Understanding the Rights and Protections of Unaccompanied Youth

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Georgia’s Systems of Continuous Improvement

- Identify Needs
- Select Interventions
- Plan Implementation
- Implement Plan
- Examine Progress
- Coherent Instruction
- Professional Capacity
- Supportive Learning Environment
- Engaged
- Healthy
- Safe
- Challenged
- Supported
- Family & Community Engagement
- Effective Leadership

Whole Child
Content

- Overview of Unaccompanied Youth
  - Identification
  - Data
  - Educational Barriers
  - Educational Rights
- LEA Supports for Unaccompanied Youth
  - Dekalb County
  - Forsyth County
- Strategies to Support Unaccompanied Youth
- Questions/ Discussion
Questions for Consideration

- What forms of targeted outreach does your district conduct to engage unaccompanied youth?
- What are the common traits that unaccompanied youth may exhibit that assist with identification?
- What data does your district currently record to help capture the needs of unaccompanied youth?
Data Walk/Identification Activity

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

Unaccompanied Youth
McKinney-Vento Act

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 Act

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;
McKinney-Vento Act

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:
  1. Does the student’s living arrangement meet the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of homeless?
  2. Once homelessness is determined, is the student unaccompanied?
UHY Flow Chart

Richard Woods, Georgia’s School Superintendent
McKinney-Vento Act

- Unaccompanied youth have the same rights as other students experiencing homelessness.
- Unaccompanied youth have run away from home, been thrown out of their homes, and/or been abandoned by parents or guardians. These young people are separated from their parents for a variety of reasons:
  - Over half report being physically abused at home
  - Over one third report sexual abuse
  - Over two-thirds report that at least one of their parents abuses drugs or alcohol
**Data Collection**

- **ENVIRONMENT CODE** indicates the type of residential environment in which a student resides or the type of school the student attended at anytime during this school year at this school. Code only those students for whom one of the codes below apply. For students where codes do not apply, leave blank.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Environment Code</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Resides in a local institution for neglected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Resides in a local institution for delinquent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Unaccompanied Homeless Youth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
UHY Educational Rights

- The right to immediate enrollment without proof of guardianship.
- The right to enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed information.
- Receive a free, appropriate public education.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin, if requested.
- Ensure prompt and fair resolutions of any disputes in accordance with the Act.
- Select a school of attendance; whether the local attendance area or school of origin.
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students.
Unaccompanied Youth Educational Barriers

- Lack of safe and stable housing.
- Lack of consistent access to bathing and laundry facilities.
- Lack of access to school records and other paperwork.
- Lack of school supplies and clothing.
- Irregular school attendance.
- Difficulty accumulating credits.
- Lack of reliable transportation.
Foster Care

Are UHY who are in foster care eligible for McKinney-Vento?

McKinney-Vento eligibility should be considered on a case-by-case basis:

- Foster youth with a fixed, regular and adequate residence: NOT ELIGIBLE
- Foster youth without a fixed, regular and adequate residence: ELIGIBLE
  - i.e. - Youth ran away from placement and is not in a fixed, regular and adequate residence
  - i.e. - Youth fleeing domestic violence in the foster care home
  - i.e. – Youth displaced due to natural disaster/fire at foster care home
  - i.e. – Youth who age out of the foster care system

- In a given school year, youth identified as MV eligible prior to entering foster care: ELIGIBLE
Reporting to Child Welfare

Are you a mandated reporter?

☐ Liaisons should make reports consistent with state law when there is a reason to suspect abuse, neglect, and/or that a student is in danger.
HB530 and ILP Students In Care
Prohibits parents or guardians from withdrawing or removing a child from a public school for the purpose of avoiding compliance with laws relating to mandatory attendance, school discipline, parental involvement, or parental responsibilities.
Independent Living Program (ILP)

ILP provides funding and support to help youth successfully transition from foster care. To be eligible you must meet one of these conditions:

- Age 14 to 21 in the foster care system regardless of their permanency plan
- Under 21 and was eligible for IL services when DFCS placement authority ended
- Between the ages 21 and 25 and enrolled in college, technical school or a training program
ILP Services

- **Education**: Youth acquire training and educational opportunities that lead to post-secondary education.

- **Employment**: Youth are assisted in searching for employment opportunities and receive education on how to generate income to support themselves.

- **Housing**: Youth have access to safe, stable, appropriate, and affordable housing in the community near public transportation.

- **Health**: Youth are guided in managing affordable health insurance for mental, physical, and dental needs.

- **Supportive Relationships**: Youth have in place supportive relationships that are able to assist them with obtaining services throughout the community for the purposes of achieving personal goals.
# UHY: Who Can Sign?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Barriers</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extracurricular activities</td>
<td>Federal law does not require LEAs to take a unified approach in resolving signature barriers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldtrips</td>
<td>Liaisons should consult with their legal counsel on how to create internal policies that will remove roadblocks to educations for UHY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medical services</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>School absences</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Additional school programming</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
Under the Operational Dashboard tab, click “Foster Report”. If you do not see this option, please contact your district data coordinator for access.
LEA Supports for Unaccompanied Youth

Dekalb and Forsyth County Schools
Strategies and Resources
Targeted Outreach and Engagement Strategies

- Post outreach materials where youth congregate (parks, clubs/organizations, libraries, etc.)
- Include contact information for the local liaison in all outreach materials.
- Develop outreach materials targeted specifically to youth. (NCHE Webpage)
- Use youth-friendly means of communication. (Websites, email, text, social media)
- Make the school a welcoming and supportive place.
- Ask other students to spread the word about services.
- Build trusting relationships.
School Engagement Strategies

- Review and revise policies to assist with accumulating credits toward graduation
- Provide access to showers and laundry facilities
- Familiarize key personnel with laws regarding minor medical consent
- Familiarize key personnel with laws regarding mandated reporting of suspected abuse or neglect, or a runaway
School Engagement Strategies

- Notify school nutrition when unaccompanied youth enrolls
- Provide flexibility with school assignments, especially those with supplies needed
- Familiarize key personnel with eligibility for local social service and housing programs
Resources

- GaDOE District Support Directory
- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) Webpage
- NCHE Homeless Liaison Toolkit
- Schoolhouse Connection Webpage
- Foster Care Non-Regulatory Guidance

The National Center for Homeless Education
NCHE operates the U.S. Department of Education’s technical assistance and information center for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program.

- McKinney-Vento Awareness Materials
- Find State & Local Contacts
  - Access and order materials to support McKinney-Vento Awareness in your community.
  - Find your State Coordinator for McKinney-Vento and access the Local Liaison Directory by state.

Non-Regulatory Guidance: Ensuring Educational Stability for Children in Foster Care
Resources

- DFCS EPAC Webpage
- Office of Inspector General Residential Child Care Search
- The National Technical Assistance Center for the Education of Neglected and Delinquent Children and Youth
- GaDOE Fed Talks Podcast
- GaDOE Professional Learning Opportunities Modules
Discussion
GaDOE Contact Information

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