



10 Great Questions!! For School Staff

1. I have a homeless student. Now what do I do?

- Have a Student Residency Form (SRQ) completed. Place the SRQ in a separate folder for your SRQs, not in the cum folder. Fax or courier to the HEARTH Project office. Ensure the child will receive a free lunch.
- Arrange transportation, if necessary.
- The question to ask yourself – “Does this student have all that they need to participate fully in school and to succeed?” If not, contact the HEARTH Project office.

2. How do I request free meals?

- Send a copy of the completed SRQ to the HEARTH Project office
- If you do not have the completed SRQ, talk with your cafeteria manager ensuring that the child has a regular meal to eat until free lunch is arranged.
- Once a student is identified to HEARTH staff and entered into the HEARTH database, he/she should automatically receive free lunch. Email the HEARTH staff contact for your school if additional assistance is needed.

3. How is transportation arranged if the child/youth remain in their school of origin?

- Make sure the student’s address and phone number is updated in Genesis.
- HEARTH staff will fax or email a HEARTH enrollment form to be placed in the student’s cum folder.
- HEARTH staff will send a transportation request to Support Services.

4. Is there a time limit on homelessness?

- The McKinney-Vento Act states there is no time limit on homelessness. Students enrolled and coded as homeless are provided services for the entire school year, even if the student later becomes housed.
- Identification is conducted on a yearly basis. Families and students still experiencing homelessness from the previous school year must be reassessed and identified in the beginning of the new school year.

5. What items and services can be provided through the HEARTH Project?

- School needs: uniform assistance, backpacks, supplies (while supplies last)
- Basic emergency needs: hygiene products, clothing
- Bus passes or gas cards: to promote attendance until bus is routed, also used for parent involvement.
- Tutoring provided at participating homeless shelters and a few school sites

6. What are the main causes of homelessness?

- The main cause of homelessness is the lack of affordable housing. While this lack also is often enough to cause homelessness, when combined with other factors such as low wages, unemployment, domestic violence, illness, mental health issues, and addiction, the risk of experiencing homelessness increases dramatically.
- The primary causes of homelessness among unaccompanied youth are parental substance abuse, neglect, physical or sexual abuse by a parent or guardian, and family conflict.

7. What academic concerns commonly impact students in homeless situations?

- Due to changing schools and the stress of being homeless, students may fall behind academically, causing learning lags and gaps. (One move = 4 months academic learning loss.)
- Students may not have a quiet place to study or access to school supplies, or computers.

8. Are children and youth incarcerated or in correction facilities considered homeless?

- No. A child or youth who is imprisoned is excluded from the definition of homelessness.
- Even children and youth, who were homeless prior to incarceration, are not considered homeless while incarcerated.

9. I feel my school is not in compliance with the laws and protections for students experiencing homelessness. What do I do?

- Contact the district liaison. We can provide support in educating your school administration and staff. We will also make onsite visits and presentations, as needed.

10. How can I get more information and help?

- Visit our website! <http://www.polk-fl.net/districtinfo/departments/learning/title1/heartth.htm>. It contains the McKinney-Vento Act, the PCPS board approved policy, HEARTH forms, 100 FAQ, etc.
- Join a webinar presented by the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE). They are listed on their website at <http://center.serve.org/nche>

Remember: You are not alone!

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the HEARTH Project staff!

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