Appendix C: Awareness Materials

One of the main roles of the local homeless education liaison is to ensure that school district personnel and community members, including those eligible for services under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, are aware of the Act and its provisions. An important component of awareness is the ability to recognize the signs of homelessness.

Appendix C includes:

- Common Signs of Homelessness Flyer
- NCHE educational rights poster, for parents (8 1/2 x 11, black and white)
- NCHE educational rights poster, for youth (8 1/2 x 11, black and white)
- NCHE Homeless Education Awareness Flyer

Additional Resources

- **NCHE awareness products; available for ordering at *http://www.serve.org/nche/online_order.php***:
  - **Educational Rights Poster**: This poster explains who qualifies as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and lists the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Place these posters in your school or community to generate public awareness. Available in youth and parent versions and in English and Spanish.
  - **Homeless Education Awareness Folder**: This sturdy, laminated folder provides an attractive way to inform colleagues and potential donors about the issues central to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Customize the information presented by filling the folder with the resources most pertinent to your audience.
  - **NCHE Brochure**: This brochure explains the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness and provides information about NCHE's mission and services, including the NCHE homeless education helpline.

- **Parent Brochure**: This brochure explains the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness and informs parents about ways in which they can support their children's education during times of mobility.

- **NCHE homeless education issue briefs; available for downloading at *http://www.serve.org/nche/briefs.php***:
  - ***Introduction to the Issues* brief**: This brief provides an overview of the main issues within the field of homeless education. It is a good general resource, but is also particularly helpful for introducing new people to the field or introducing the issue to those outside of the field.
  - ***Who is Homeless?* brief**: This brief provides the definition of "homeless", as stated in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, and offers strategies for determining homelessness by the definition.

- **NCHE Information by Topic: *Awareness Videos* webpage; visit *http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/aw_video.php***: This webpage lists video resources that help create awareness of the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the plight of homeless people, including families with children, in the United States.

Common Signs of Homelessness

Note: While these are considered common signs, please recognize that they only offer general guidance. There is significant variability within the school-age homeless population. Individual students may differ significantly from the following general characteristics.

Lack of Continuity in Education

- Attendance at many different schools
- Lack of records needed to enroll
- Inability to pay fees
- Gaps in skill development
- Mistaken diagnosis of abilities
- Poor organizational skills
- Poor ability to conceptualize

Poor Health/Nutrition

- Lack of immunizations and/or immunization records
- Unmet medical and dental needs
- Respiratory problems
- Skin rashes
- Chronic hunger (may hoard food)
- Fatigue (may fall asleep in class)

Transportation and Attendance Problems

- Erratic attendance and tardiness
- Numerous absences
- Lack of participation in after-school activities
- Lack of participation in field trips
- Inability to contact parents

Poor Hygiene

- Lack of shower facilities/washers, etc.
- Wearing same clothes for several days
- Inconsistent grooming

Lack of Personal Space After School

- Consistent lack of preparation for school
- Incomplete or missing homework (no place to work or keep supplies)
- Unable to complete special projects (no access to supplies)
- Lack of basic school supplies
- Loss of books and other supplies on a regular basis
- Concern for safety of belongings

Social and Behavioral Concerns

- A marked change in behavior
- Poor/short attention span
- Poor self-esteem
- Extreme shyness
- Unwillingness to risk forming relationships with peers and teachers
- Difficulty socializing at recess
- Difficulty trusting people
- Aggression
- “Old” beyond years
- Protective of parents
- Clinging behavior
- Developmental delays
- Fear of abandonment
- School phobia (student wants to be with parent)
- Anxiety late in the school day

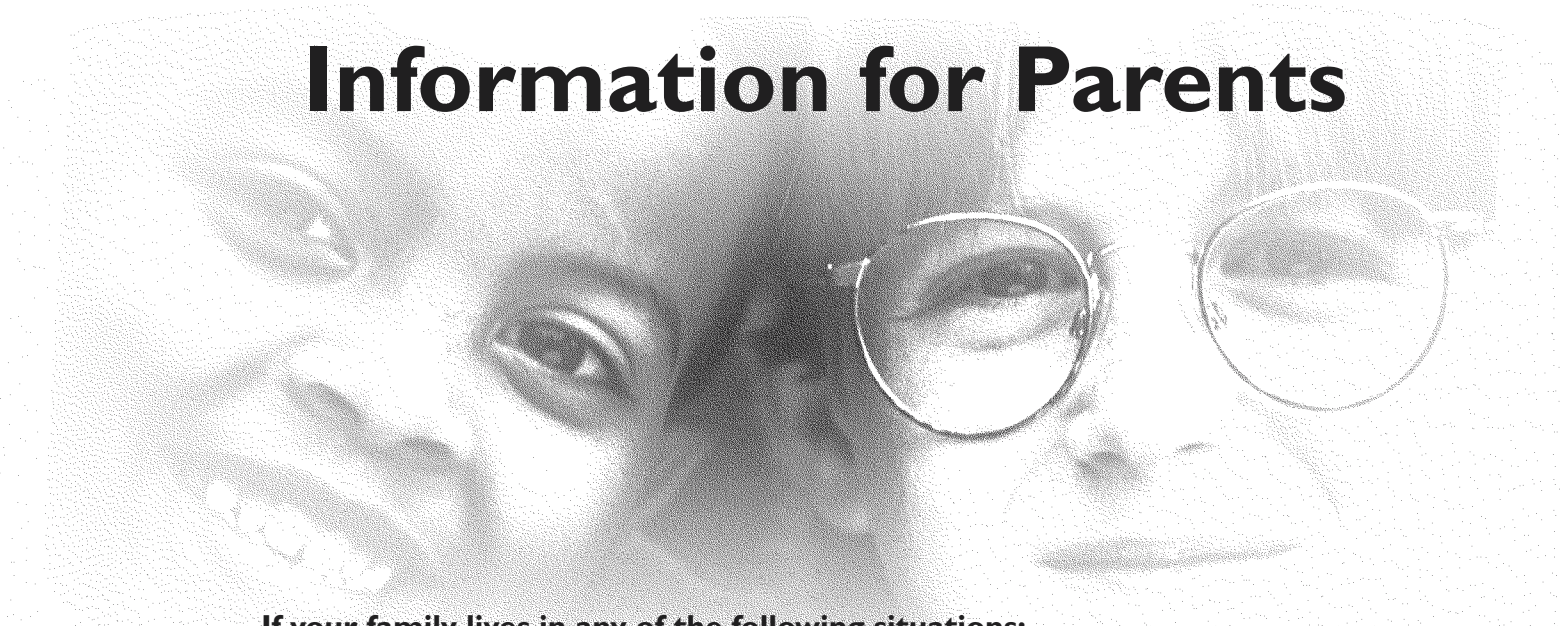
Reaction/Statements by Parent, Guardian, or Child

- Exhibiting anger or embarrassment when asked about current address
- Mention of staying with grandparents, other relatives, friends, or in a motel, or comments, such as
  - “I don’t remember the name of the last school.”
  - “We’ve been moving around a lot.”
  - “Our address is new; I can’t remember it”
  - “We’re staying with relatives until we get settled.”
  - “We’re going through a bad time.”

NCHE National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE

Common signs adapted from flyers developed by the Illinois and Pennsylvania Departments of Education. For more information on homeless education, visit the National Center for Homeless Education website at *http://www.serve.org/nche*.

Information for Parents



If your family lives in any of the following situations:

- In a shelter, motel, vehicle, or campground
- On the street
- In an abandoned building, trailer, or other inadequate accommodations, or
- Doubled up with friends or relatives because you cannot find or afford housing

Then, your preschool-aged and school-aged children have certain rights or protections under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.

Your children have the right to:

- Go to school, no matter where you live or how long you have lived there. They must be given access to the same public education, including preschool education, provided to other children.
- Continue in the school they attended before you became homeless or the school they last attended, if that is your choice and is feasible. If a school sends your child to a school other than the one you request, the school must provide you with a written explanation and offer you the right to appeal the decision.
- Receive transportation to the school they attended before your family became homeless or the school they last attended, if you or a guardian request such transportation.
- Attend a school and participate in school programs with children who are not homeless. Children cannot be separated from the regular school program because they are homeless.
- Enroll in school without giving a permanent address. Schools cannot require proof of residency that might prevent or delay school enrollment.
- Enroll and attend classes while the school arranges for the transfer of school and immunization records or any other documents required for enrollment.
- Enroll and attend classes in the school of your choice even while the school and you seek to resolve a dispute over enrolling your children.
- Receive the same special programs and services, if needed, as provided to all other children served in these programs.
- Receive transportation to school and to school programs.

When you move, you should do the following:

- Contact the school district's local liaison for homeless education (see phone number below) for help in enrolling your child in a new school or arranging for your child to continue in his or her former school. (Or, someone at a shelter, social services office, or the school can direct you to the person you need to contact.)
- Contact the school and provide any information you think will assist the teachers in helping your child adjust to new circumstances.
- Ask the local liaison for homeless education, the shelter provider, or a social worker for assistance with clothing and supplies, if needed.

Local Area Contacts:

State Coordinator:

If you need further assistance, call the National Center for Homeless Education at the toll-free HelpLine number:

1-800-308-2145

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

Information for School-Aged Youth

If you live in any of the following situations:

- In a shelter, motel, vehicle, or campground
- On the street
- In an abandoned building, trailer, or other inadequate accommodations, or
- Doubled up with friends or relatives because you cannot find or afford housing

Then, you have certain rights or protections under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act.

You have the right to:

- Go to school, no matter where you live or how long you have lived there. You must be given access to the same public education provided to other students.
- Continue in the school you attended before you became homeless or the school you last attended, if that is your choice and is feasible. The school district's local liaison for homeless education must assist you, if needed, and offer you the right to appeal a decision regarding your choice of school if it goes against your wishes.
- Receive transportation to the school you attended before you became homeless or the school you last attended, if you request such transportation.
- Attend a school and participate in school programs with students who are not homeless. Students cannot be separated from the regular school program because they are homeless.
- Enroll in school without giving a permanent address. Schools cannot require proof of residency that might prevent or delay school enrollment.
- Enroll and attend classes while the school arranges for the transfer of school and immunization records or any other documents required for enrollment.
- Enroll and attend classes in the school of your choice even while the school and you seek to resolve a dispute over enrollment.
- Receive the same special programs and services, if needed, as provided to all other students served in these programs.
- Receive transportation to school and to school programs.

When you move, you should do the following:

- Contact the school district's local liaison for homeless education (see phone number below) for help in enrolling in a new school or arranging to continue in your former school. (Or, someone at a shelter, social services office, or the school can direct you to the person you need to contact.)
- Tell your teachers anything that you think they need to know to help you in school.
- Ask the local liaison for homeless education, the shelter provider, or a social worker for assistance with clothing and supplies, if needed.

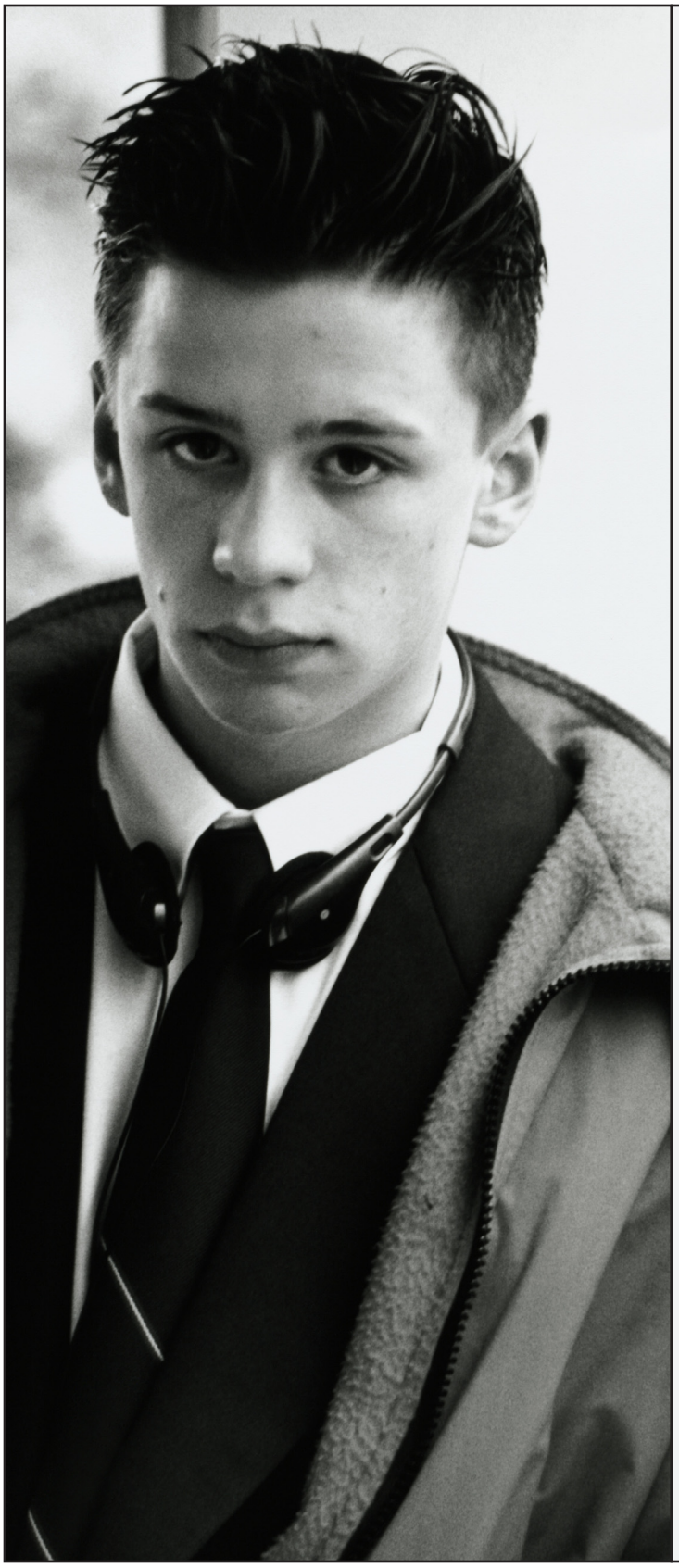
Local Area Contacts:

State Coordinator:

If you need further assistance, call the National Center for Homeless Education at the toll-free HelpLine number:

1-800-308-2145

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA



This face and more than 1 million like it are homeless every year.

And it's hard to do homework when you don't have a home. Yet approximately 1.4 million children and youth will face that challenge this year.

Receiving an education is critical to breaking the cycle of homelessness in the lives of these children and youth. Federal law protects their right to a **free, appropriate public education**.

For more information on the rights of and services available to children and youth experiencing homelessness, please contact:

Local Homeless Education Liaison

Homeless Education Awareness Flyer compliments of:

National Center for Homeless Education

800-308-2145 (toll-free Helpline)

http://www.serve.org/nche

NCHE
National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE