

Supporting Students in Foster Care and Experiencing Homelessness

What to Learn from Your State's ESSA Plan

ESSA adds homeless youth and children in foster care as an identified subgroup for state-level accountability. With this new addition, states will determine how to best collect new and/or better information around youth experiencing homelessness or foster care, including standards for their identification and support. Many states have systems set up under the McKinney Vento Act that dictate standards for its implementation at the local level. Check with state leaders to learn more about any changes to these systems under the new ESSA state plan.

Guidance for School Improvement

Under the Title I and McKinney-Vento Act's Homeless Children and Youth programs, LEAs are responsible for appointing liaisons to address the barriers homeless students may face to receiving a quality education (e.g., policies related to missed enrollment deadlines, accruing partial or full course credits, fees or fines related to extracurricular or academic activities, absences, etc.). Liaisons must inform students pursuing postsecondary education of the independent financial aid filing status and must ensure those impacted by homelessness receive the appropriate health and human service referrals (mental, housing, substance abuse, etc.). Additionally, any LEA receiving Title I funds are now required to ensure school access and the educational stability of foster care students. They must also reserve dollars to support the needs of homeless students and include their disaggregated academic achievement data as part of annual report cards.

Using the annual reporting of the academic achievement of children and youth experiencing homelessness, local leaders can better understand and keep track of the challenges facing these students and strengthen relationships with child welfare agencies and other youth-serving organizations to address them. ESSA allows LEAs to use Title I funds for services that support students impacted by homelessness or foster youth, such as transportation and funding additional local liaisons. LEAs and schools should also clarify with stakeholders the district role in protecting the rights of homeless students under FERPA and IDEA.

Find Support for this Strategy in ESSA

TITLE I PART D: Prevention and Intervention Programs for Children and Youth
who are Neglected, Delinquent, or At-Risk

TITLE IX, PART A: Homeless Children and Youth



Students Experiencing Homelessness

Youth experience homelessness for a number of reasons:

- youth asked to leave home
- youth who run away from home
- youth who age out of or run away from foster care or juvenile justice systems
- youth without a legal guardian
- youth sleeping in non-traditional areas
- youth in families experiencing homelessness (including those in transitional or temporary housing)
- youth living in any home that is not their own (e.g. motel, emergency shelter, family acquaintance)

Given that a higher number of youth experiencing homelessness are part of marginalized communities—such as those with mental health needs, foster youth, or LGBT youth—working with student support organizations, health facilities, community adult leaders (e.g. religious leaders, youth partnership leaders) and community groups that support such young people will help to reach students and families with specific needs. Families experiencing homelessness are often experiencing crisis events, such as domestic violence or financial crisis. Districts and schools might work with crisis partners to better determine overarching community needs — as well as individual case management — and develop adequate responses (e.g. support family travel to and from outreach events).

Essential Stakeholders

- ✓ Students and families impacted by homelessness or involved with foster care services
- ✓ Local liaisons
- ✓ School staff (counselors or advisors, social workers, teachers, principals)
- ✓ Families and community organizations that serve homeless populations (e.g. YWCA, local shelters)
- ✓ Tribal child welfare agencies and staff
- ✓ Foster care agencies
- ✓ Local agencies (child protection and job and family services) and tribes
- ✓ Court appointed special advocates
- ✓ Parent and family mentor groups, as well as students/families who have previously or are currently impacted by homelessness
- ✓ Community centers, including faith-based organizations
- ✓ National advocates [e.g. School Superintendents Association (AASA), National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, School Social Workers (SSWAA)]

Ask the Experts

- ✓ [Technical Assistance Tools](#) (National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth)
- ✓ [Homeless Liaison Toolkit | 2017 Edition](#) (NCHE)
- ✓ [Integrated Service Settings Open Doors for Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#) (SAMHSA)