

Unlocking Potential!

By Michele Myers, Doctoral Fellow,
and Patricia A. Popp, Ph.D.
The College of William and Mary

In participation with the Virginia Department of Education

Information Brief No. 7 Fall 2003

What Educators Need to Know About Homelessness and Special Education

Increasingly, educators are being asked to serve many needs in students' lives outside of the traditional academic role. Students experiencing homelessness require additional support from teachers and administrators to ensure that social, developmental, and academic goals are met. When students who are homeless also have disabilities, the challenge for these professionals can appear even more complex. This can be a daunting task, considering the limited resources that schools have at their disposal. This information brief provides school personnel with the information they need to enroll, promote the attendance, and ensure the success of students with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness.

The Impact of Homelessness and Disabilities

Homelessness is a social dilemma that has academic repercussions. It can be devastating to families and children, possibly causing students to fall behind their peers in achievement.¹ These students are at increased risk for academic and behavioral challenges due to the disruption of services caused by unstable living situations that often result in multiple school changes in a given year. School is a place where students spend a great deal of time; for students experiencing homelessness, school provides the stability and safety that they may not have in their living situation.

The reauthorized McKinney-Vento Act, Title X, Part C of the *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 (NCLB)*, ensures the right of children and youth experiencing homelessness to a free, appropriate public education.

Children who experience homelessness have been iden-

tified in need of special education services at two-to-three times the incidence rates observed for their housed peers.² It is important to note that not all students who are homeless have or will develop disabilities. In fact, they may be successful in school and qualify for services through gifted or talented programs. However, when students experiencing homelessness also have disabilities, educators are faced with the multiple challenges of meeting complex student needs and ensuring compliance with the requirements of both the *Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)* and the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

Meeting the Needs of Students with Disabilities who are Homeless

The first step in meeting the needs of this special subgroup of students is identifying who is homeless. The McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness (see boxed text on the back page of this brief) includes students living in a variety of situations from "doubled-up" with friends or relatives due to a lack of housing to residing in shelters. Also, there are students who live in substandard housing, such as trailers or houses lacking electricity and plumbing, who may be considered homeless. Sometimes families share this sensitive information with school officials, but the stigma still associated with homelessness can make this difficult.

While the 2000 Child Estimate indicated that more than 17,000 children and youth had experienced homelessness in the Commonwealth of Virginia from July 1999 to June 2000, this was considered a conservative estimate due to limited awareness of students' living arrangements and how to define homelessness.

Therefore, all educators must be familiar with the warning signs and be able to assist with the identification of students experiencing homelessness in order to ensure that the students and their families are appropriately supported.

Enrollment personnel may notice multiple school and household moves. The address provided may be a low-cost motel, shelter, or another family’s residence. In other cases, the fact that a family is homeless may be discovered when school personnel investigate academic or behavioral concerns. School personnel may notice signs commonly associated with homelessness, such as hoarding food, inconsistent hygiene, and/or reluctance or inability to tell where they live.

School personnel may enroll students who are homeless and were receiving special education services or are suspected of having a disability. Educational decisions for these children should be made in compliance with the Individuals with Disabilities Act and the McKinney-Vento Act. School personnel must consider both acts as they navigate children’s unique living situations to provide an appropriate education.

For example, due to the high mobility of students who are homeless, even small delays in enrollment can present barriers to learning. The McKinney-Vento Act requires that children have the right to remain in their home school when feasible or be enrolled in the new school immediately, even when documentation is not readily available. In addition, school personnel serving these students must know school and community resources that are available to support their work and assist decision making.

Included within this document is a reprinted article published in 2003 entitled, “Exceptional and Homeless,” from the Council for Exceptional Children (CEC) publication, *Today*. This reprint describes characteristics of children experiencing homelessness and examines key legislation supporting homelessness and special education. In addition to the reprint, this information brief includes a summary table of suggestions for school personnel to address the needs of students from early childhood through high school, and highlights other resources that may assist school personnel serving students and their families when homelessness occurs.

	IDEA	McKinney-Vento
Current Authorization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • IDEA Amendments of 1997 – P.L. 105-17 • Legislation is currently being reauthorized by Congress at the time of this printing. 	McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act of 2001, Title X, Part C of the <i>No Child Left Behind Act</i>
Began	1975 as P.L. 94-142	1987 as Subtitle VII, B of P.L. 100-77
Why	In response to evidence that of the approximately 8 million students with disabilities, half were receiving either inappropriate or no educational services ³	In response to reports that over 50% of students experiencing homelessness were not attending school regularly ⁴
Goals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved educational outcomes • Parent involvement • Teacher support • Improved discipline and safety • Conflict resolution • Misclassifications reduction • Early intervention services • Improved transitions from school to workplace 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Immediate enrollment • School selection and parent involvement • Dispute resolution – for school placement decisions • Transportation to school when appropriate • Access to comparable services • Student achievement – students are to be held to the same high standards as their housed peers and should participate in state and local testing

The following article has been reprinted from the March 2003 *Today* with permission from the Council for Exceptional Children.⁵

Exceptional and Homeless

“Since we first applied [for shelter], my kids have changed schools eight or nine times.”

“My oldest son, 15, has an uncontrollable temper since we lost our apartment. My other son, 11, who’s been an honor roll student for six years, cries because he’s missing school.”

— Actual quotes from homeless parents in New York City, as told to the Association to Benefit Children.

Who Are Homeless Children and Youth?

A homeless child is any youth who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. These children might be sharing the housing of others, living in cars, motels, campgrounds, homeless shelters, or bus stations; or they may be awaiting foster care placement.

According to state reports, between 1997 and 2000, the number of homeless children and youth (K-12) increased from around 842,000 to more than 930,000. The majority of reported homeless youth are elementary or pre-school aged, and children are the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population.

Add to that the fact that one in 16 American children has a disability, and you can see that you may have a greater chance of being called on to teach or otherwise serve a homeless student with a disability or gifts than you might have realized.

The good news? More homeless kids are attending school. In 1997, only 45 percent of school-aged homeless children were attending regularly. By 2001, that number reached 87 percent. Better laws and greater awareness seem to be helping to improve homeless students’ access to educational services.

For homeless children, school is one of the few safe, stable places in their lives. School provides hope that they can develop the skills they need to someday escape poverty. It is critical that these children attend school.

Homeless Special Education Law The McKinney-Vento Act of 1987

This Act, amended and reauthorized in 2001, requires states and school districts to furnish homeless children with equal access to the same free education provided to other students. In addition, schools must do their best to eliminate any barriers to the educational success of homeless students.

All districts are now required to designate a homeless education liaison to ensure that homeless children and youth enroll and succeed in school. These liaisons must help students with such things as enrolling in school immediately, whether or not they have their previous school records; setting up transportation to school; accessing medical, dental, mental health or other needed services; quickly settling disagreements with the school; informing their parents/guardians of available programs and services; and more.

In addition, schools must:

- Obtain records from the previous school.
- Make placement determinations that are in the best interests of the child.
- Make sure students with disabilities get the special education and services they need.
- Help homeless students get free lunch and/or breakfast.
- Provide English language learning services if needed.
- NOT ask families or youth about their citizenship/immigration status.
- NOT segregate homeless students.

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Each state employs a state coordinator to ensure that all school districts within the state comply with McKinney-Vento. If schools fail to comply, districts and states can be sued.

IDEA

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) provides for children in homeless situations through the child find rule. This rule demands that schools seek out, identify, and evaluate all youth with disabilities, whether or not they are homeless or enrolled in school. If a student is enrolled, the school must communicate with the child's parents if staff feel that the child may have a disability.

Students coping with the stress of being homeless often exhibit two different types of behavior that educators should be aware of, according to Mary Ruth Coleman, associate professor at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill:

- **Withdrawal/depression.** These quiet, detached children may not even be noticed. However, in extreme cases they may become suicidal.
- **Acting out.** These aggressive "squeaky wheels" exhibit inappropriate classroom behaviors. Taken to the furthest degree, these children may act out in violence.

Educators should realize that the stress of being homeless and having to cope with many uncomfortable adjustments may temporarily cause these children to act abnormally, and they may be eligible for services for children who are emotionally disturbed or have behavioral disturbance.

The transient nature of some homeless students with disabilities and their families makes it difficult for schools to provide services quickly. To alleviate this, schools should inform homeless families and youth of their rights to special education as soon as they enroll. If a parent requests evaluations, start the process right away. When the student moves to a new school, be sure to transfer his or her special education records as soon as possible.

Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)

Homeless students are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of their academic performance. School districts must set aside funds to provide these services, and each district's Title I plan must include a description of the services to be provided to homeless youth. In addition, ESEA requires district Title I coordinators to collaborate with district homeless liaisons.

Districts can use Title I funds for such things as hiring special teachers or tutors for homeless students, facilitating parent involvement, or for funding after-school or summer programs.

Rural vs. Urban Homelessness

Families with children make up 40 percent of the nation's overall homeless population. Research shows that this percentage is even higher in rural areas. Families, single mothers, and children comprise the largest segment of the rural homeless population. And rural areas often have no homeless shelters at all.

In urban areas, there are more shelters (although some cities still don't have enough shelters to house their homeless), but school-to-school "bounce" is a major problem. Since some shelters limit the length of time families can stay, homeless children may have to switch schools frequently as their residence changes.

This "bounce" isn't such a large issue in rural cities [sic], because many are composed of only one school district, according to Rafael Cde Baca, manager of Shelter Services for Aid for Friends, a shelter in Idaho. In five years, he has never known of a student having to wait for his or her IEP paperwork to access services. In his region, the lines of communication between shelters and schools seem to develop naturally.

Perhaps the greatest challenge for rural shelters and schools serving homeless youth is that homelessness tends to be considered a "big city" problem.

"It's not," Cde Baca emphasizes. "It's everywhere." In Pocatello, a small city of 50,000, Aid for Friends filled 6,000 beds last year.

“Communities need to realize that people living at the local shelter are part of the community, not label them ‘the homeless people’. Educators, citizens, and community groups, particularly colleges and their students, can do a lot to help local shelters and homeless children. Education students can even gain valuable teaching experience by working with the children.”

In urban areas, schools may not know children are homeless or that they have a disability. Families often try to hide the fact of their homelessness, due to personal pride as well as fear that social services will take their children away from them, according to Kevin Swearinger, facilitator for students with emotional disturbance and co-chair of the Student Support Team at Hartford Heights Elementary in Baltimore, Md. Because of this, many homeless students never gain access to the benefits and services to which they are entitled.

“Communities need to realize that people living at the local shelter are part of the community, not label them ‘the homeless people.’”

In fact, the school may not find out that a child is homeless until after he or she has transferred to another school.

This problem is common to urban schools across the country, says Doug Gill, Washington State Director of Special Education and chair of the Finance Task Force of President Bush’s Commission on Excellence in Special Education. This can greatly disrupt students’ learning — particularly for students with IEPs.

Gill feels that homelessness among students having disabilities is a large problem that is not well defined due to the highly mobile nature of many homeless families.

Watch for the Signs

Think a child in your school may be homeless but trying to hide it? Here are some signs to look for:

- Wears the same clothes day after day.
- Frequently late to school.
- Doesn’t have school supplies.
- Tends to not want to go home.
- Homework not done.
- Notes not signed by parents.

If the child seems to fit the bill, Swearinger advises asking a few simple questions for additional corroboration, since some of the above signs can be indicators for other situations than homelessness such as abuse, neglect, or abandonment. Ask the child for his or her address and phone number. Can he or she provide real ones? Ask non-intrusive questions: “How are things at home? What did you do this weekend? What time did you get to bed last night? 3 a.m.! Why so late?” Talk and listen to the child. He or she will see that you are concerned and open up to you.

What Can Teachers Do?

You can begin to help homeless students with special needs before they even step into your classroom. Coleman suggests arranging intake interviews when a new student enrolls. Meet the parents and get them involved. Find out if the child has had special education before. Ask the parent(s) what they feel their child needs to succeed in school.

Swearinger would like to see this taken a step further, with teachers visiting their students’ families at home — wherever “home” is — to really get a grasp of the kind of home life each child has to deal with.

You can do a number of other things to help homeless students with disabilities and/or gifts and talents succeed in school, such as the following.

- **Facilitate learning by understanding the needs of homeless students with exceptionalities.** Coleman emphasizes that it is critical to provide a feeling of structure and security for the child. “If children and youth come from environments of little structure and a limited sense of security, those are their first needs when they get to school. These are safety needs. In order to learn and do well in school, a child must feel safe.”

Positive, pro-active discipline, clear rules, and strong classroom management skills help provide that essential structure. To establish security, she suggests telling the child, in whatever words you are comfortable with, “You are safe here. I will protect you.” Give them a sense of acceptance, too: “We’re glad you’re here. You belong here.”

School counselors can help. “When kids first come to school, talk to them, let them know you are there for them, where your office is, and that they can come see you any time they need to talk. Make sure they know you will keep what they tell you confidential,” advises Hartford Heights Counselor Joanna Owens.

- **Realize that homelessness can exacerbate existing learning problems.** Transitions are often hard for children with exceptionalities, cautions Coleman. If a child has a problem with reading, for example, and that child becomes emotionally stressed by transition, the additional stress can make existing reading difficulties more acute. There’s less energy available for academics because more energy is diverted to handle the stress of moving.

*In a homeless child’s mind,
his or her desk or locker
becomes the child’s “home.”*

- **Be open to special considerations or exceptions that may need to be made for homeless students.** If the child has no home, allow homework to be done in school. Allocate time in the morning before classes start or at lunch. Also be prepared to teach other necessary subjects, such as hygiene and personal space skills.
- **Be sensitive to the importance of personal space and personal possessions for homeless children.** In a homeless child’s mind, his or her desk or locker becomes the child’s “home.” Swearingen warns, “When you violate that space, it’s like you’re breaking into their house. The child may become territorial, protective, or even hostile.” Try to respect homeless children’s boundaries. Let them put their name on their possessions and/or spaces.

- **Help the whole class learn about and understand homelessness.** Realize that students might mistakenly assume that their classmate is to blame for his or her homelessness. The homeless child, too, might feel that he or she is at fault for the situation.

Get the class involved in a project that helps someone who is homeless, perhaps going to a homeless shelter and taking Christmas gifts, Hartford Heights Special Education Teacher Glenda Frisby suggests. In health class, have students consider self-esteem issues that homeless people deal with, or include homeless families among the types of family structures discussed. You could also use pertinent current events from the newspaper to build a lesson on homelessness.



Retired teacher Barbara McCutcheon used bibliotherapy and cooperative learning groups to educate her fifth graders on the subject. She read aloud to the class from Eve Bunting’s story, “Fly Away Home,” about a homeless father and son living in an airport. Then she had the class work in groups to design what they felt would be the optimum shelter and write proposals for it, utilizing budgeting, math, and thinking skills.

Whatever learning exercises you use, make sure they both educate and build a sense of power and understanding of the situation for students. Meanwhile, be careful not to expose a student as homeless, unless the child chooses to reveal that fact independently.

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- **Maintain the sense of belonging.** If you learn that a homeless child in your class is moving, help him or her maintain the bond with the class. Coleman suggests providing the student with stamped, addressed postcards so he or she can correspond with friends and former classmates.

Some IEP Considerations

- **Make sure a social worker is onboard,** advises April Polk, who is in charge of putting together IEPs for Hartford Heights. The social worker can “follow” homeless students to different schools, coordinate with homeless shelters, and even keep on hand things such as school supplies and clothes. Also, a lot of homeless adults have mental health issues. When that is the case with the child’s parent(s), collaboration with social services is critical.
- **Get a parent advocate involved.** This might be a social worker or other reliable person who can help parents by providing a mailing address and phone number, reliable transportation to meetings, and assistance with understanding their rights and the IEP process.
- **Be realistic.** “Realize that there may be absenteeism and that it may require two years to complete a grade level rather than one, given the situation,” suggests Swearinger.
- **List summer school and after-school programs on the IEP** to help make up for missed days due to homelessness that may cause a student to fall behind.
- **List transportation on the IEP.** Be sure to consider other unique needs of homeless students receiving special education, such as:
 - Remedial services or tutoring.
 - Counseling.
 - School supplies.
 - Free lunch/breakfast.
 - Preschool programs.
 - Medical services.
 - Case management.
 - Staff development.
 - Agency coordination.
 - Parent training.

What about Homeless Gifted and Talented Students?

Swearinger feels that homeless gifted and talented students tend to fall through the cracks. If they are doing their work and not causing a problem in class, they simply blend in. Their teachers may never know they are gifted and never realize they are silently dealing with the emotional turmoil of homelessness.

“Gifted students are just not getting enough attention,” Swearinger says. “Educators need to make a concerted effort to seek out gifted [homeless] students and screen and evaluate them, just as they would for students with disabilities.”



Special Considerations for Working with Homeless Parents

Be sure to respect parents’ pride and boundaries. Even if you feel a service you can help them access would be beneficial, don’t push it. That can backfire. Point the parent(s) to services they can access, and ask them what they would like you to do to help. Always be diplomatic, professional, and discreet. Empower them to improve their family’s situation.

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What Can School Administrators Do?

- **Get educated.** Swearinger advises administrators to read about homelessness. Find information on the Internet. Network with schools that deal with this problem regularly. In addition, you can take advantage of teacher training resources, such as realistic vignettes developed by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and other groups, which provide practice for teachers concerning questions of law, strategy, and issues related to educating homeless students. Access them at www.nationalhomeless.org/reauthorization.html.

“It’s all about kids being successful. That is what we need to make our number one priority.”

- **Communicate.** If there is a homeless shelter in your district, Coleman recommends designating one staff person as the liaison with that shelter. Ask the shelter to do the same, and keep the school-shelter lines of communication open. This will help expedite enrollment and IEP creation or continuation.
- **Be Prepared.** While new laws are getting more homeless students enrolled in school and involved in pertinent programs, they place additional burdens on schools. The National Center for Homeless Education has come up with strategies for schools to smoothly implement these requirements:
 - Train staff on the legal requirements for enrollment of homeless students with disabilities.
 - Develop short educational assessments to help with the immediate and appropriate placement of new students. Be sure to consider gifted and talented and special education.



- Host on-site immunization clinics periodically.
- Expedite special education referrals.
- Provide needed remediation and/or tutoring without delay.
- Have counselors meet with parents and students when registering.
- Create an orientation video for students, parents, and service providers.
- Establish routines for smoothing incoming and outgoing transitions.
- Take the time to talk with and welcome students individually.
- Assign faculty and peer mentors to new students.
- Hand out a short, simple list of classroom rules and procedures.
- Keep a portfolio of each homeless child’s work that the child can take if he or she transfers to a new school.

Whether you’re an administrator, a teacher, or even a homeless shelter worker or volunteer, as Cde Baca points out, “It’s all about kids being successful. That is what we need to make our number one priority.”

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School personnel may face challenges when trying to provide an appropriate education for students experiencing homelessness. Listed in the table below are common challenges and strategies to overcome them when determining eligibility and accessing services.

Challenges to Providing Special Education Services

Potential Challenge:	What You Can Do:
<p>Providing outreach to families who are homeless to comply with current Child Find regulations.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with the school division’s local homeless education liaison to identify shelters in the area and other places where families and youth who are homeless may be living. • Contact shelter staff and other service providers. Provide them with information and training about the Child Find process and who to contact in your school division when a potential need is identified. • Request the assistance of your local Parent Resource Center to provide outreach in the community. For example, offer a parent’s introduction to special education workshop at a local shelter.
<p>The student is struggling in school. Is the difficulty related to the living situation?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check initial enrollment forms for parental comments regarding educational services the student previously received. • Review school records for special education paperwork and alert a special educator if there are questions about the documentation. • Complete a referral that addresses academic or behavioral concerns. • Address the issue right away. The student may move again before you evaluate the situation completely. Delaying the referral process, even to give the student time to adjust to changes in his or her living situation may result in the student not receiving needed educational services.
<p>Missing records</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have the parent or guardian sign a release of information form. • Contact previous school for needed records. Seek assistance from your local homeless education liaison, when needed. • Ask the student questions to determine if additional supports were received at a previous school such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – How many students were in your class? – Were the students in your class in a different grade than you? – Did you have more than one teacher in the classroom? – Did you have an adult that worked only with you on your schoolwork? – Did you stay in the same classroom all day? (Except for usual resources) – What did you do when you took a test in your classroom? • Establish procedures for special education personnel in each school to review all records of students experiencing homelessness to look for indications that an eligibility process was initiated at a previous school.
<p>Incomplete eligibility process</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the previous school for relevant documentation to assist in the eligibility decision. • Complete the testing components at the school the child currently attends and hold the eligibility meeting as quickly as possible.

Potential Challenge:	What You Can Do:
Incomplete testing process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If the sending school, alert the receiving school and make sure all relevant paperwork is in the child's file. • If the receiving school: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Expedite the eligibility if at all possible to ensure services begin at the new school. - Coordinate with the previous school to get copies of completed testing and finalize missing components at the new school site.
Missing physical for the eligibility process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contact the health department to arrange a physical. The school nurse is a good resource to facilitate this contact.
Copy of the current IEP is not in the student's folder	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ask the parents/guardians if they have a copy. • Have the parent sign a release of information form. • Contact the case manager from previous school to see if a current IEP exists. • Have the IEP faxed from the previous school. • Check on the procedures within the local school division to determine how to serve the child while an IEP is being developed (in the event the IEP is not accessible).
Chronic absenteeism	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Treat students as you would any other student who is chronically absent. Remember, the McKinney-Vento Act emphasizes the importance of school attendance. • Request that the school nurse follow-up with questions about the student's health and coordinate medical services. • Have eligibility team members coordinate and schedule the assessment so that all the components can be done the same day.
Unresponsive parent/guardian	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request that the social worker visit the parent or guardian. • Have a parent liaison from the school or the local homeless education liaison facilitate contact with the parent. • If living in a shelter, work with shelter staff, such as a Child Services Coordinator. • Follow your local school division's procedures for holding an IEP meeting without parental involvement.
Student registers for school during the summer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish procedures for office staff and provide a listing of contacts to address special education matters in a timely manner.

Students who are homeless often manifest characteristics such as inattentiveness, aggression, lagging academic achievement, and frustration that are seen in students who qualify for special education services. Closing the achievement gap for homeless students may be further hindered if academic, behavioral, and social concerns are left unaddressed due to transience.⁶ Once gaps in skill development are uncovered, taking timely measures can ensure that children receive the services they need.

Endnotes

- ¹ Better Homes Fund. (1999). *America's homeless children: New outcasts*. Newton, MA. Author
- ² Ibid.
- ³ Rothstein, L. F. (1995). *Special Education Law*. New York, NY: Longman. Citing 20 U.S.C. § 1401(b)(1)-(5).
- ⁴ National Coalition for the Homeless. (2001). *Fact Sheet: Education of Homeless Children and Youth*. Washington, DC: Author
- ⁵ Exceptional and homeless. (2003, March). *Today*, 9(6), 1-2.
- ⁶ Walther-Thomas, C., Korinek, L., McLaughlin, V. L., & Williams, B. T. (1996). Improving educational opportunities for students with disabilities who are homeless. *Journal of Children and Poverty*, 2(2), 57-75.

National Resources on Homelessness and Disabilities

Council for Exceptional Children (CEC)

<http://www.cec.sped.org/>

CEC advocates for appropriate governmental policies, sets professional standards, provides continual professional development, advocates for newly and historically underserved individuals with exceptionalities, and helps professionals obtain conditions and resources necessary for effective professional practice.

IDEA Partnerships

<http://www.ideapractices.org/>

The IDEA Partnerships are four national projects funded by the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Special Education Programs (OSEP) to deliver a common message about the landmark 1997 reauthorization of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

<http://www.naehcy.org>

NAEHCY, a national grassroots membership association, serves as the voice and the social conscience for the education of children and youth in homeless situations. NAEHCY connects educators, parents, advocates, researchers and service providers to ensure school enrollment, attendance, and overall success for children and youth whose lives have been disrupted by the lack of safe, permanent and adequate housing.

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)

<http://www.serve.org/nche>

NCHE acts as a clearinghouse for information related to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Many resources are available on-line. Materials ordered from NCHE are free of charge. Quantities are limited.

National Association of Federal Education Program Administrators (NAFEPA)

<http://www.nafepa.org/>

NAFEPA is made up of those working with Title I and other federal programs and seeks to promote and protect the educational rights of disadvantaged children. The organization provides leadership in dealing with both legislation and instruction.

National Law Center for Homeless and Poverty (NLCHP)

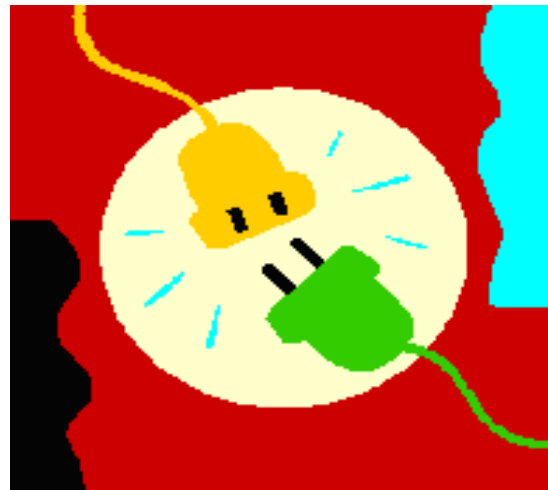
<http://www.nlchp.org>

NLCHP is an advocacy organization whose Education division monitors and enforces compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act. The staff can provide updates on related legislation and provide resources related to education.

U.S. Department of Education

<http://www.ed.gov/index.jsp>

This site provides information for teachers, school personnel, parents, and families, as well as updates and guidance on implementing federal legislation at the local level.



Virginia Resources

Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)

<http://www.peatc.org>

Special education information and support for families of children with disabilities.

Project HOPE – Virginia

See contact information below

The office of the state coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth, Project HOPE-Virginia is part of the Virginia Department of Education and administered through The College of William and Mary. Other information briefs developed by Project HOPE-Virginia are available on our website, or they can be ordered through our office. Readers may wish to review our brief on homelessness and special education for families and homeless service providers. There is no charge for these resources.

Virginia Department of Education

<http://www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/sped/parents.shtml>

Resources for families of students in Virginia schools can be found at this website, including information about enrollment, Standards of Learning, and contact information for state and local school division staff.

A Parent's Guide to Special Education. (2001).

This resource for families is available at no charge.

Virginia Interagency Action Council for the Homeless (VIACH)

<http://www.viach.state.va.us/index.html>

Organization of federal and state agencies, local continuums of care, and non-profits who serve individuals experiencing homelessness.

DEFINITION OF HOMELESS

Anyone who, *due to a lack of housing*, lives:

- In emergency or transitional shelters;
- In motels, hotels, trailer parks, campgrounds, abandoned in hospitals, awaiting foster care placement;
- In cars, parks, public places, bus or train stations, abandoned buildings;
- Doubled up with relatives or friends;
- In these conditions and is a migratory child or youth.

*To determine homelessness, consider the **permanence** and **adequacy** of the living situation.

Project HOPE

Virginia Department of Education

The College of William and Mary – SOE
P.O. Box 8795

Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795

(757) 221-4002 Toll Free (877) 455-3412

Email: homlss@wm.edu

This and other information briefs are available on the Project HOPE-Virginia website:

<http://www.wm.edu/hope>

Project HOPE-Virginia is Virginia's Program for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. The College of William and Mary administers the program for the Virginia Department of Education. Funding is authorized under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, Title X, Part C of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (P.L. 107-110). The purpose of Project HOPE is to ensure the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth in school.