

Supporting Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

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April 28, 2022



WISCONSIN DEPARTMENT OF
Public Instruction
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Using Microsoft Teams

- We will mute everyone while we are presenting, please do not unmute yourself.
- If you have a camera on your computer please turn off the video by clicking on the camera icon at the top of your screen. It should show a line through the camera.
- To be able to use the chat function, click on the chat bubble on your screen to have the chat pop up on the right side of the screen.
- You can enter full screen by clicking on the three dots and choosing Enter Full Screen.
- We are recording the webinar.
- Feel free to enter questions into the chat at any time. We will answer at the end as time allows.

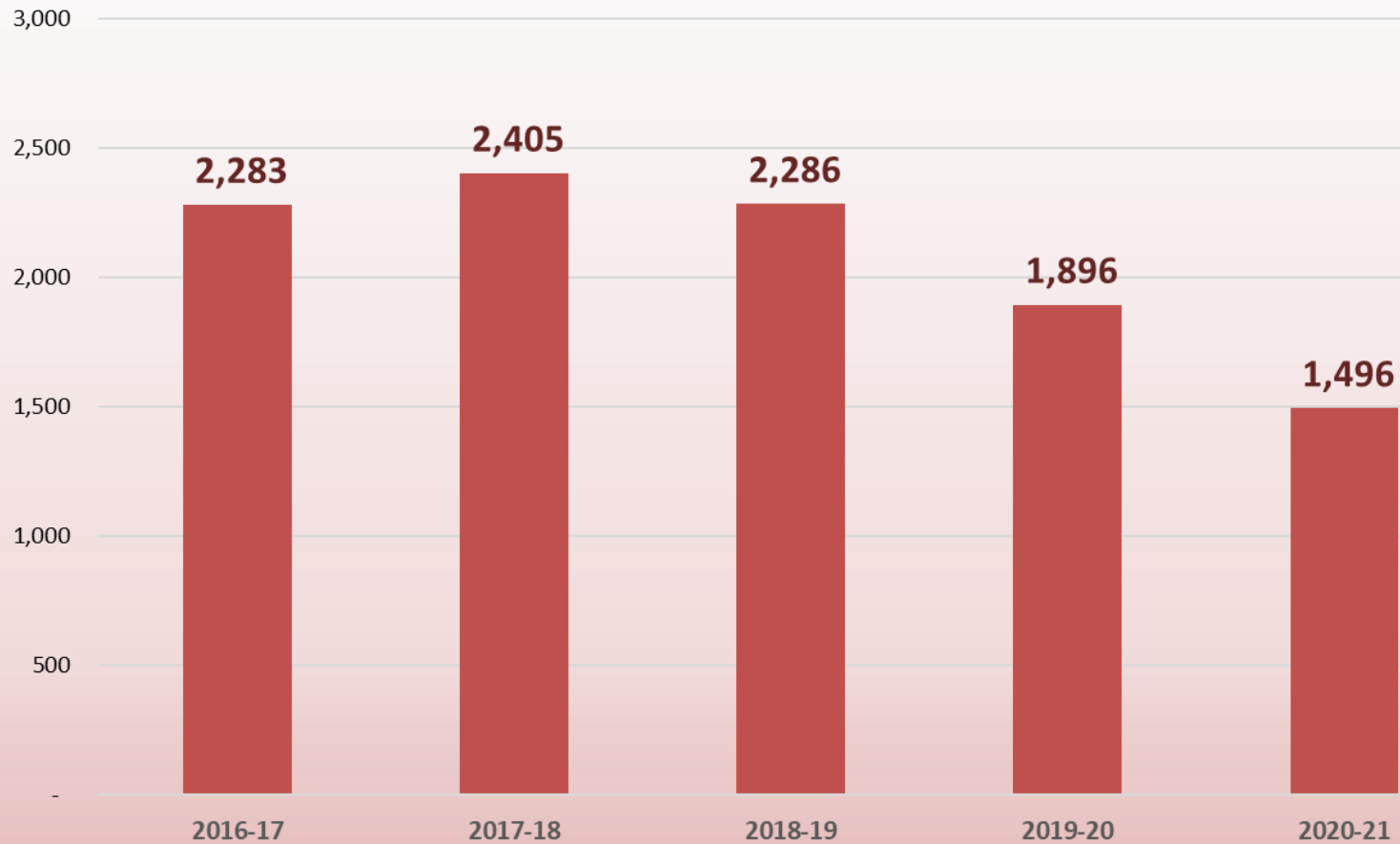
Learning Outcomes

- Understand the definition of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (UHY)
- Learn ways to specifically support UHY
- Hear from liaisons in WI about their district UHY policies/procedures.

Homeless Student Enrollment in Wisconsin 2011-2021



Total Unaccompanied Youth Enrollment 2016-2021



Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Unaccompanied homeless youth often face unique barriers in enrolling and succeeding in school. These barriers may include:

- school attendance policies
- credit accrual
- legal guardianship requirements

Without a parent or guardian to advocate for them and exercise parental rights, UHY may be denied enrollment and remain out of school for extended periods of time. UHY may not understand their educational rights or know how to acquire this information. Given their vulnerability to not graduating from high school on time or at all, special attention and support should be provided to this important subgroup of homeless youths.

Homelessness Defined

The term “homeless” children and youth means:

“Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence—”

What exactly is a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence?

Fixed, Regular, and Adequate

- **Fixed:**
 - Stationary, permanent, not subject to change
- **Regular:**
 - Used on a predictable, routine, consistent basis
 - Consider the relative permanence
- **Adequate:**
 - Lawfully and reasonably sufficient
 - Sufficient for meeting the physical and psychological needs typically met in a home environment

Can the student go to the **SAME PLACE** (fixed) **EVERY NIGHT** (regular) to sleep in a **SAFE AND SUFFICIENT SPACE** (adequate)?

Eligibility

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up)
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Living in a public or private place not designed for ordinary use as a regular sleeping accommodation for humans (cars, parks, bus or train stations, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, etc.).
- Children from migratory families who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.
- Unaccompanied youth living in the above circumstances

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Definition:

Youth who meet the definition of homeless **AND** are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian (i.e., youth living with relatives on an emergency basis, youth living with a friend or runaway).

Determining Eligibility

- Case-by-case determination
- Get as much information as possible (with sensitivity and discretion)
- Look at the McKinney-Vento definition (specific examples in the definition first, then overall definition)
- Considerations for youth who are staying with other people:
 - Where would you go if you could not stay here?
 - What circumstances led to your current living situation?
- [Sample questions to use - from DPI website](#)

HOMELESS

SITUATIONS BELOW PERTAIN TO UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH,
I.E., YOUTH NOT IN THE *PHYSICAL* CUSTODY OF A PARENT OR

Family lost housing; unable to stay together in same place; placed child temporarily with someone else

Child or youth lives apart from parent/guardian due to domestic violence or family conflict; housing is not fixed, regular, adequate

Parent abandoned child; did not make long-term child care arrangements

Parent has a work conflict & made arrangements for child to stay with others


Incarcerated or hospitalized parent did not make arrangements for child's care

Incarcerated or hospitalized parent arranged for child to stay with caregiver

NOT HOMELESS

School Stability/Best Interest

In determining best interest, the district must:

- Presume that keeping the student in the school of origin is in the student's best interest
 - Unless contrary to the request of the unaccompanied homeless youth
 - Consider student-centered factors, including the impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, and safety
 - Give priority to the youth's request
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Enrollment

- Immediate enrollment applies, even without parent or guardian.
 - Youth self-enrollment; Caregiver forms
- Liaisons must help unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school, give priority to the youth's wishes, and inform the youth of their right to appeal the district's decision.
- School personnel (administrators, teachers, attendance officers, enrollment personnel) must be made aware of the specific needs of runaway and homeless youth.

Strategies

- Develop clear policies for enrolling unaccompanied youth immediately, whether youth enroll themselves, liaisons help with enrollment, caretakers enroll youth in their care, or another procedure is in place.
- Offer youth an adult and peer mentor.
- Establish systems to monitor youth's attendance and performance, and let youth know you'll be checking up on them.
- Help youth participate fully in school (clubs, sports, homework help, etc.).
- Build trust! Be patient, and ensure discretion and confidentiality when working with youth.

School Engagement

- Find out who the student has a connection to and leverage that connection (counselor, teacher, custodian, etc.)
- Provide a mentor
- Regularly help the student check grades and attendance
- Help the student find other ways to engage in school, such as through extracurricular activities

Extracurricular Activities

McKinney-Vento requires the removal of barriers for full participation in extracurricular activities

- Transportation
- Supplies needed (shoes, instruments, apparel, etc.)
- Participation fees waived
- Make the connection with the coach/teacher/advisor for the student, don't wait for the student to reach out

Title I Eligibility

Children and youth experiencing homelessness are eligible to receive Title I services:

- Automatically, including services provided through schoolwide or targeted assistance programs.
- For the remainder of any school year in which they become permanently housed.
- Even if not attending a Title I school, through the Title I-A set-aside.

Awarding Partial Credit

McKinney-Vento requires that school districts identify and remove barriers that prevent students experiencing homelessness from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with State, local, and school policies.

- Wisconsin does not have a state law; each district must determine their own policies/procedures
- A workgroup of homeless liaisons across the state created guidance for awarding partial credit

[Recommendations for Awarding Partial Credit](#)

A few recommendations:

- The sending school should calculate and award partial credits, placing them on the student's transcript before sending records to the receiving school.
- If the sending school still does not award partial credits, the receiving school can and should award partial credits.
- Consider awarding retroactive credit for passing an advanced course.

[SchoolHouse Connection Awarding and Accepting Partial Credit Guidance](#)

Support for Academic Success: Transitioning to Higher Education

All youth eligible under McKinney-Vento must be able to receive assistance from counselors to advise such youths, and prepare and improve the readiness of such youths for college.

Unaccompanied homeless youth can apply for the FAFSA with independent student status. The homeless liaison must provide verification.

Higher Education Act: FAFSA and Students Experiencing Homelessness

- Youth who meet the definition of “independent student” can complete the FAFSA without parental income information or signature.
- [SchoolHouse Connection FAFSA Information](#)

The FAFSA (*continued*)

- Unaccompanied homeless youth are automatically considered independent students.
 - Must be determined to be unaccompanied and homeless after July 1 of the prior year.
- Youth who are unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting are also automatically considered independent students.
 - Must be determined as such during the school year in which the application is submitted.

The FAFSA (*continued*)

- Determination must be made by a:
 - McKinney-Vento Act school district liaison,
 - HUD homeless assistance program director or their designee,
 - Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program director or their designee, or
 - financial aid administrator.
- Youth who have been in foster care at any time after age 13 are also automatically independent.

More info and sample letters are available at:

<http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/higher-ed>

School District of Marshfield



Milwaukee Public Schools



FAFSA Resources

SchoolHouse Connection

- [Federal Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\) and Youth Homelessness](#)
- [The FAFSA: Four Things You Can Do to Help Homeless and Foster Youth](#)
- [FAFSA & Homeless Youth: Challenges + Recommendations in the COVID-19 Era](#)
- [Sample Form Letters to Determine the Independent Student Status of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth](#)

DPI UHY Module and Resources

DPI EHCY Training Resources Webpage

<https://dpi.wi.gov/homeless/resources>:

[Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Training Module](#)

DPI EHCY Guidance Webpage:

<https://dpi.wi.gov/homeless/guidance#Unaccompanied%20Youth>

Resources (cont.)

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)

- [Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homeless](#)
- [Enrolling Students on Their Own](#)
- [Students Living with Caregivers](#)
- [Partnering to Support Educational Success for Runaway and Homeless Youth](#)
- [Chronic Absenteeism](#)
- [Maximizing Credit Accrual](#)
- [Sex Trafficking of Minors](#)

Questions?

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