CONNECTICUT COALITION to END HOMELESSNESS

School Is Here No Matter What.

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Connecticut State Department of Education
No matter what.
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CONNECTICUT COALITION to END HOMELESSNESS

Presenters:

Louis Tallarita
CT State Department of Education

Nicole Lenti
Odonnell Company

CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

The McKinney-Vento Act

No Matter What …

May 17, 2023

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B

- McKinney-Vento Act turns 36 this year (1987).
- ESSA amended McKinney-Vento, Title I, and the entire Elementary and Secondary Education Act in 2015.
- McKinney-Vento provides formula grants to states; States award competitive subgrants to local education agencies (LEAs).

State Coordinators

42 USC 11432(d)(3)

- Ensure McKinney-Vento students receive “the full protections and services provided by” the law.
- Monitor all LEAs.
- Publish an annual updated list of the liaisons.
- Provide professional development programs for liaisons and others.
- Respond to inquiries from parents, youth, LEAs and others.
- Gather, post and report homelessness data.
- Collaborate with broad array of educators, service providers, community organizations and policymakers.

Local Liaisons

11432(g)(1)(J)(ii)

- Identify McKinney-Vento students and ensure they are enrolled in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school.
- Connect young children to preschool, Head Start, and early intervention.
- Connect families and youth to housing, health, mental health and other services.
- Post public notice of McKinney-Vento rights to parents and youth.
- Carryout enrollment disputes.
- Provide professional development and support on McKinney-Vento to school staff.

Definition: Who is Eligible?

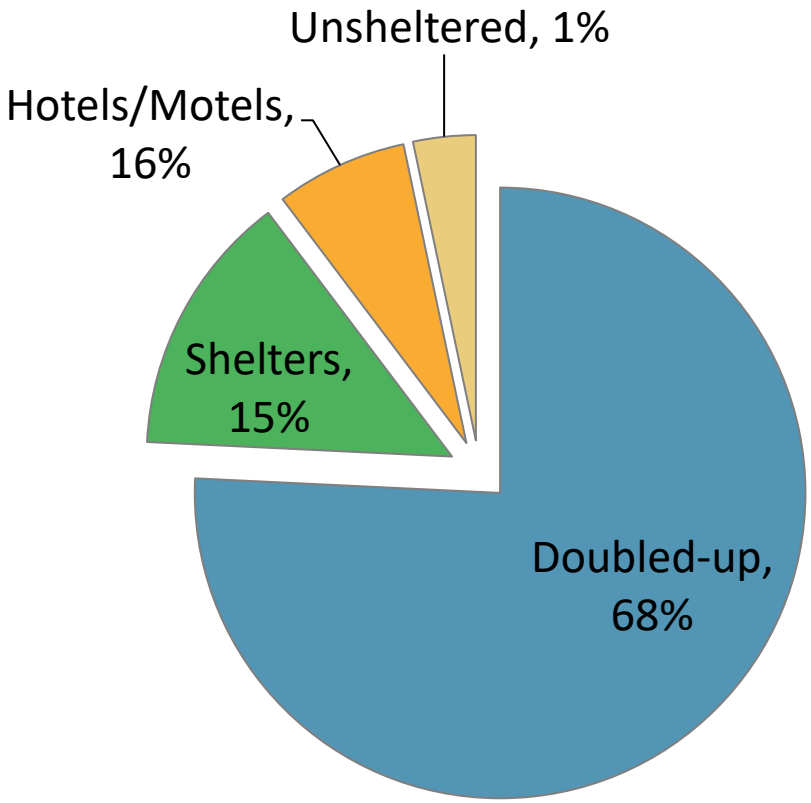
11434a(2)]

Those who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including students:

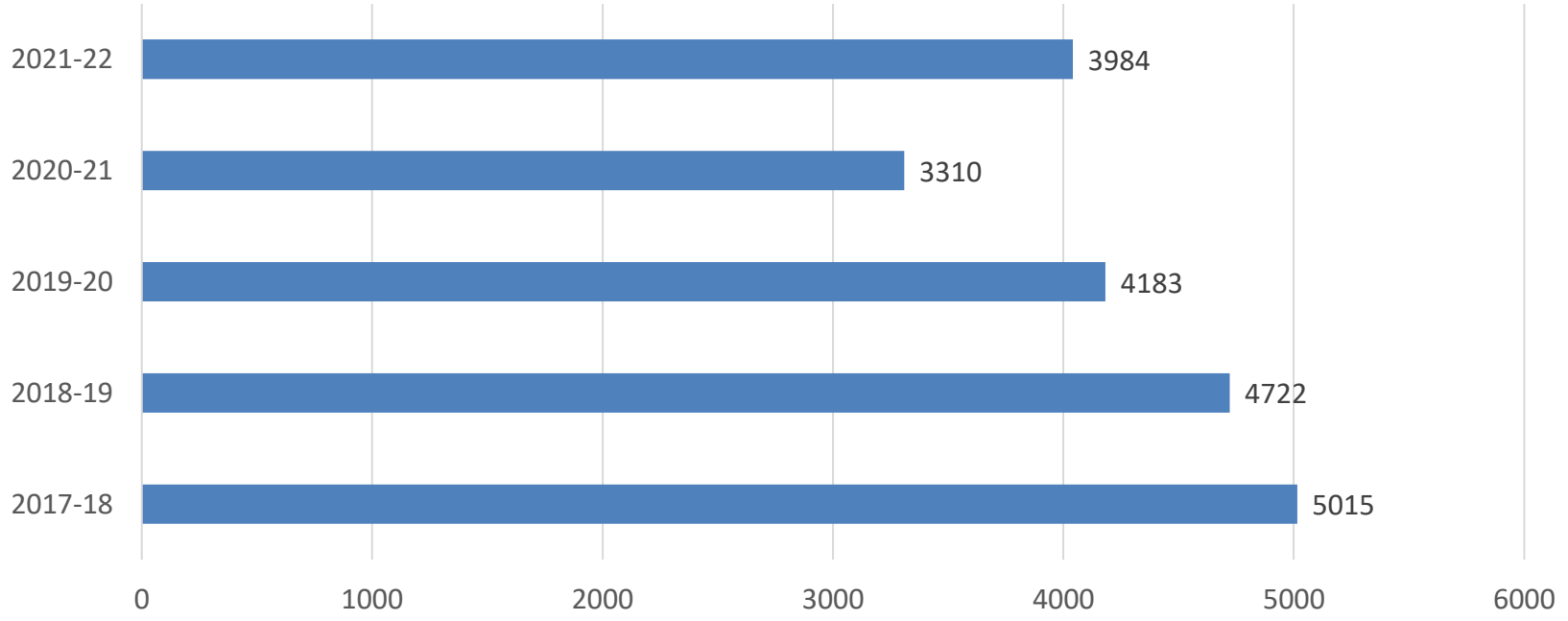
- *Sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.*
- *Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to a lack of alternative, adequate accommodation.*
- *Living in emergency & transitional shelters.*
- *Abandoned in hospitals.*
- *Living in public or private places not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.*
- *Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations or similar situations.*

Total Enrollment HCY: 3984

Enrolled by Primary Nighttime Residence



Students Experience Homelessness: Connecticut Five-year Trend



Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

42 U.S.C. § 11434a(6)

- includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- Liaisons must assist UHY with enrollment, school selection, & dispute resolution.
- Have the same right to immediate enrollment & educational services as other students.

School Stability

11432(g)(3)(I)

School of Origin (SOO): school attended when permanently housed or the school in which last enrolled, including a preschool.

- SOO includes designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools, when the student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin (ex. Middle to High School.)
- Preschool includes:
  - Preschool special education.
  - Publicly-funded program for children 0-5 for which the LEA is a financial or administrative agent, or is accountable for providing early childhood education.
  - Preschools operated, administered or funded by an LEA, including Title I or similar.
  - Head Start programs for which the LEA is the grant recipient.

Best Interest

11432(g)(3)(A)

Each LEA shall, according to the child's or youth's best interest:

- Keep the student in the *school of origin* for the duration of homelessness, and until the end of the academic year in which the student becomes permanently housed; or
- Enroll the student in any public school that housed students living in the attendance area where the student is living are eligible to attend.

Best Interest

11432(g)(3)(A)

- School of origin is presumed to be in student's best interest unless this is contrary to parent or UHY's wishes
- Consider student-centered factors such as impact of mobility on achievement, education, health, & safety.

Immediate Enrollment

11432(g)(3)(C)

Students entitled to immediately enroll in any public school that students living in the same attendance area are eligible to attend, even if:

- do not have required documents, such as school records, records of immunization and other required health records, proof of residency, guardianship, or other documents; or
- missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness.

Immediate Enrollment

11432(g)(3)(C)

- Enrollment includes “attending classes and participating fully in school activities.”
- Liaison must assist in obtaining immunization and other health records or screenings, and immunizations if needed; the student must be enrolled in the interim.
- Enrolling school must obtain school records from the previous school; the student must be enrolled while records are obtained.
- Immediate enrollment applies even without parent or legal guardian.

Dispute Resolution

11432(g)(3)(B)(ii)

- Disputes may arise over: eligibility, school selection, or enrollment.
- If enrollment or continued attendance is denied, a written statement must be given explaining the reason and the local appeal process.
- Provided in a format and language the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied homeless youth can understand.
- Students must be enrolled and receive services while any dispute is pending.

Transportation

11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)

- HCY are eligible for transportation to/from the school of origin.
- Right to transportation extends:
  - For the duration of homelessness; or
  - Until the end of the school year in which they obtain housing.
- Transportation should be comparable to what others receive.

Services and Supports

Educational services comparable to those provided to other students, include:

- special education services,
- preschool services,
- free school meals,
- Title I services; and
- gifted and talented services.

Removing Barriers

11432(g)(1)(I)

SEAs and LEAs must develop, review, and revise policies to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment and retention of McKinney-Vento students, including barriers due to outstanding fees or fines, or absences.

Independent Student Status FAFSA

- UHY qualify as independent students on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), so they do not have to provide parent information, and their federal aid package is calculated solely on their income and assets.
- Local liaisons must inform UHY about their independent student status and assist them in documenting this status
- Independent student status may be determined by local liaisons, RHYA and HUD shelter directors, and college financial aid administrators.

New EdSight Dashboard
Students Experiencing Homelessness

- State level dashboard provides HCY information including:
  - primary nighttime residence;
  - demographic and programmatic characteristics;
  - academic performance on state assessments; and
  - graduation rates.
- Additional tabs provide aggregate data at state and district level for viewing on screen or downloading to Excel.

- Visit EdSight.

Resources

- CSDE Homeless Education Webpage
- National Center for Homeless Education
- SchoolHouse Connection
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

CAMPAIGN

CAMPAIGN OBJECTIVES

Increase awareness of the McKinney-Vento Act and how this allows students experiencing homelessness/housing insecurity to remain in school

Increase ability for school-based staff/district staff to identify all students experiencing homelessness/housing insecurity

AUDIENCES

- Primary:
  - Parents/Grandparents/Caregivers of school age children experiencing homelessness/housing insecurity
  - Youth/Young Adults experiencing homelessness/housing insecurity
    - Special focus on LGBTQ+ population
- Secondary:
  - School-based staff/district staff
  - Community organizations

RESEARCH

RESEARCH APPROACH

In order to better understand the campaign audience groups, barriers they are facing in connecting to education, as well as the process by which students are identified, OC conducted the following research steps:

- Digital surveys:
  - McKinney-Vento Liaisons
  - General School-Based Staff
- Subject matter expert interviews

BARRIERS TO STAYING IN SCHOOL

- Lack of awareness that they have the right to remain in or return to their school of origin
- Mental health needs
- Transportation
- Commuting time
- Clothing - needing to wash clothes or clothing allowances
- Fees - for lost books or school supplies
- Focus is on basic needs

CHALLENGES IN IDENTIFYING STUDENTS

- Students are reluctant to come forward and self identify
  - Fear of stigma of homelessness/not identifying as homeless
  - Fear of being separated from their families or getting families in trouble
- It is not always obvious who is experiencing these challenges

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Important to be clear on definitions of homelessness and help available based on status:
    - HUD definition of homelessness (literally living on the street or in a shelter)
    - MV's definition (unstable housing)
- Easier to track students who are in shelters; the hidden people are staying with family/friends and are not meeting the HUD definition
- People do not associate themselves with the term "homeless"
- Terms used: moving around, staying with a friend, couch hopping
- Returning a student to their home school is easier than starting over with a new placement

MESSAGING APPROACH/THEMES

BEHAVIOR CHANGE & BRAIN SCIENCE

- People have a need for belonging
- Research shows that homelessness could take many forms, important to catch people who are “under the radar”
- Focus on school as support, link to other help/bring audience in
- School is an inclusive, stabilizing force even when life is difficult and other basic needs are not being met
- Create a sense of empowerment

MESSAGING APPROACH

- Clear, simple communications
- Key points for community organizations and school district staff
- Supportive and understanding
- Create a sense of empowerment
- The target audience is dealing with a host of difficult issues and, in some cases, trauma—calls to action should have a clear benefit
- Language matters. People do not necessarily associate themselves with the term homeless

CREATIVE

NO MATTER WHAT

Even when so much in life is unstable and you don't have a home of your own, you still have protections. No matter what your situation, there is support. School can provide stability in uncertain times and help you get support.

CT.GOV/NOMATTERWHAT

Display Ads

CSDE
School is
for Everyone

School is Here
No Matter What

School is Here
No Matter What
CSDE

CSDE
School is
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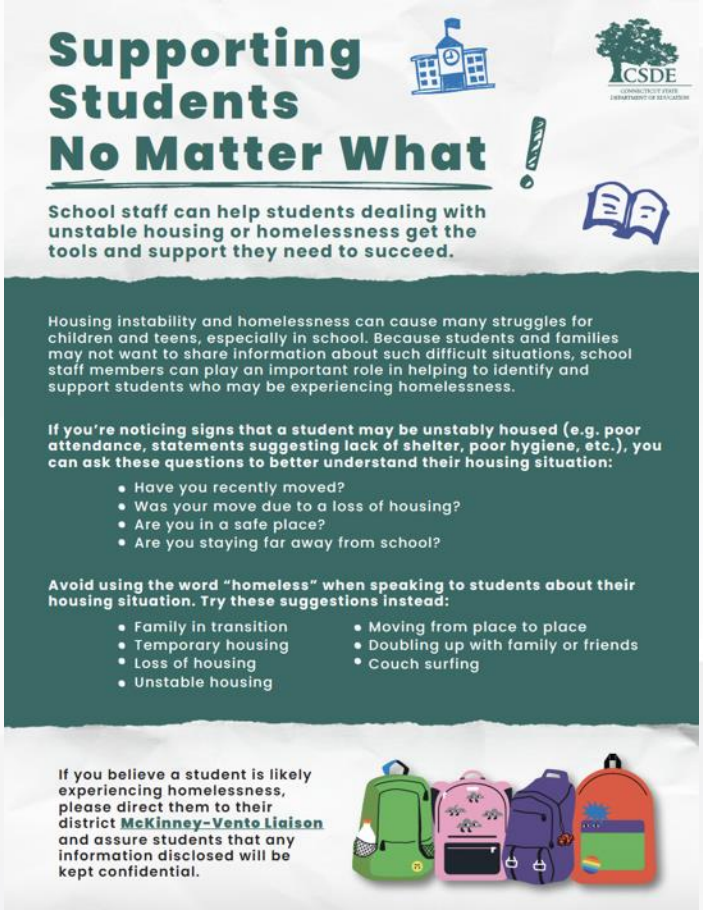
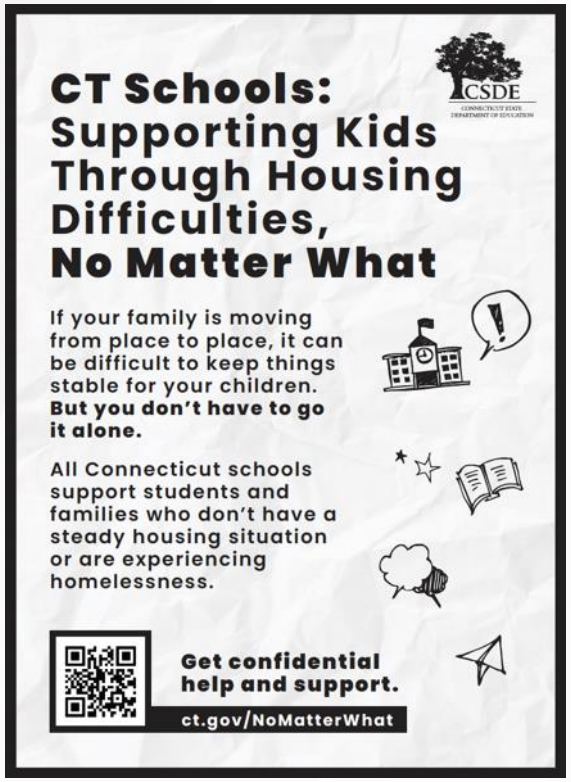
Animated Story Ads
(Snapchat & Tiktok)

Digital Screens



District PDF Flyer



Print Ad (English, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese)

Pediatrician Poster

MEDIA PLAN

PAID MEDIA

1.9 - 5.31.23

English Media Tactics:

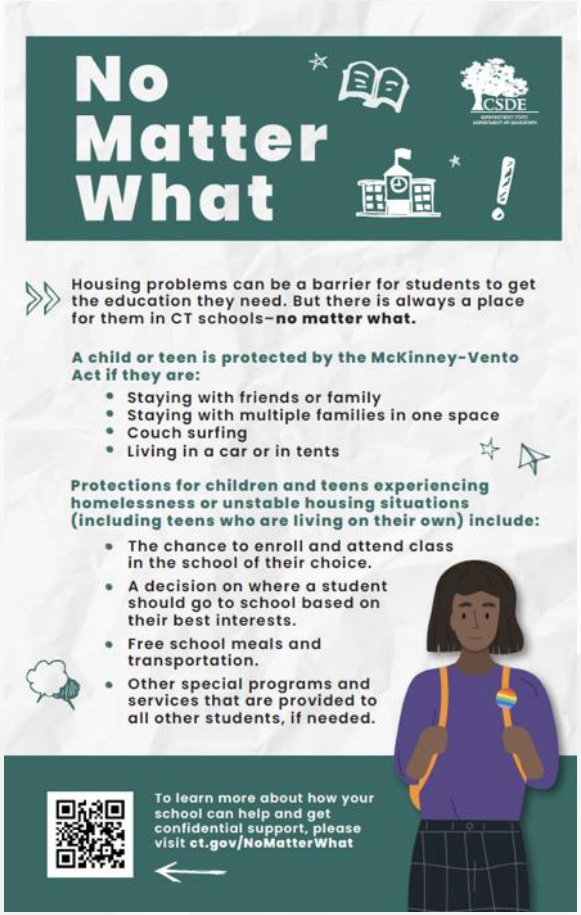
- Facebook & Instagram
- Snapchat & Tiktok
- Google Display
- GeoFencing Digital Banners
- Patch.com
- Newspapers
- Pediatrician Offices
- Gas Station Audio
- Convenience Store Digital Screens

Spanish Media Tactics:

- Facebook & Instagram
- Digital Content
- Influencer Vignettes
- Supermarket Screens

COMMUNITY OUTREACH

- Distributing posters to locations in the local community to promote awareness
- Food pantries, soup kitchens, community centers, YMCAs, libraries, faith-based organizations, LGBTQIA+ organizations, laundromats, etc.
- Concentrating on 4 markets: Bridgeport, Norwalk, Stamford, Danbury



OUTREACH RESULTS TO DATE

- **405** Posters distributed throughout Bridgeport, Danbury, Norwalk and Fairfield
- Visited **145** locations, such as
    - Food Pantries
    - Community Centers
    - Libraries
    - Churches
    - Malls
    - Restaurants
    - Bodegas
    - LGBTQIA+ Organizations

QUOTES FROM THE FIELD

"Nice to know these kids have this support in place."

"Thanks for sharing these posters with us, while I don't know any youth currently struggling with this. It's good to have this in mind in case I see any of them."

"Wow, I hadn't heard about the McKinney-Vento Act at all - but this is good information to keep in mind for youth experiencing housing insecurity."

I know a lot of people in the community that could benefit from this information."

Field Photos

Field Photos

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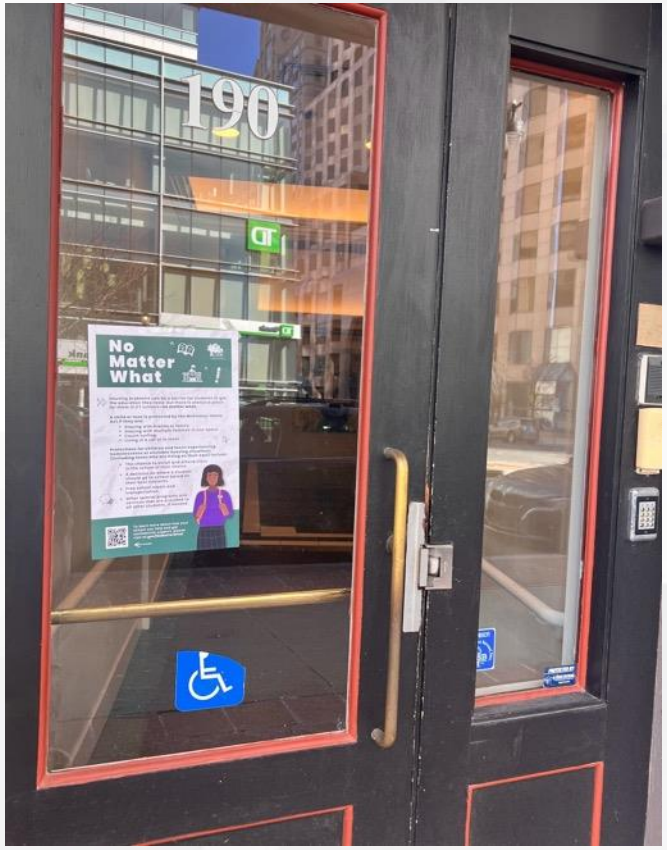

Field Photos

SPREAD THE WORD

CSDE SOCIAL/WEB LINKS

- www.facebook.com/ctdepartmentofeducation
- www.instagram.com/educate.ct
- CT.GOV/NOMATTERWHAT

UTILIZING TOOLKIT ASSETS

- Add to your school website
- Email communication to parents/caregivers
- Like/Repost/reshare elements from our social channels
- Display at school
- Share with PTA/PTSA/Athletic Associations for their distribution
- Share during faculty and/or staff meetings

ENGAGING STUDENTS

- Homeroom or school assembly
- Clubs re: Community/Volunteer activities
- Student Council/Student Government
- Volunteer hours for those to help spread the word
    - Putting posters in local areas
    - Share on their social media
    - Start a conversation
    - Collect needed items to keep in school for housing insecure

SPREAD THE WORD!

- Check out the toolkit elements on ct.gov/nomatterwhat
- Post information on your district social media accounts and follow the CSDE social accounts
- Connect with your Communications Director and/or McKinney-Vento Liaison!

QUESTIONS

THANK YOU

CONNECTICUT COALITION to END HOMELESSNESS

Questions?

www.cceh.org
info@cceh.org

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