

Florida Homeless Education Program

The federal McKinney-Vento Act (Title X, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act) requires that each state educational agency and local educational agencies (school districts) ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth. Additionally the U.S. Department of Education allocates McKinney-Vento funding annually to states based on the state's proportion of the Title I, Part A federal allocation. States must allocate funds competitively to school districts within the state to be used for program implementation at the local level. The sub-grants are awarded competitively based on need and quality of the application. In 2010-2011, the Florida Department of Education was allocated \$3.2 million and provided sub-grants to 41 school districts.

In order to carry out the requirements of the Act, the Florida Homeless Education Program within the Florida Department of Education provides leadership, technical assistance, support to districts and educational funding through a competitive process. The purpose is to ensure that homeless students are identified, enrolled, and attend school, and have access to resources to help them achieve academically. Funds within this program may be used to offer:

- school supplies (i.e., backpacks, calculators, notebooks, folders, etc.) and uniforms, including those needed for extracurricular activities sponsored by the school district;
- tutoring, supplemental instruction, and other educational services, including mentoring and summer educational programs;
- referrals to medical, dental, mental, and other health services; and
- parental engagement activities, among many others.

Number of Homeless Students Identified in Florida Schools 2005-2006 to 2009-2010				
2005-2006	2006-2007	2007-2008	2008-2009	2009-2010
29,545	30,878	34,375	41,286	49,112

Unfortunately, the number of homeless children and youth identified in Florida's schools has steadily increased since the 2005-2006 school year. They have risen from 29,545 identified homeless children in 2005-2006, to 49,112 identified in 2009-2010. From 2008-2009 to 2009-2010 school year, there was a 19 percent increase in the number identified.

Of the 49,112 homeless students identified in 2009-2010 school year,

- 6,330 (13 percent) of those were "Unaccompanied Youth" (not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian);
- 36,633 (75 percent) were reported as sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason; doubled-up (33 percent increase from 2009-2009); and

All (67) school districts reported at least one homeless student in their schools.

Given the current economic situation, it is anticipated that these numbers will continue to rise. On March 6, 2011, a short segment on homeless children and youth in Seminole County, Florida, was aired on the CBS 60 Minutes show. It has been said that a picture is worth a thousand words. We encourage you to view this segment by clicking on the link below. It puts a real face to homelessness.

<http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2011/03/06/60minutes/main20038927.shtml?tag=contentMain;contentBody>

Fortunately, every school district in Florida has a homeless education liaison to assist homeless students and their families. The liaison's responsibilities include:

- identifying and reporting children and youth eligible for services, including access to free meals and health and other services;
- ensuring homeless students have the right to remain in their school of origin (the school they last attended or school they were attending when they became homeless) and that transportation is provided to it;
- removing barriers that contribute to exclusion or school enrollment delays;
- posting public notice of educational rights of homeless children; and
- training school staff to ensure homeless students enroll with full and equal opportunity to succeed in school.

If you have not connected with your school district's homeless liaison to share resources that may assist homeless students in your area, please click on the link below. In "Program Area," scroll down to "Title X Homeless Contacts." In "District Area," select district. <https://app1.fldoe.org/flbpsi/nclbchoice/bpsiDirectory/directory.aspx>

For more information on the program, contact Lorraine Allen at Lorraine.allen@fldoe.org or 850-245-0668.

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