

Tip #1 - Definition of Homelessness (according to McKinney-Vento)

Anyone who, DUE TO A LACK OF FIXED, REGULAR & ADEQUATE HOUSING (because of financial reasons, loss of housing, or a similar reason), lives:

- Doubled up with relatives or friends;
- In emergency or transitional shelters;
- In motels, hotels, trailer parks, campgrounds;
- Abandoned in hospitals;
- Awaiting foster care placement or in temporary foster placement;
- In cars, parks, public places, bus or train stations, abandoned buildings.

To determine homelessness, we also consider the PERMANENCE and ADEQUACY of the living situation.

If you have any questions or need to problem solve a specific situation, please contact Missi Mcpherson at 254-5016.

It is because of each of you that the CPPS is able to find students/families in our school district experiencing homelessness and then get them the help/resources they need to help them through the situation. Keep up the great work!

Tip #2 - "Are ALL children and youth who live with friends or relatives considered homeless?"

Answer: No. Lack of affordable housing and permanence of the living arrangement, rather than cultural preference or the desire to save money, are criteria to assist in determining who should be considered homeless.

Tip #3 - Referral Process

Each school was given referral forms. However, the protocol regarding who completes the form somewhat varies. It is preferred that a secretary, social worker, guidance counselor , or administrator complete the form. This is primarily because contact often needs to be made with the person completing the form and it just makes that process easier.

Students often confide with school personnel and might disclose information that would possibly constitute one being "homeless". This information should be reported to those mentioned above or you are welcome to call me. At this point, additional information might need to be gathered or it could result in a referral. However, no referral will be made until the information can be verified. It would probably be more efficient for one of the mentioned individual's to complete this process. The referral forms are then sent to the census secretary. I am then notified of the referral and will attempt to make contact with the parents and discuss possible forms of assistance.

You don't need to have "proof positive" information to report concerns. Statistically, many students who would qualify for assistance under this program go undetected. Your calls with related information or questions are appreciated.

Tip # 4 - Can the enrollment of a homeless student be delayed until appropriate records are received?

No. Schools must immediately enroll homeless students even when:

- School or health records are unavailable at the time of enrollment
- Birth certificates are not available
- Proof of residency is not available

This is to minimize the impact of the transition and to decrease the loss of academic progress (remember – with every change in school 4-6 months of academic progress is lost).

Tip # 5 - Recognizing Possible Signs

It is probably more the exception than the norm that a student would identify oneself as being homeless. Below are some commonly found behaviors of children experiencing being *Homeless*. Arguably, these behaviors could be indicative of other social and mental health issues. However, please don't overlook the possibility of a child being homeless when confronted with these behaviors.

Possible Signs of Homelessness:

- History of attending many schools
- More than one family at the same address
- Erratic attendance and tardiness
- Consistent lack of preparation for class
- Sleeping in class
- Hostility and anger or extremes in behavior (i.e. shyness, withdrawal, nervousness, depression)
- Needy behavior (seeking attention) or withdrawn behavior
- Poor hygiene and grooming
- Inadequate or inappropriate clothing for the weather
- Hunger or hoarding food
- Resistance to parting with personal possessions (i.e. not wanting to leave a favorite toy unattended or put a coat in a locker)

Some common statements used by homeless students may include:

- "We've moved a lot."
- "We're staying with relatives/friends while looking for a place"
- "We're going through a bad time now."

Tip #6 - Can a child or youth identified as homeless be denied enrollment because they are not accompanied by a parent or guardian?

No. The lack of a parent or guardian cannot be a barrier to enrollment. Many families have circumstances that do not allow for the children and families to be together. Also, some parents and guardians do not want their children to live with them.

Tip #7 - Ensuring opportunities for extra-curricular activities

Ask if the student participated in any after-school activities or had special classes at a previous school. Then assist to connect the student with similar resources, if available. Ensure that the student has every opportunity that a non-homeless student has for participation in after-school activities and in-school programs.

Tip #8 - Transportation

Question: What responsibilities does the district have regarding the transportation of the homeless?

Answer: Local education agencies (LEA's) must provide homeless students with transportation to and from their school of origin if their homelessness caused them to live outside the boundary of their school of origin.

Question: Who is responsible for transportation if the student is no longer residing in the district's school of origin?

Answer: If the student is living outside the school of origin's LEA, the LEA where the student is living and the school of origin's LEA must determine how to equally share the responsibility and costs of transportation. Here is an example. If a student's school of origin is Farnsworth but he is in a double-up living arrangement in Plymouth, the two districts would need to share the cost of transportation to and from Farnsworth. (It is for this reason we have the transportation agreement.)

Tip #9 - Families in Transition

The use of the term "homeless" when referring to the program can understandably be awkward. It might result in a defensive response by the parent or student. Refer to the presented or known living arrangement and inform the parent or student that some special assistance might be available to them under the program.

Recently all the schools have received the brochure Families and Students in Transition. Hopefully, it will provide information about the program and other valuable resources for these families in need. The school's counseling center or office has this information.