



School Nutrition Staff

Tips for Ensuring Educational Access and Success for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

You play a critical role in identifying students experiencing homelessness and giving them the support they need to succeed in school.



Identify Students Experiencing Homelessness

- Look for students who:
 - do not have lunch or money to purchase a meal;
 - seem extraordinarily hungry;
 - request second and third helpings;
 - ask for food from other students; or
 - hoard food in order to take extra food home.
- See the [*McKinney-Vento Quick Guide*](#) tip sheet for other common signs of homelessness.
- Learn your division's referral process and contact your McKinney-Vento liaison or the appropriate building point-of-contact if you see a student showing signs of homelessness.



Provide a Caring and Supportive Environment

- Students experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible for free school meals. Parents should not be required to fill out the application for free school meals.
- Your McKinney-Vento liaison should notify the school nutrition program director immediately when a McKinney-Vento student is identified so that free meals can begin right away.
- Maintain confidentiality regarding students' living situation.
- Do not implement practices that stigmatize these students or others receiving free meals, such as creating a special line to receive their meals, providing them with a different meal, or commenting on their living situation.
- Develop positive and understanding relationships with these students.

Students experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible for free school meals.



Connect Students With Your Division's McKinney-Vento Liaison

- 🍏 If you see signs that a student might be experiencing homelessness, reach out to your direct supervisor so they can connect the student to your division's McKinney-Vento liaison or the appropriate building point-of-contact immediately.
- 🍏 Your division's McKinney-Vento liaison can assist by:
 - 🍏 Helping students stay in the same school, if it is in their best interest, or immediately enroll in the local school even without required documents; seem extraordinarily hungry;
 - 🍏 Assisting families with obtaining required documents and medical records;
 - 🍏 Connecting students to free school meals;
 - 🍏 Removing barriers to learning such as lack of supplies or fees, access to tutoring, or transportation;
 - 🍏 Making sure students have every opportunity to enroll in after school activities and in-school programs; and
 - 🍏 Helping families access community resources.



“School is the most normal activity that most children experience collectively...For homeless children it is much more than a learning environment. It is a place of safety, personal space, friendships, and support” (Oakley & Kling, 2000).



PROJECT
HOPE
VIRGINIA

**Find Your Local
McKinney-Vento
Liaison**



For More Information

Learn more about how to support children and youth experiencing homelessness with these resources:

- 🍏 [Project HOPE-Virginia](#)
- 🍏 [Common Signs of Homelessness](#)
- 🍏 [Ensuring Access to Food Resources \(SchoolHouse Connection\)](#)
- 🍏 [McKinney-Vento Quick Guide](#)