

Homelessness



Giving homeless children the chance to be educated, giving them this ticket to their futures, is so wonderful. They will have the chance to not repeat the suffering of their childhoods in their own families. They can build secure and safe lives for themselves and their children.

— Laura Bush —

HOMELESSNESS MEANS "NO HOME" - RIGHT?

Nope! Have you ever had a student that slept on Grandma's couch for a semester? It's not necessarily a bad thing - - but has their life been disrupted? Will this affect their school-life?

DEFINITION: The term "homeless children and youths"--

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and

(B) 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 adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;

(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

(iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

How can schools help?

1. Stabilize the child's basic needs.

Have food, clothing, shelter, medical care, basic hygiene, and transportation needs resolved. Provide a community resource list to the family or youth. If necessary, find a place for students to shower. Keep nutritious snacks available. Don't ask students with insecure housing to bring food items or treats to school.

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Keep a supply of nutritional snacks in your classroom.

FACT: A reported 2,397 people were experiencing homelessness in Kansas in January 2022, and an estimated 29.1% of them were unsheltered.

The number of people experiencing homelessness in Kansas has declined by 2.1% since 2020, **but is up by 18.4% since 2010.**

How can schools help? cont.

2. Administer a brief educational assessment to the child to determine their level of academic ability.

A brief assessment in reading, math, and writing will avoid teaching above or below a student's ability while previous school records are obtained. Do an oral interview to find out the child's school history and share this information with other teachers.

3. Find time each week for new students to "check-in" with their teacher.

Assign an adult to check-in daily with new children during the first month of school. Have an adult watch new students during recess for the first few weeks since play time may be difficult for new students. Assign new students a "job" or have them become involved in extracurricular activities.

4. Pair a new student with a "buddy" in the classroom on the first day of school.

Having a buddy will keep new students in contact with someone who knows their way around the school. A buddy can also make sure new students have all their books and supplies to do work at home at the end of the day. Other welcoming activities include: Lunch with different staff members and the student's buddy during the first week of school; Play get acquainted games, or have the student fill out an "All About Me" sheet; and Have a current student give the new student a tour of the building, and introduce him/her to faculty.

5. Provide structure and adhere to a consistent daily routine and clear, concise rules.

Don't assume the child knows the classroom's behavior expectations, regardless of the student's age. Be patient and persistent in trying to help the child adjust to the new environment. Learn the unwritten rules of the poverty, middle class, and wealthy classes.



Ensure that homeless children can participate in field trips, school wide activities, and class projects even if they do not have the transportation or necessary fees.

6. Facilitate successful experiences for new students.

Many students who have not had a stable school experience have low self-esteem and lack positive feelings about school. Provide 10 to 20 times the normal amount of reassurance to children in transition.

7. Plan assignments so children can keep up without having to take work home.

Schedule the school day to allow teachers to help with school assignments before the end of the day. Provide school supplies and books. Provide "special occasion" supplies in private; Don't withdraw privileges if a new student doesn't return school materials; Don't take possessions away as a disciplinary measure; and If a new student falls asleep in class, let her/him sleep. It may be needed rest from living in a car or shelter.

8. If tutoring is required, be proactive in obtaining it through school or community programs.

9. If counseling is necessary, refer the child to the school counselor or outside community agency.

The child may have many and varied emotional needs that require attention.

10. Reach out to parents.

Send a "welcome" letter or videotape home to the parents. Create a special invitation inviting parents to a getting acquainted time. Provide transportation to home and school conferences. Above all, don't let the student "slip through the cracks" of the system.



Try to give the child something that he/she can call their own – taking care of a certain plant, class pet, etc.

Helpful Resources

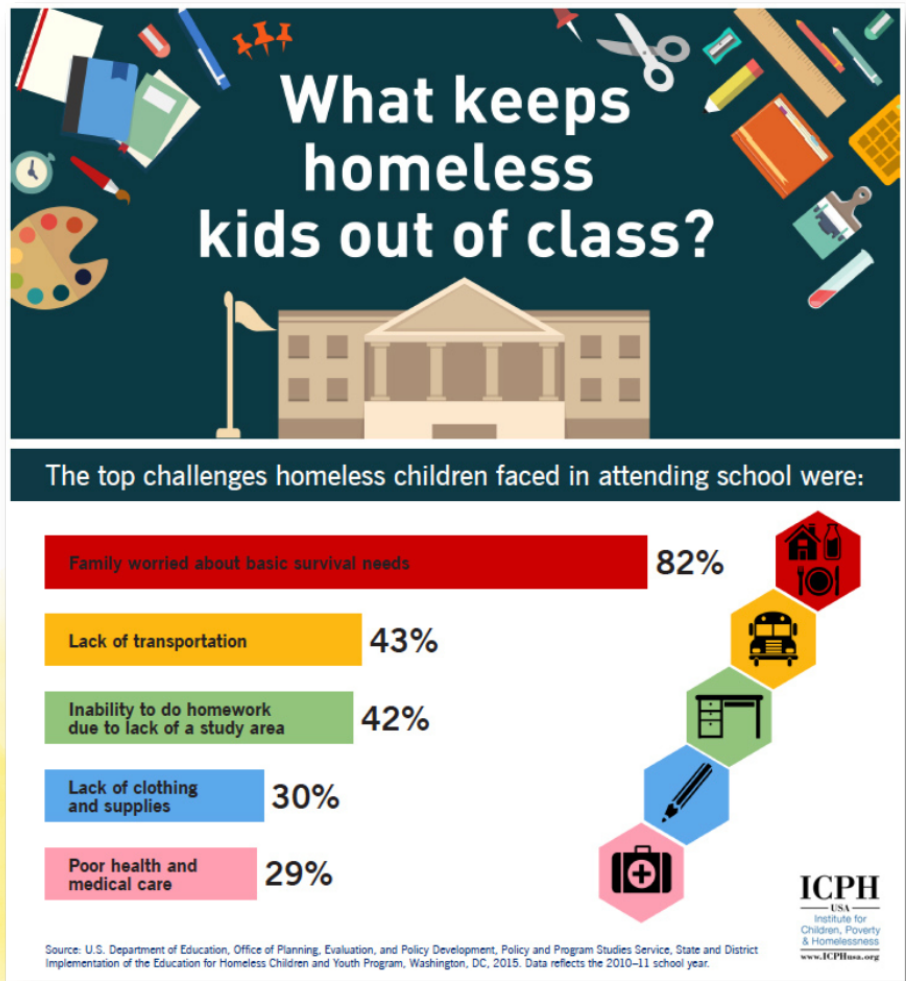
<https://www.weareteachers.com/homeless-students/>

<https://www.ahaprocess.com/tools-and-resources/>



Hold the child accountable for what he/she can control (behavior, attitude, etc.); not for what is not in the child's control (purchase of materials for art, etc.).

There are 9,715 homeless students in Kansas. 2% of all students



Homelessness is in Your School And School District, Even If You Can't See It.

- Homeless families and youth are much more likely to stay temporarily with other people, or in motels, than in shelters.
- Students of color, pregnant and parenting students, and LGBTQ students are significantly more likely to experience homelessness. In high school, Black students are 2.25 times more likely to experience homelessness, and Hispanic students are 2 times more likely to experience homelessness, than their white peers.
- Educators can respond to child and youth homelessness by understanding the full range of traumatic events that lead to and accompany loss of housing, and adopting a trauma-informed approach to identification and services.

Link to article

Five Facts Educators Need to Know About Student Homelessness – And Actions to Take
Sep 22, 2021 | Guest Blog, SHC Perspectives



Lori Jensen Wilson
Director of Special Initiatives
main (620) 584-3300
mobile (620) 243-2586
orioneducation.org



Megan Yoder
Reno County Learning Center Director
Educational Consultant
1500 E. 11th Ave. Suite 200
Hutchinson, Kansas 67501
620.664.6607 office
megan.yoder@essdack.org