

# **THE EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH WITHOUT HOMES ACT OF 2009**

## **HELP HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH SUCCEED IN SCHOOL**

### **Background:**

In the 2007-2008 school year, public schools identified 794,617 homeless children and youth enrolled in school. This is a 17 percent increase from the 2006-2007 school year. The economic downturn and foreclosure crisis have had a significant impact on homelessness: one in five responding school districts reported having more homeless children in the fall of 2008 than over the course of the entire 2007-2008 school year. This year, school districts continue to report unprecedented increases in family and youth homelessness.

School offers structure, normalcy, support, and hope – it is a place where homeless children and youth can obtain the skills that they will need to avoid poverty and homelessness as adults. Yet children and youth experiencing homelessness face great challenges. High mobility, precarious living conditions, and severe poverty combine to present significant educational barriers.

- Many homeless children and youth lack basic supplies and a reasonable environment in which to do homework.
- Unaccompanied homeless youth experiencing homelessness confront these and other challenges associated with homelessness, without the support and guidance of a caring adult.
- Homeless children and youth perform below their peers in math and reading and are more likely to be held back.
- Young children who are homeless have higher rates of developmental delays and other problems that set them back as they start out life, yet face significant barriers to accessing preschool programs.

### **McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program:**

The McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program was created to remove the barriers to education caused by homelessness. The EHCY program mitigates the negative impact of homelessness, allowing homeless students to continue their education despite the turmoil in their lives. The legislation has a strong 22-year history and has made a lasting difference in the lives of millions of homeless students, including during national crises such as the Gulf Coast storms and the current economic recession. However, numerous barriers remain, as evidenced by federal data collection, evaluations, and the experiences of school districts and service providers.

### **The Educational Success for Children and Youth Without Homes Act of 2009:**

The Educational Success for Children and Youth Without Homes Act of 2009 makes a strong law even more effective by reinforcing and expanding its key provisions, including school stability, enrollment, and support for academic achievement. It draws from 22 years of experience and the insights of local and state educators, as well as service providers and advocates. The Educational Success for Children and Youth Without Homes Act of 2009 will help children and youth experiencing homelessness thrive in school, despite the constant moving, trauma, and loss associated with their homelessness.

### **The legislation will promote school stability by:**

- Keeping homeless children and youth in their original schools, unless the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth wishes to change schools, or unless an individualized, best interest determination by the school supports a change of schools
- Increasing the authorized funding level to help assist with the costs of transportation to the school of origin
- Making transportation to the school of origin an allowable use of Title I, Part A funds
- Developing a clear and accessible dispute resolution process for parents of homeless youth and children, and unaccompanied youth

**The legislation will help homeless students participate in the full range of academic support opportunities offered by schools, including those provided through Title I, Part A by:**

- Clarifying that the amount of the Title I, Part A homeless set-aside be based upon a needs assessment that includes objective criteria and is developed in coordination with the school district homeless liaison
- Improving access to summer school, before and after school programs, and other educational opportunities

**The legislation will enhance school districts' ability to identify and serve homeless children and youth by:**

- Providing professional development, training, resources, and time to school district homeless liaisons so they can carry out the duties required by the Act

**The legislation will assist unaccompanied homeless youth to overcome unique educational challenges related to being without a home and a parent or guardian by:**

- Improving the academic progress and high school graduation rate of unaccompanied youth by addressing guardianship barriers, credit accrual problems and access to credit recovery opportunities

**The legislation will increase access to preschool programs for young children who experience homelessness by:**

- Extending some of the Act's protections to homeless preschoolers to address barriers to stability in preschool programs and to permit immediate enrollment while documents are located
- Requiring public preschool programs to identify and prioritize homeless children for enrollment