



SUPPORTING UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH IN ACCESSING HIGHER EDUCATION



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MEET NCHE

- ◎ The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) is the U.S. Department of Education's technical assistance and information center in the area of homeless education
 - ◎ www.serve.org/nche
 - ◎ Helpline: 800-308-2145, homeless@serve.org
 - ◎ Listserv: email tlewis@serve.org to join



TODAY'S PLAN

- What is the McKinney-Vento Act?
- Who are unaccompanied homeless youth?
- Unaccompanied homeless youth and the FAFSA
- Strategies and take-home points
- Resources
- Q&A and Discussion

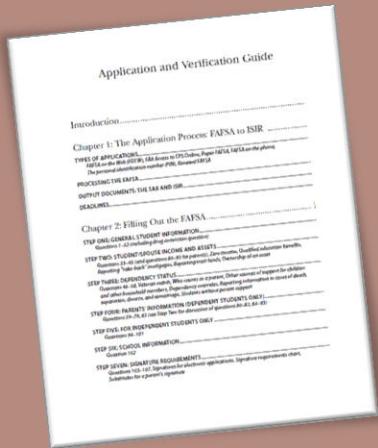




FOUNDATIONAL DOCUMENTS

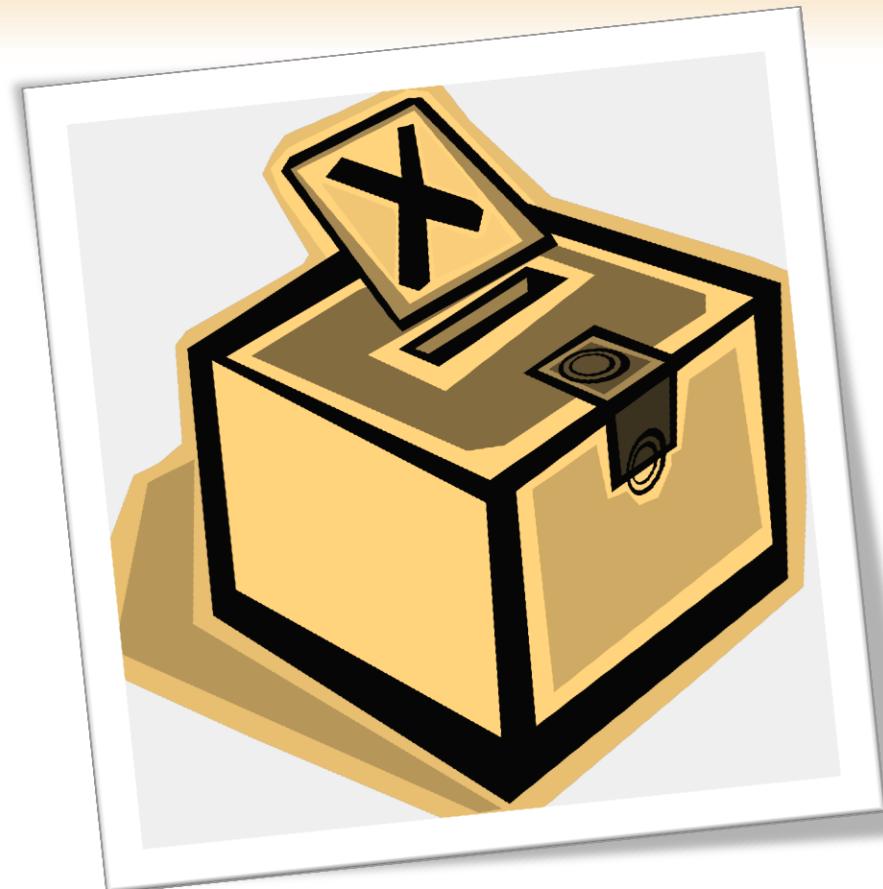
- The McKinney-Vento Act and Policy Guidance, available at
<http://center.serve.org/nche/m-v.php>

- The Application and Verification Guide (AVG), available at
http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_e_d.php





“ICEBREAKER POLL”



WHAT IS THE McKINNEY-VENTO ACT?





M-V

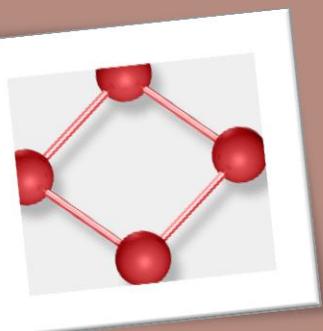
THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT

- Title X, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)
- Applies to K-12 public schools; provides additional rights and supports for eligible students
- Key themes
 - Support for school access and success
 - School stability
 - Child-centered, best interest decision-making



MCKINNEY-VENTO PROGRAM STRUCTURE

- States
 - Appoint a State Coordinator of Homeless Education
 - Remove barriers, including revising state policy/law
 - Ensure compliance with Title X, Part C
 - Contact information at
www.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php
- Districts
 - Appoint a Local Homeless Education Liaison
 - Remove barriers, including revising district policy
 - Identify eligible students
 - Ensure compliance with Title X, Part C





ELIGIBILITY FOR MCKINNEY-VENTO RIGHTS AND SERVICES

- Children or youth who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**, including:
 - Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (*“doubling up”*)
 - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to the lack of adequate alternative accommodations
 - Living in emergency or transitional shelters





ELIGIBILITY FOR MCKINNEY-VENTO RIGHTS AND SERVICES

- Awaiting foster care placement (*less applicable for higher ed issues due to the CCRAA's provision on kids in foster care at age 13 or older*)
- Living in a public or private place not designed for humans to live
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or a similar setting
- Migratory children living in the above circumstances
- Unaccompanied youth living in the above circumstances

FIXED, REGULAR, AND ADEQUATE

- **Fixed:** Stationary, permanent, and not subject to change
- **Regular:** Used on a predictable, routine, or consistent basis (*e.g. nightly*); consider the relative permanence
- **Adequate:** Sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments



*Can the student go to the SAME PLACE (fixed)
EVERY NIGHT (regular) to sleep in a SAFE AND
SUFFICIENT SPACE (adequate)?*



WHY THE “BROAD DEFINITION”?

- Shelters are often full, turning youth away
- There are no shelters in many suburban and rural areas
- Eligibility rules of shelters often exclude unaccompanied minors
- Youth may fear adult shelters
- Shelters often have 30-, 60-, or 90-day time limits
- Youth may be unaware of alternatives, fleeing in crisis, living in over-crowded, temporary, and sometimes unsafe environments
- Shelters often are a last resort after all other possibilities are exhausted



DOUBLED-UP

- McKinney-Vento defines “doubled-up” as “sharing the housing of others ***due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason***”
- Considerations:
 - Why is the student doubling up? Due to a crisis or by mutual choice as a plan for mutual benefit?
 - How permanent is the living arrangement intended to be?
 - Where would the youth live if not doubling up?
 - Is the living arrangement fixed, regular, and adequate?

WHO ARE UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH?





WHO ARE UNACCOMPANIED STUDENTS?

- ◎ 2-step process
 - 1) Does the student's living arrangement meet the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless?
 - 2) Once homelessness is determined, is the student unaccompanied?
- ◎ Unaccompanied = “not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian”; in practical terms, this means the youth does not live with the parent or guardian



BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

- 
- Lack of financial means to live independently and safely
 - Difficulty being financially self-sufficient once enrolled in college
 - Limited housing options, especially in small towns or rural areas
 - Struggling to balance school and other responsibilities
 - Lack of adult guidance and support
 - Lack of access to parental financial information and support
 - Failure to access available support systems



PATHS TO BEING “ON YOUR OWN”

- Longstanding patterns of family conflict:
blended family issues, pregnancy, sexual activity or orientation, school problems, alcohol/drug use
- Abuse and/or neglect within the home
- Parental incarceration, substance abuse, illness, hospitalization, or death





PATHS TO BEING “ON YOUR OWN” (CONT)

- Foster care issues: running away from a foster care placement, aging out of the foster care system; significant correlation between involvement with the child welfare system and experiencing homelessness as an adult
- Some students become homeless with their families, but end up on their own due to lack of space in temporary accommodations or shelter policies that prohibit adolescent boys



“BUT, THE STUDENT CHOSE TO LEAVE...”

- ◎ A youth can be eligible regardless of whether he/she was asked to leave the home or “chose” to leave
- ◎ Sometimes there is “more than meets the eye” for youth’s home life situations
- ◎ Sharing sensitive personal information with someone you don’t know can be difficult



THE SCHOOL'S CHARGE

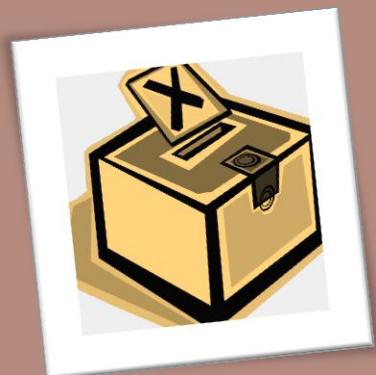
- ◎ Institutions of higher education first and foremost are educational agencies
- ◎ Their primary responsibility and goal is to educate in accordance with federal law, which supersedes state and local law
- ◎ Institutions of higher education do not need to understand and/or agree with all aspects of a student's home life to educate him/her and comply with federal educational mandates



SCENARIO: SARAH

Sarah was kicked out of her house after graduating high school. She'd had problems getting along with her stepdad for some time and the level of conflict had gotten very intense. She went to live with her friend, Kim, but Kim's parents said Sarah can only stay there until the end of the summer, when Kim leaves for college. Sarah is no longer in contact with her mom and stepdad.

- ◎ According to McKinney-Vento, is Sarah an unaccompanied homeless youth?
- ◎ Other questions?



UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH AND THE FAFSA





INDEPENDENT STATUS FOR UNACCOMPANIED STUDENTS

- ◎ CCRAA uses the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless
 - ◎ Includes a student living in the dorms if he/she would otherwise be homeless
 - ◎ Includes a homeless student fleeing an abusive parent, even if the parent would provide housing and support
- ◎ Youth = 21 or younger or still enrolled in high school on the date he/she signs the FAFSA
- ◎ At risk of homelessness: “when a student’s housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate”



INDEPENDENT STATUS FOR UNACCOMPANIED STUDENTS

- Must be determined by:
 - Local liaison (*graduating seniors*)
 - Runaway and Homeless Youth Act funded shelter director or designee (*received services*)
 - U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development funded shelter director or designee (*received services*)
 - College Financial Aid Administrator



101

HUD AND RHYA 101

- HUD = The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- HUD provides funding to local communities through an annual competitive process for providing supportive housing to people experiencing homelessness (*e.g. emergency shelter and transitional housing*)
- RHYA = The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act
- RHYA provides funding to local agencies for providing housing specifically for unaccompanied homeless youth (*street outreach, basic centers, and transitional living programs*)



THE ROLE OF THE FAA

- ◎ According to the AVG, if a student does not have, and cannot get, documentation from a Local Liaison, RHYA provider, or HUD provider, a financial aid administrator **must** make a determination of homeless/unaccompanied status
- ◎ If a student meets the definition of UHY, this is not an “exercise of professional judgment” or a “dependency override” for youth 21 and younger; this is determining the independent student status of an unaccompanied homeless youth
- ◎ In instances where a student doesn’t meet the definition of UHY but there are other extenuating circumstances, a dependency override or exercise of professional judgment may be appropriate





2011-12 APPLICATION AND VERIFICATION GUIDE

- ◎ Updated AVG released in March 2012
 - ◎ Student can use the college's administrative address as his/her mailing address
 - ◎ Youth = 21 or younger or still enrolled in high school on the date he/she signs the FAFSA
 - ◎ UHY age 22-23 = qualify for a dependency override
 - ◎ 24 or older is automatic independent status



2011-12 APPLICATION AND VERIFICATION GUIDE

- Provides guidance on determination by FAAs
 - Verification of “yes” answers on the FAFSA is not required unless there is conflicting information
 - Permits a FAA to verify the status with a documented interview
 - Encourages discretion and sensitivity when gathering information
 - Some information may be confidential
 - Child welfare reports are not necessary
 - Recommends consulting with Local Liaisons, State Coordinators, NCHE, school counselors, clergy, etc.
 - Eligibility determinations may be appealed to the school or the U.S. Department of Education



2012-2013 *ONLINE* FAFSA

On or after July 1, 2011, were you homeless or were you at risk of being homeless?

- Yes No

At any time on or after July 1, 2011, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless?

- Yes No

At any time on or after July 1, 2011, did the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless?

- Yes No

At any time on or after July 1, 2011, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?

- Yes No



2012-2013 ONLINE FAFSA

STUDENT

Student Demographics	School Selection	Dependency Status	Parent Demographics	Financial Information	Sign & Submit	Confirmation
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Homeless Circumstances

You indicated that you were homeless or at risk of being homeless and you answered "no" to all of the specific homeless questions.

However, your financial aid administrator could make a determination that you are a **homeless youth**, and do not need to provide parental information, if you meet both of the following conditions:

- You are **homeless**, which means you are lacking fixed, regular and adequate housing, which includes living in shelters, parks, motels or cars, or temporarily living with other people because you had nowhere else to go. Also, if you are living in any of these situations and fleeing an abusive parent you may be considered homeless even if your parent would provide support and a place to live; and
- You are **unaccompanied**, which means you are not living in the physical custody of your parent or guardian.

If you believe that you meet these conditions and would like to follow up with the financial aid administrator at your college, select "I am homeless or at risk of being homeless" and click **Next** to get additional information.

If you do not meet the above conditions and will be providing parental information, select "I will provide parental information" and click **Next** to continue.

I will provide parental information
 I am homeless or at risk of being homeless

PREVIOUS **NEXT**

NEED HELP? **SAVE** CLEAR ALL DATA **VIEW FAFSA SUMMARY** **EXIT**

Help and Hints

Homeless Circumstances

Select **I will provide parental information** to continue to Parent Demographics.

Select **I am homeless or at risk of being homeless** to get additional information.



2012-2013 PDF FAFSA

Step Three (Student): Answer the questions in this step to determine if you will need to provide parental information. Once you answer "Yes" to any of the questions in this step, skip Step Four and go to Step Five on page 8.

45. Were you born before January 1, 1989?	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
46. As of today, are you married? (Also answer "Yes" if you are separated but not divorced.)	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
47. At the beginning of the 2012-2013 school year, will you be working on a master's or doctorate program (such as an MA, MBA, MD, JD, PhD, EdD, graduate certificate, etc.)?.....	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
48. Are you currently serving on active duty in the U.S. Armed Forces for purposes other than training? See Notes page 2.	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
49. Are you a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces? See Notes page 2.....	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
50. Do you have children who will receive more than half of their support from you between July 1, 2012 and June 30, 2013?....	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
51. Do you have dependents (other than your children or spouse) who live with you and who receive more than half of their support from you, now and through June 30, 2013?	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
52. At any time since you turned age 13, were both your parents deceased, were you in foster care or were you a dependent or ward of the court? See Notes page 9.	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
53. As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you an emancipated minor? See Notes page 9.	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
54. As determined by a court in your state of legal residence, are you or were you in legal guardianship? See Notes page 9.	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
55. At any time on or after July 1, 2011, did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless? See Notes page 9.	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
56. At any time on or after July 1, 2011, did the director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless? See Notes page 9.	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2
57. At any time on or after July 1, 2011, did the director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless? See Notes page 9.	Yes <input type="radio"/> 1	No <input type="radio"/> 2



NOTES FROM THE 2012-13 PDF FAFSA

Notes for questions 55–57 (page 5)

Answer “**Yes**” if you received a determination at any time on or after July 1, 2011, that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or, for question 57, at risk of being homeless.

- “**Homeless**” means lacking fixed, regular and adequate housing. You may be homeless if you are living in shelters, parks, motels or cars, or are temporarily living with other people because you have nowhere else to go. Also, if you are living in any of these situations and fleeing an abusive parent you may be considered homeless even if your parent would provide support and a place to live.
- “**Unaccompanied**” means you are not living in the physical custody of your parent or guardian.
- “**Youth**” means you are 21 years of age or younger or you are still enrolled in high school as of the day you sign this application.

Answer “**No**” if you are not homeless or at risk of being homeless, or do not have a determination. You should contact your financial aid office for assistance if you do not have a determination but believe you are an unaccompanied youth who is homeless or are an unaccompanied youth providing for your own living expenses who is at risk of being homeless.

The financial aid administrator at your college may require you to provide a copy of the determination if you answered “**Yes**” to any of these questions.



SCENARIO: SAMUEL

Samuel had to leave home the summer before his senior year in high school, when his mom was incarcerated. Samuel's father has never been a part of his life and, in fact, he doesn't know where he is or if he's even still alive. Samuel has been moving between the homes of relatives and friends since then, but no one has been willing to assume legal guardianship or provide financial support. He's now starting to apply for colleges and is concerned about having enough money to attend.

- ◎ According to McKinney-Vento, is Samuel an unaccompanied homeless youth?
- ◎ Other questions?



DETERMINING SAMUEL'S ELIGIBILITY

- Q** Could the Local Homeless Education Liaison determine Samuel's independent student status?
 - A** Yes, if Samuel is identified as an unaccompanied homeless youth while attending high school
- Q** What if the Local Liaison did not identify Samuel as an unaccompanied homeless youth while he was in high school?
 - A** The FAA must determine Samuel's eligibility

COLLEGE SUPPORT NETWORKS AND INITIATIVES: BEST PRACTICES





IDENTIFYING UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH AT YOUR SCHOOL

- Post information publicly in strategic locations throughout campus
- Create awareness of the issue among staff, particularly those working in the area of financial aid and student services
- Resources
 - NCHE/NASFAA awareness poster
 - NCHE higher education brief
 - NCHE FAA determination tool





DETERMINING INDEPENDENT STUDENT STATUS

- Become familiar with the AVG
- Become familiar with the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless and apply it to students' circumstances on a case-by-case basis
- Consult with Local Liaisons, State Coordinators, or NCHE, as needed
- Be reasonable and sensitive when requesting information from students
- Advocate!



SUPPORTING UNACCOMPANIED STUDENTS IN YOUR INSTITUTION

- Refer unaccompanied students to campus and community support services upon admission
- Establish coordination between financial aid offices, student support services, and campus housing
- Establish a food and clothing bank on campus
- Plan housing for homeless students when dormitories close; ideas include leaving one residence hall open or establishing a list of “host homes” in the community
- Establish a mentoring program for unaccompanied homeless youth



FOR MORE INFORMATION

NCHE website:

http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php

(AVG, ACT/SAT fee waivers, etc.)

http://center.serve.org/nche/best/higher_ed.php

NCHE helpline: 800-308-2145 or

homeless@serve.org

**National Association for the Education of Homeless
Children and Youth:**

<http://www.naehcy.org>

**National Association of Student Financial Aid
Administrators:**

<http://www.nasfaa.org/>



FINAL QUESTIONS?

