

Board of Education

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Dr. Darrin Slade
Superintendent

Supporting Students that are Homeless and in Foster Care

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What is Homelessness?

Lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Homeless living situations include:

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; (Doubled-Up)
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Staying in emergency or transitional shelters
- Sleeping in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

Indicators of Homelessness

67%

Percentage of students who report feeling uncomfortable disclosing their homelessness and seeking help at school

Student homelessness doesn't always look like we expect. Instead, we may notice struggles or behaviors that reflect the trauma of losing housing, sleeping on someone's couch, staying in a shelter, or sleeping in a car.

Potential Indicators of Homelessness

- Tardiness or absences
- Poor hygiene, wearing the same clothes repeatedly or not appropriately dressed for the weather
- Unmet medical/dental needs
- Missing the bus
- Sleeping in class, fatigue
- Hunger
- Enrollment at multiple schools, lack of records, gaps in learning
- Social and behavioral challenges like extreme shyness, anxiety late in the school day
- Lack of participation in field trips or after school activities, lack of school supplies

Homelessness is a traumatic experience for children and youth. The devastating impact of homelessness begins early in life, with harm to health and development prenatally, in infancy, in early childhood, and in school-age years. Students experiencing homelessness are more likely to drop out of high school, and have high school graduation rates that are well below graduation rates of students who are poor, but who have stable homes. Tragically, not getting a high school degree leads back to a cycle of homelessness: lack of a high school degree or GED is the single greatest risk factor for experiencing homelessness as a young adult. Youth experiencing homelessness who do persist to graduate from high school face significant barriers to achieving higher education, which is the surest path to economic independence.

The Importance Of Identification

- Homelessness creates significant educational barriers for children and youth.
- Students experiencing homelessness lack basic resources like a safe and stable place to live, food, and clothing, all of which impacts their ability to attend and succeed in school.
- They also may lack school and immunization records, other documentation necessary to enroll in school, and school supplies.
- Additionally, students in homeless situations may not only lack the ability to provide their own transportation to school on a daily basis, but also may struggle with getting to school to register or enroll.

Educational Rights of students experiencing homelessness

While the McKinney-Vento Act provides children and youth experiencing homelessness with certain educational rights, families or unaccompanied youth may not be aware of the supports available under the Act.

Educational Rights (continued)

- Immediate school enrollment, even if lacking paperwork normally required, or their right to continue attending the school of origin, if this is in their best interest, even if they have moved outside the school's residential zone.
- Free school meals to students experiencing homelessness
- Transportation
- Resources to remove barriers


Statistics

- 1.3 million children and youth experienced homelessness in the 2019-2020 school year. This was an all-time record and roughly equal to the population of Dallas, Texas.
- Another 1.4 million under age six are estimated to experience homelessness.
- In addition to children who experience homelessness with their parents, at least one in thirty adolescents ages 13-17, and nearly one in ten young adults 18-24 are estimated to experience homelessness on their own.
- These numbers are now likely much higher as a results of the pandemic and related economic and family stress.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Unaccompanied homeless youth are young people experiencing homelessness who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Homelessness among unaccompanied youth is most commonly caused by severe family dysfunction, and exacerbated by poverty. Family dysfunction includes abuse, conflict, and substance abuse.



UHY Risks

- Unaccompanied youth are at a much higher risk for labor and sex trafficking, assault and other forms of victimization than their housed peers.
- Most unaccompanied youth are unable to access safe housing or shelter, for a combination of reasons, including:
 - being too young to consent for services without a parent;
 - fear of child welfare involvement;
 - and the lack of services overall: more than half of those who seek shelter cannot access it because shelters are full.

Building Homeless Point of Contacts

Every school is required to have a Building Homeless Point of Contact.

Building Point of Contacts help to support and remove barriers for students experiencing homelessness.

Identification

- School secretaries, teachers, staff, volunteers can refer families that are suspected as being homeless to my office. I will make contact with families and complete an intake form to determine eligibility.
- Not every family referred is homeless
- But many unidentified families are struggling and need to be referred.
- Delicate and sensitive process.

Concerns/Questions/Supports

Call or email me

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Parent Meeting: Attendance

- Thursday, December 7
Maple Street Magnet School for
the Arts, media center
- 6 p.m.

