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McKinney-Vento Children and Youth

NEWSLETTER

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Educating Students Experiencing Homelessness, Instability, and Disengagement

It has been wonderful to see so many of you at the Dr. Ruby Payne: Educating Students Experiencing Homelessness, Instability, and Disengagement sessions. Your participation and engagement are helping to strengthen supports for students experiencing challenging circumstances across our schools.

We are excited to share that there will be opportunities to participate in a follow-up book study for those who want to explore Dr. Payne's work in greater depth. Dr. Ruby Payne's book, *Educating Students Experiencing Homelessness, Instability, and Disengagement*, provides practical strategies and real-life examples to help educators understand and support students facing significant challenges outside the classroom. It explores the social, emotional, and academic barriers that students experiencing homelessness or instability often encounter and offers actionable guidance for building relationships, fostering engagement, and creating supportive learning environments. The book emphasizes trauma-informed approaches, collaboration among school and community partners, and step-by-step strategies to help students succeed academically and socially despite difficult circumstances.

For schools interested in participating, Dr. Payne has prepared voice-over recordings for each chapter as well as accompanying materials to guide discussions and learning. This is a great way to continue building knowledge, implementing strategies, and fostering success for all students.

After the four sessions are concluded, information about how to apply to participate in the follow-up book study will be shared, giving schools the opportunity to engage more deeply with Dr. Payne's work through chapter discussions and guided materials.

Supporting the Attendance for Students Experiencing Homelessness from Schoolhouse Connection and Attendance Works

Regular school attendance is one of the strongest predictors of student success. However, students experiencing homelessness face unique challenges that can make consistent attendance difficult. Transportation barriers, frequent moves, lack of school supplies or clothing, health concerns, and the stress of housing instability all contribute to higher rates of chronic absenteeism among these students. In fact, students experiencing homelessness are chronically absent at least twice as often as their housed peers.

The Schoolhouse Connection brief, "Supporting the Attendance of Students Experiencing Homelessness," provides practical guidance and strategies for schools, districts, and community partners to address these barriers. The brief emphasizes the importance of meeting students' basic needs, offering transportation solutions, creating a supportive and trauma-informed school climate, and using early warning attendance data to identify students at risk. It also highlights the need for a collaborative approach that brings together counselors, liaisons, nurses, bus drivers, food service staff, and community organizations to ensure that students receive the supports they need.

Implementing these strategies helps reduce chronic absenteeism, improves engagement, and increases the likelihood that students experiencing homelessness will succeed academically. Attendance interventions for these students are not only important for their academic success but also a key step in preventing long-term negative outcomes, including the risk of continued homelessness in young adulthood.

Liaisons, Communities in Schools site coordinators, and other school personnel can use this brief to guide policy, plan targeted supports, and strengthen collaboration across school and community teams. Supporting attendance is one of the most impactful ways schools can help students experiencing homelessness stay on track and thrive.



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McKinney-Vento Mini Manual - Updated and Available Now!

The McKinney-Vento Mini Manual is available in the OneNote notebook for liaisons and was recently updated this fall. This comprehensive resource provides guidance, practical tools, and step-by-step processes to help liaisons navigate the McKinney-Vento program requirements effectively.

The manual covers a wide range of essential topics, including:

- Frequently Used Abbreviations and Acronyms
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Information (background, definitions, and student rights)
- McKinney-Vento Liaison Responsibilities
- District Policy Requirements
- Steps to Success for McKinney-Vento Programs: outreach and identification, verification and eligibility, planning and delivery of services, and records and reporting processes
- Data Collection and Reporting Tools
- Funding and Fiscal Information
- Program Evaluation and Monitoring
- Professional Development and Technical Assistance Opportunities
- Coordination and Collaboration with Internal and External Stakeholders
- McKinney-Vento Yearly Snapshot
- Additional Resources

This manual is designed to be a practical, user-friendly guide for liaisons, ensuring students experiencing homelessness receive the supports and services they need to succeed academically.

Resource Highlight: Holiday Meals

Holiday meals for students are typically not an allowable expense under Title I, Part A funds. These funds are intended to support educational programs and interventions that directly improve student learning, and regular meal service usually falls under other federal programs such as the National School Lunch Program. However, extended school breaks during holidays can create gaps in nutrition for students who rely on school meals, making access to food an important consideration for their well-being and readiness to learn.

Although Title I funds cannot be used directly to purchase holiday meals, schools and families can take steps to ensure students have access to nutritious food during breaks. Many districts collaborate with local food banks, pantries, and community organizations to provide meals or food kits for families in need. Tools like FindHelp211 can serve as a helpful starting point for locating resources in your area, but building strong relationships with local organizations and community partners is key to connecting families to all available supports.

School liaisons and staff can support families by maintaining a current list of community food resources, sharing information about holiday meal programs, and coordinating with local nonprofits or faith-based organizations. By proactively guiding families to available supports and leveraging local connections, schools can help ensure that students' basic needs are met so they return to school ready to learn and succeed.

District Liaison Spotlight Alysa Crawford - Mercer County Schools

Alysa recently attended the NAEHCY Conference in Dallas and returned with a wealth of valuable insights to support students experiencing homelessness. She explored innovative ideas such as the UpRooted: Voices of Student Homelessness comic-based workshop, which she plans to implement with MCTEC's Grow Your Own students and through a "train the trainer" model for student support staff. Alysha also highlighted critical issues facing rural students, including the higher prevalence of homelessness in rural areas and the importance of applying the federal McKinney-Vento definition to identify and support students effectively. Additionally, she shared resources like the Why Rural Matters 2025 report, CarePortal, and Soles4Souls, along with tools to strengthen referral processes. Her participation in the conference demonstrates her dedication to professional development and her commitment to moving this work forward in her district.