

# Identification of Children and Youths Experiencing Homelessness

Recognizing Common Signs of Homelessness  
McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth



# Who Is Homeless?



Section 725 of the federal McKinney-Vento Act—

The term “homeless children and youth”—

(A) Means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and



# Who is Homeless?

(A) Includes—

(i) Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a 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; or are abandoned in hospitals.



# Who is Homeless?

(ii) 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...

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and



# Who is Homeless?



(iv) 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).

# The McKinney-Vento Act

Every Local Education Agency is required to designate a homeless education liaison.

The McKinney-Vento Act describes the duties of the homeless liaison.

[McKinney-Vento, Sec. 722, (g)(6)(A)]



# The McKinney-Vento Act

*Each local educational agency liaison for homeless children and youths... shall ensure that—*

- (i) **Homeless children and youths are identified** by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies;



# The McKinney-Vento Act

**Housing questionnaire** administered to every family at least one time per year, as well as at enrollment

Ensure the designated homeless liaison attends **routine McKinney-Vento training**

Designate **building level liaisons** as required by [RCW 28A.320.142](#)

**Training** for building level staff

**Collaboration** with other agencies







# Strategies for Identification

# Strategies for Identification

1

**Post** the educational rights of homeless children and youth in all schools and throughout the community.

2

**Update** school websites to include forms and information for families experiencing homelessness.

3

**Provide easy-to-access information** for children, youth and families in all school buildings regarding the rights of students who are experiencing homelessness.



# Strategies for Identification Continued

4

**Active identification** of children and youth experiencing homelessness, including the identification of unaccompanied youth, preschool students and other early learners, is critical for school success.

5

**Districts cannot rely on self-disclosure** when identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness





# Common Signs of Homelessness

Adapted from the Illinois and Pennsylvania Departments of Education and the National Center for Homeless Education



Washington Office of Superintendent of  
**PUBLIC INSTRUCTION**

# Common Signs of Homelessness



**Every student, housed or homeless, is a unique individual; each with their own story.**

**Individual students may differ significantly from the following general characteristics.**

**Many students show no outward signs of their housing situation, which makes active identification by district so important.**



# Lack of Continuity in Education



Attendance at many different schools



Lack of records



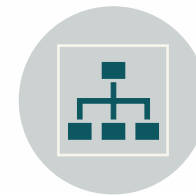
Inability to pay fees



Gaps in skill development



Mistaken diagnosis of abilities



Poor organizational skills



# Poor Health and Nutrition

Lack of immunizations and/or immunization records

Unmet medical and dental needs

Respiratory problems

Skin rashes

Chronic hunger/food insecurity

Fatigue



# Attendance Problems

Erratic attendance and tardiness

Numerous absences

Lack of participation in after-school activities

Lack of participation in field trips

Inability to contact parents





# Poor Hygiene



Lack of shower facilities/washers, etc.

Wearing the same clothes for several days

Inconsistent grooming

# Lack of Personal Space After School



Consistent lack of preparation for school



Incomplete/missing homework



Unable to complete special projects



Lack of basic school supplies



Loss of books and other supplies



Concern for safety of belongings



# Social and Behavioral Concerns

Marked change in behavior

Poor/short attention span

Extreme shyness

Difficulty socializing

Difficulty trusting people

Protective of parents

“Wise” beyond years

Clinging behavior

Poor self-esteem

Aggression

Anxiety

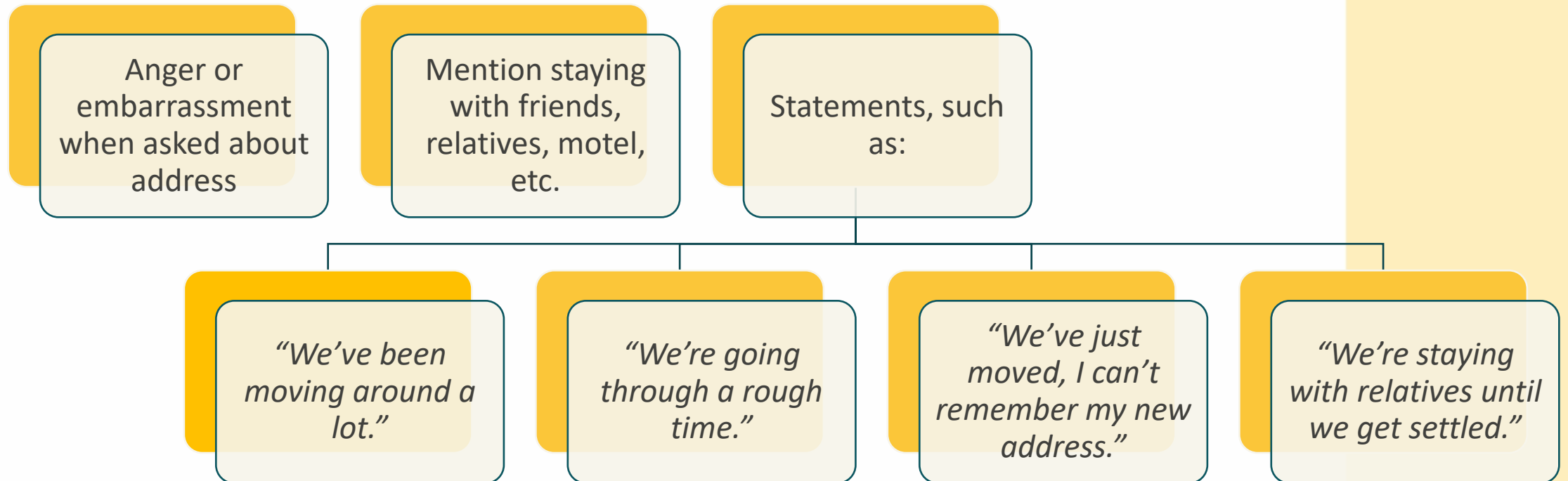
Unwilling to risk forming relationships with peers and teachers

Developmental delays

Fear of abandonment



# Reaction of Parent, Guardian or Child





# Awareness

# If You See Signs...

Contact the local school district liaison

Connect with the building level liaison

Direct families, children, youths (including unaccompanied youths) to the local school district liaison

[OSPI maintains a list of all liaisons in the state...](#)



# Quick Answers!

“OSPI School Staff Resource Guide”

“Frequently Asked Questions”

“Issue Brief: Homeless Education Liaisons”



# Resources

[Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction](#)

[National Center for Homeless Education](#)

[SchoolHouse Connection](#)

[National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth](#)





# Resources

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