

# Executive Summary

## Prepared for Board of Trustees Meeting

### June 12, 2012

## McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001

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### Board Goals:

**III. Climate: encourage and nourish a safe learning and compassionate working environment which insures open and transparent communication and is supportive, cooperative and ethical**

**VI. Growth, Change and Fiscal Responsibility: create and modify strategies to mitigate increasing stresses on our children, our schools, and our community**

**The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the key provisions of McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and to update the board on how the act is implemented in Denton ISD. The board will receive a breakdown of students identified as homeless for the 2011-2012 school year by campus and category of eligibility, as defined by McKinney-Vento.**

### Objectives

- to clarify the intent of McKinney –Vento, which ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth who “lack a fixed, adequate nighttime residence”
- to inform the board regarding the identification, school enrollment, attendance and opportunities for academic success of students who are displaced or living in unstable or uncertain living situations
- to inform the board of collaborative relationships with community social service providers, agencies and faith based organizations, along with district programs and departments that link students and their families to the resources which stabilize students and promote academic achievement at the individual, school and district level

### Results

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act provides educational rights and services for children and youth experiencing homelessness. This includes children or youth who are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; children and youth who are staying in a motel or hotel, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations; children and youth living in emergency or transitional shelters; children and youth living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or similar settings; migratory children who are living in circumstances described above; children in CPS custody and awaiting foster care; children informally placed in a kinship or family/friend home (home is not licensed, certified and CPS does not have custody or CPS dropped the child off without a safety plan and or power of attorney, and unaccompanied youth who are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

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Denton Independent School District utilizes a form called a Student Residency Questionnaire (SRQ) as a part of the standard enrollment packet to help campuses quickly identify those students living in situations that are likely to indicate homelessness. This form is completed by all parents, guardians or unaccompanied youth at the time of enrollment. Once the campus is alerted to a possible homeless situation, they fax the form to the Homeless Liaison's office. The family is contacted by phone and a determination is made as to whether the student is eligible for services under McKinney-Vento. The campus is not responsible for making the final determination about a student's homeless status.

Students and their families are displaced or experience crisis and emergencies throughout the school year. Campuses notify this office throughout the school year regarding these situations and a determination is made as to eligibility for rights and services under Mc-Kinney-Vento. Again, the SRQ is the form that this office uses to document the extent to which the family or youth fits the definition of homelessness. The SRQ is the form that is sent to Child Nutrition and Transportation to insure immediate assistance with busing, if eligible, as well as free lunch and breakfast for the children. The SRQ must be retained for five (5 years), either as a hard copy or electronically, by the campus. Parents and guardians are not required to complete new SRQ's if a change in their status occurs. Students are re-evaluated at the beginning of every school year when a new SRQ is completed.

This office collaborates and coordinates within the district and the community to ensure that eligible students and their families have access to programs and services at a district level. It is important that they are aware of and have access to medical, dental, mental, and other health services and assistance in applying for and receiving Medicaid/CHIP, SNAP and Child Support and are provided referrals for assistance with housing, utilities and food.

McKinney Vento is designed to provide educational stability to students and youth during a time of instability in their lives. Students who are identified as homeless have the right to continue attending their "school of origin" (the school they attended when they had permanent housing or the school in which they were last enrolled). If they are staying in another school district, they students have the right to receive transportation to their school of origin if feasible. The two districts collaborate to provide transportation. If a student's living situation stabilizes and they move into permanent housing, they remain in their school of origin for the entire school year, if that is the wish of the parent or guardian.

Trainings for McKinney-Vento are held regularly at Region XI and registrars, counselors, attendance officers, administrators, transportation and child nutrition are urged to attend and participate in the trainings. This office meets with registrars and secretaries every year to discuss McKinney-Vento and the challenges and obstacles involved in assisting their families who may be eligible for services under the Act. We provide information and support to school counselors

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at trainings, meetings and staff developments to raise awareness of identifying homeless students and assist them to meet the educational and psycho-social needs of the students and their families at a campus level.

For the 2012-2013 school year, the social workers who have primarily worked with pregnant and parenting teens at the middle and high school campuses, will be identified as school social workers and will provide case management for at risk youth, to include unaccompanied minors at the schools where they are assigned.

In the 2011 Community Assets and Needs Assessment, through United Way of Denton County, it is evident that our community leaders are aware of what our DISD families face. The financial stability and independence of individuals and families is impacted by high poverty rates. Requests for food and clothing are on the rise, as is the need for emergency, transitional housing and shelter. Adults are under employed or having a difficult time finding employment. Skills for self-sufficiency and access to transportation remain an identified need. Our families do not have enough money to buy basic necessities and the demand for affordable and flexible childcare make it difficult for parents to work, if they find a job. Reasons for homelessness in Denton ISD include loss of a job, domestic violence, and inability to pay rent or mortgage, deportation, illness, incarceration, drug and alcohol abuse. Oftentimes grandparents, other family members and even neighbors became the caretakers of children. An increasing number of our families live in a motel for the greater part of a school year, when they cannot find affordable housing.

Again, McKinney-Vento provides educational stability for a child during a time when their home life is insecure and unstable. Without judgment and always with respect, it is our job to do all that we can to help a child succeed in school. Whatever the circumstances at home or with a parent, the student has pure potential and no matter his or her age, is our primary concern. We advocate for them, assist them to find available resources, and insure, to the best of our ability, that services and support are accessible and available. We work with families to find solutions to their challenges and obstacles. School is often the only opportunity these children have for a stable environment, uninterrupted adult attention, peer relations, academic stimulation and reliable meals. Our district is breaking down the barriers and creating awareness of the rights of homeless children and youth, and while we are ensuring compliance with the law at the federal, state and local levels, more importantly, we are doing what is absolutely in the best interest of our children.