

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 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 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.

UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

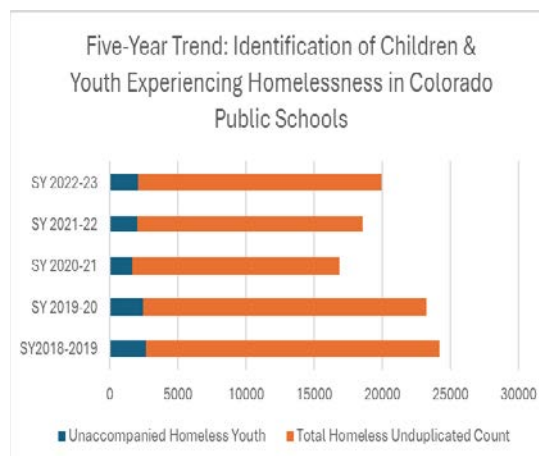
In addition to providing a definition of homeless, the McKinney-Vento Act defines unaccompanied youth as youth who fit the definition of homeless and are "not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian" [42 U.S.C. § 11434a (6)].

The number of unaccompanied homeless youth identified and served by Colorado public schools reached 2,045 during the 2022-23 school year. Many of these students are living in doubled-up situations, several are couch surfing without a constant and predictable place to sleep every night and entirely dependent on the kindness of others. These youths are among the most vulnerable, as they are dealing with the crises of homelessness without a safe, supportive parent or guardian.

STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN COLORADO

Increased efforts in cross-training, collaboration, and regional approaches to outreach and identification of students experiencing homelessness has led to a rise in identification by 18% from the 2020-21 school year to the 2022-23 school year; however, this remains below the pre-pandemic identification numbers in the 2018-19 school year of 21,560.

National studies point to the closure of school buildings and other disruptions due to the COVID-19 pandemic, as the cause of Colorado's decline in identification from 2019-20 school year to 2020-21 school year, this is reflective of national trends.



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 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)

American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) & Response to the Impacts of COVID-19

ARP-HCY funding awarded through the U.S. Department of Education, allowed Colorado to award 41 grants to Colorado school districts, Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES), and community-based organizations in support of:

- 1) Identifying homeless children and youth
- 2) Providing wraparound services in light of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic
- 3) Providing assistance needed to enable homeless children and youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities.

A total of \$7.2 Million was distributed across seven Colorado educational regions making funding available to 96 districts across the state. Funding has been approved to support reasonable and necessary expenses associated with the identification, enrollment, retention and educational success of homeless children and youth including but not limited to the examples listed below.

- Hiring **system navigators** to support outreach and navigation of services for children, youth and families experiencing homelessness.
- Contracting with community-based organizations to conduct outreach, identification and enrollment of homeless children and youth as well as **wraparound services** to support unaccompanied homeless youth with social emotional supports, and historically underserved populations.
- Training for staff on **trauma informed approaches**.
- Defraying costs of **transportation** with contracted car services, gas vouchers and public transportation passes.
- Purchasing **cell phones and laptops** for students to be able to fully engage in their schoolwork and stay connected to supportive and caring adults as well as needed services.
- Paying for **short-term, temporary housing** when necessary to enable the homeless child or youth to attend school and participate fully in school activities primarily with hotel/motel vouchers.
- Supporting engagement in **summer programming** to keep homeless children and youth engaged in programming through the summer and school breaks including access to needed resources, academic and enrichment opportunities, and prosocial activities.

American Rescue Plan -Homeless Children and Youth Funding must be expended by grantees by September 30, 2024.

Where can I learn more?

- To learn more [visit the Colorado Department of Education Homeless Education webpage](#) or contact Paula Gumina at Gumina_p@cde.state.co.us.
- 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](#).