# Supporting the Education of Homeless Students

National Center for Homeless Education

800-308-2145

homeless@serve.org

# Specific McKinney –Vento Provisions

- Addressing the needs of homeless youth is required by law
- Schools must eliminate barriers to enrollment, attendance, and success in schools for students.
- The act also mandates that school districts appoint a liaison to work with homeless students as well as serve as a resource for educators

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# Definition: WHO is Homeless?

- Children or youth who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**, including:
  - Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason ("doubling up")
  - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to the lack of adequate alternative accommodations
  - Living in emergency or transitional shelters

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# WHO IS HOMELESS?

- Living in a public or private place not designed for humans to live
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, **substandard housing**, bus or train stations, or a similar setting
- Migratory children living in the above circumstances
- Unaccompanied youth living in the above circumstances

**NOTE:** Children in foster care or awaiting foster care placement are not considered homeless.

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# Who are Unaccompanied Homeless Students?

- **2-step process**

**Step 1: Does the student's living arrangement meet the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless?**

✓ Does the student lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence?

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# Step 2: Who is unaccompanied?

**Step 2: Once homelessness is determined, is the student unaccompanied?**

- According to McKinney-Vento, an unaccompanied homeless student is a child or youth **"not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian"**
- The Act refers to:

*physical custody*, **NOT** *legal custody*;

this usually means that the student is living apart from his/her parent(s) or guardian(s)

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# "But, the student chose to leave…"

- A youth can be eligible regardless of whether he/she was asked to leave the home or "chose" to leave
- Sometimes there is "more than meets the eye" for youth's home life situations
- Family conflict
- Abuse within the home
- Substance abuse
- Pregnancy

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# The School's Responsibility

- First and foremost schools are educational agencies
- The school's primary responsibility and goal is to **enroll and educate** in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Act *(federal)*; federal law supersedes state and local law
- Schools do not need to understand and/or agree with all aspects of a student's home life to educate him/her

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# Undocumented students

- Plyler v. Doe: Undocumented students are eligible for McKinney-Vento services to the same extent as documented students; this would include undocumented unaccompanied homeless students

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# Remove Barriers to Education

- Enrollment without proof of guardianship
- Enrollment without school records and other paperwork
- Provide of transportation
- Provide school supplies, clothing
- Provide free meals
- Permit exceptions to school policies

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# Enrollment Reminders

- A school district **can not require** a caregiver to obtain legal guardianship at any point prior to or following an unaccompanied homeless student's enrollment
- A school district **can not discontinue a student's enrollment** due to an inability to identify a caregiver, guardian, or parent following enrollment or failure to produce guardianship or other paperwork

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# Enrollment Strategies

- Three common methods for enrolling unaccompanied homeless students:
  - The student enrolls himself/herself
  - A caregiver enrolls the student
  - The local liaison enrolls the student

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# Rights of <u>All</u> Homeless Students

- Immediate enrollment, even if lacking paperwork normally required
- School selection: Eligible students can attend either the local attendance area school or the school of origin, according to the student's best interest
- Transportation to/from the school of origin

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# Rights of All Homeless Students *(cont)*

- Access to educational programs for which they are eligible (Title IA, IDEA, ELL, vocational/technical education, gifted, etc.)
- Free school meals (USDA's Child Nutrition Act)

**Mingo County Policy 5111.01**

**Homeless Students**

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# Participation in Extra-curricular Activities

- McKinney-Vento defines enrollment **as "attending classes *and participating fully in school activities*"**; this includes extra-curricular activities offered through the school.

- Provide before- or after-school support programs
- Waive program fees and deadlines
- **Questions concerning eligibility must be directed to WVSSAC!**

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# Educational Support for all homeless students

**McKinney-Vento charges SEAs and LEAs to:**

- Permit exceptions to school policies on class schedules, tardiness, absences and credits <u>to accommodate the needs of all homeless children and youth</u>

- Assist with credit accrual and recovery *(chunking credits, partial credits, etc.)*

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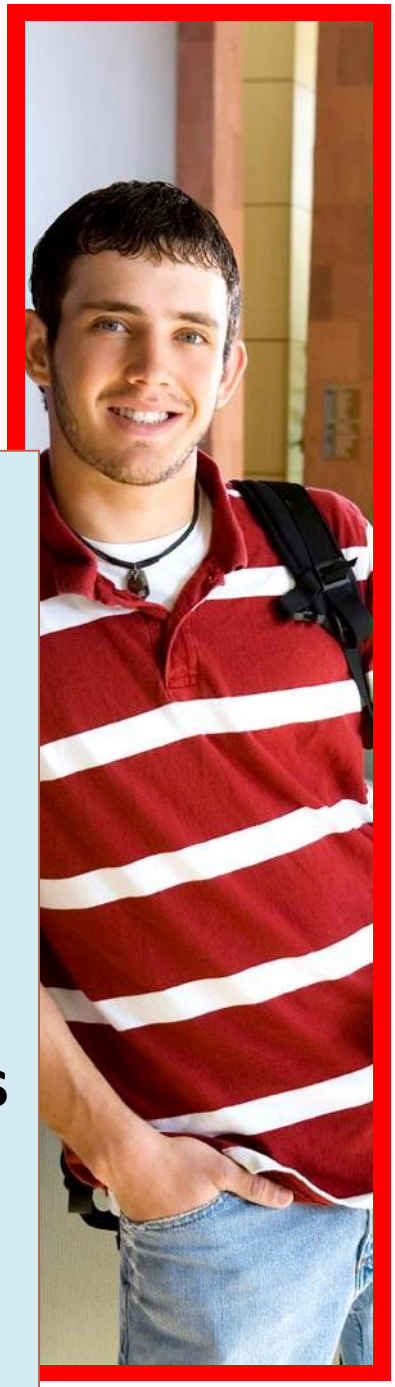
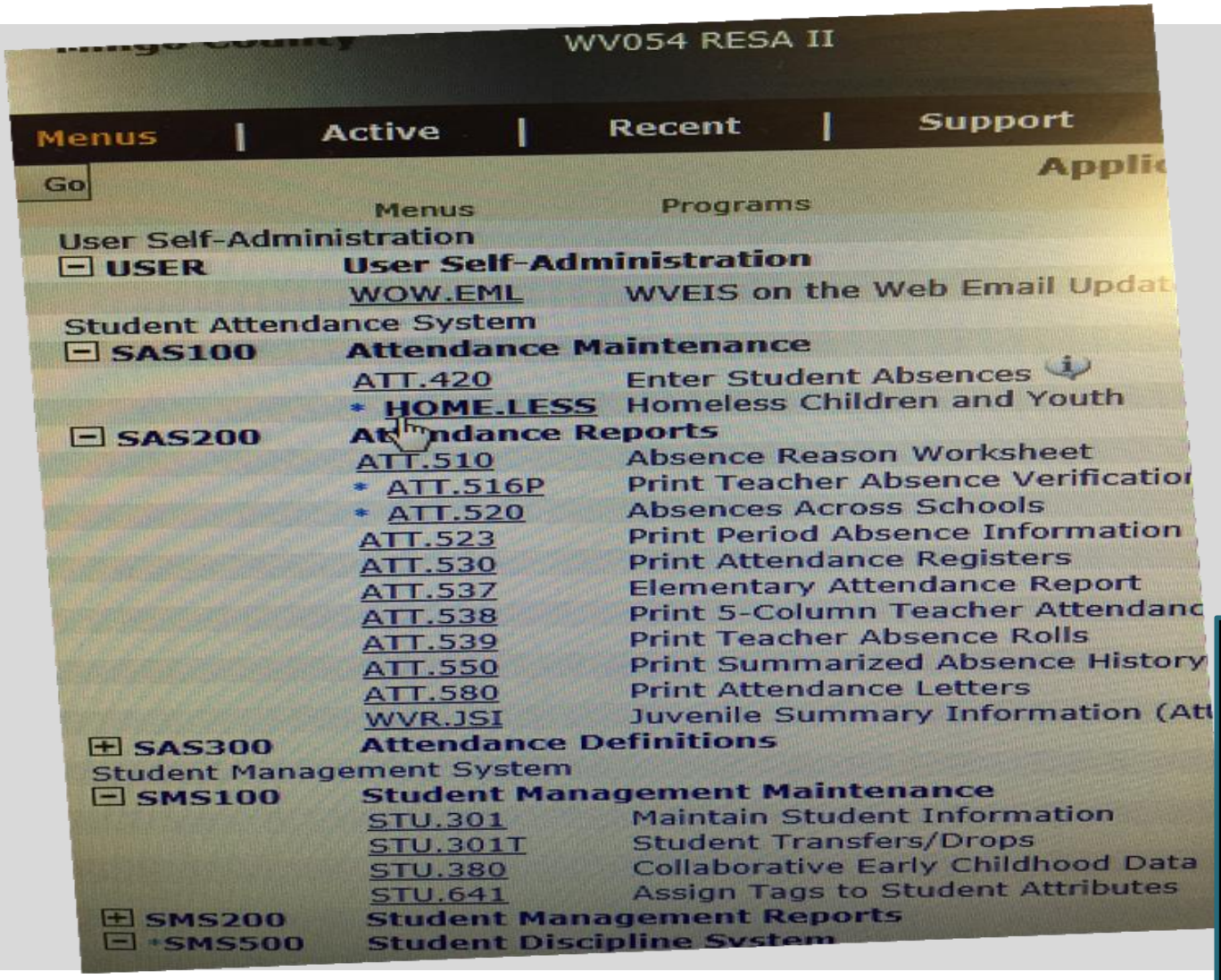
# Strategies for identifying and enrolling homeless children and unaccompanied students

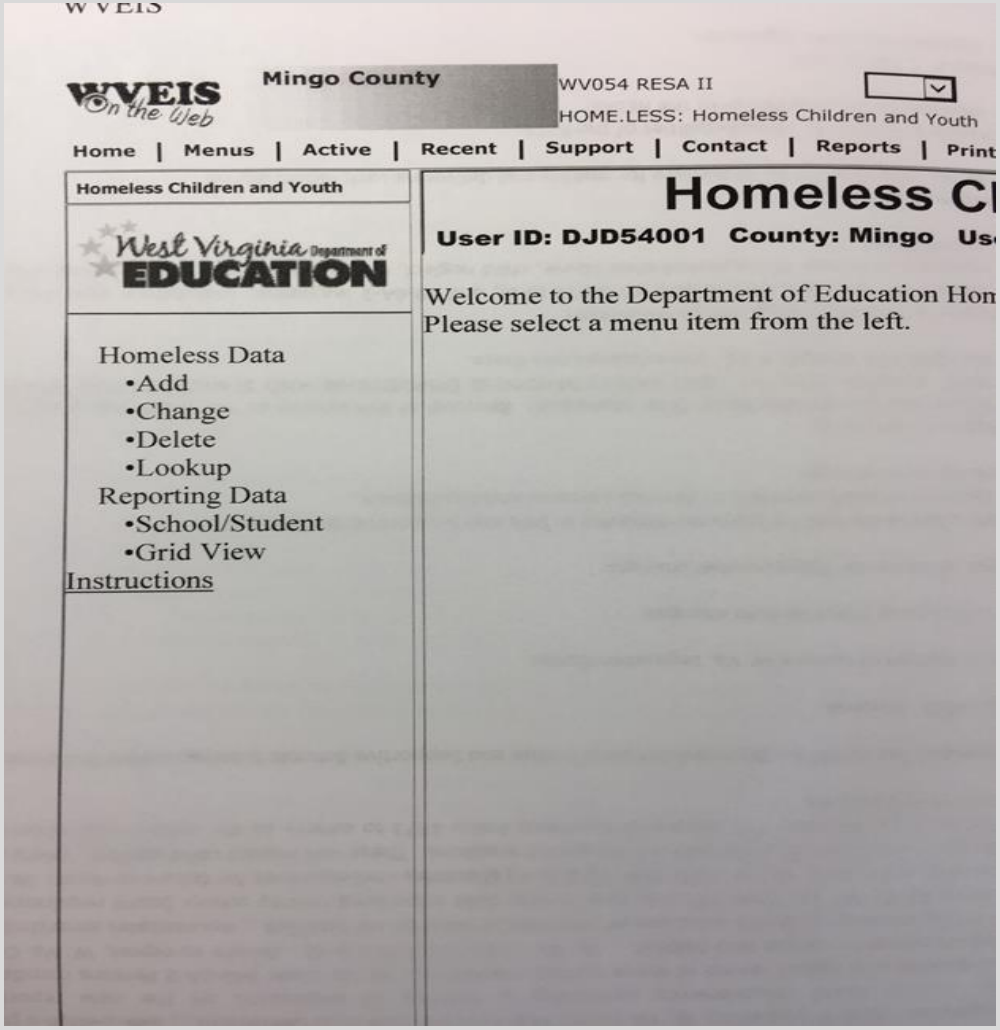


- **Provide continuing education awareness activities for school staff:**
  *(secretaries, counselors, social workers, nurses, teachers, bus drivers, custodians, administrators, etc.)* about the specific needs of runaway and homeless youth
- **Post services available to homeless students**
- **Display policy / guidelines**
  - **Mingo County Policy 5111.01**

# UPDATE WVEIS/WOW



# Add Homeless Data



# For more information

**WV Department of Education**

**Rebecca Derenge,**

**Homeless Education Coordinator**

**Mingo County Schools**

**Drema J Dempsey, Homeless Liaison**

**304-235-7122**

**didempse@k12.wv.us**

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*Supporting the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness*

**NCHE helpline: 800-308-2145 or** *homeless@serve.org*

# Power Point prepared by:

National Center for Homeless Education

*Supporting the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness*

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Current policy information was added to presentation by:
Drema J Dempsey,
Homeless Liaison