

Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (McKinney-Vento)



COLORADO
Department of Education

PURPOSE

The intent of the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program is to remove all educational barriers facing children and youth experiencing homelessness, with an emphasis on educational enrollment, attendance and success.

WHO QUALIFIES?

Children or youth who lack a fixed, regular or adequate nighttime residence qualify for the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). This includes children and youth who:

- Share the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
- Have 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;
- Live in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar settings; and
- Are migratory children.

As COVID-19 disrupts education, services and life across the country, children and youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability are exceptionally vulnerable. This [Homeless Education FAQ](#) offers resources and information on educational rights and protections for students who have experienced housing loss or instability during COVID-19.

Many homeless families with children, and unaccompanied youth, who share the housing with others (doubled-up) and motel situations are extremely vulnerable, living in precarious, unstable and sometimes unsafe conditions. They are forced into motels or other temporary situations because there is no family or youth shelter available in the community. If shelters are available, many are full, or may have policies that separate the family or prohibit unaccompanied minors. Children and youth may suffer the life-long impacts of toxic stress if their living situations are not stabilized.

UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

In addition to providing a definition of homeless, the McKinney-Vento Act defines unaccompanied youth as youth who fit the definition of homeless and are "not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian" [42 U.S.C. § 11434a (6)].

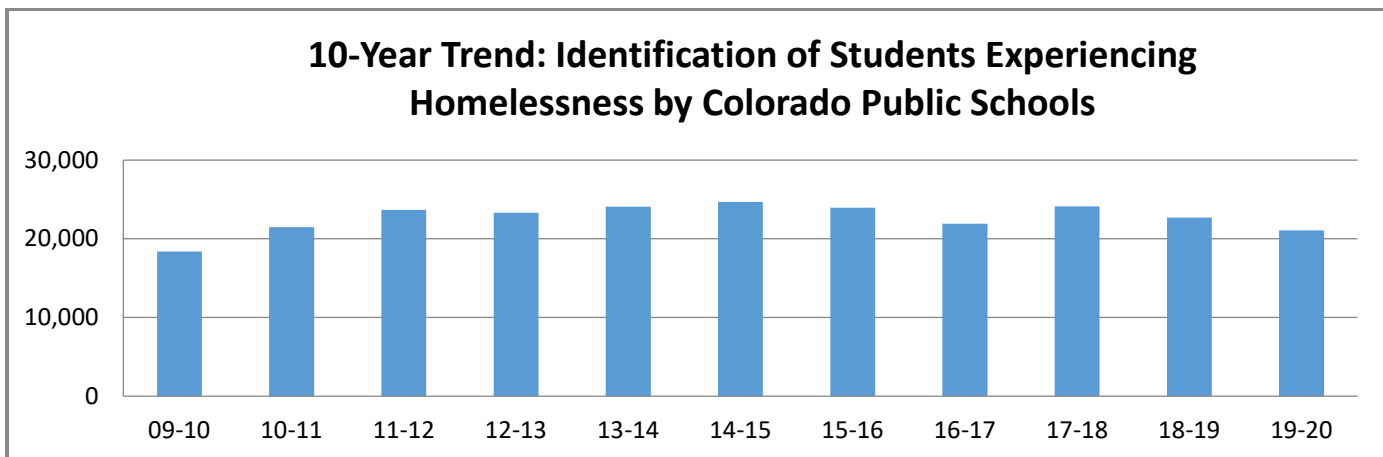
The number of unaccompanied homeless youth identified and served by Colorado public schools reached 2,416 during the 2019-20 school year. This continued growth in the identification of Unaccompanied Youth reflects changing demographic and increasing needs of this population. These youth are among the most vulnerable, as they are dealing with the crises of homelessness without a safe, supportive parent or guardian.

Educational Rights of McKinney-Vento Eligible Children and Youth

- A McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Liaison in every school district who has the skills and capacity to carry out the duties of the position
- Identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness through outreach and coordination activities
- Immediate enrollment with full and equal opportunity to succeed in school
- Choice between the neighborhood school or the school of origin (school last enrolled in or attended)
- Transportation to the school of origin (including preschool)
- Immediate access to free school meals and educational services for which they are eligible
- Automatic eligibility for Title I, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015
- Referrals to health care, dental, mental health and substance abuse, housing and other appropriate services
- Unaccompanied youth are informed of their status as independent students on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA)

STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN COLORADO

During the 2019-20 school year, Colorado public schools identified and served 21,089 students experiencing homelessness. This includes birth-2, 3-5 (not kindergarten), and pre-K–12.



IMPACTS OF COVID ON THE EDUCATION OF YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

A recent study *Lost in the Masked Shuffle & Virtual Void: Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Amidst the Pandemic* conducted by Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan and School House Connection highlights the dramatic drop in the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness who have been identified and supported by public schools, despite evidence of the increased need during the pandemic. School stability and continuity are essential to positive academic outcomes, as well as emotional and social well-being. Yet homelessness creates many barriers to school access and stability, including high mobility, lack of transportation, and lack of required documentation.

Key Findings:

- An estimated 420,000 fewer children and youth experiencing homelessness have been identified and enrolled by schools so far this school year.
- While overall homeless student identification and enrollment is down, the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness has likely increased due to the economic crisis.
- Children and youth experiencing homelessness face significant unmet needs in their communities, including lack of internet, housing, food, and child care.
- Only 18% of respondents indicated that federal coronavirus relief education funding provided by the CARES Act is being used to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

In light of these findings, this [checklist](#) offers important considerations to help ensure equitable access to education for students experiencing homelessness. Additional resources can be found through [NCHE](#).

Where can I learn more?

- To learn more visit the [Colorado Department of Education Homeless Education webpage](#) or contact Kerry Wrenick at wrenick_k@cde.state.co.us or 303-866-6930.
- For information on district McKinney-Vento implementation, [contact local district liaisons](#).
- [View additional data on Colorado's Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program](#).
- [View a summary from the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth on major Amendments on Homelessness and Foster Care in "The Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015."](#)
- [View all CDE fact sheets](#).