PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

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-Virginia is to ensure the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth in school. The Project HOPE-Virginia Newsletter is an effort to increase awareness and identify resources regarding the issues of homeless education. For a listing of the other resources available from Project HOPE-Virginia, see page 10.

From the Desk of the State Coordinator

Happy New Year to all our readers! I hope your holidays were joyful and that the new year brings much happiness and fulfillment.

In December, HOPE hosted its statewide seminar, HOPE for the Future: Reaching New Heights! While our participants were less than 100, the content was very well received and meaningful connections were made. The program and many of the presentation resources can be found at: http://education.wm.edu CENTERS/HOPE/PROFESSIONALDEV/SEMINARS/SEMINAR14/index.php.

In this installment, we have attempted to include articles that address issues that are confronting our schools more and more frequently, including immigration, sex trafficking, LGBTQ youth, and safety technology. Please feel free to let us know if there are topics you would like us to explore in the future. Our graduate assistants love a research challenge!

Page 5 highlights some exciting state level initiatives related to youth experiencing homelessness in which Project HOPE-VA is at the table. If you have information related to these projects that you would like to share, I would love to hear from you.

As always, thank you for all your efforts to provide a safe, stable environment for our young people. Please let us know how we can better support you and the children you serve.
In recent years, significant numbers of unaccompanied immigrant youth have arrived in the United States. By May 31, 2014, 34,611 unaccompanied youth were apprehended in the U.S., ten times the number reported for 2009. Many of these youth confront the dangers and challenges of homelessness without the care of a parent or legal guardian.

After crossing into the U.S., many unaccompanied immigrant youth are apprehended by U.S. officials near the border, while others are apprehended in the interior of the U.S. An unknown number of additional young people come alone to the U.S. and are not known to U.S. officials. They live in urban, suburban and rural communities across the United States.\(^2\)

Unaccompanied immigrant youth struggle with both homelessness and the lack of lawful immigration status. They face the challenges of homelessness without a parent or guardian and without the rights and benefits available to United States citizens or lawful permanent residents. For instance, they have no parents to pay for their basic needs; they may live in homes with total strangers, in shelters, or sleep in parks and abandoned buildings, putting them at risk for many health problems.\(^3\)

Upon being apprehended, an unaccompanied immigrant child goes through a two-phase process: initial detention, which leads to temporary shelter, often on a military base (average length of stay is 35 days); and ultimately a longer-term placement, most often with individuals (87% of children placed with sponsors are placed with individuals, which may include a parent, relative, legal guardian, or family friend/acquaintance).\(^4\) All children receive a health screening and all needed immunizations. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) believes that the children arriving at U.S. borders pose little risk of spreading infectious diseases to the general public.\(^5\)

The Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) has the legal obligation to meet the basic needs of children who are in detention and temporary shelter. It includes: shelter, food, health care and education. Once children have been placed in longer-term accommodations, whether in a group home, shelter, foster family or with another individual, their education becomes the responsibility of the local school district.\(^6\) Undocumented students have the same right to public education as U.S. citizens.\(^7\) Resources that may be helpful when enrolling immigrant children include: Services for Educationally Disadvantaged Children (Title I, Part A), Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), English Language Acquisition Program (Title III), McKinney-Vento Act, Migrant Education Programs (MEP, Title I, Part C), and the National Clearinghouse for English Language Acquisition.\(^8\)

**Homelessness**

Determining homeless status and services under the McKinney-Vento Act’s Education of Homeless Children and Youth program always requires a case-by-case analysis of a child’s actual living situation.\(^9\) According to DHHS, children’s average stay in temporary placement is 35 days. Once they are moved to a longer-term placement in the community, they may be eligible for McKinney-Vento services. The following practices can assist with case-by-case determinations:\(^10\)

- Eligibility hinges upon the child’s living situation: Ask, “Is the living situation fixed, regular, and adequate for the child?” The sponsor’s housing status is not relevant, unless the sponsor is homeless (in which case the child living with the sponsor necessarily also would be homeless).

- Consult the NCHE brief, *Determining Eligibility for Rights and Services Under the McKinney-Vento Act*, which provides tools and guidance for evaluating each child’s living situation.

- Provide McKinney-Vento Act information in Spanish to unaccompanied immigrant children enrolling in the district. This information will help them identify themselves to the liaison if they are homeless or become homeless later.
The living situations of unaccompanied immigrant children tend to be extremely unstable, making it important to review their eligibility for McKinney-Vento services. Consider the following trends:

- Immigrant children placed with family members often have never met, or cannot remember, the adults with whom they are placed. Essentially, the adults are acting as foster parents, but without financial or service coordination support and with the added challenges of managing the children’s legal proceedings, English language limitations, and the extent of integration.

- Children placed with family friends or acquaintances (27% of unaccompanied immigrant children) commonly have no relationship whatsoever with that adult and are at a particularly high risk of labor and sex trafficking. There have been multiple reports of children placed with supposed acquaintances only to be sold to sex or labor traffickers within days of placement. The children are afraid to inform authorities that they do not know these supposed acquaintances.

- According to children’s advocates and McKinney-Vento liaisons, many unaccompanied immigrant children are forced out of their sponsor’s home or leave after experiencing abuse or exploitation.

- Sponsors sign an agreement stating they will care for the child placed with them; however, there is little, if any, monitoring of compliance with this agreement.

- Sponsor agreements do not grant any kind of legal guardianship, leaving the children with no one legally empowered to get them medical care, enroll them in school, or take other actions on their behalf that would require legal guardianship.

Resources:
- Catholic Legal Immigration Network, Inc. [https://cliniclegal.org/](https://cliniclegal.org/)
- Education Week articles
  - [http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/06/27/36unaccompanied.h33.html](http://www.edweek.org/ew/articles/2014/06/27/36unaccompanied.h33.html)


LGBTQ (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and questioning) youths face multiple challenges that may lead to homelessness. Research shows that since the 1970s, LGBTQ youths are coming out earlier, usually in their teens, rather than waiting until after they leave their parents’ home. The most frequent factor contributing to LGBTQ homelessness cited was family rejection. Discrimination in federally-funded institutions also contributes to the growing rates of homelessness among LGBTQ youth.

The National Coalition for the Homeless reported:

- Gay and transgender students are two-times less likely to finish high school or pursue a college education compared to the national average.
- 86 percent of gay and lesbian students reported being verbally harassed at school due to their sexual orientation in 2007.
- 44 percent gay and lesbian students reported being physically harassed at school because of their sexual orientation in 2007.
- 22 percent of gay and transgender students reported having been physically attacked in school in 2007, with 60% saying they did not report the incidents because they believed no one would care.
- 31 percent of gay and transgender students reported incidents of harassment and violence at school to staff, only to receive no response.

The Number of LGBTQ Youth

Data for 2013 from Youth Count!, a federal interagency initiative that aims to improve counts of unaccompanied homeless youths, sheds some light on the issue. Six sites surveyed youths in shelters and on the streets about gender identity and sexual orientation. Among them, 19 percent of youths surveyed identified as lesbian, gay, or bisexual, and 3 percent identified as questioning (see Figure 1). There was significant variation by site (Table 1). According to research statistics, LGBTQ youths are “more likely to experience poor mental health, more likely to exhibit risky sexual behavior and use drugs, more likely to use survival sex and sex trade strategies for coping with their situation and more likely to be HIV positive.”

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**TABLE 1**

*LGBTYouths by Youth Count! Site*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site</th>
<th>Percent Identifying as Lesbian, Gay, or Bisexual</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>New York City</td>
<td>43%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>King County, WA</td>
<td>18%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Winston Salem, NC</td>
<td>10%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cuyahoga County (Cleveland), OH</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hennepin County, MN</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Houston, TX</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Cuyahoga County includes “questioning” within this category of lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

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**FIGURE 1**

**Sexuality Self-Identification**

- Don’t know/don’t identify/questioning: 8%
- Refused answer: 11%
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual: 19%
- Non-binary: 6%
- Transgender: 4%
- Transvestite: 1%
- Transsexual: 1%
- Gender fluid: 1%
- Male/Man: 4%
- Female/Woman: 5%
- N = 1,196

How to Ensure Better Counts of LGBTQ Homeless Youths
Proposed Actions

Regardless of a persons’ gender, sexual preferences, or questioning manner, all people deserve the right to safe shelter. The National Coalition for the Homeless has proposed the following actions to reduce homelessness among this population and to improve services if homelessness is experienced.

- Create schools that are safe havens for all youth, including LGBTQ youth. We need to address the role that unsafe schools have in promoting youth homelessness, and address school bullying.
- Recognize that LGBTQ homeless youth, and homeless youth in general, face challenges as special-needs populations and could benefit from protections from discrimination by federal grantees.
- Expand housing options so LGBTQ homeless persons have safer access to housing that will respect their sexuality and personal identity, as well as provide a safe environment. This includes training for shelter staff on how to be an ally to LGBTQ individuals and written policies to keep discrimination from occurring.

Resources:

- The Ali Forney Center
- National Coalition for the Homeless
- United States Interagency Council on Homelessness
- Pathways to Employment

Keeping Our Students Safe

On September 30, the Project HOPE Advisory Board met. Concerns were shared about our students’ safety when utilizing public transportation. Many college campuses have endorsed apps to promote student safety, but what about our students? While a number of apps are customized for use on college campuses, the good news is that many of these safety apps are available for the general public. Listed below are a few apps that may be suitable for your students:

Rave Guardian—http://www.ravemobilesafety.com/rave-guardian/

The Rave Guardian app allows users to designate guardians to receive alerts about potential safety threats. The user can set a timer that, if not deactivated, sends an alert to pre-designated contacts (guardians) with a GPS location. Alerts are routed through the app, so your designated guardians must also sign up and install the Rave Guardian app.

Circle of 6—http://www.circleof6app.com/

With one touch of a button, the Circle of 6 app allows users to send a text message to six pre-designated contacts that says, “Come and get me. I need help getting home safely.” The text also includes a link to the user’s approximate location using the GPS on the phone. The app is free and does not require a subscription fee, but requires user action in order to deploy help.


Open the Lifeline Response app before heading into a potentially dangerous situation. If the user’s thumb slips off the phone or a user-set timer expires, and the deactivation code is not entered, an alarm sounds, authorities are dispatched to the phone’s GPS location and the user’s life-lines are notified of the emergency situation. The personal version requires a subscription fee of $9.99 per year.

The Many Faces of Doubled Up

While many understand that students experiencing homelessness are not a homogenous group, there is growing understanding that even categories such as doubled up are heterogeneous. Recent research by Ronald Hallett exposed two distinct family structures in doubled up households, and found that merged families, wherein responsibilities such as preparing meals and helping with homework were shared, tended to support educational participation. Separate households, or residences in which two or more families live as independent units, tended to be less supportive of educational participation.

In “Worn Out Welcome Mat,” filmmaker Diane Nilan portrays the realities of doubled up living situations and exposes several of the stressors associated with overcrowding and living in uncertainty. Students and parents share their experiences and struggles in a way that brings new light to an old problem.

For more information, check out the resources below:
ZERO TO THREE has released a new set of materials that show how adult interactions shape the growth and learning of infants and toddlers. The set includes four videos that explore key aspects of early childhood development for use in work with families and professionals, including:

- Brain Wonders: Nurturing Healthy Brain Development From Birth
- Literacy Skills: The Roots of Reading Start at Birth
- Power of Play: Building Skills While Having Fun
- Temperament: What Makes Your Child Tick?

The videos are all available to view online at no cost.

www.zerotothree.org/MOEM

**Community Highlight**

**Spotsylvania**

**Camp Out, Rock Out, Knock Out Homelessness Event**

Spotsylvania County Public Schools held their fourth annual *Camp Out, Rock Out, Knock Out Homelessness* event on November 1st, 2014. This public event raises awareness about and collects donations to meet the needs of the county students experiencing homeless. It is a community-wide event.

This year’s camp was held at the local Wal-Mart. Shoppers were asked to purchase items of toiletries, food, and school supplies to support Treasure House (a building that offers those items to families at no cost). There was a festive atmosphere with face painting, a local radio station, and appearances by the school mascots. The entire school district was involved in making the event successful.

School Board members, Superintendent Baker, school social workers, counselors, teachers, and administrators, along with business partners, and concerned citizens, braved the cold, wet elements, to make a difference in the lives of Spotsylvania County Schools students.

This event raised more than $2,000.00 in gift cards and cash along with a truck load of new, donated items, to fill Treasure House! Way to go SPOTSYLVANIA!

A shout out to Spotsylvania homeless liaison Michelle Swisher, school social worker, Lisa Dolan, and school board members Amanda Blalock and Dawn Shelley, for presenting, “No Place Like Home,” at the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Conference in Kansas City, MO., in October, 2014.

This exemplary level of support is appreciated!
Sex Trafficking

The National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE recently released a best practices brief on sex trafficking of minors, offering guidance for identifying and supporting youth that may be affected by sex trafficking. Homeless youth are particularly at risk for becoming involved in sex trafficking. Estes and Weiner cite homelessness as the number one risk factor for becoming involved in sex trafficking, because homelessness is often a result of a number of other vulnerabilities.¹ In fact, some estimate that within 48 hours of leaving home, one-third of teen runaway or throwaway youth will turn to prostitution in order to survive.²

The brief lists several warning signs that school personnel can observe that may signal involvement in sex trafficking:

- Unexplained school absences
- Abrupt change in attire, behavior, or relationships
- Presence of an older “boyfriend”
- Travel with an older male who is not a guardian
- Sudden presence of expensive material possessions
- Chronic running away
- Homelessness
- Signs of psychological coercion, such as depression, anxiety, and/ or an overly submissive attitude
- Lack of control over schedule, money, or proof of identification
- Signs of physical trauma, including bruises, cuts, burns, and/or scars
- Tattoos or other branding marks
- Poor health, as evidenced by STDs, malnutrition, and/ or serious dental problems
- Substance abuse or addictions³

NCHE at SERVE offers the following tips for schools:
1. Train school personnel to recognize and respond to the signs of trafficking
2. Develop and implement a protocol for sex trafficking if your school or district doesn’t have one
3. Offer prevention curriculum to students
   - The Prevention Project http://www.prevention-project.org/home.php
   - A21 Campaign—Bodies Are Not Commodities http://www.thea21campaign.org/content/bodies-are-not-commodities/gidpjv
   - Not for Sale Campaign High School Curriculum http://jp.notforsalecampaign.org/resources/

For more information, visit: http://center.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/trafficking.pdf

From the HOPE website, click on the Human Trafficking Link on the home page to access other state & federal resources. http://education.wm.edu/centers/hope/

# Materials Order Form

All publications are available on our Web site: www.wm.edu/hope

They are not copyrighted and can be copied with appropriate reference to Project HOPE-Virginia.

<table>
<thead>
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<th>Project HOPE Publications</th>
<th>Publication Date</th>
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<th>Quantity</th>
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<td>Family Brochure “What Every Family Should Know”</td>
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**Information Briefs**

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<td>Unlocking Potential: What Educators Need to Know About Special Education and Homelessness</td>
<td>Winter 2014</td>
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<td>Unlocking Potential: What Families and Shelters Need to Know About Special Education and Homelessness</td>
<td>Winter 2014</td>
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<td>Standards of Learning At-A-Glance K-5</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
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<td>25</td>
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<td>What Educators Can Do</td>
<td>Fall 2013</td>
<td>25</td>
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<td>Identifying Homeless Youth on Their Own</td>
<td>Winter 2008</td>
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<td>Resilience: Strengthening Relationships, Fostering Hope</td>
<td>Summer 2008</td>
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<td>Questions and Answers on Homeless Education</td>
<td>Fall 2007</td>
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<tr>
<td>When School Is Home Family: Supporting the Attendance and Success of Youth on Their Own</td>
<td>Fall 2007</td>
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<td>Enrolling Homeless Students: First Step to the Schoolhouse Door</td>
<td>Summer 2006</td>
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**Parent Pack**

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<td>Fall 2011</td>
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<td>Virginia’s Early Intervention and Public Preschool Programs pamphlet</td>
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<td>from Crib to Kindergarten Development Wheels</td>
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**Resources Available Only Online**

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<td>Spring 2010</td>
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<td>Bibliography of Homeless Education Resources</td>
<td>Fall 2006</td>
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<tr>
<td>School Nurses: It’s Not Just Bandages Anymore</td>
<td>Fall 2004</td>
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*For larger quantities, contact Project HOPE-Virginia at 757-221-4002

Name _________________________________________________________________

Title ________________________________________________________________

Organization _________________________________________________________

Address _____________________________________________________________

City ______________________________________ State __________ Zip __________

Phone __________________________________ Fax _________________________

Email _____________________________________________________________

Fax this form to: 757-221-5300

Or mail to: Project HOPE-Virginia
The College of William & Mary
P O Box 8795, SOE
Williamsburg, VA 23187-8795
Project HOPE Materials Descriptions

Project HOPE Publications

The family brochure and poster provide a summary of the rights to an appropriate education for students experiencing homelessness. The brochure includes suggestions for successful transitions and a listing of state agencies that may be accessed for additional support.

Information Briefs

Standards of Learning At-A-Glance K-5 provides a one-page overview of the Virginia SOL per grade from Kindergarten to fifth grade, along with reading suggestions and useful resources.

When School Is Home & Family: Supporting the Attendance and Success of Youth on Their Own is designed to help your school support the attendance and success of youth on their own—whether they have run away or are independent for other reasons—by providing background information about unaccompanied youth, sharing some of the challenges they face, and suggesting positive policies and programs for school divisions.

Identifying Youth on Their Own provides basic information and strategies for each step to support school divisions in their efforts to identify unaccompanied homeless youth.

Enrolling Homeless Students: First Step to the Schoolhouse Door provides enrollment personnel with tips on identifying and serving families experiencing homelessness during the enrollment process.

Unlocking Potential: What Educators Need to Know About Special Education and Homelessness provides educators with tips on supporting families experiencing homelessness through the special education process.

Unlocking Potential: What Families and Shelters Need to Know About Special Education and Homelessness provides families experiencing homelessness and service providers who work with these families with an overview of the special education process and tips for working through the process.

Helping Young Children Grow and Learn: A Guide for Families and Shelters emphasizes ways that families and shelter providers can encourage the development of young children and become aware of potential concerns. It provides resources and strategies to assist when delays are observed.

Using the Best That We Know: Supporting Young Children Experiencing Homelessness provides educators with information, resources, and strategies for supporting families with young children who are experiencing homelessness and may have special needs.

Questions and Answers on Homeless Education Answers basic questions regarding the educational needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness. It is a useful resource for school administrators.

Resilience: Strengthening Relationships, Fostering Hope explores resiliency with suggestions for ways to nurture this protective factor.

Tips for Supporting Highly Mobile Students provides suggestions for meeting the needs of highly mobile students at the division level, school level, and classroom level.

What Educators Can Do introduces teachers to the topic of homeless education with practical suggestions to welcome and support homeless students in the classroom.

Early Childhood Parent Pack

Parent Pack Folder & Inserts: were developed by state and local representatives from Early Childhood Special Education, Title I, Part C, Head Start/Early Head Start, and homeless education. It contains information on the basic educational rights under the McKinney-Vento Act for children and youth and provides a means of keeping important documents in one place. The inserts describe the federal and state-sponsored education programs in Virginia, share tips on early childhood reading, and provide guidelines of growth and development in children from the ages of one month to five years.

These publications are not copyrighted. They can be downloaded from our website and copied with appropriate reference to Project HOPE-Virginia. The Project HOPE-Virginia Web site contains additional resources for supporting students and families experiencing homelessness, as well as news updates regarding resources and policy. Check it out!

www.wm.edu/hope
Upcoming Events

Virginia Council for Learning Disabilities
Spring Symposium
March 21, 2015
The Inn at Virginia Tech & Skelton Conference Center
Blacksburg, VA

Virginia Head Start Association
Annual Conference
March 24—26, 2015
Southwest VA Higher Education Center
Abingdon, VA

Commonwealth of Virginia Comprehensive Services Act
Conference
April 20—21, 2015
Hotel Roanoke Conference Center
Roanoke, VA

Creating Connections to Shining Stars
State Early Childhood Conference
July 9—10, 2015
Wyndham Beachfront Hotel
Virginia Beach, VA

Virginia Association of Federal Education Program Administrators
Fall Conference
October 14—16, 2015
Hampton Roads Convention Center
Hampton, VA

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
27th Annual Conference
November 15-17, 2015
Preconference Institutes: November 14, 2015

Project HOPE - Virginia Staff

State Coordinator: Patricia A. Popp, Ph.D.
Faculty Liaison: James H. Stronge, Ph.D.
Office Manager: Kathy Wallace
Graduate Assistants: Yi Hua, M.A., Laura Hackett, M.Ed.
 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 child or youth not in the physical custody of an adult (unaccompanied youth*);
- In these conditions and is a migratory child or youth.

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

* Unaccompanied youth - a youth without fixed, regular, and adequate housing who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. This would include runaways living in homeless situations and those denied housing by their families (sometimes referred to as throwaway children and youth).