

RISING TOGETHER



Guiding Every Student Higher



2026 Federal Programs Institute

Rising Together Trail to Success

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Agenda

- McKinney-Vento Overview
- Types of Homelessness
- Game Play
 - Purpose
 - Your Role
 - How to Play
- Debrief
 - Reflection
 - Content Connection
 - Action Planning
- Recourses

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McKinney-Vento Overview

McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.)

- Establishes the definition of homeless used by public schools
 - Covers all public schools, including charter, magnet, & virtual schools
- Focuses on identification, enrollment, stability, and success of homeless children and youth (HCY), pre-K through high school
- Requires every school district to appoint a local homeless education liaison and every state to have a coordinator for homeless education
- Requires state educational agencies (SEAs) and local education agencies (LEAs) to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, and retention of HCY

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.

McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless

- **Lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence:**
 - Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
 - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - Living in emergency or transitional shelters, or are abandoned in hospitals;
 - Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
 - Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
 - Migratory children living in the above circumstances.

Fixed, Regular, and Adequate

- **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 (UHY)

- 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.



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Types of Homelessness

Hidden Homelessness

- Hidden homelessness refers to individuals or families who do not have a permanent place to live but are not visibly living on the streets or in shelters.
- Instead, they may temporarily stay with friends or family (doubled-up) or live in inadequate and overcrowded conditions.

Sheltered Homelessness

- Sheltered Homelessness refers to individuals or families who seek refuge in emergency shelters, transitional housing, or other temporary housing facilities provided by organizations or other government agencies.
 - These shelters may offer a safe place to sleep, access to basic amenities, and support services such as counseling or job training.
 - Sheltered homelessness, however, is still temporary and often involves rotating between different shelters.
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Unsheltered Homelessness

- Unsheltered homelessness is when individuals or families do not have access to emergency shelters or any form of stable housing.
- They live on the streets, in parks, in abandoned buildings, or in makeshift encampments.
- People experiencing unsheltered homelessness face numerous challenges, including exposure to the elements, lack of sanitation facilities, and increased vulnerability to violence and exploitation.

Employment and Homelessness

- People experiencing homelessness want to work, and many do, according to the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH).
- As many as 40-60 percent of people experiencing homelessness have a job, but housing is unaffordable because wages have not kept up with rising rents.
- There is no county or state where a full-time minimum –wage worker can afford a modest apartment.
- At minimum wage, people need to work 86 hours a week to afford a one-bedroom apartment.

Source: United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

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Trail to Success Challenge Game Play

TN

Department of
Education

Purpose

- Understand barriers faced by students experiencing homelessness.
- Experience how instability impacts learning.
- Recognize the power of the Education for Homeless Children & Youth (EHCY) supports.

Your Role

- You are Trail Guides.
- Help students navigate barriers.
- Work together to reach the summit.

How to Play

- Roll the die and move forward.
- Draw Challenge or Support cards.
- Follow the trail to the Summit.

Challenge Spaces

- Unexpected barriers slow progress.
- Housing instability.
- Transportation issues.
- Missed instruction.

Support Stations

- Supports moving students forward.
- Transportation and enrollment.
- Counseling and mentoring.
- School collaboration.

RISING TOGETHER: TRAIL RULES

1. Roll the die and move forward.
 2. Land on a space:
 - Challenge → Draw a card and follow the setback.
 - Support → Draw a card and follow boost.
 3. First to reach the Summit wins.
 4. Notice what slows you down and what helps you move forward.
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Trail to Success Challenge Debrief

Reflection

- What barriers impacted progress?
- What supports made the biggest difference?
- How does this connect to your school?
- What will you do differently?

Content Connection

- Connect experiences to McKinney-Vento supports:
 - Immediate enrollment
 - Transportation assistance
 - School of origin stability
 - Barrier removal policies

Action Planning

- Identify ONE action your team will implement immediately.
- Complete: 'Starting tomorrow, we will...'
- Focus on consistency of supports, not individual effort.

The Impact of Adult Decisions

- Remember, students don't get to leave the trail.
- The difference between a barrier and a pathway is often an adult decision.
- The game provides the experience, while the conversation fosters learning.

Will You Be A Trail Guide?





Questions?

Resources

- [ePlan > TDOE Resources](#) > ESSA Information, Guidance, PPTs, & Webinars > Title IX, Part A Education for Homeless Children & Youth > McKinney-Vento Toolkit and Resources
- [U.S. Department of Education: Identifying and Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness from Pre-School to Post-Secondary Ages](#)
- [Non-Regulatory Guidance for Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program](#)
- [National Center for Homeless Education \(NCHE\):](#)
 - [NCHE Homeless Liaison Toolkit](#)
 - Homeless Education Helpline: (305)306-8495 or NCHE.helpline@safalpartners.com
- [SchoolHouse Connection](#)

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session.**

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[2026 Federal Programs Institute Session
Feedback Form](#)



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What's Next | 2:35–3:45 p.m.

- Ed-Flex in Tennessee (Room 3)
- Common ESSA Findings & Strategies for Success (Room 4)
- Title III Director Panel (Room 5)
- Navigating Federal Civil Rights and State Law (Room 6)
- Student Homelessness Interactive Learning (Room 9/10)



Thank You!

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