

## UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

A financial aid administrator can also determine if a student is an unaccompanied youth who is either homeless or is self-supporting and at risk of being homeless. It is important to examine students' living situations and claims on a case-by-case basis. If a student does not have and cannot get documentation from any of the authorities given on page 26, you must determine if she is an unaccompanied youth who is homeless or is self-supporting and at risk of being homeless.

As defined in the margin note, a student is considered homeless if he lacks fixed, regular, and adequate housing. This is broader than just living “on the street.” It includes temporarily living with other people because he had nowhere else to go; living in substandard housing (if it doesn't meet local building codes or the utilities are turned off, it is generally not adequate); living in emergency or transitional shelters, for example, trailers provided by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) after disasters; or living in motels, camping grounds, cars, parks, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, or any public or private place not designed for humans to live in. It also includes living in the school dormitory if the student would otherwise be homeless. A student living in any of these situations and fleeing an abusive parent may be considered homeless even if the parent would provide support and a place to live.

The documentation for an FAA's evaluation of the living arrangements of a student must demonstrate that she meets the definition of this category of independent student. The determination may be based on a documented interview with the student if there is no written documentation available.

When you are making a determination of homelessness:

- Ask for help with determining eligibility from local school district homeless liaisons, state homeless education coordinators, or the National Center for Homeless Education (<http://center.serve.org/nche>).
- School district homeless liaisons and shelter providers can help you develop and implement procedures for verification.
- Relevant information can come from recognized third-parties such as private or publicly funded homeless shelters and service providers, financial aid administrators from another college, college access programs such as TRIO and GEAR UP, college or high school counselors, other mental health professionals, social workers, mentors, doctors, and clergy.
- Use discretion when gathering information, and respect the student's privacy. Some information, such as that protected by doctor-patient privilege, is confidential. Also, documents such as police or Child Protective Services reports are not necessary. Do not focus on why the student is homeless or unaccompanied but on whether the evidence shows that he is an unaccompanied homeless youth as defined in section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a); see the margin note.

## Homeless youth definitions

**At risk of being homeless**—when a student's housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate, for example, a student who is being evicted and has been unable to find fixed, regular, and adequate housing.

**Homeless**—lacking fixed, regular, and adequate housing.

**Self-supporting**—when a student pays for his own living expenses, including fixed, regular, and adequate housing.

**Unaccompanied**—when a student is not living in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

**Youth**—a student who is 21 years old or younger or still enrolled in high school as of the date he signs the application.

## Housing

**Fixed**—stationary, permanent, and not subject to change.

**Regular**—used on a predictable, routine, or consistent basis.

**Adequate**—sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in the home.

## Homeless youth determinations

DCL GEN-15-16

**Confirmation not required**

You are not required to confirm the answers to the homeless youth questions unless you have conflicting information. A documented phone call with, or a written statement from, one of the relevant authorities is sufficient verification when needed.

It is not conflicting information if you disagree with an authority's determination that a student is homeless. If you believe the authority is incorrect or abusing the process, accept his determination but contact the following oversight party, as relevant, to evaluate the authority's determinations:

- School district homeless liaison: contact the coordinator of education for homeless children and youth programs of the state's educational agency. A list of state coordinators can be found at: [http://center.serve.org/nche/states/state\\_resources.php](http://center.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php).
- Director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program: you should contact the local Continuum of Care (CoC) administering the HUD homeless assistance program. Go to <https://www.hudexchange.info/coc/> and click on "Contact a CoC" on the right side of the page.
- Director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program: contact the National Clearinghouse on Families and Youth by phone at (301) 608-8098 or by e-mail at [nfcy@acf.hhs.gov](mailto:nfcy@acf.hhs.gov).

- Determine eligibility based on the legal definitions provided.
- A determination of being homeless is not a dependency override or a case of professional judgment. Students should understand that they are able to contest an eligibility determination by a financial aid office by providing supporting information to be reviewed collaboratively by the school's general counsel, the financial aid director, and a recognized McKinney-Vento practitioner (such as a school district homeless liaison, state homeless education coordinator, or the National Center for Homeless Education).
- Unaccompanied homeless youth may use the address of your school as their own on the FAFSA.

For students you determine to be unaccompanied homeless youths or unaccompanied, self-supporting youths at risk of being homeless, select the homeless youth determination option (#4) in the dependency override field in FAA Access to CPS Online or EDE. On the paper FAFSA, fill in the relevant bubble in the "College Use Only" box (see the graphic on page 124), include your school code, and sign. For students who have already filed their FAFSA, submit a FAFSA correction using the Homeless Youth Determination flag on the "dependency determination" page (Special Circumstances flag item 176 on the 2015–2016 ISIR). To cancel a homeless youth determination, you use the same method as when canceling a dependency override: change the dependency override value to "2—FAA override canceled" in FAA Access or EDE.

As with a dependency override, you may rely on a determination by another school that on or after July 1, 2014, a student was in this category. Also, a new determination must be made each year for an applicant who is homeless or at risk of being homeless.

Students who don't meet the definition of youth because they are older than 21 (and not yet 24) and who are unaccompanied and homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless qualify for a homeless youth determination.