



National Center for Homeless Education  
Supporting the Education of Children and  
Youth Experiencing Homelessness  
[www.serve.org/nche](http://www.serve.org/nche)



## BEST PRACTICES IN INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION

# Access to Food for Homeless and Highly Mobile Students

### INTRODUCTION

This brief is designed for state and local child nutrition program administrators, cafeteria managers, State Coordinators for Homeless Education, and local homeless education liaisons. It explains the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Child Nutrition Division (CND) policies regarding eligibility for free school meals for certain homeless, migrant, runaway, and foster students; addresses frequently asked questions about implementing these policies; and offers tools to ensure that these students can access food both inside and outside of school.

### HOMELESSNESS AND FOOD INSECURITY

Homelessness is a lack of fixed, regular, and adequate housing often resulting from extreme poverty; economic hardship due to job loss, illness, or a similar reason; or devastation following a natural disaster. According to the Urban Institute, the mean income of families experiencing homelessness is less than half the federal poverty line (Burt et al., 1999). As a result, many homeless families cannot afford to provide their children with adequate meals. According to the Better Homes Fund, homeless mothers cite lack of money as the primary reason for their inability to provide three meals a day to their children (Better Homes Fund, 1999). Homeless families and youth also often

#### Who is Homeless?

**(McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act – Title X, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – Sec 725)**

The term “homeless children and youth”—

- A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and
- B. includes —
  1. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
  2. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...
  3. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
  4. migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

face barriers in accessing food programs due to lack of documents, high mobility, and lack of transportation. In fact, homeless children experience hunger more than twice as often as other children (Better Homes Fund). As such, their most nutritious meal during the day is likely to be the one they receive through the school breakfast or lunch program.

## HOMELESS, MIGRANT, RUNAWAY, AND FOSTER CARE 101

Before learning more about free school meal eligibility for homeless, migrant, runaway, and foster students, a basic understanding of these populations and related programs is useful.

### The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 authorizes the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program. The goal of the EHCY Program is to ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to a free, appropriate public education. The McKinney-Vento Act establishes the educational definition of a homeless child or youth (see the sidebar on page one), authorizes rights and services aimed at providing educational stability and continuity for eligible students, and requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to appoint a local homeless education liaison (hereafter *local liaison*) to oversee the implementation of the Act within the school district.

For more information on the McKinney-Vento Act, visit <http://center.serve.org/nche/briefs.php>.

### The Migrant Education Program (MEP)

Title I, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) authorizes the federal Migrant Education Program (MEP). The goal of the MEP is to ensure that all migrant students reach challenging academic standards and graduate with a high school diploma (or compete a GED) that prepares them for responsible citizenship, further learning, and productive employment. Title I, Part C of the ESEA establishes the definition of a migratory child and authorizes supplemental educational services for eligible students. According to the

Act, a migratory child is a child who moved in the preceding 36 months on his or her own, or with a parent or spouse, in order to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work.

For more information on the definition of migratory child and the MEP, visit <http://www.ed.gov/programs/mep/mepguidance2010.doc>.

### The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA)

The Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) authorizes the federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, administered by the Family and Youth Services Bureau of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. The Act provides funding to local agencies for providing housing specifically for unaccompanied runaway and homeless youth. These funds support street outreach, short-term shelter, and longer-term transitional living and maternity group home programs that serve U.S. youth who run away from home, are asked to leave their homes, or become homeless.

For more information about the Runaway and Homeless Youth Program, visit <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/programs/rhy.htm>.

### Foster Care

Foster care refers to the system under which children who can not remain safely in the home of their parent(s) are removed from the home by the state child welfare agency and placed temporarily in an institution, group home, or private home of a state certified caregiver referred to as a *foster parent*. Depending on the specific circumstances of each child, the child may be reunified with his or her parents when it is deemed safe to do so, or may be placed elsewhere through either adoption, a guardianship, placement with a relative, or another planned permanent living arrangement in foster care.

For more information about foster care, visit <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/index.html>.

## CATEGORICAL ELIGIBILITY FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS

The Richard B. Russell National School Lunch Act establishes that certain homeless, runaway, and migrant children are categorically eligible

for free meal benefits under the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. Children in foster care also are categorically eligible if their care and placement are the responsibility of the state, whether they are placed by a foster care agency or a court.<sup>1</sup> These students and families do not have to complete an application for free meals. Rather, USDA policies allow for automatic enrollment of these students, which is known as “direct certification,” to ensure they receive meals quickly.<sup>2</sup> More information, including related USDA memos, is available at [http://center.serve.org/nche/legis/cn\\_wic.php](http://center.serve.org/nche/legis/cn_wic.php) or <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/>.

## DIRECT CERTIFICATION FOR FREE SCHOOL MEALS

The following chart outlines the documentation required for the direct certification of each group of students.

Student Group	Documentation
Homeless students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student’s name or a list of student names (if necessary to identify the student(s), additional information such as a birth date or unique student identifier may be needed); and</li> <li>• A signed statement from the LEA’s liaison or the director of a homeless shelter where the student resides, with effective date.</li> <li>• An electronic data match that includes this information also is acceptable.</li> </ul>
Migrant students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student’s name or a list of student names (if necessary to identify the student(s), additional information such as a birth date or unique student identifier may be needed); and</li> <li>• A statement certifying that the student(s) has/have been determined eligible for the MEP; and</li> <li>• The dated signature of the local MEP coordinator or the State MEP director.</li> <li>• An electronic data match that includes this information also is acceptable.</li> </ul>
Youth served by RHYA programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The student’s name or a list of student names (if necessary to identify the student(s), additional information such as a birth date or unique student identifier may be needed); and</li> <li>• A statement certifying that the student(s) is/are being served by a RHYA program; and</li> <li>• The dated signature of the RHYA service provider or the local liaison.</li> <li>• An electronic data match that includes this information also is acceptable.</li> </ul>
Students in foster care	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• An appropriate state or local court or child welfare agency must provide documentation indicating that the child is a foster child whose care and placement is the responsibility of the state or who has been placed with a caretaker household by a court.</li> <li>• A foster parent also may complete a school meals application indicating that the child is a foster child without providing income information or documentation of foster status.</li> </ul>

Once the above documentation has been provided to the school nutrition program, the student must be directly certified. School meals personnel do not have discretion to decline to directly certify children who have been documented to be categorically eligible. If a school administrator knows that a child is homeless but is concerned that there may be a delay in obtaining documentation from the local liaison, the administrator may complete an application on behalf of the child so that the child can begin receiving free meals immediately and then follow up with the local liaison to obtain the needed documentation.

Once a child is certified as eligible to receive free school meals, eligibility remains in effect for the duration of the current school year and for up to 30 days after the first operating day of the subsequent school year or until a new eligibility determination is made in the new school year, whichever comes first.

<sup>1</sup> This group includes all children in foster care, regardless of whether the child is IV-E eligible; it does not include children placed informally in kinship care.

<sup>2</sup> Children may also be directly certified if their family receives selected benefits under the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, formerly known as food stamps, the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families cash assistance program, or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations; however, the process for directly certifying these children is not discussed in this brief.

## RECOMMENDED PRACTICES

### The Free School Meals Application

Although students and families experiencing homelessness do not need to follow the standard application process to receive free school meals, it remains a good practice for school districts to include in the application information about the categorical eligibility of homeless students, the contact information of the local liaison, and a box to check indicating that the household lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. Many parents and youth hesitate to disclose their homeless situations to the school, but may request a meal application. Including the homeless policy within the application may encourage parents and youth to discuss their circumstances with the school and helps ensure that all students who are eligible for free meals receive them.

### Identifying Students Experiencing Homelessness

Although homeless students are categorically eligible for free school meals, students may not receive meals if the school district is not aware of their homelessness; therefore, identifying homeless students is an important first step in ensuring that they receive free school meals and other needed services and supports. Under Section 722(g)(6)(A)(i) of the McKinney-Vento Act, the local liaison must ensure that homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies. As part of

### SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT: BALTIMORE COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

The Baltimore County Public Schools (BCPS) website includes information about categorical eligibility for free school meals for homeless, migrant, and runaway students. BCPS' downloadable Household Meal Benefit Application also refers parents of these students to the school pupil personnel worker, who will complete and submit the free school meals certification on behalf of the household. For more information, visit [http://www.bcps.org/offices/ofns/free\\_reduced\\_program.html](http://www.bcps.org/offices/ofns/free_reduced_program.html).

### SCHOOL DISTRICT HIGHLIGHT: HUMBLE INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT (TX)

In Humble ISD in Texas, the local liaison and the child nutrition program specialist jointly train registrars and school attendance personnel each school year. These staff members process student housing questionnaires, which ask parents and youth about their living arrangements in an effort to screen for McKinney-Vento eligibility and are included as standard enrollment forms. The training helps staff members understand that by forwarding the forms to the local liaison immediately, they can ensure that eligible students receive free school meals that same day. The child nutrition program specialist also is in regular contact with cafeteria managers to ensure that they understand the categorical eligibility for free school meals for homeless, migrant, and runaway students. Cafeteria managers often help identify these students, contacting the child nutrition specialist when they notice students who repeatedly are unable to pay for lunch, are hoarding food, eat frequently from other students' trays, or need assistance with a lunch application.

this responsibility, it is recommended that local liaisons provide information about homelessness to child nutrition program administrators and cafeteria managers, who can be important partners in identification, and yet are likely to be unfamiliar with the criteria for being considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. While it is the local liaison who is authorized by the McKinney-Vento Act to make the final determination of eligibility and to provide documentation to school meals staff, nutrition and cafeteria personnel can play an important role in identifying homeless children who have not yet been in contact with the local liaison.

Many local liaisons provide training for child nutrition personnel, registrars, and other school and district staff members who may be in a position to ensure that eligible students are receiving free school meals. It is particularly important that these staff members be aware of common signs of homelessness, know how to refer children to the local liaison, and understand the local procedures for connecting eligible students to free school meals and other services.

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

The following section provides information about questions asked frequently by school nutrition personnel, local liaisons, and other school or community staff members regarding the implementation of the free school meals program. Responses should not be construed as non-regulatory guidance.

**Q: What should we do if there are delays in processing the free school meal paperwork for a student experiencing homelessness?**

**A:** Due to the streamlined procedures for homeless students outlined by USDA statutes and policy, generally there should be no delay in determining their eligibility. An email with an electronic signature or a fax from the local liaison or director of the shelter where the student resides is sufficient to establish eligibility and start the provision of free school meals immediately. In some school districts, the local liaison enters student information into a spreadsheet that is compatible with the nutrition services database to facilitate the prompt transfer of information and immediate free meal eligibility. In fact, most school districts that become aware that a student is homeless in the morning are able to provide the student with lunch that same day. Under USDA regulations, homeless children must be directly certified as soon as possible, but no later than three operating days after the date that the LEA receives the relevant documentation, as detailed in the table on page three (7 CFR 245.6).

It is important to establish procedures for documenting eligibility when the local liaison is out of the office, such as accepting verification

## BEST INTEREST CONSIDERATIONS IN SCHOOL SELECTION

Section 722(g)(3)(B)(i) of the McKinney-Vento Act (2001) gives students the right to continue attending their same school (their “school of origin”) despite changes in their living situation, if remaining in that school is in their best interest. The availability of a meal program at school would be one important factor to consider in evaluating a student’s best interest.

of eligibility from the local liaison over the phone on an interim basis, and training another staff member to fill in for the local liaison when necessary.

If unusual circumstances make it impossible to process a student’s meal eligibility immediately, school districts are encouraged to cover the cost and provide the student with food in the interim. It is important to remember, however, that the federal school meals program will not provide reimbursements for meals made available before the child was determined to be eligible for free school meals. School districts are discouraged from billing homeless families for these meals, as the delay in processing student eligibility is due to issues within the school district and not with the family.

**Q: Some public schools in our area, such as certain high schools and charter schools, do not have school meal programs. Are they obligated to provide food to students who are homeless?**

**A:** No. Students experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for free meals through the federal school meal programs; yet, if a school does not have a federal meal program, there is no obligation to provide students with food. Many schools, however, choose to provide students with food through community collaborations, such as the projects described later in this brief. Since there is a strong correlation between adequate nutrition and academic achievement, partnering with community agencies to provide meals is an excellent way to meet this need.

**Q: Private schools in our area do not have meal programs. Are they obligated to provide food to their homeless students? Is the local public school district obligated to provide meals to homeless students in private schools?**

**A:** No. Private schools are not obligated to provide meals to their students, regardless of their homeless status. Public schools are not obligated to provide meals to homeless students attending private schools. Private non-profit schools may participate in the school meal programs. Other private schools may wish to implement one of the strategies outlined later in this brief to provide food to students in need.

**Q:** We just discovered that a student in our school has been homeless for several months. We enrolled her for free meals immediately, but she has unpaid meal fees from the period of time when she was homeless, but before we *identified* her as homeless. How should we handle the unpaid fees?

**A:** Regardless of past fees, every student identified as homeless is categorically eligible for free meals from the date on which the local liaison or shelter director documents the student's homelessness. There can be no delay in providing free meals to students who meet the relevant eligibility criteria due to unpaid fees.

As mentioned, it is the school district's responsibility to identify all children and youth experiencing homelessness. Therefore, if a student was homeless but not identified, the school district should not hold the student or family responsible for the fees accrued during that time. There are several common practices school districts have used to handle these fees, including waiving the fees and absorbing the cost, or paying the fees from funds such as donations from PTOs or PTAs.

**Q:** One of our students just lost housing. We identified him as homeless and enrolled him for free school meals immediately; but he has unpaid meal fees from a period of time prior to his homelessness. How should we handle those unpaid fees?

**A:** As stated above, regardless of past fees, every student identified as homeless is categorically eligible for free meals from the date on which the local liaison or shelter director documents the student's homelessness. There can be no delay in providing free meals to students who meet the relevant nutrition program eligibility criteria due to unpaid fees.

In this case, the district may waive the fees, pay the fees with funds such as donations from PTOs or PTAs, or follow any of the district's standard unpaid meal fee procedures that do not delay or disrupt the student's receipt of free meals. Regardless of how the fees are handled, Section 722(g)(1)(I) McKinney-Vento Act requires the elimination of barriers to a student's full participation in school. Therefore, unpaid fees and actions taken to collect them may not

pose a barrier to the student's full participation in classes, extra-curricular activities, field trips, graduation ceremonies, and other school activities.

**Q:** How can an unaccompanied homeless youth be enrolled for free school meals?

**A:** Like other homeless students, unaccompanied homeless youth are categorically eligible for free school meals. A Runaway and Homeless Youth Act provider where the student is receiving services or a local liaison may document the student's eligibility, as detailed in the table on page three. This direct certification is the quickest and easiest way to provide youth with meals immediately. However, in cases where unaccompanied homeless youth are not directly certified, youth who are 18 years of age or older and youth who are legally emancipated under state law may complete their own meal applications. For youth who are under 18 and not emancipated, a school official may complete the application.

**Q:** If a homeless child changes schools, does the child continue to receive free school meals in the new school?

**A:** Once a child is certified as eligible to receive free school meals, eligibility remains effective for the remainder of the school year and continues for a maximum of 30 days after the first operating day in the subsequent school year, or when a new eligibility determination is made in the new school year, whichever comes first. If a student changes schools within the same LEA, the free meal certification must continue. If a student moves to a new LEA, the new district may rely on the eligibility determination of the prior district without incurring liability for any error.

**Q:** Under what circumstances may a local liaison or other school or district staff member disclose a student's free meal eligibility to persons or programs within or outside the school district? For example, we have community programs that provide automatic eligibility and priority for services to children who receive free school meals. May we provide these programs with information about students' free meal status?

**A:** In general, information about a student's free

meal eligibility status is confidential and may not be shared without parental consent; however, there are some exceptions (7 CFR 245.6). Relevant exceptions include:

- The school may share a student’s name and eligibility information with school lunch and breakfast programs at other schools and other school districts when a student changes schools;
- The school may disclose a student’s name and meal eligibility status to persons connected directly with the administration or enforcement of a federal education program, or a state health or education program administered by the SEA or LEA;
- The school may disclose a student’s name and meal eligibility status to persons connected directly with the administration or enforcement of a federal, state, or local means-tested nutrition program with eligibility standards comparable to those of the school meals program (e.g., eligibility for households with incomes at or below 185% of the poverty line); and
- The school may disclose a student’s name and meal eligibility status to Medicaid or the State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) when both the SEA and LEA agree to do so, as long as the parent or guardian has not declined to have this information disclosed after being notified of the potential disclosure and given the opportunity to decline.

To ensure that parents and guardians are informed of these exceptions, USDA regulations instruct SEAs or LEAs that intend to disclose free meal status to include the following statement on free meal applications:

“We may share your eligibility information with education, health, and nutrition programs to help them evaluate, fund, or determine benefits for their programs; auditors for program reviews; and law enforcement officials to help them look into violations of program rules.”

For children eligible through direct certification, including homeless children, the notice of potential disclosure may be included in the document informing parents/guardians of their children’s approval for free meals through direct certification.

Any other disclosures of a student’s free meal eligibility status require written consent from the student’s parent or guardian.<sup>3</sup>

**Q:** I’ve been asked to “verify” a student’s homeless status so she can continue to receive free meals. What does this mean?

**A:** Once applications for school meals have been processed and eligible students have been certified for free or reduced-price meals, school districts must select a small sample of applications for eligibility verification. The verification process is designed to identify students who are ineligible for the benefits they are receiving and encourage families to provide accurate information on their application.

Students who are directly certified are not subject to verification; therefore, most homeless students should never be involved in a verification process. However, if a homeless student was approved for free meals based on an application, the application may be selected for verification. These students’ families can be spared a substantial burden and a potential loss of benefits if the local liaison verifies the student’s homeless status with school meal administrators without involving the family. For students who are not verified this way, the LEA must send a notice to the household asking for documentation of eligibility. When parents do not respond to the verification notice, their child(ren) stop(s) receiving school meal benefits.<sup>4</sup>

If a local liaison is unable to verify a student’s status without involving the family, it is important that the verification notice explain to parents how to proceed if their child is homeless, runaway, or migrant. The USDA’s

<sup>3</sup> Only a parent or guardian who is a member of the child’s household for purposes of the free and reduced price meal or free milk application may give consent to the disclosure of free and reduced price meal eligibility information.

<sup>4</sup> During the 2008-2009 school year, 32 percent of households selected for verification did not respond. Research shows that substantial portions of the children who lose benefits as a result of non-response are eligible for free or reduced-price meals. See Neuberger and Greenstein for more information.

model verification notice states, “If you get this letter for a homeless, migrant, or runaway child, please contact [school, local liaison, or migrant coordinator] for help.”

SEAs and LEAs are encouraged to ask the local liaison whether any of the students with applications selected for verification are homeless before contacting the family, and to make sure the verification notice includes information for parents about whom to contact if they believe their child is homeless.

### BEYOND FREE MEALS: STRATEGIES FOR PROVIDING FOOD ON WEEKENDS AND AFTER SCHOOL

For schools that do not have meal programs and for all schools seeking to provide food to children and families on weekends and after school, the practices outlined below have been successful in communities across the country. For specific examples of successful local programs, see *Collaborating to Provide Food for Youth and Families After School and on Weekends* on page 10.

#### Help families and youth apply for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP / food stamps).

SNAP provides benefits that people can use to buy food at grocery stores, certain retail stores, and some restaurants. Federal regulations state that no one may be denied SNAP benefits because they do not have an address or a photo ID; also, there are no age restrictions or guardianship requirements. Unaccompanied minors, including unaccompanied homeless youth, are eligible for SNAP benefits. Eligibility is based on “household” income, not family income. A household is defined as people who buy food and prepare meals together. Federal rules regarding the SNAP homeless shelter deduction offer states a flexible tool to provide increased benefits to individuals and families who are without permanent housing but still have shelter expenses.<sup>5</sup> For more information, or to find your local SNAP office, call the national toll-free SNAP information line at 1-800-221-5689 or visit [http://naehcy.org/dl/tk/hs/21\\_snap.doc](http://naehcy.org/dl/tk/hs/21_snap.doc), or [http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant\\_recipients/10steps.htm](http://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/applicant_recipients/10steps.htm).

<sup>5</sup> For more information about how states may handle the shelter expenses of homeless families, see Jones.

#### Refer children and youth to after-school programs, day care centers, and homeless shelters that provide food through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP).

CACFP pays for nutritious meals and snacks for eligible children who are enrolled at participating child care centers, family child care homes, homeless shelters, and after-school programs. CACFP is a federally-funded program administered by states. Contact your state CACFP agency to apply for funds for your program or locate a participating facility. State contacts are available at <http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/care/>. Additional information is available at <http://frac.org/federal-foodnutrition-programs/child-and-adult-care-program/>.

#### Create weekend food programs.

Weekend food programs resulting from collaborations among schools, community foundations, civic groups, the faith community, food banks, and other organizations are becoming increasingly common.

Since many families and youth who are homeless lack reliable transportation, providing food at school helps eliminate transportation barriers and ensures that students have access to food. It is important to provide food in a manner and location where students can receive it privately and without stigma. Similarly, it is important to provide the food in a bag or container that does not make it obvious the student is receiving food.

Contact information for local food banks is available in the phone book or by visiting <http://feedingamerica.org/foodbank-results.aspx>.

#### Collaborate with grocery stores, farmers’ markets, and restaurants.

Local food businesses and farms may have a special interest in providing food for children and youth experiencing homelessness. See the district highlights above for examples of successful collaborations.

#### When other sources of food are not available, school districts may use Title I, Part A funds and McKinney-Vento subgrant funds to pay for food.

Students experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services,



regardless of whether they attend a participating school. In addition, LEAs must set aside such funds as are necessary to provide comparable services for homeless children who do not attend Title I, Part A schools. These set-aside funds may be used for homeless students in any school. Purchasing food is an allowable use of set-aside funds whenever reasonable and necessary to enable homeless students to take advantage of educational opportunities and when funding is not reasonably available from another source.<sup>6</sup> Additionally, Section 723(d) of the McKinney-Vento Act authorizes McKinney-Vento subgrant funds to be used to provide food to attract, engage, and retain homeless children and youth in public school programs and services, as well as on an emergency basis to enable homeless children and youth to attend school.

## CONCLUSION

Good nutrition is an important contributor to students' abilities to focus in class and succeed academically. The federal law governing the USDA's National School Lunch and School

<sup>6</sup> See Question G-11, Using Title I, Part A ARRA Funds for Grants to Local Educational Agencies to Strengthen Education, Drive Reform, and Improve Results for Students", available at <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/titlei-reform.pdf>.

Breakfast Programs grant homeless, runaway, and migrant students categorical eligibility for free school meals, ensuring them lunch, and breakfast and an afterschool snack if the school operates the program, every school day. However, schools also can play a role in providing students with nutritious food after school and on weekends by connecting families to other federal and state nutrition programs and through community collaborations.

## FOR MORE INFORMATION

For more information about child nutrition and how to ensure that nutritious food is available to families experiencing homelessness in your community, visit:

**Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**

<http://www.cbpp.org/>

**Food Research and Action Center**

<http://www.frac.org/>

**National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth**

<http://www.naehcy.org/>

**National Center for Homeless Education**

<http://www.serve.org/nche/>

**USDA Child Nutrition Division**

<http://www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/>

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## COLLABORATING TO PROVIDE FOOD FOR YOUTH AND FAMILIES AFTER SCHOOL AND ON WEEKENDS

- **Beaverton, Oregon:** In Beaverton School District, the local liaison receives a Community Supported Agriculture (CSA) membership, which provides her McKinney-Vento program with fresh produce from local farms. She also accepts donations of fresh produce from family or community gardens.
- **Bushland, TX:** In Bushland Independent School District, a rural district of only 1,311 students, the local liaison started a “SnackPak 4 Kids” weekend food program. She receives donations of food and money from the local community, noting: “We got the word out through our media about the program, and the support has been phenomenal.” The program, together with other local area school districts, developed a website to keep the community informed. Visit <http://www.snackpak4kids.org/> for more information.
- **Denver, CO:** Denver Public Schools (DPS) has received over 50 pallets of food from their local Whole Foods’ *Grab and Give Program*, through which each store may select a school or non-profit organization to receive food and donations from Whole Foods shoppers for a set period of time. DPS also receives funds and bread from Great Harvest Bread Co., which one weekend per year bakes an excess of their famous honey whole wheat bread and sells them for \$5.00. All proceeds from the bread sales go to DPS; and many patrons choose to donate the bread back to the district to share with a family experiencing homelessness.
- **Napa, CA:** VOICES, an agency serving youth who are transitioning from foster care to adulthood, partners with more than 15 state and county agencies to improve access to support services for homeless youth. Youth can apply for CalFresh (SNAP) benefits at VOICES offices in Napa and Sonoma counties, and receive financial assistance for food purchases. A CalFresh eligibility worker visits each office weekly to ensure the prompt processing of VOICES youths’ SNAP applications. Visit <http://www.voicesyouthcenter.org/> for more information.
- **Portland, OR:** The Blazers Boys & Girls Club program serves youth ages 6-18 at six different locations throughout the Portland metropolitan area. Blazers programs incorporate technology programming, volunteer opportunities, and organized sports. In addition, Blazers offers meals through the Afterschool Meal Program during their late-night teen program on Friday and Saturday nights. Blazers also supplies meals on weekends and during school holidays. Many teens participating in the program have developed close relationships with the staff and the chefs and often volunteer to assist with preparing and serving the food.
- **Reno, NV:** The Washoe County School District (WCSD) provides meals to children and youth staying at a local shelter. More than 300 youth at the shelter receive free breakfast and lunch through the Child and Adult Care Food Program (see page 9 for more information on CACFP). The youth also are able to participate in the Afterschool Meal Program as they attend evening classes. WCSD also provides meals to more than 1,000 youth participating in the district’s Re-Engagement Program, which offers students the opportunity to earn credits towards graduation and get back on track with their high school studies.
- **San Diego, CA:** The local liaison in San Diego Unified School District contacted Feeding America to seek assistance with providing food for the more than 5,000 homeless students in her district. This contact resulted in the creation of food pantries at five schools in addition to nine schools distributing 430 weekly food bags for students to take home for the weekends. The district also partners with San Diego’s Park and Recreation Department to provide barbecues and resource fairs for students and families.
- **Scottsbluff, NE:** Scottsbluff Public Schools created a weekend food program with the support of a locally owned grocer and Walmart.

**This brief was developed collaboratively by:**

**Center on Budget and Policy Priorities**

*http://www.cbpp.org/*

**Food Research and Action Center**

*http://www.frac.org/*

**National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth**

*http://www.naehcy.org/*

**National Center for Homeless Education**

*http://www.serve.org/nche/*

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Every state is required to have a coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth, and every school district is required to have a liaison for homeless students. These individuals will assist you with the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. For information on the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness in Texas and to obtain contact information for the liaison in your district, please contact:



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