



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
OFFICE OF ELEMENTARY AND SECONDARY EDUCATION

August 4, 2026

Dear Chief State School Officers:

Thank you for your continued leadership and dedication to supporting the academic success, well-being, and educational stability of students experiencing homelessness.

I am writing today to provide an update on how Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) grant funds may be used to meet the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Local educational agencies (LEAs) may, in certain circumstances, use EHCY subgrants to pay for short-term, temporary emergency housing (such as a hotel or motel room) for families and youth experiencing homelessness. Any such use shall be without regard to the recipient's gender, race, national origin, or religious affiliation. Whether it is permissible to use EHCY subgrants to pay for short-term, temporary emergency housing for families and youth experiencing homelessness is context dependent and determined on a case-by-case basis.

In general, it is permissible to use EHCY subgrants to pay for short-term, temporary emergency housing for families and youth experiencing homelessness when the use is reasonable and necessary to facilitate school attendance and as a last resort when other funding sources are not readily available. More information is provided below to guide your implementation of this permissible use of funds. In addition, to support your continued implementation of the EHCY program, I have also incorporated this information into the enclosed updated *Education for Homeless Children and Youths Non-Regulatory Guidance*, which is also available on our [website](#).

The McKinney-Vento Act explicitly authorizes LEAs to use EHCY subgrant funds to provide “other extraordinary or emergency assistance needed to enable homeless children and youths to attend school and participate fully in school activities.” 42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(16). Under appropriate circumstances, the U.S. Department of Education (Department) has now determined that this authority extends to the provision of short-term, temporary emergency housing. To ensure compliance and responsible stewardship of Federal funds, such circumstances should satisfy the following criteria:

- **Last resort after coordination:** EHCY funds may only be utilized for short-term emergency housing when alternative funding sources and housing options are not readily available, such as shelter beds or hotel vouchers for which a child, youth, or family may be eligible, despite active collaboration and coordination with local housing providers, local government agencies, and non-profit organizations that support families and youth experiencing homelessness.

400 MARYLAND AVE., SW, WASHINGTON, DC 20202
www.ed.gov

The Department of Education's mission is to promote student achievement and preparation for global competitiveness by fostering educational excellence and ensuring equal access.

- **Case-by-case determination:** Decisions should be rooted in the individual student's unique circumstances and must be adequately documented. 2 C.F.R § 200.302(b)(3).
- **Reasonable and necessary for school attendance:** The temporary housing must be essential to remove an immediate barrier to the student's enrollment, regular attendance, or full participation in school activities, which includes maintaining educational stability at the school of origin. *See, e.g.,* 2 C.F.R. §§ 200.403–404. When determining if a cost is necessary and reasonable, consideration should be given to the relative impact of the expenditure given the amount of the grant and number of students who would benefit particularly with respect to the needs assessment conducted by the LEA subgrantee and reviewed by the SEA (*see* 42 U.S.C. § 11433(b)(1) and (c)(2)).
- **Short-term and temporary:** The provision of housing must be strictly time limited as it is for “extraordinary or emergency assistance.” (42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(16)). It is intended to address an immediate, acute barrier while long-term housing solutions are actively pursued.

Guidance for Determining “Short-Term” Duration

The Department recognizes that housing transitions are complex and fact-specific and that it may take time to find long-term housing for children and youth experiencing homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act does not define what constitutes “short-term.” As a result, the State educational agency (SEA), in coordination and collaboration with its LEAs, must determine the appropriate length of time for which EHCY subgrant funds may be used for short-term, temporary emergency housing.

Relevant considerations may include, for example, ensuring a student can complete a week of school before a housing change, particularly when a mid-week move would foreseeably disrupt attendance, transportation arrangements, or overall school stability. During the period that short-term, temporary emergency housing is provided using EHCY subgrant funds, LEAs must work to connect the family or unaccompanied youth to sustainable housing supports through appropriate community partners. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(5)(A)-(C)).

Recommendations for Consistent Implementation

To ensure appropriate and consistent use of EHCY funds for the provision of short-term, temporary emergency housing, the Department strongly encourages the SEA to assist LEAs in:

- **Establishing simple internal review processes** to approve and accurately document each individual case.
- **Confirming and recording specific coordination steps** taken to identify other housing resources prior to authorizing the use of EHCY funds.
- **Maintaining a primary focus on school stability** and positive attendance outcomes, giving due consideration to transportation needs and school of origin mandates.
- **Conducting periodic reviews** of each situation if the barrier to attendance persists and ensure continuous referrals to appropriate housing and community support networks.

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) has developed a [Use-of-Funds Tip Sheet for Serving Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#). This resource can assist SEAs and LEAs in evaluating whether a proposed use of EHCY program funds—including the provision of short-term, temporary emergency housing—is permissible on a case-by-case basis.

Thank you for your ongoing partnership and for your tireless efforts to support our Nation's children and youth experiencing homelessness. If you have any questions regarding this guidance, please do not hesitate to contact the Department at homelessED@ed.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Kirsten Baesler".

Kirsten Baesler
Assistant Secretary
Office of Elementary and Secondary Education

Enclosure

cc: SEA Homeless Coordinators