

Education for Homeless Children and Youth (CFDA No. 84.196)

I. Legislation

Title VII, Subtitle B, of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, as amended (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) (expires September 30, 1999).

II. Funding History

<u>Fiscal Year</u>	<u>Appropriation</u>
1987	\$ 4,600,000
1990	7,404,000
1991	7,313,000
1992	25,000,000
1993	24,800,000
1994	25,470,000
1995	28,811,000
1996	23,000,000

III. Analysis of Program Performance

A. Goals and Objectives

This program is designed to provide formula grants to state education agencies (SEAs) to ensure that homeless children and youth have access to a free, appropriate public education. Funds are distributed to SEAs in the same proportions as under Section 1122 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, except that no state receives less than \$100,000, and 0.1 percent of the appropriation is allocated to the outlying areas (U.S. territories). The Secretary is authorized to transfer one percent of the appropriation for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

B. Strategies to Achieve the Goals

Services Supported

This program provides assistance to states to (1) establish or designate an Office of Coordinator of Education of Homeless Children and Youth; (2) prepare and carry out a state plan for the education of homeless children and youth; (3) develop and implement programs for school personnel to heighten awareness of the specific problems of homeless children and youth; (4) provide activities for and services to homeless children and youth that enable them to enroll in, attend, and achieve success in school; and (5) award subgrants to local education agencies to facilitate the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth in schools.

Each state may reserve up to five percent of its allocation, or an amount equal to its 1990 allocation, whichever is greater, to conduct authorized state-level activities. The remainder is awarded to local districts.

A large percentage of state grant funds are used for subgrants to districts (V.1, V.2). States awarded an average of 71 percent of their McKinney Act grant funds for 1993–94 to local education agencies (LEAs); subgrant funds went to three percent of LEAs nationwide, the majority (51 percent) to urban LEAs (V.2).

Subgrants support a variety of activities, including before- and after-school education projects; awareness raising and sensitivity training; coordination among local service providers; transportation to school; parental involvement; identification and school placement of homeless children; and improved access of homeless children and youth to educational programs and services (V.2).

Strategic Initiatives

The Department is developing a revised version of *Serving Homeless Children: The Responsibilities of Educators* through a contract with Policy Studies Associates. The revised booklet, entitled *Meeting the Educational Needs of Homeless Children and Youth: A Resource for Schools and Communities*, offers information to help educators, other school personnel, shelter and social services providers, and state and local policymakers better understand the needs of homeless children and youth and to ensure an appropriate education for them. The revised version includes new examples of service strategies from states, districts, and schools across the country that are serving homeless children and youth.

C. Program Performance—Indicators of Impact and Effectiveness

Evaluation Findings

In 1995 the Department published *An Evaluation of State and Local Efforts to Serve the Educational Needs of Homeless Children and Youth* (V.2), which reported findings from a study of the program conducted for the Department by Policy Studies Associates. Findings are based on a survey of state coordinators in all 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Bureau of Indian Affairs, and site visits to six state educational agencies and eight school districts, along with an analysis of state plans submitted to the Department.

Objective: States will identify and eliminate residency laws and other laws, regulations, practices or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or success of homeless children and youth in school.

Almost all states have revised their laws, regulations, and policies to improve access to education for homeless students, and report a high level of success in identifying and eliminating barriers once posed by policies on residency and school records (V.2).

However, states and districts still struggle to provide access while meeting guardianship and immunization requirements (which raise sensitive health and safety issues) (V.2).

- To fight disease, 42 states retain immunization requirements for all students. The extent to which these states are able to enroll homeless children and youth depends largely on the effectiveness of state and local methods for providing immunizations or obtaining these records for homeless students (V.2).
- To protect children's safety and welfare (and to avoid liability), schools require a legal guardian's permission for many enrollment and education decisions. Few states set aside these requirements

entirely, instead, making special allowances for homeless students. Barriers remain when children are not identified as homeless or when special allowances are not made at the district or school level (V.2).

States and districts have few resources to address transportation needs. Site visit data suggest that homeless students are rarely placed in their school of origin, particularly when it would require transportation across district lines. The McKinney program does help transport some homeless students to a school; before McKinney, some homeless students had no access to any school transportation services (V.2).

Homeless youth face extreme barriers to school access. Efforts to curb crime or ensure school safety may impede enrollment for homeless teens—for example, curfew laws make them guilty of a crime just because they have no place to go. Schools in some states refuse to admit homeless teens because of liability concerns. Unlike younger children, teens may be placed statewide, with up to six or seven moves a year disrupting learning. In terms of McKinney-funded services, few of the LEAs in the site visit sample provided instructional services to older students (V.2).

Although access to school has improved significantly for homeless students under the McKinney Act, a large proportion have difficulty gaining access to specific educational services (e.g., gifted and talented programs, Head Start). These difficulties remain despite state policies promoting such access. Some subgrantees try to ensure access to Title I (e.g., by tracking students' whereabouts), but few reported monitoring the access to other services, such as special education, limited English proficiency programs, or Head Start (V.2).

Objective: Local education agencies (LEAs) will not separate homeless children and youth from the mainstream school environment because of their homeless status.

Homeless students in different districts within the same state often have uneven access to educational services. This situation can be addressed at the state, district, and school level. State policies exempting homeless students from enrollment requirements do not eliminate barriers unless schools and districts are aware of and enforce these policies. State coordinators could help improve these situations by giving technical assistance and information on promising practices to all districts (V.2).

Objective: Homeless children and youth are taught to the same high state and local standards as other children and youth.

Family mobility may be the greatest barrier to school success for homeless students. States and districts are just beginning to explore ways to help homeless students continue making progress as they move from school to school (V.2).

Objective: States and LEAs develop strong collaborative partnerships with state and local agencies and organizations that provide services to homeless children, youth, and families, in order to provide a "continuum of care."

Housing authorities are generally unaware of the importance of considering the educational needs of homeless students when making housing placements (V.2).

IV. Planned Studies

The Department has begun a study of the program as a follow up to the 1995 evaluation, and a report is due in 1999.

V. Sources of Information

1. Program files.
2. L. Anderson, M. Janger, K. Panton, An Evaluation of State and Local Efforts to Serve the Educational Needs of Homeless Children and Youth (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, 1995).

VI. Contacts for Further Information

Program Operations: Linda Mount, (202) 260-0960

Program Studies: Joanne Wiggins, (202) 401-1958