

# PENNSYLVANIA'S EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM

JEFF ZIMMERMAN, REGION 7 COORDINATOR

ANDY KUHL, CONSULTANT

## Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Have the Right to a Free Appropriate Public Education

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### *The Story of Charlie*

Charlie, the iconic image by photojournalist Pat Van Doren, has a long history of helping homeless kids. He and his mom were homeless in the early 1990s at Hased House in Aurora, IL. Van Doren captured his picture that fittingly represents every homeless child. In 1994, his photo adorned every promotional material urging the Illinois legislature to pass the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act, aka "Charlie's Bill."

The success of that hallmark legislation led to a national movement, and the Illinois legislation became the essence of the 2001 improvement of the federal legislation, the McKinney-Vento Act, opening school doors and encouraging success of millions of homeless students.

Charlie, now a working husband, father of 3 children with his own house, is proud of his role in making life better for kids in homeless situations.

Van Doren serves on the HEAR US board of directors. Her photos, and life, make a difference for children and youth without Homes.

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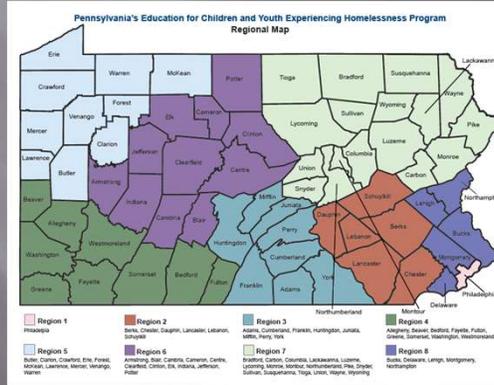


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## The Scale of Homelessness

- ❖ 1,384,301 homeless children were enrolled in public schools during the 2018-2019 school year (National Center for Homeless Education).
- ❖ Children make up half of the homeless population nationwide
- ❖ 37,930 homeless children identified by ECYEH program in 2019-2020
- ❖ 2,580 homeless children identified in Region 7 (2019-2020)

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### McKinney -Vento Homeless Act

- ❖ 2015 ESSA reauthorizes the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act originally enacted in 1987. New legislation signed by Barack Obama December 10, 2015
- ❖ Requires educational access, attendance, and success for children and youth experiencing homelessness.
- ❖ Provides states with funding to support statewide initiatives.
- ❖ PA ECYEH program covers 501 school districts, 29 intermediate units, 127 public charter schools, and 53 career-technical schools.
- ❖ Does not include private schools

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### Who is homeless?

- ❖ An individual who lacks a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence
  - Includes children and youth who are:
    - Sharing housing (doubled-up)
    - Living in motels and hotels
    - Living in emergency shelters or transitional housing
    - Unaccompanied Youth-Abandoned, Runaways
    - Living in cars, parks, public places, abandoned buildings, trailers, RVs, camping grounds
    - Migratory children (living in circumstances above)

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### How vulnerable are you to becoming homeless?

- ❖ Fire
- ❖ Flood
- ❖ Job Loss
- ❖ Eviction
- ❖ Domestic Violence
- ❖ Accident
- ❖ Illness

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### Unaccompanied Youth

- ❖ Any child who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian
- ❖ Includes runaways, children thrown out of their home, been abandoned by parents or separated from parents for any other reason
- ❖ Must fit the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless
- ❖ No age range specified (Upper range determined by state)
- ❖ Temporary surrogate parents must be assigned to unaccompanied youth to make special education decisions if the youth does not have an authorized person

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### Unaccompanied Youth

"The primary responsibility of the schools is to enroll and educate homeless children and youth in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act, which neither authorizes, nor requires schools to make judgments about the validity of why a student is not living with a parent or guardian. Determinations of eligibility should be made on the student's nighttime living arrangement, not the circumstances that caused the student to leave home."

~National Center for Homeless Education

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### Enrollment

Requires public schools to immediately enroll students experiencing homelessness even when lacking:

- ❖ Proof of residency \*\*\*\*FERPA
- ❖ 1302 not required
- ❖ Guardianship
- ❖ Birth certificates, school records, or other documents
- ❖ Medical records, including immunization records
- ❖ Required dress code items, including uniforms

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### Enrollment Cont'd.

- ❖ School placement in:
  - School of origin, if the parent and/or child wishes and it is feasible
  - School in area of current residency
- ❖ **School of origin** is defined as the school the child attended when permanently housed or where they were last enrolled
- ❖ If the child is unaccompanied, his/her wishes should be taken into consideration

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### Transportation

- ❖ School districts are required to adopt policies and practices to ensure that transportation is provided to school of origin
- ❖ Child's right to attend their school of origin extends for the duration of their homelessness and for the remainder of the academic year, if they become permanently housed
- ❖ Title I monies can be used to transport a homeless student or former homeless student

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### Homeless Liaison Duties

- ❖ Identify homeless children with assistance from school personnel and through other entities and agencies
- ❖ Inform parents/guardians of educational rights
- ❖ Mediate disputes
- ❖ Assist families that do not have documentation (records, immunizations, etc.)
- ❖ Know the best resources in their community to assist families
- ❖ Identify pre-school children by working with shelters and agencies
- ❖ Provide information to shelters (regional office)

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### Addressing Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness

LEAs must:

- ❖ Set aside Title I funds (justify amount)
- ❖ Ensure immediate enrollment
- ❖ Enroll students in free breakfast and lunch programs
- ❖ Ensure access to instructional support/resources, special education and gifted programs
- ❖ Provide homeless awareness training
- ❖ Alert teachers of a student's living situation (respecting privacy)
- ❖ Know laws pertaining to homeless children and remove barriers

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### Addressing Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness

LEAs must:

- ❖ Post educational rights in schools and community
- ❖ Provide access for unaccompanied youth (must enroll without proof of guardianship)
- ❖ Have a dispute resolution procedure
- ❖ Publish homeless information on website and in handbooks
- ❖ Provide community resources to homeless families
- ❖ Provide academic remediation and support interventions (Absences due to homelessness must be excused)

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### Best Interest Determination (Factors to Consider)

- ❖ Mileage to original school
- ❖ Age of child
- ❖ Area the family and/or child might relocate to
- ❖ Special needs
- ❖ Time of school year
- ❖ Other siblings
- ❖ Domestic violence (Danger at school?)
- ❖ Consult with staff at original school (best interest)
- ❖ Pregnant teen and child care
- ❖ Parent/Guardian/Child choice

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### Title I Funding

#### Allowable Expenses

- ❖ School Clothing/Supplies
- ❖ Students fees (general education programs/testing)
- ❖ Transportation (former and current homeless students)
- ❖ Birth Certificates
- ❖ Immunizations
- ❖ Emergency Food
- ❖ Medical/Dental service
- ❖ Eyeglasses/Hearing Aids
- ❖ Counseling/Outreach Services
- ❖ Tutoring or extended learning time (before or after school)

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### Title I Funding

#### Prohibited

- ❖ Cannot supplant other state or local funds
- ❖ Rent
- ❖ Utilities
- ❖ Clothing for parents

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### Dispute Resolution

LEA → Regional Coordinator → State Coordinator

Formal Dispute → Legal → Court

\*\*If a dispute arises over school selection or enrollment, the child or youth involved must immediately be admitted to the school in which they are seeking enrollment, pending resolution of the dispute. A written explanation must be given if enrollment is denied. The parent/guardian or unaccompanied must also be informed of his/her right to appeal the school's decision.

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### Homeless Children Characteristics

- ❖ Attendance at several schools
- ❖ More than one family at the same address
- ❖ Attention-seeking behavior
- ❖ Hunger and hoarding of food
- ❖ Sleeping in class
- ❖ Inappropriate dress for weather

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### Importance of Collaboration

- ❖ Learn more about conditions where family is coming
- ❖ Mental/behavioral state of homeless child on a daily basis
- ❖ Knowing changes in student's or family's situation
- ❖ Professional development opportunities
- ❖ ID important for higher education (FAFSA)

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### Importance of Collaboration

- ❖ Know services provided (housing, economic assistance, transportation, summer programs etc.)
- ❖ Learn about each other's needs and gaps
- ❖ Challenges each agency/district faces
- ❖ Help with pre-school/unaccompanied youth ID (Point in time counts)

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### Difficulties for homeless students

- ❖ Ashamed of where they live
- ❖ Teased by other students about homelessness, hygiene and inabilities
- ❖ Misunderstood by parents (LGBTQ)
- ❖ Difficulty adjusting to new school
- ❖ No place to do homework
- ❖ Developmental delays augment feelings of failure

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### Challenges for teachers

- ❖ Student attended many different schools with different teaching methods
- ❖ No school records
- ❖ Need to assess educational needs without prior records
- ❖ Student may move soon
- ❖ Other students react negatively
- ❖ Student might have difficulty trusting
- ❖ Inability to contact parents
- ❖ Parents often emotionally unavailable
- ❖ Homework completion can be difficult

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### Resources

(PA ECYEH Program) <http://homeless.center-school.org>

(Schoolhouse Connection) [www.schoolhouseconnection.org](http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org)

(NAEHCY) [www.naehcy.org](http://www.naehcy.org)

(National Center for Homeless Education) <https://nche.ed.gov/>

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*Formerly Homeless*

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