



National Center for Homeless Education  
Supporting the Education of Children and  
Youth Experiencing Homelessness  
<http://nche.ed.gov>



#### MCKINNEY-VENTO LAW INTO PRACTICE BRIEF SERIES

## Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homelessness

### This NCHE brief:

- describes the educational barriers and challenges faced by unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness,
- explains key provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act related to the education of unaccompanied youth, and
- suggests proven strategies from across the country for supporting the educational success of unaccompanied youth.

### INTRODUCTION

Homelessness is a devastating circumstance for any child or youth; but for youth on their own, the stresses of homelessness are multiplied. The myriad of challenges faced by youth experiencing homelessness on their own puts these students at risk of dropping out or school failure. Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, reauthorized in 2015 by Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.; hereafter *the McKinney-Vento Act*), guarantees educational rights and supports for students experiencing homelessness, including specific supports for unaccompanied youth. This brief explains the Act's provisions related to unaccompanied youth and suggests strategies for implementation. Briefs on additional homeless education topics are available at <https://nche.ed.gov/briefs.php>.

### MCKINNEY-VENTO DEFINITION OF HOMELESS 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)

The term “homeless children and youth”—

- A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and
- B. includes —
  - i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
  - ii. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...;
  - iii. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
  - iv. migratory children...who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).