

# Trauma-Informed Support for Children Experiencing Homelessness

Georgia Compensatory Educational Leaders  
(GCEL) Conference

March 9-11, 2020

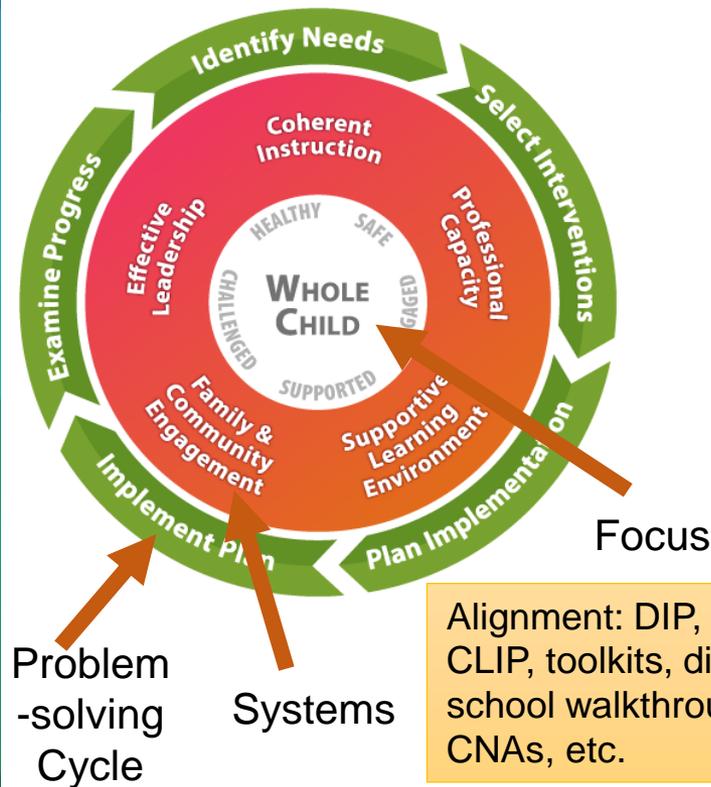
Presenter: Eric McGhee, Grants Program Manager

# Background

## GaDOE commitment to continuous improvement in ESSA

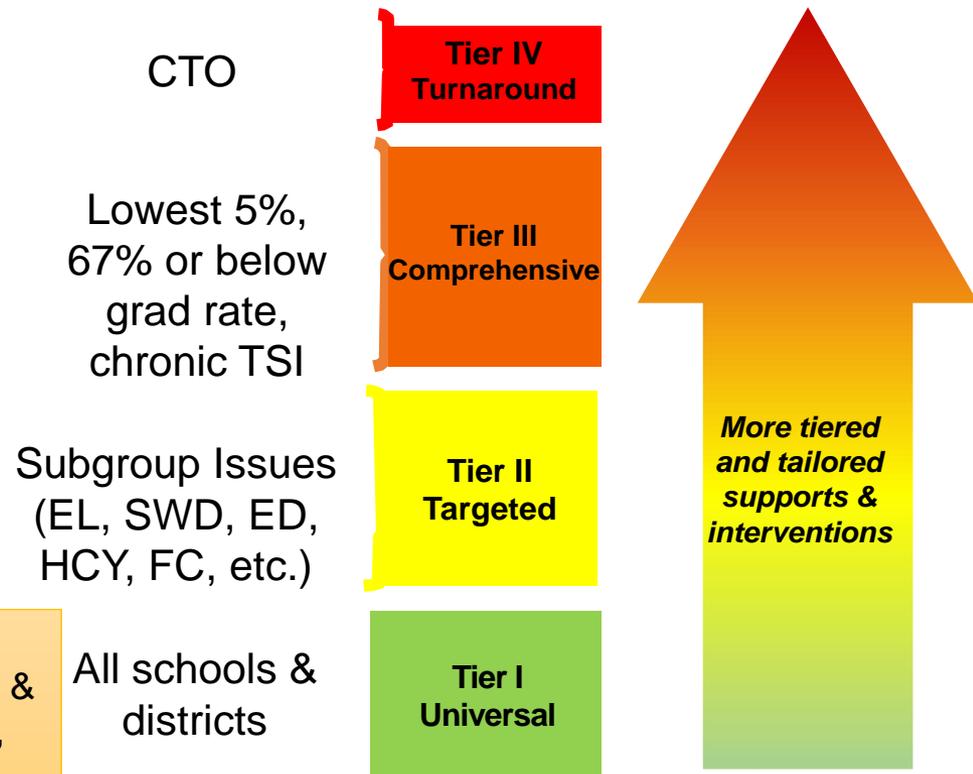
### Georgia's Systems for Continuous Improvement –

*A common framework for improvement*



### Georgia's Tiered System of Supports –

*All Students, All Schools, All Districts – All Hands on Deck!*



# Agenda

- **McKinney-Vento Overview**
- **Data**
- **Support**



# McKinney-Vento Overview

## McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program

# Pop Quiz: True or False?

1. Every local educational agency (LEA) must designate a McKinney-Vento liaison.
2. Most McKinney-Vento students live in shelters.
3. McKinney-Vento students can stay in the same school, even if they move out of district.
4. McKinney-Vento applies to public preschools.
5. McKinney-Vento does not apply to charter schools.

# McKinney-Vento Overview

## Definition of Homeless Students

- **Individuals whose nighttime residence is NOT:**
  - **Fixed**—stationary, permanent, and not subject to change
  - **Regular**—used on a predictable, routine, or consistent basis
  - **Adequate**—sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in the home

(42 U.S.C. § 11434A(2)(B)(i))

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

# McKinney-Vento Overview

## The Homeless definition includes children and youth who are:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason;
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due the lack of alternative accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Abandoned in hospitals;
- Living in a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus/train stations, or similar settings;
- Migratory – who qualify as homeless living in circumstances described above.

# McKinney-Vento Overview

## Definition of Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (UHY)

- Unaccompanied = not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian; in practical terms, this means the youth does not live with the parent or guardian.
- 2-Step Process:
  - Does the student's living arrangement meet the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless?
  - Once homelessness is determined, is the student unaccompanied?

# McKinney-Vento Overview

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines the homeless as those who:

- Are literally homeless, including those who are living in shelters, unsheltered or living and/or sleeping in a place that is unfit for human habitation.
- Are at imminent risk of homelessness.
- Are homeless under other Federal statutes.
- Are fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence.

The distinction between the ED definition of homeless and the HUD definition is important, not only because it impacts outreach and access to services targeting the homeless, but it also impacts who is viewed as homeless in the public discourse.

# McKinney-Vento Overview

## State Coordinators

- Every state educational agency (SEA) must have a state coordinator who can “sufficiently carry out” their duties. 11432(d)(3)
  - Ensure McKinney-Vento students receive “the full protections and services provided by” the law. 11432(f)(7)
  - Provide professional development and support regarding McKinney-Vento to LEAs.
  - Monitor all LEAs. 11432(f)(5)
  - Gather and post homelessness data on the SEA website. 11432(f)(1)(A) & (f)(3)
  - Collaborate with broad array of educators, service providers, community organizations and policymakers. 11432(f)(4) and Guidance E8

# McKinney-Vento Overview

## Local Liaisons

- Every local educational agency (LEA) must designate a liaison, whose duties include:
  - Identify McKinney-Vento students
  - Post public notice of McKinney-Vento rights to parents and youth
  - Provide professional development and support regarding McKinney-Vento to district and school staff
  - Connect young children to preschool, Head Start, and early intervention
  - Connect families and youth to housing, health, mental health and other services

11432(g)(6)

# McKinney-Vento Overview

## HUD and ED McKinney-Vento

- Local homeless liaisons are authorized to affirm whether children and youth meet the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness, to qualify them for HUD homeless assistance programs. Liaisons must refer homeless families and students to housing services, in addition to other services.
- ED and HUD programs use the definition of children and youth experiencing homelessness established in the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act.
- The ED McKinney-Vento definition is broader than the HUD definition and includes children and youth:
  - Sharing the housing of other persons, due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
  - Living in motels or hotels due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations, regardless of who pays for the motel or hotel

# McKinney-Vento Overview

- The **local liaison** has the authority and responsibility to ensure that eligible students are identified; this should be a collaborative effort with school personnel, and through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(i)].
- Eligibility determinations should be made on a **case-by-case basis**, considering the circumstances of each student.
- Pay close attention to the legislative wording, as it may provide needed clarity.
- Download *Determining Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Rights and Services* at <https://nche.ed.gov/pr/briefs.php> for more information.

# McKinney-Vento Overview

## ESSA Authority - Homeless

- States must have procedures to identify and remove barriers that prevent youth from receiving appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school, in accordance with state, local, and school policies.
- Local liaisons must ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth have opportunities to meet the same state academic achievement standards as the state establishes for other children and youth, including by implementing procedures to remove barriers that prevent homeless youth from receiving credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed at a prior school.
- State plans must describe how homeless youth will receive assistance from school counselors to advise, prepare, and improve their readiness for college.
- Local liaisons must ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth informed of their status as independent students for college financial aid and may obtain assistance to receive verification for the FAFSA.

# McKinney-Vento Overview

## Funding

- All LEAs must implement the McKinney-Vento Act.
- According to ESSA Title I, Part A, all LEAs **must** reserve (set-aside) such funds as are necessary to provide comparable services to homeless children. [Section 1113 (c)(3)(i)]
  - LEAs must use one of four methods on the next slide to calculate the set-aside.
  - Determining appropriate amount requires coordination between Title I and the Homeless Education Department.
- LEAs with high numbers (over 150) may submit a competitive (discretionary) grant application to receive an additional McKinney-Vento grant.

# McKinney-Vento Overview

McKinney-Vento Subgrants

Title I, Part A  
Set-Asides

General  
Funds



# McKinney-Vento Overview

**McKinney-Vento funds can assist homeless children and youth in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. In particular, the funds are being targeted to support any number of the following activities authorized under section 723(d) of the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. 11433(d)):**

- Supplemental educational services, such as tutoring and other academic enrichment programs
- Expedited evaluations for various educational services, such as eligibility for educational programs for gifted and talented students, special education and related services for children with disabilities, English language acquisition, vocational education, school lunch, and appropriate programs or services under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act
- Professional development activities for educators and pupil services personnel working with homeless students
- Health referral services, such as medical, dental, and mental

# McKinney-Vento Overview

## Use of Funds Continued...

- Defraying the excess cost of transportation in order to enable students to attend the school of origin
- Early childhood education programs for pre-school-aged homeless children
- Services and assistance to attract, engage, and retain homeless children and youth and unaccompanied youth in public school programs
- Before and after-school, mentoring, and summer programs with educational activities
- Payment of fees and costs associated with tracking, obtaining, and transferring records of homeless children and youth
- Education and training for parents of homeless children and youth about rights and resources

# McKinney-Vento Overview

## Use of Funds Continued...

- Development of coordination between schools and agencies providing services
- Provision of pupil services (including violence prevention counseling) and referrals for such services
- Activities to address needs that may arise from domestic violence
- Adaptation of space and purchase of supplies for non-school facilities to provide services listed above
- Provision of school supplies, including those to be distributed at shelters or other appropriate locations
- Other extraordinary or emergency assistance needed to enable homeless students to attend school

# Data

## Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness



# McKinney-Vento: Data

## Georgia – Children and youth experiencing homelessness identified by LEAs:

- **FY19 = 40,246**
- FY18 = 41,089
- FY17 = 39,966
- FY16 = 39,695
- FY15 = 39,113
- FY14 = 29,138
- FY13 = 35,764
- FY12 = 35,048
- FY11 = 31,384
- FY10 = 27,338
- FY09 = 23,724
- FY08 = 15,700

# McKinney-Vento: Data

## Student Count

- FY08 = 15,700
- FY18 = 40,246

*In the past 12 years, the number of students identified by LEAs in Georgia as experiencing homelessness has increased by 156 percent.*

## Allocation from US ED

- FY08 = \$3,096,475
- FY19 = \$2,453,291

*In the past 12 years, the grant award from US ED to support students experiencing homelessness has decreased by 21 percent.*

# McKinney-Vento: Data

## 2016-2017 4-YEAR COHORT GRADUATION RATE

All Students	129,176	104,059	80.6%
Economically Disadvantaged	71,288	54,437	76.4%
Experiencing Homelessness	4,277	2,603	60.9%

# McKinney-Vento: Data

## Homelessness is traumatic and leads to a host of compounded and cumulative losses:

- Women and children experience dislocation from home and community, and loss of important social roles leading to isolation and feelings of helplessness
- Shelter living is chaotic: Families lack privacy. Policies and procedures often accentuate the loss of control over important relational connections and environment
- Homelessness puts women and children at risk for violence, and violence puts women and children at risk for homelessness

# McKinney-Vento: Data

## Violence is a common ingredient in the recipe for homelessness.

- Multiple studies suggest that violence is normative in the lives of homeless women and children with at least half (50% to 60%) experiencing homelessness after fleeing from a violent relationship
- Severe physical and/or sexual assault: The majority (92%) of homeless mothers have experienced severe physical and/or sexual assault at some point in their lives. Sixty-six percent experienced severe physical abuse and 43% were sexually molested as children Sixty-three percent have been subjected to violence by intimate partners

(Browne, 1997; Goodman, 1991; Bassuk et al., 1996; Buckner, Beardslee, and Bassuk, 2004)

# McKinney-Vento: Data

## Violence is a common ingredient in the recipe for homelessness.

- *Homeless children are exposed to extremely high rates of violence:* Eighty-three percent of children over the age of 12 years have been exposed to violence and 25% have witnessed violence in their families.
- *Services are not designed to respond to women and children who show symptoms of distress:* Homeless women who present symptoms of post traumatic stress (psychic numbing, rage reactions, re-experiencing painful past episodes, depression, anxiety, endless watchfulness, sleeplessness), may use substances to help them medicate painful trauma-related sequelae. They may have difficulty accessing essential housing, economic, healthcare, educational, childcare and peer support services.

(Browne, 1997; Goodman, 1991; Bassuk et al., 1996; Buckner, Beardslee, and Bassuk, 2004)

# McKinney-Vento: Data

## Homelessness makes families sick.

- *Homeless children are sick four times as often as middle-class children*
- *Chronic stress* associated with homelessness, violence, poverty, isolation, and shame takes its toll on women's physical health
- *Reproductive health issues* such as complicated pregnancies, poor prenatal care, lack of access to contraceptives, and exposure to violence increase the risk for sexually transmitted diseases
- Major depression: Half of homeless mothers experience severe depression; One-third of mothers have made at least one suicide attempt
- *Post Traumatic Stress*: 36% of homeless mothers have Post Traumatic Stress Disorder over the course of their lifetimes, a rate three times higher than women of all ages in the general population

(Buckner and Bassuk, 1997; Weinreb, Goldberg, Bassuk, and Perloff, 1998; Merkert and Wintermute - CLN Kids, 2012)

# Support

Perspective, Services, Advocacy



*Offering a holistic education to **each and every child** in our state.*

# Support Perspective

## Common barriers for students experiencing homelessness

- Unable to meet school enrollment requirements
- Move around and change schools a lot
- Hungry, tired, and stressed
- Not have school supplies or a quiet place to study
- Not have access to reliable transportation
- Not have a parent or guardian to help them (unaccompanied youth)
- Be chronically absent from school
- Get lower grades
- Have special education needs
- Score poorly on assessment tests
- Drop out of school

# Support Perspective

## Preventative Value of Education

- Children in quality preschool programs are more likely to graduate from high school and own homes
- High school graduation is associated with an array of positive life outcomes (↓ unemployment, ↓ criminal justice involvement, ↑ income, ↑ health outcomes, ↑ life span)
- 95%+ of the jobs created since the great recession have gone to workers with at least some post-secondary education

# Support Services

States must implement procedures to remove barriers to academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs. 11432(g)(1)(F)(iii)

- LEAs should anticipate and accommodate the needs of students experiencing homelessness and youth in foster care to enter these programs and consider giving them priority on waitlists. *Guidance I6*
- SEAs and LEAs should develop policies to expedite full participation in extracurricular activities and work with athletic associations to adjust policies to facilitate participation. *Guidance p. 25*
- McKinney-Vento students are automatically eligible for free school meals.

# Support: Trauma-Informed Services

## Traditional Services & Systems

- Traumatic stress is not viewed as a primary defining event in people's lives.
- Problems/Symptoms are discrete and separate. Each problem (symptom/concern) presented by homeless families requires a separate source of support and /or intervention. For example, when a woman abuses alcohol, the assumption is that she drinks excessively because she is an alcoholic not because she might be trying to deal with sleeplessness, anxiety, intrusive thoughts/memories or other problems associated with trauma.

## Trauma-informed Services & Systems

- Traumatic and violent events are the central, primary events impacting everything else in the lives of women and children. Assumes the impact of trauma is all-encompassing.
- Problems/Symptoms are inter-related responses to or coping mechanisms to deal with trauma. Many problems (symptoms) including homelessness, psychological problems, substance use/abuse, dissociation, self-injury, physical problems, and startle responses are attempts to cope with violence/trauma and overwhelming feelings associated with traumatic events or unsafe environments.

# Support: Trauma-Informed Services

## Traditional Services & Systems

- Hierarchical: Clinical staff and administrators are trained to respond to trauma-survivors in a specific way. Clinical personnel are seen as the experts who assign diagnoses in order to treat a condition. The focus is on being “objective” and “distant”. This approach is based on power imbalances.
- People providing shelter and other services are the experts. Homeless families are seen and treated as passive recipients of services provided by people who are more knowledgeable about what is best for families.

## Trauma-informed Services & Systems

- Shares Power/Decreases Hierarchy: Everyone is trained to respond to individuals in distress, and about the impact of trauma in the lives of those being served. From grounds-keepers and maintenance staff to accountants, clinicians, administrators, advocates and clients, all are trained to respond to individuals in distress. This approach emphasizes the importance of viewing clients’ responses through the lens of trauma and attempts to equalize power imbalances in relationships.
- Homeless families are active experts & partners with people providing services: Women and their children are viewed and treated as the experts in knowing what is best for them and what will help the most.

# Support: Trauma-Informed Services

## Traditional Services & Systems

- Primary goals are defined by service providers and focus on symptom reduction.
- Reactive: Services and systems are crisis driven and focused on minimizing high liability.

## Trauma-informed Services & Systems

- Primary goals are defined by homeless families and focus on recovery, self-efficacy and, healing.
- Proactive: Services and systems for homeless families focus on preventing further crisis and avoiding retraumatization. On an individual level, providers assist families in creating crisis prevention plans and on a systemic level, policies and practices are adjusted to avoid retrauma.

# Support: Trauma-Informed Services

## Traditional Services & Systems

- Sees those experiencing homelessness as broken, vulnerable, damaged and needing protection from themselves. Agencies and providers are responsible for “fixing” the “problem.”

## Trauma-informed Services & Systems

- Understands providing those experiencing homelessness with the maximum level of choices, autonomy, self-determination, dignity, and respect is central to healing. Philosophy of holistic healing and resilience. Agency responsible for creating an environment conducive to healing and becoming a partner in family-defined process.

# Support: Advocacy

## Improving Educational Outcomes

- Annual requirement for SEAs and LEAs to report academic achievement and graduation rates for children experiencing homelessness as a separate subgroup
- Ensures proper support throughout education and connectivity to appropriate services
- Compliance with federal privacy and confidential laws

# Support: Advocacy

- SEAs and LEAs should train staff on the traumatic effects of homelessness. Specific trauma-informed care strategies should be instituted. Guidance p. 34
- SEAs and LEAs should ensure school personnel consider issues related to homelessness prior to taking disciplinary action. Guidance p. 33
- Coordinate with Early Warning Systems for dropout prevention.
- All McKinney-Vento youth must be able to receive individualized counseling from counselors to prepare and improve their readiness for college, including college selection, application, financial aid, and on-campus supports. 11432(g)(1)(K); Guidance Q1

# Support: Advocacy

## ESSA Disaggregated Subgroup Elements

- Discipline (ISS, OSS, School related arrests, referrals to law enforcement and incidents of violence including bullying)
- Assessments (Assessed vs. Not Assessed)
- Attendance (including chronic absenteeism)
- Graduation Rates
- Academics (Accelerated coursework)

## Questions to Consider

- Are these elements examined in your school or district?
- What unique actions are taken when discrepancy in achievement levels are discovered?
- What proactive strategies do you implement for children experiencing trauma?
- Do you have the tools necessary to address gaps?

[www.gadoe.org](http://www.gadoe.org)

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GEORGIA'S FUTURE**

