

ANNUAL NOTICE

HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youth as:

- Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth who are:
 - 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
 - abandoned in hospitals
 - living in a primary nighttime residence that is 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 who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described above

If you are personally aware of or are acquainted with any children or youth who may qualify according to the above criteria, the Mineral Point Unified School District provides the following assurances to parents and guardians of homeless children and youth and unaccompanied homeless youth:

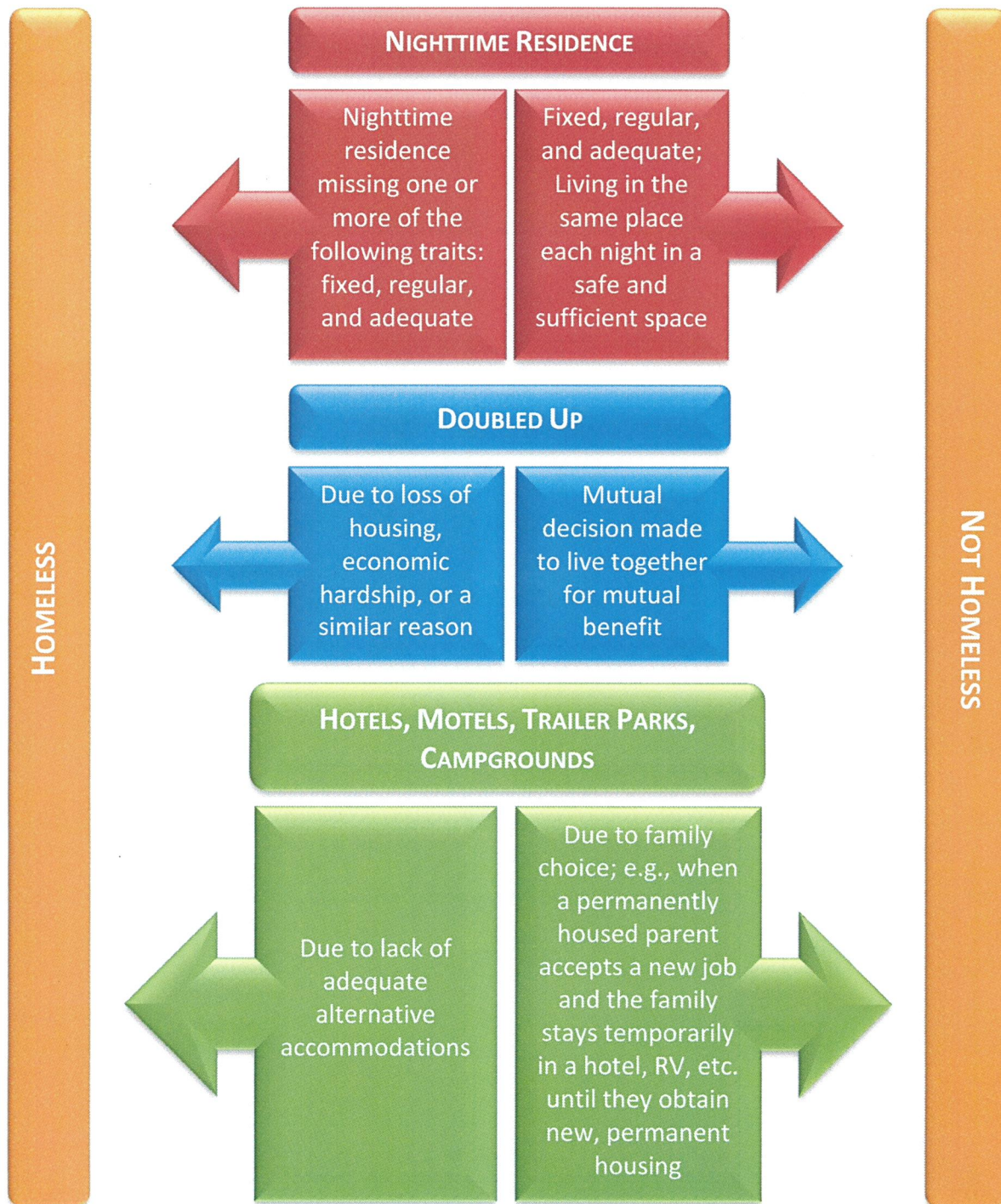
- The child or youth shall be immediately enrolled and allowed to fully participate in school, even if unable to produce records normally required for enrollment (e.g., academic records, immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, or other documentation) or has missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.
- Homeless children and youths are not stigmatized or segregated on the basis of their status as homeless and have full and equal educational and related opportunities.
- Meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children including special notices of events, parent-teacher conferences, newsletters, and access to student records.
- Immediate enrollment and transportation to the school of origin. "School of origin" means the school that a child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled, including a preschool.
- Written explanation of any decisions related to school selection or enrollment made by the school, the local educational agency, or the State educational agency involved, including the rights of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth to appeal and receive prompt resolution of such decisions.

Please contact Angela Klein, homeless liaison for the Mineral Point Unified School District, at (608) 987-0712 or email angela.klein@mp.k12.wi.us for additional information about the rights and services described above.

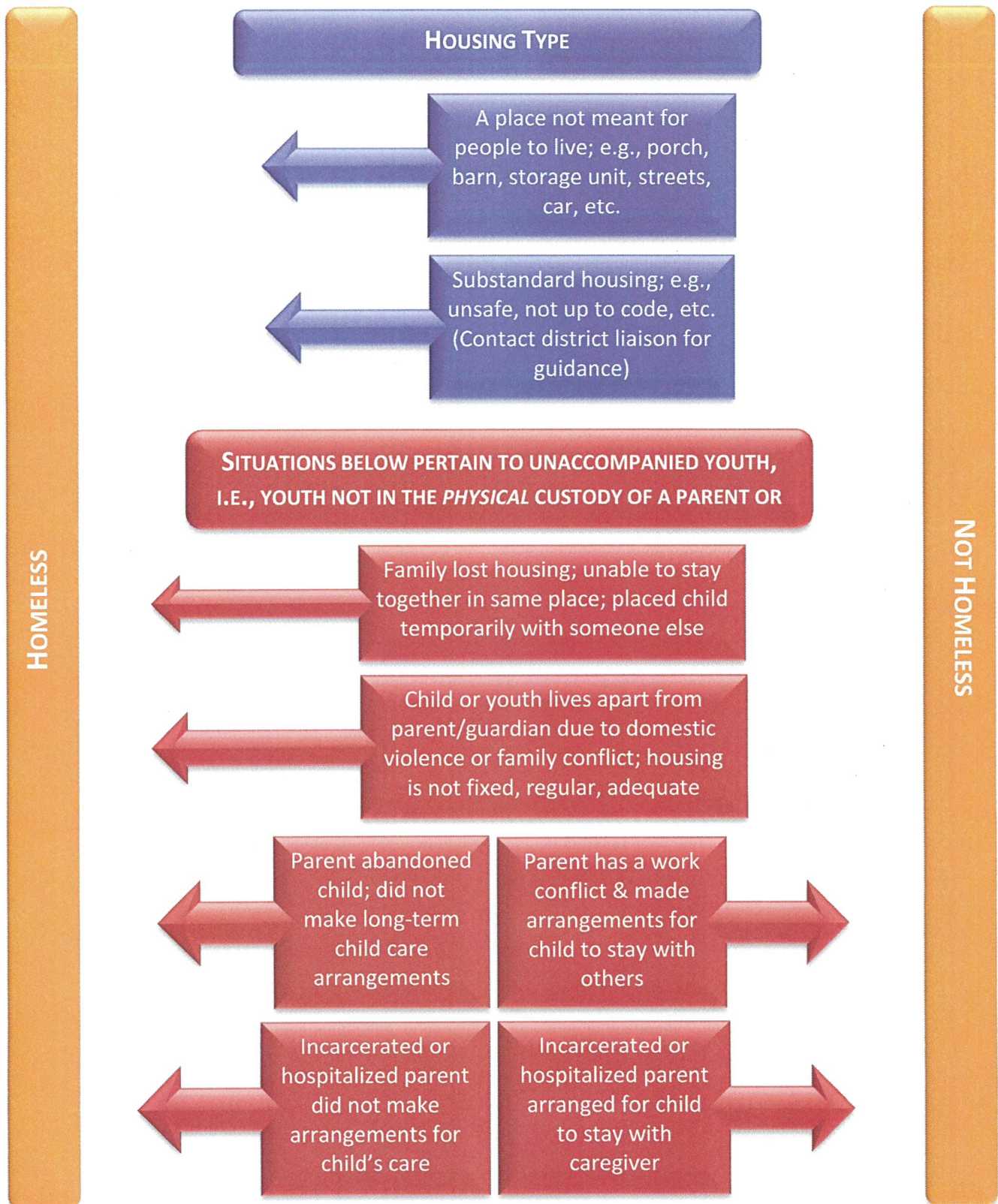
Who Is Homeless?

A Flowchart for Making Determinations for Education Services

This flowchart is meant to aid you in making decisions about a student's eligibility as homeless under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 *et seq.*), but it may not capture every housing situation. For the complete definition of *homeless*, visit <https://nche.ed.gov/legis/mv-def.php>. For more information on making determinations, see the related issue brief from the National Center for Homeless Education: https://nche.ed.gov/downloads/briefs/det_elig.pdf.



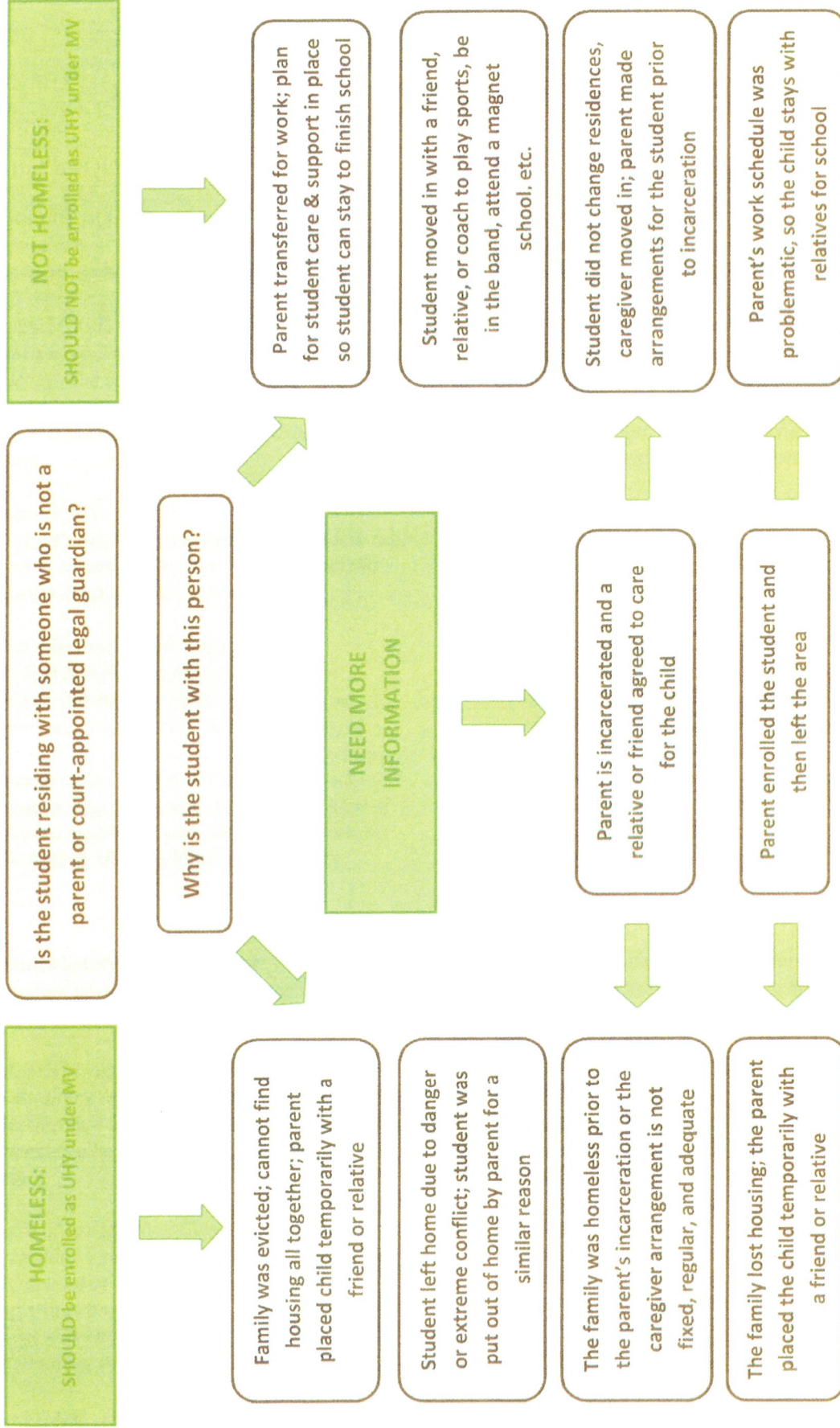
*Note: Children and families who qualify for education services based on this definition may or may not qualify for housing and related assistance. Contact your local housing programs for more information.



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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.

Sample Questions to Ask the Students or Parents for Information Gathering

The following questions are designed to assist in gathering information from families or youth to determine the extent to which their living arrangement is fixed, regular, and adequate.

A **fixed** residence is one that is stationary, permanent, and not subject to change

Fixed

- Is this a permanent arrangement or just temporary?
- Are you looking for another place to live?
- Do you plan to move out soon?
- Why are you staying in your current place?
- Where were you living right before this place? Why did you leave?
- Where would you go if you couldn't stay where you are?
- Are you staying with friends/relatives just for a little while?
- Did you and your friends/relatives decide to move in together and share a home and expenses for the long term? Or is this a temporary situation for you?
- Could your friends/relatives ask you to leave if they wanted to?
- Are you all sharing the home equally, or are you more like guests in the home?

A **regular** residence is one that is used on a regular [i.e., nightly] basis

Regular

- Do you stay in the same place every night?
- Do you have a key to the place where you are living?
- Do you move around a lot?
- How long have you been at that place?
- How long do you plan to stay?
- How long did you live in your last place?

An **adequate** residence is one that is sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments

Adequate

- How many people are living in the home? How many bedrooms/bathrooms does it have?
- Are you and your children sharing a room? How many people are staying in one room?
- Are you and your children sleeping in a bedroom, or in a public area, like a dining room?
- Does the home have heat/electricity/running water?
- What condition is the home in? Does it keep out rain and wind? Is it safe? Is it warm and dry?
- Can you come and go as you please?



TIPS FOR TEACHERS & STAFF: HOW TO SUPPORT STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

For many students experiencing homelessness, school is the only place of stability in their lives. Teachers play a crucial role in creating a classroom environment that is safe and supportive for all students, especially those who are highly mobile and have experienced the trauma that often accompanies homelessness. Here, we provide information and strategies that teachers and support staff can use to support the educational success of students experiencing homelessness.

Who is considered homeless?



The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law that protects the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness. It defines “homeless children and youth” as any student who lacks a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” That includes students who are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations; living in emergency shelters or transitional housing; and living in cars, campgrounds, or bus stations. This definition includes migrant children who are staying in these situations. Special protections also are provided for youth who are experiencing homelessness on their own.

TIP: Know the Signs



Be familiar with common characteristics of students experiencing homelessness, including:

- Enrollment at multiple schools, lack of records, gaps in learning, poor/inconsistent attendance.
- Poor hygiene, unmet medical/dental needs, wearing the same clothes repeatedly, fatigue.
- Social and behavioral challenges, such as extreme shyness, withdrawal, or aggression; clinginess; difficulty with peer and/or adult relationships; poor attention span; anxiety late in the school day.
- Lack of participation in field trips and/or afterschool activities, lack of basic school supplies, inability to complete special projects.

What core protections and services are provided for students experiencing homelessness?

Through the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act:

- Students who are experiencing homelessness can remain in one school (including a preschool), even if their temporary living situation is located in another school district or attendance area, if that is in their best interest. Schools must provide transportation.
- Students who are experiencing homelessness can enroll in school and begin attending immediately, even if they cannot produce normally required documents, such as birth certificates, proof of

guardianship, immunization records, or proof of residency, or even if they have missed application or enrollment deadlines.

- Students who are experiencing homelessness must be able to participate fully in school activities and access all programs and services for which they are eligible, including [extracurricular activities](#), credit recovery, special education services, school nutrition programs, language assistance for English learners, career and technical education, gifted and talented programs, magnet schools, charter schools, summer learning, online learning, and before- and after-school care.
- Every local educational agency, including charter schools that are local educational agencies, must designate a homeless liaison. Homeless liaisons have many critical responsibilities in the service of students experiencing homelessness, including identification, enrollment, ensuring access to early childhood education and other programs, and collaboration with community agencies.

What can I do if I believe one of my students is experiencing homelessness or is at risk of becoming homeless?

Teachers can play a critical role in the lives of students who are homeless. While McKinney-Vento liaisons bear the local-level legal responsibility for serving students experiencing homelessness, teachers are well-positioned to observe and respond to student needs. Some strategies for providing support include:

1. Learn more about the McKinney-Vento Act and connect with your local liaison.



If you believe one of your students needs support, [contact your district's homeless liaison](#) about next steps (you should be able to find the liaison's contact information on your district website or SEA website). Ask your liaison for local resources, and read more about McKinney-Vento provisions [here](#).

2. Create a welcoming climate and build trust with all students.



Find time each week to check in with the student to assess unmet basic needs, offer encouragement, and recognize the child's talents and accomplishments. Pair new students with a "buddy" in the classroom or assign new students a "job" and encourage involvement in extracurricular activities. These personal relationships can be critical.

3. Help to identify and support students experiencing homelessness.



Many students are uncomfortable telling people at school about their homelessness and asking for help. Be attentive to the stigma of homelessness and avoid using the word "homeless." Especially if you notice any of the warning signs listed above, use descriptive language and ask questions to better understand a student's housing situation. For example, ask students and families, "Where would you go if you couldn't stay here?" "What led you to move into this situation?" If appropriate, refer the child and his/her family for supportive services and housing assistance in your community.

4. Take a trauma-informed approach.



The experience of and events leading up to homelessness can expose students to violence, abuse, hunger, trafficking, and other traumatic experiences. Allow students to hold on to personal possessions in class, keeping in mind that any possession may be the child's only one. Provide well-defined transition procedures from one activity to another and give choices when appropriate to counter the loss of control experienced in their lives.

5. Stabilize basic needs and support full participation.



Make healthy snacks and/or hygiene supplies available. Ensure enrollment in the free meal program. (Homeless students are automatically eligible for free meals, and do not need to complete an application.) Ensure that the student has every opportunity to participate in school activities: contact the homeless liaison to find out how to provide school/project supplies, cover field trip fees, purchase uniforms, and meet other needs. Give students a clipboard to use as a "desk" when they leave school.

6. Ensure classroom policies and procedures set students up for success.



[Disciplinary policies](#) must take homelessness into consideration. Provide structure and adhere to a consistent daily routine and clear, concise rules. Plan assignments so children can keep up without having to take work home.

7. Reach out to parents/caregivers.



Because parents may not have regular access to a phone, create a communication plan. Send the family a "welcome" letter and/or invite them to visit the classroom. Ask if younger siblings need supportive services. Make sure parents know their family's rights.

Sources: [EHCY Fact Sheet](#), [Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction: How Teachers Can Help Students Who are Homeless](#), [NYS-TEACHS Tips for Teachers](#)