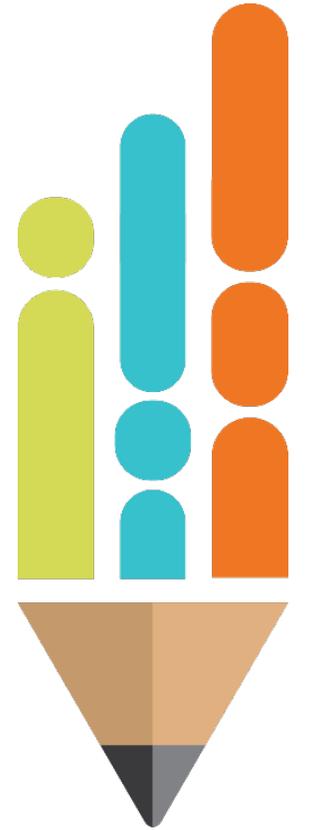
# “Sharing the housing of other persons...”

- 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?



# Helpful Considerations

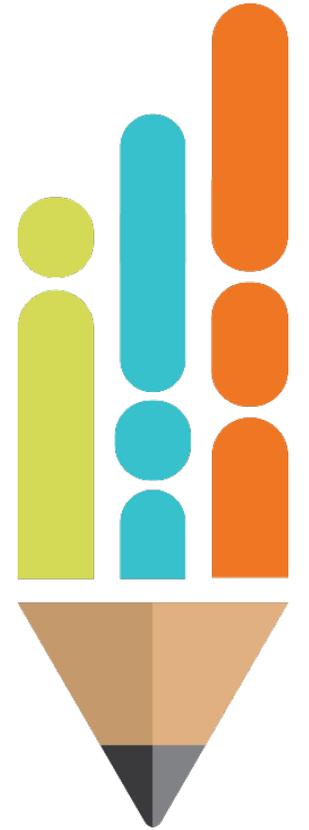
- Consider:
  - How the shared housing came about
  - The intention of the residents
  - The family's or youth's housing options if not sharing housing
  - The fixed, regular, and adequate guiding phrase
- Make determinations on a case-by-case basis



# Who Are Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?

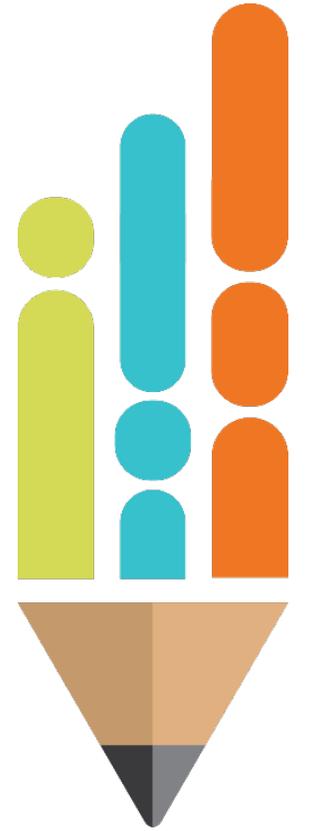
# Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

- There are no age limits in the McKinney-Vento Act.
- Eligibility is based on the student's housing.
- Pathways to homelessness for unaccompanied youth:
  - 35% of youth experienced the death of at least one parent or caregiver
  - 44% of youth had been in foster care
  - 24% were homeless with their families before becoming unaccompanied
- See [Missed Opportunities in Youth Pathways Through Homelessness](#) for additional information.



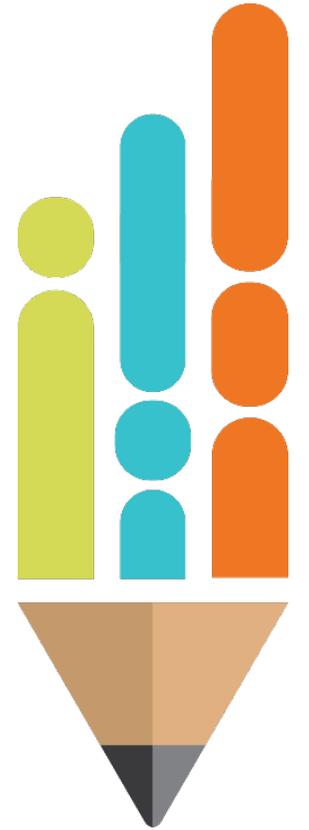
# Understanding Youth Homelessness

- Common causes of youth homelessness:
  - Abuse or neglect
  - Acute conflict (e.g., pregnancy, sexual orientation, gender identity, blended family issues, substance abuse)
  - Economic challenges (e.g., pressure for older children to be financially independent)
  - Shelter policies (e.g., lack of space for whole family, adolescent boys not accepted at family shelters)



# Understanding Youth Homelessness

- As a result of the difficult circumstances faced by homeless youth, these youth experience unique educational barriers and challenges and have higher than average rates of:
  - Mental health and substance abuse issues
  - Criminal victimization, including rape, assault, and human trafficking
  - Criminal activity related to survival
  - Pregnancy and sexually transmitted disease

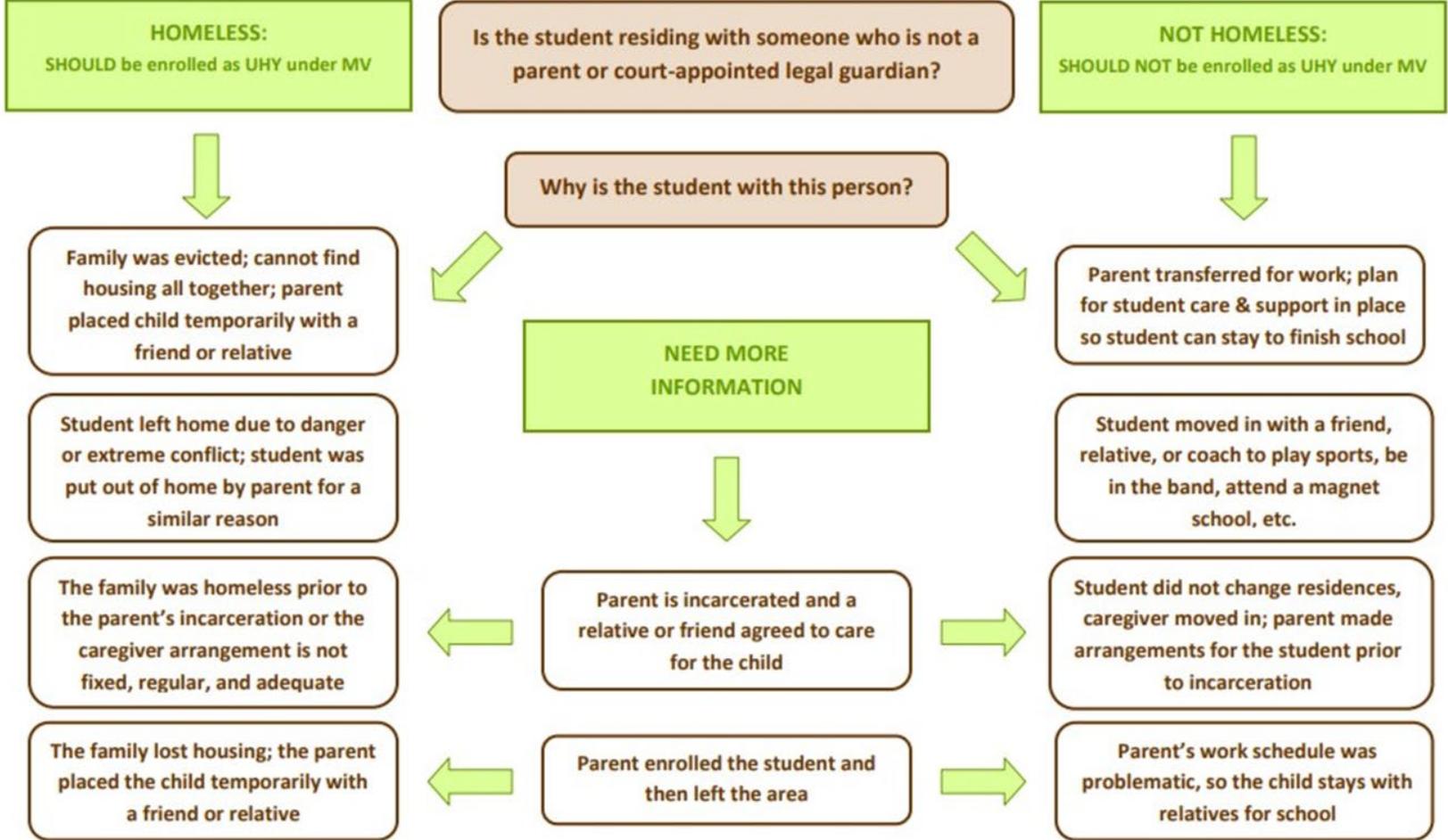


# Identifying UHY





### Unaccompanied Youth Eligibility Flowchart

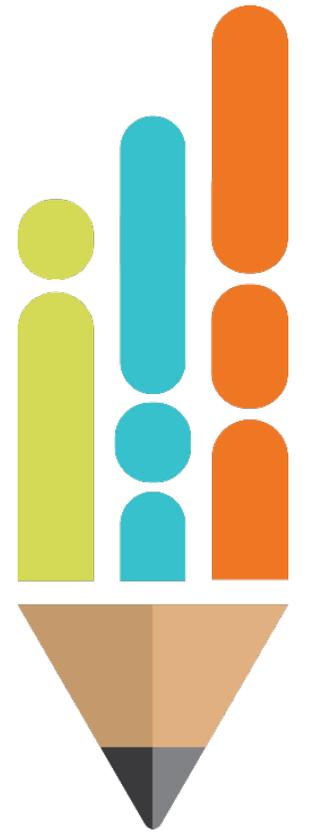


**NOTE:** The information contained in this flowchart is intended to serve as a general guide. All McKinney-Vento eligibility determinations should be made on a case-by-case basis weighing the individual circumstances of each student. To be eligible for McKinney-Vento services as an unaccompanied homeless student, the student must meet the criteria of both homeless and unaccompanied.

# Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Flowchart

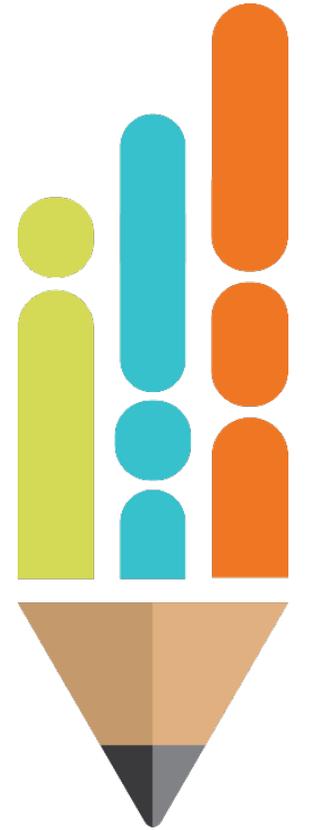
# Identifying Unaccompanied Youth

- The identification of McKinney-Vento students, including unaccompanied youth, is important because:
  - Identification is a critical first step to ensuring the provision of needed supports
  - Schools must remove barriers to and improve the identification of students experiencing homelessness



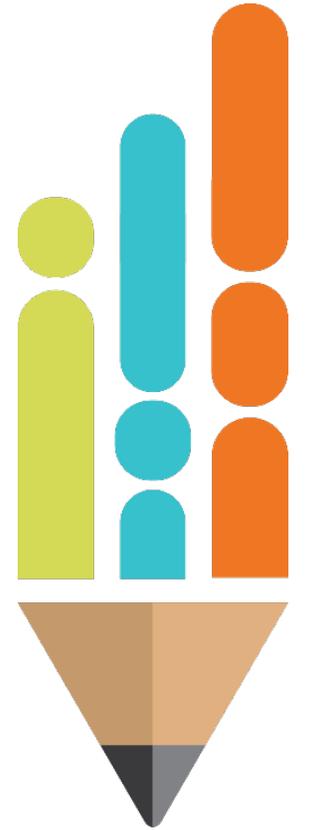
# Barriers To Identification

- Lack of understanding of the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless
- Desire to avoid the stigma often associated with homelessness
- Discomfort discussing the circumstances, which often are very personal and sensitive, that led to their being homeless and on their own
- Fear of being treated differently by school personnel or other students if they are “found out”
- Fear of being reported to child welfare and/or law enforcement agencies



# Identification Strategies

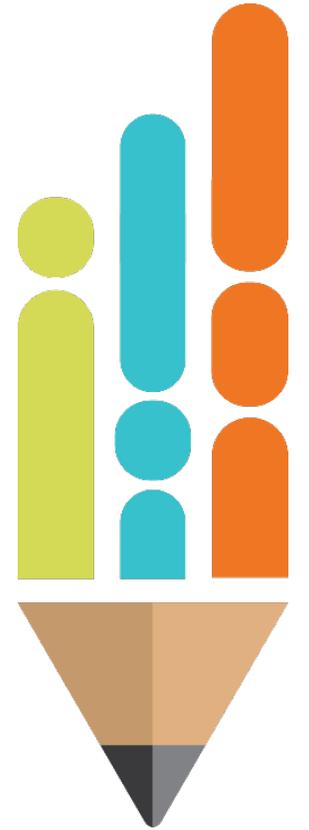
- Create a welcoming and supportive school environment.
- Develop youth-friendly outreach materials and distribute them where youth are likely to see them.
- Use youth-friendly means of communication (e.g., social media, text, websites).
- Develop trusting relationships with youth by conducting conversations sensitively and confidentially and informing youth up-front of circumstances under which you are required to report concerns to child welfare and/or law enforcement.
- Include local liaison contact information on all McKinney-Vento materials.



# Educational Rights & Supports

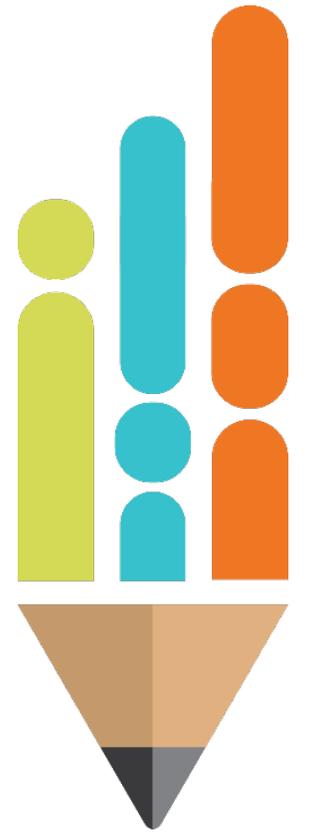
# Rights and Supports for UHY

- Students experiencing homelessness are entitled to immediate school enrollment:
  - Even if lacking records normally required for enrollment, such as:
    - academic records
    - immunizations
    - health records
    - proof of residency
    - proof of guardianship
    - other needed documentation
  - Even if having missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(C)(i)]



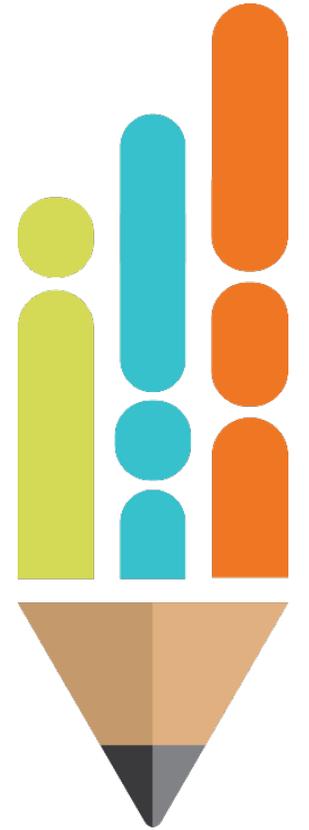
# Rights and Supports for UHY

- Enrollment is defined as “attending classes and participating fully in school activities” [42 U.S.C. § 11434a(1)].
- For more information, see [Enrolling Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in School](#).



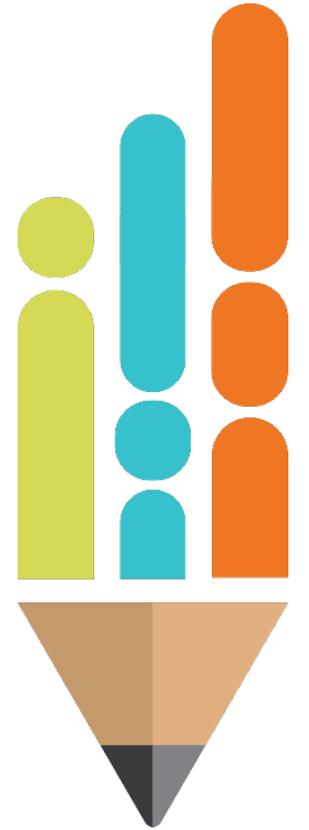
# Removing Barriers to Extracurricular Activities & Before and After School Programs

- Provide transportation
- Pay for needed uniforms and supplies
- Pay or waive fees



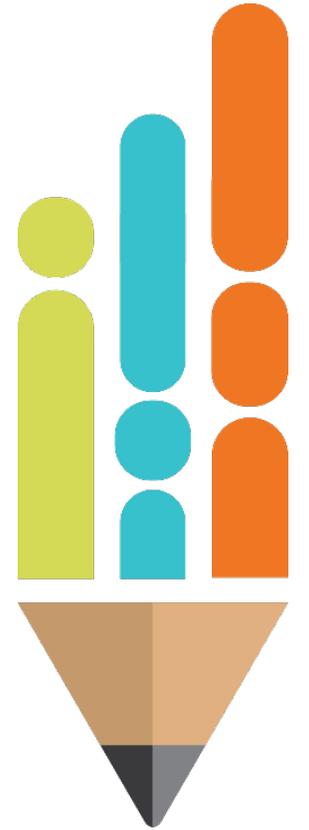
# Enrollment Methods

- Common methods for enrolling unaccompanied youth include:
  - Students enroll themselves using a self-enrollment form.
  - An adult caregiver enrolls the student using a caregiver form.
    - See a sample [TDOE McKinney-Vento Caregiver Authorization Form](#).
  - The local liaison enrolls the student.
- **Unaccompanied youth must be enrolled in school immediately, even if no adult caregiver can assist with enrollment.**



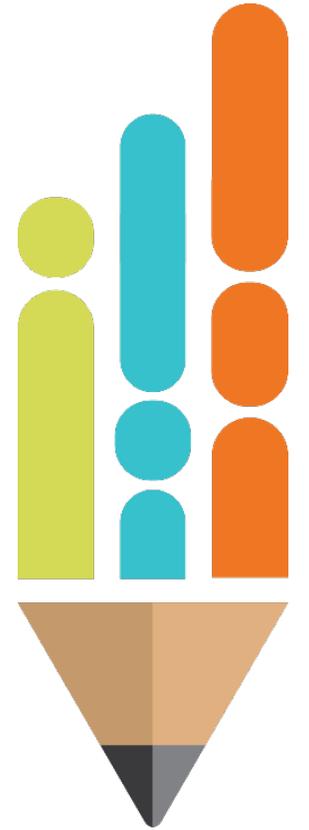
# Ensuring Enrollment

- Review and revise local education agency (LEA) policies that may serve as barriers to the immediate enrollment of unaccompanied youth.
- Ensure enrollment staff understand the McKinney-Vento Act and the rights of unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness.
- Ensure that enrollment staff are aware of policies and procedures for immediate enrollment, including knowing how and when to contact the local homeless education liaison.



# Credit Accrual

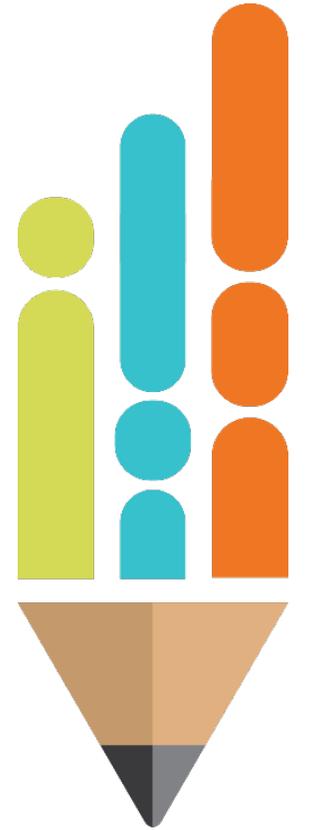
LEAs must implement procedures to identify and remove barriers to McKinney-Vento students receiving appropriate **credit for full or partial coursework** satisfactorily completed at a prior school [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(F)(ii)].



# Transportation & Best Interest

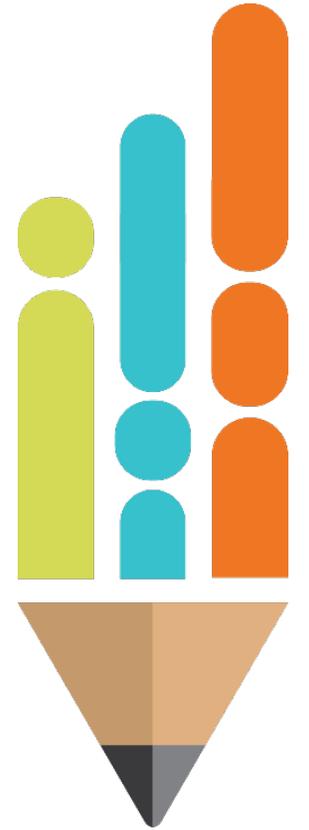
# Best Interest

- UHY have the same rights as other students experiencing homelessness.
- Local liaisons must assist unaccompanied youth with placement or enrollment decisions, giving priority to the views of the youth [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(B)(ii)].
- If the school and parent/guardian/unaccompanied youth disagree after the best interest determination, initiate the LEA's dispute resolution process.



# School of Origin

- Homeless children and youth have the right to attend:
  - **The school of origin** [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(A)(ii)]
    - The school that a child or youth attended when permanently housed, or
    - The school in which the child or youth was last enrolled
    - Includes public preschools
    - Includes receiving schools
  - **The local attendance area school** [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(I)(i)]
    - Any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area in which the child or youth is living are eligible to attend.



# School of Origin Transportation

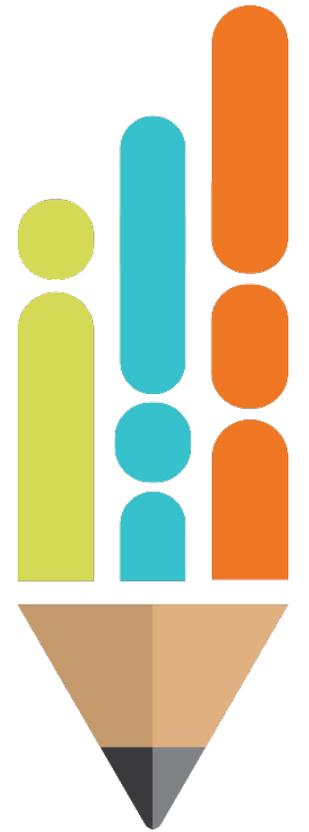
- LEAs must transport homeless students to and from the school of origin, at a parent's or guardian's request or at the local liaison's request for unaccompanied homeless youth [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)].
- If the child or youth lives and attends school within the same LEA, that LEA must provide or arrange transportation.



# Higher Education & HUD

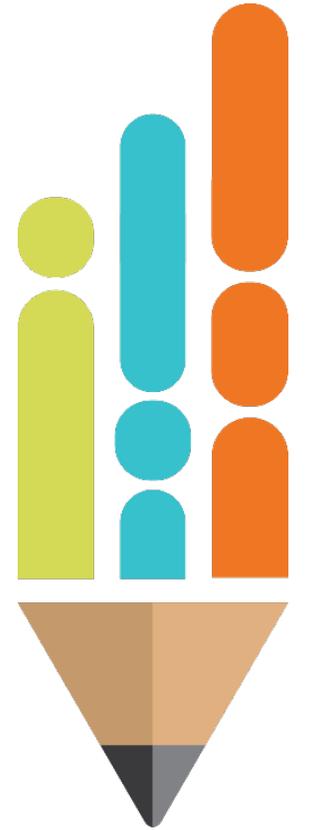
# Higher Education

- UHY qualify as independent students on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), so they do not have to provide parent information, and their federal aid package is calculated solely on their income and assets.
- School counselors must advise homeless youth about college and support their college readiness.
- Local liaisons must inform unaccompanied homeless youth of their status as independent students on the FAFSA and assist them in verification of this status.
- See these [Federal Student Aid resources](#) for additional information.



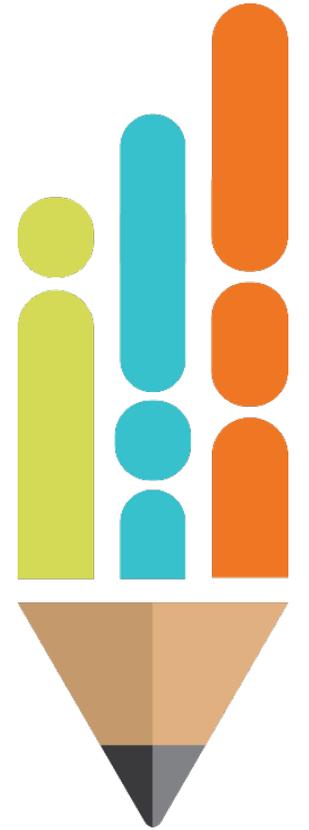
# The College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA)

- CCRAA includes specific provisions designed to remove barriers to accessing federal financial aid for college for UHY.
- The Act enables UHY to be qualified as “independent students” to fill out the FAFSA, removing the need for parental financial information and a parent signature.
  - Youth must be determined as unaccompanied and homeless, or as unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting during the school year in which they apply for aid.



# Access to HUD

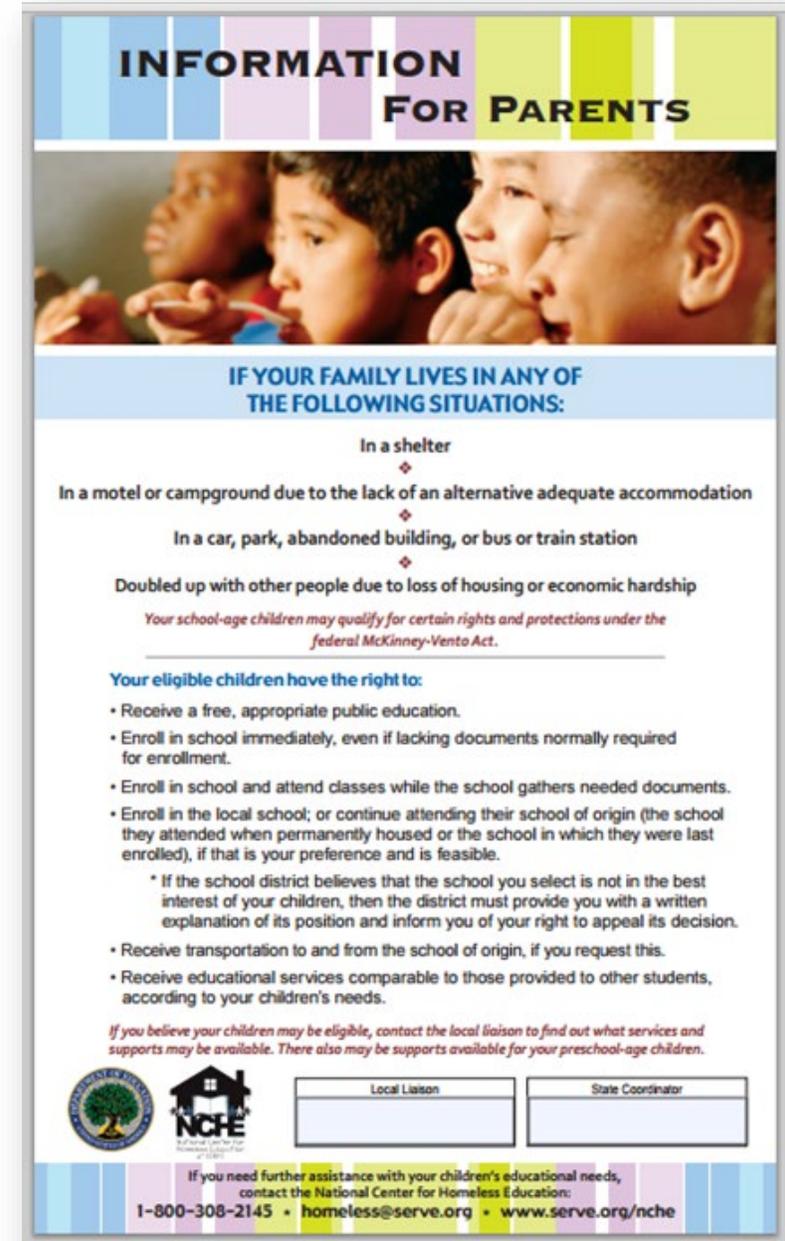
- Local liaisons are authorized to affirm whether children and youth meet the HUD definition of homelessness to qualify them for HUD homeless assistance programs.
- Although a liaison may affirm, the family must still meet the other requirements of HUD projects.
- Local liaisons may make this affirmation in the form of a signed letter on LEA letterhead that at minimum, identifies the most recent primary nighttime residence of the homeless child or youth.



# Important Reminders & Resources

# Important Reminders

- Ensure every school has an updated homeless poster posted in a common area of the school.
- Contact information should include both the local homeless liaison as well as the state coordinator:
  - **Vanessa Waters**
  - **(615) 917-3750**
- Posters and other vital resources can be ordered for free from the [National Center for Homeless Education](http://www.nche.org).



The poster is titled "INFORMATION FOR PARENTS" and features a photograph of three children. It lists various housing situations where children may be eligible for educational services under the McKinney-Vento Act. It provides a list of rights for eligible children, such as receiving a free public education and enrolling in school immediately. It also includes contact information for the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHÉ) and a section for local and state coordinators.

**INFORMATION FOR PARENTS**

**IF YOUR FAMILY LIVES IN ANY OF THE FOLLOWING SITUATIONS:**

- In a shelter
- In a motel or campground due to the lack of an alternative adequate accommodation
- In a car, park, abandoned building, or bus or train station
- Doubled up with other people due to loss of housing or economic hardship

*Your school-age children may qualify for certain rights and protections under the federal McKinney-Vento Act.*

**Your eligible children have the right to:**

- Receive a free, appropriate public education.
- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents normally required for enrollment.
- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.
- Enroll in the local school; or continue attending their school of origin (the school they attended when permanently housed or the school in which they were last enrolled), if that is your preference and is feasible.
- \* If the school district believes that the school you select is not in the best interest of your children, then the district must provide you with a written explanation of its position and inform you of your right to appeal its decision.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if you request this.
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to your children's needs.

*If you believe your children may be eligible, contact the local liaison to find out what services and supports may be available. There also may be supports available for your preschool-age children.*

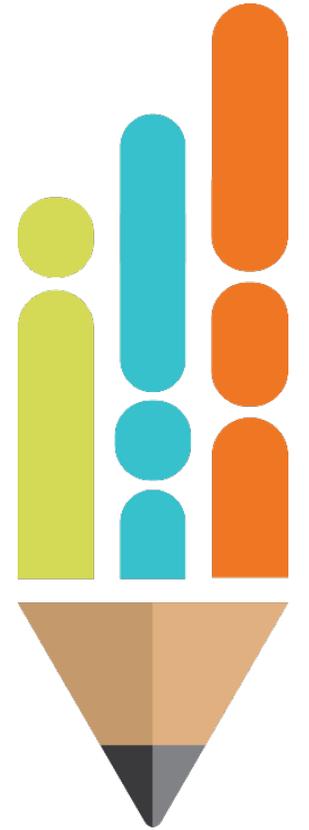
 

Local Liaison	State Coordinator
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If you need further assistance with your children's educational needs, contact the National Center for Homeless Education:  
1-800-308-2145 • [homeless@serve.org](mailto:homeless@serve.org) • [www.serve.org/nche](http://www.serve.org/nche)

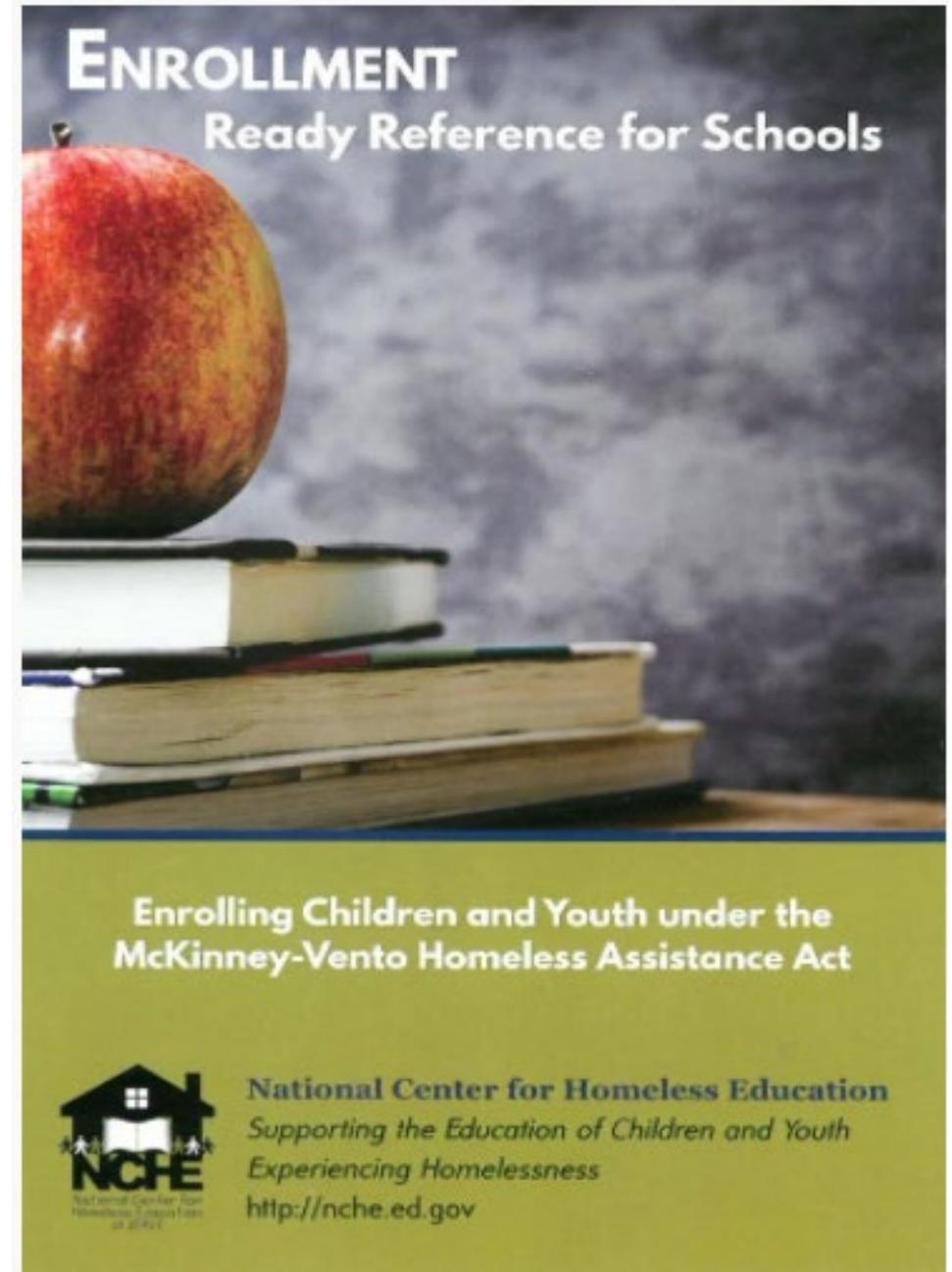
# Posters

- Posters explaining the rights of homeless children and youth should be displayed:
  - In all schools and locations where parents enroll students
  - In hotels, motels, camping grounds and shelters
  - In or around public libraries, laundromats, shelters, convenience stores, and bus stations
  - In all locations around the community where persons experiencing homelessness access services



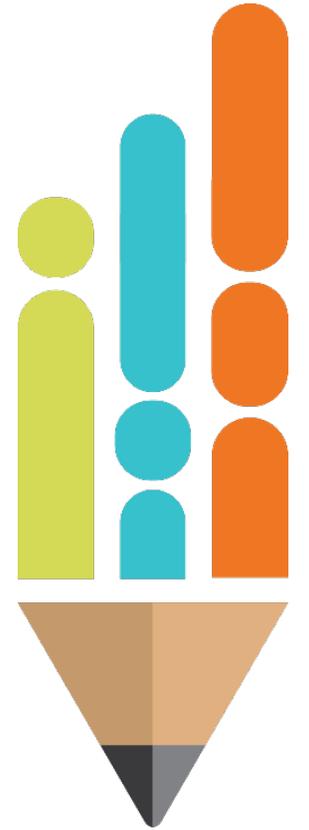
# Brochures

- Brochures explaining the rights of students under McKinney-Vento are also available from [NCHE](http://nche.ed.gov) in English and Spanish.
- These should be given to parents when their child is determined to be eligible for services, or to homeless unaccompanied youth.



# Additional Communication

- Include information about the McKinney-Vento Act in your district handbook that is given to every student.
- Clearly display information about McKinney-Vento on your LEA/school website in a place where parents and students can find it easily, including:
  - Name and contact information for the local liaison
  - Definition of homeless under McKinney-Vento
  - Rights and services available to students experiencing homelessness



# Resources



- [U.S. Department of Education \(ED\): McKinney-Vento Law and Guidance](#)
- [Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance](#)
- [ePlan > TDOE Resources](#) > ESSA Information, Guidance, PPTs, & Webinars > Title IX, Part A Education for Homeless Children & Youth > McKinney-Vento Toolkit and Resources 2021
- [National Center for Homeless Education \(NCHE\):](#)
  - [NCHE Homeless Liaison Toolkit](#)
  - Homeless Education Helpline: 800-308-2145 or [homeless@serve.org](mailto:homeless@serve.org)

# Resources

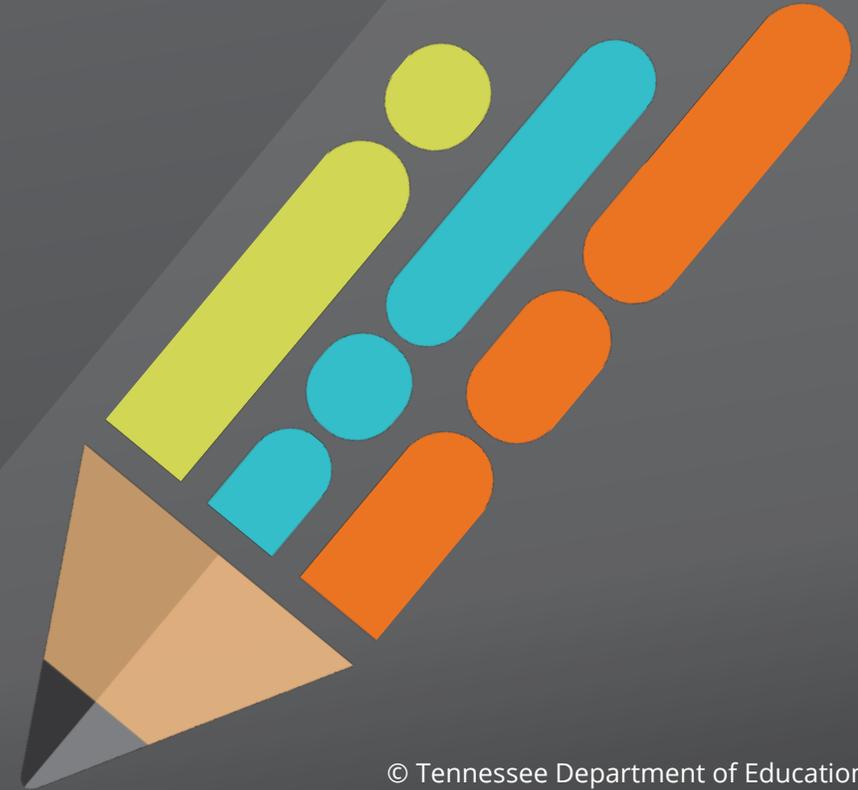
- [A Guide to Effective Collaborations with Community-Based Organizations to Support Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [Coordinated Entry Processes: Building Mutual Engagement between Schools and Continuums of Care](#)
- [National Clearinghouse on Homeless Youth and Families](#)
- [National Runaway Safeline \(NRS\)](#)



# Please Share your Feedback:

You may access the PD by navigating here:

[https://stateoftennessee.formstack.com/forms/fpo\\_professional\\_development\\_survey](https://stateoftennessee.formstack.com/forms/fpo_professional_development_survey)





# Thank You!

**Vanessa Waters** | McKinney-Vento and Immigrant Grant Manager

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(615) 917-3750

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