



Homelessness Under the McKinney-Vento Act:

Definitions and Signs of Homelessness for Schools

What is the definition of homelessness?

Lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Homeless living situations include:

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Staying in emergency or transitional shelters
- Sleeping in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

Citation: [42 USC §11434a\(2\)](#)

What are the signs of homelessness?

- Enrollment at multiple schools, lack of records, gaps in learning, poor/inconsistent attendance, talking about frequent moves.
- Poor hygiene, unmet medical/dental needs, wearing the same clothes repeatedly, fatigue, hoarding food.
- Social and behavioral challenges, such as extreme shyness, withdrawal, or aggression; clinginess; difficulty with peer and/or adult relationships; poor attention span; anxiety late in the school day.
- Lack of participation in field trips and/or afterschool activities, lack of basic school supplies, inability to complete special projects.

What are the potential signs of homelessness in a virtual learning world?

- Frequent changes in the background of where the student is working; the student appears to be changing location frequently
- Many different people in the background, beyond just the student's immediate family
- Background in a motel/hotel, outdoors, or public areas
- Student/parent unreachable for periods of time
- Unwilling to turn on camera; inconsistent internet.