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The Educational Success of Homeless Youth in California: Challenges and Solutions

By Patricia F. Julianelle, JD

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C A L I F O R N I A

R E S E A R C H B U R E A U

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By Patricia F. Julianelle, JD

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Contents

| | |
|--|-----------|
| EXECUTIVE SUMMARY | 1 |
| BACKGROUND | 7 |
| EDUCATING HOMELESS YOUTH IN CALIFORNIA..... | 9 |
| FEDERAL MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT | 9 |
| CALIFORNIA’S HOMELESS EDUCATION STRUCTURE | 10 |
| DATA ON HOMELESS STUDENTS | 12 |
| KEY ISSUES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH IN MEETING THEIR EDUCATIONAL GOALS..... | 15 |
| MEETING BASIC NEEDS | 15 |
| MAKING SCHOOLS SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE | 19 |
| IMPLEMENTING MCKINNEY-VENTO | 22 |
| FLEXIBLE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS..... | 28 |
| REENGAGING DISENGAGED YOUTH..... | 32 |
| IMPACT OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES POLICIES AND PRACTICES | 34 |
| COORDINATING EFFORTS AND INVOLVING YOUTH AS PARTNERS | 36 |
| POLICY OPTIONS | 43 |
| MEETING BASIC NEEDS | 43 |
| MAKING SCHOOLS SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE | 43 |
| IMPLEMENTING THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT | 43 |
| FLEXIBLE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS..... | 44 |
| REENGAGING DISENGAGED YOUTH..... | 45 |
| IMPACT OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES POLICIES AND PRACTICES | 45 |
| COORDINATING EFFORTS AND INVOLVING YOUTH AS PARTNERS | 45 |
| APPENDIX A | 47 |
| APPENDIX B | 51 |
| RESOURCES | 55 |
| ENDNOTES..... | 59 |

Homeless and Runaway Youth Project

The California Research Bureau (CRB), in participation with the California Council on Youth Relations (CCYR), and with support from The California Wellness Foundation, has been conducting a major research and policy initiative to bring attention to the issues facing homeless youth in California. These include lack of shelter and educational opportunities, health and mental health needs, and problematic interaction with law enforcement agencies and the courts.

In addition to this report, the project involves the following research components that will culminate in several public policy seminars.

- Journalist Nell Bernstein has completed a street-outreach survey that employed young people who were or had been homeless to interview over 200 of their peers around the state. In addition, New America Media (formerly Pacific News Service) organized focus groups of homeless youth in several cities. Ms. Bernstein is the author of a CRB report summarizing the research findings about homeless and runaway youth's experiences, their ideas about the kind of support that would help them the most, and the changes they would like to see happen in policy or law.
- Youth media will produce a DVD to highlight the youth's recommendations to state policymakers.
- Youth involvement is an essential component of the project. For this reason, the CRB examined how youth may be best prepared to participate in public policy forums. This inquiry builds on previous CRB work with at-risk youth and culminated in the recent CRB report, *Preparing Youth to Participate in State Policymaking* by Lisa Foster.*
- A youth advisory group made up of homeless youth organized through the CCYR focuses on housing stability for its participants; it meets weekly to discuss issues and provide ongoing feedback to the project.
- During the course of this project, the CRB has also been reviewing research materials on homeless and runaway youth to identify and summarize major issues and investigate promising program models. The bibliography will be published as a CRB report at the close of the project and will be available online.

* This report is available through the Internet at the California State Library's home page (www.library.ca.gov) under CRB Reports.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge the invaluable contributions of the many educators and advocates interviewed for this publication, listed in Appendix A. Their experience and unwavering commitment to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness yielded many of the key findings and best practices contained in this report. Although they expect no thanks beyond the satisfaction of assisting young people to find safety and reach their goals, the author thanks them for their time and support and for the excellent work they do every day.

Most importantly, we offer this publication to honor the many thousands of young people living in California's parks, abandoned buildings, bus stations, streets, shelters, motels, garages, and living rooms, who fight to survive and succeed on their own every day. These young people deserve our recognition. We are awed by their capacity to confront the challenges of adolescence and the transition to adulthood without parental guidance, economic support, or stable housing. They deserve reliable mentorship, safety, and stability. We thank them for their daily struggle and for who they are.

Internet Access

This report is also available through the Internet at the California State Library's home page (www.library.ca.gov) under CRB Reports. The report is formatted for printing pages on both sides so some pages are intentionally left blank.

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

“Through it all, school is probably the only thing that has kept me going. I know that every day that I walk in those doors, I can stop thinking about my problems for the next six hours and concentrate on what is most important to me. Without the support of my school system, I would not be as well off as I am today. School keeps me motivated to move on, and encourages me to find a better life for myself.”

Carrie
2002 LeTendre Scholar and formerly homeless youth

National data find that between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth leave their homes each year,¹ generally due to severe dysfunction in their families such as abuse, neglect, and other circumstances that put their safety and well-being at risk. Over 50 percent of youth in shelters and on the streets have reported that their parents either told them to leave or knew they were leaving but did not care.² These youth end up in a variety of temporary situations such as sharing the housing of friends or relatives (“couch-surfing”), living in an emergency shelter or transitional living program, living in a car or campground, or staying in a park, abandoned building, train or bus station, under a bridge, or in another public place.

Homelessness places youth at extreme risk of victimization and violence. Crowded living situations and exposure to the elements lead to higher rates of illness,³ and the mental and emotional stress of homelessness leads to increased risks of substance abuse, depression, and even suicide.⁴

Given this context, school can be an oasis for homeless youth, where they can find security and support and obtain the skills they need to survive safely on their own. Yet, three-fourths of California homeless youth surveyed for the California Research Bureau were not in school. Most of the 54 youth surveyed were between 17 and 24, yet only six had graduated from high school or attained a GED. This data is consistent with national surveys of homeless youth on their own.⁵ At the same time, a majority of California youth surveyed expressed the desire to return to school and had life goals (such as becoming a teacher or social worker or working in the medical field) that require extensive education to achieve.⁶

In this report, the term “homeless youth” refers to unaccompanied teenagers and young adults who lack safe, stable housing and who are not in the care of a parent or guardian. While many young people experience homelessness while they are with their families, this report focuses on those youth who are homeless on their own. They are also known by the term “unaccompanied homeless youth.”

Federal, State, and Local Structure and Funding

Passed in 1987 and reauthorized as part of the *No Child Left Behind Act* in 2001, the federal *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*, Subtitle VII-B (referred to as the *McKinney-Vento Act*), is designed to increase the school enrollment, attendance, and

success of children and youth experiencing homelessness. It establishes educational rights for homeless students and provides funding to all states.

The California Department of Education (CDE), the state educational agency, received \$8.3 million in *McKinney-Vento Act* funds for 2006-07. Federal law permits states to reserve up to 25 percent of their *McKinney-Vento* grants for state-level activities; in 2006-07, CDE reserved roughly five percent of its funding for this purpose. There is no state funding source dedicated to supporting the educational success of homeless students.

The CDE Office of State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth is staffed by one education specialist with 80 percent of her time dedicated to implementing the *McKinney-Vento Act*, and one financial administrator with 90 percent of her time dedicated to funding and grants administration for the Act. CDE conducts little monitoring of local educational agencies' implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act*: during the 2006-07 school year, 18 of 160 local educational agencies monitored for compliance with a variety of education laws were monitored for *McKinney-Vento Act* compliance.

Local educational agencies – 58 county offices of education and 1,054 school districts – have designated *McKinney-Vento* homeless liaisons and provide direct educational services to students.⁷ CDE disburses all the *McKinney-Vento* funds it does not reserve at the state level – roughly \$8 million – to 82 local educational agencies via competitive sub-grants (see Appendix B). These funds serve less than half (42 percent) of the close to 170,000 homeless students enrolled and identified by schools in the 2005-06 school year. Since federal funding is insufficient and there is no supplemental state funding, all local educational agencies use general education funds to implement the *McKinney-Vento Act* and to provide services such as transportation to homeless children and youth.

Data on Homeless Students

The *McKinney-Vento Act* and the United States Department of Education require states to collect enrollment data on homeless students. Local educational agencies that receive *McKinney-Vento* sub-grants must provide additional data. Nationally and in California, however, many agencies have not yet submitted complete or accurate data.⁸ Since these data collection requirements have only been in place for three years, many are still struggling to design effective data collection and reporting procedures.

California reported 169,722 homeless children and youth enrolled in school in 2005-06. However, the number of homeless students in the state is undoubtedly considerably larger. Close to 40 percent of California's school districts reported that they had no homeless students enrolled; many others reported homeless students in the single digits. In some cases, school districts that are located next to each other report vast discrepancies in the number of homeless students enrolled.

In addition to inadequate data collection and reporting procedures, factors that contribute to schools not identifying homeless youth who are enrolled may include inadequate

training on data collection, inadequate training on *McKinney-Vento* requirements (school personnel may turn homeless students away), and privacy issues (homeless youth may hesitate to disclose their living situations or request that counselors and teachers not share this information).

Key Issues for Homeless Youth in Meeting their Educational Goals

“From my experience, I can say that most unaccompanied youth do want to be in school, exactly because they’re homeless and on their own -- they know how rough it is out there. It’s a misconception that they don’t want their education. They may be too overwhelmed by the rest of their lives, but there is that desire to be in school.”

Cathy Requejo, Project HELP Supervisor
Austin Independent School District, Texas

This report discusses seven key issues related to challenges homeless youth face in achieving their educational goals. It also presents policy options that address these challenges.

Meeting Basic Needs: It is extremely difficult for young people to attend school if they must meet their own basic needs for shelter, food, clothing, and health care. While California has funded several shelter and transitional housing programs, these initiatives barely scratch the surface of the need for emergency shelter, transitional housing and independent living programs for homeless youth. Some of these programs refuse to serve youth based on their age, gender, or lack of a guardian; others, like emergency shelters, enforce specific time limits which create barriers to attending school.

Homeless youth are at an elevated risk for physical illnesses and mental health problems⁹ and, without access to health care, these difficulties will severely limit their ability to attend school consistently and to concentrate on their educational goals. Homeless youth also face many barriers to accessing public benefits such as food stamps, Supplemental Security Income, Cal-Learn and Cal-Works which provide nutrition and income. They may also lack information about the services for which they are eligible, transportation to benefits offices, and the capacity to advocate on their own behalf or obtain representation to ensure they receive the services to which they are entitled.

The public school system can offer a wealth of resources that can assist homeless youth in meeting their needs, including: school meals; laundry and cooking facilities; showers and personal hygiene supplies; lockers; clothing banks; bus passes; school nurses and on-campus health clinics; school counselors, and social workers; and parenting classes, daycare, and other resources for teen parents. Many schools have adopted policies and practices to provide homeless young people with access to such resources.

Making Schools Safe and Supportive: Despite their desire to pursue their education, if young people feel unwelcome, marginalized, or uncomfortable in school, they are less likely to attend. Therefore, programs and procedures to welcome and support students

who may feel isolated are important elements in enhancing their engagement and success in school. These include educational advocate or mentoring programs.

In addition, young people who sometimes stand out from their peers tend to be overrepresented among homeless youth, including youth who identify themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender, those who are pregnant or parenting, and students with large gaps in school attendance.¹⁰ School programs to support these youths' needs can also increase their attendance and success.

Implementing the *McKinney-Vento Act*: Although California has made progress in implementing the *Act* and has an active State Coordinator, the current *McKinney-Vento* staffing level at the California Department of Education is minimal compared with other states. The amount of professional development and technical assistance on the *Act* is limited due to lack of staff capacity, and the number of local educational agencies monitored for compliance with the *McKinney-Vento Act* is small.

Increased *McKinney-Vento* staffing in local educational agencies would enhance compliance with every aspect of the *McKinney-Vento Act*. Further, statewide procedures for enrolling homeless youth and determining educational decision-making for them would help schools implement youth's enrollment and participation.

Flexible Policies and Programs: Homeless youths' educational needs and interests vary widely. To permit homeless youth to access the educational options that best meet their specific needs and goals, schools must accommodate the realities and demands of homelessness and independence with flexible policies and programs.

Many homeless young people can benefit from special academic services such as supplemental education services, gifted and talented programs, and career and technical education. Non-academic activities, such as sports and clubs, are often critical for engaging youth in school and guiding them toward graduation. Awarding partial credits and facilitating credit recovery programs allow youth to continue earning credits and advancing toward graduation despite their instability. In addition, open enrollment policies ensure that youth can begin attending school and participating in activities immediately when they attempt to enroll, instead of being denied entrance due to deadlines missed because of homelessness or mobility.

Reengaging Disengaged Youth: Homeless youth tend to distrust adults and rarely initiate contact with service providers, which makes outreach to them challenging. Homeless liaisons and other service providers emphasize that, to engage homeless youth in school, any dropout recovery program must include hands-on outreach in the community by adults who are trained in effective communication with homeless youth, the challenges and needs of this population, and in the specific, responsive services and activities that schools can provide. They must be prepared to meet young people where they are physically and emotionally and must be equipped to respond to their most urgent needs immediately, either through resources at school or collaborations within the community.

Impact of Child Welfare Services Policies and Practices: There is a significant relationship between the child welfare system and homeless youth. Abuse and neglect are primary causes of homelessness among youth; thousands of young people in California become homeless after running away from abusive homes or being forced to leave home by neglectful parents. In many cases, the system's services are not sufficient to provide families with the support necessary to prevent youth homelessness; in other cases, youth who should have received services are never served. Many youth run from foster care placements they perceive as inappropriate, choosing life on the street over child welfare services.

Given the significant overlap between foster care and homelessness, programs that support the independence and education of foster youth offer services of great value to youth who are homeless. However, only current or former foster youth qualify for these services. Homeless youth need access to the same critical supports.

Coordinating Efforts and Involving Youth as Partners: To obtain services to meet their basic needs, homeless youth must generally seek help from a wide variety of public and private agencies; they must travel to several different offices (taking time away from work or school and requiring transportation), fill out different application processes, and explain personal and often painful details to many different caseworkers. Collaborations provide an alternative: they enable agencies to work together to craft more comprehensive strategies to help homeless youth navigate the maze of agencies by supplying more integrated services, cutting down on paperwork, and reducing delays in providing service. Collaborative efforts can increase efficiency and reduce duplication of services, which can translate into an expansion of services.

Specifically, given the importance of shelter and housing programs in the lives of homeless youth, increased support for educational success from such programs could significantly enhance young people's education. If state and local *McKinney-Vento* staff had more time and capacity, they might also expand their collaborations.

Homeless youth are the most experienced and well-informed experts regarding their own strengths, challenges, needs, and goals. They should be active participants in all collaborative and youth-serving efforts.

BACKGROUND

“I haven’t met a single runaway youth yet who didn’t leave home for a good reason.”

Sue Kanthak
Homeless Program Coordinator
Rockford Public Schools, Illinois

“None of my classmates knew that I didn’t have a home to call my own. No one knew that while I was listening to my teacher explain adjectives I was also wondering whether I would still have a place to sleep that night after school let out.... I knew that I didn’t want to be homeless for the rest of my life, and I saw education as the sure path to a more secure future. In spite of struggling with such an adverse situation, I wanted to maintain as high a standard as possible. I wanted colleges to look at me and see a student who really wanted to succeed and was willing to work as hard as necessary to reach her goals.”

Ashleigh, 2005 LeTendre Scholar * and formerly homeless youth

In this report, the term “homeless youth” refers to unaccompanied teenagers and young adults who lack safe, stable housing and who are not in the care of a parent or guardian. While many young people experience homelessness while they are with their families, this report focuses on those youth who are homeless on their own. They may have run away or have been forced to leave home by their parents, or have left foster care. Their educational challenges and needs are likely to be different from those of youth who experience homelessness with their parents.

Between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth leave their homes each year.¹¹ Generally, youth leave home due to severe dysfunction in their families, including circumstances that put their safety and well-being at risk. Over 50 percent of youth in shelters and on the streets have reported that their parents either told them to leave or knew they were leaving but did not care.¹²

Unfortunately, physical and sexual abuse in the home is common. Studies of homeless youth have found that 20 to 50 percent were sexually abused in their homes, while 40 to 60 percent were physically abused.¹³ Parental drug use or alcoholism and conflicts with stepparents or partners also provoke youth to run away from home.¹⁴ Many young people are forced out of their homes by parents who disapprove of their pregnancy or of their sexual orientation. For example, 20 to 40 percent of homeless youth in one study identified themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender, compared to only three to five percent of the overall population.¹⁵

* Established in 1998 in memory of André E. LeTendre, husband of Mary Jean LeTendre, former Director of Compensatory Education for the U.S. Department of Education, the LeTendre Education Fund provides scholarship assistance to students who are homeless or have experienced homelessness.

In addition, many young people who are on the street are foster youth who have left their foster care placements. Several studies have shown that between 20 and 55 percent of homeless youth are or were under the care and custody of the child welfare system.¹⁶

However, in a recent survey of over 200 homeless and formerly homeless youth in California, conducted by the California Research Bureau (CRB), over half felt that being homeless was as safe as or safer than being at home.¹⁷ And less than half of homeless youth are considered to have a realistic prospect of family reunification.¹⁸

These youth live in a variety of temporary situations. Some common living arrangements include:

- sharing the housing of friends or relatives temporarily (sometimes known as “couch-surfing”)
- living in an emergency shelter or transitional living program
- living in a car or campground
- staying in a park, abandoned building, train or bus station, under a bridge, or in another public place

Homelessness places youth at extreme risk of victimization and violence.¹⁹ Youth living in public places are often victims of physical and sexual assaults and robberies.²⁰ Some youth are forced to engage in “survival sex” in exchange for shelter, food, or money.²¹ Crowded living situations and exposure to the elements lead to higher rates of illness,²² and the mental and emotional stress of homelessness leads to increased risks of substance abuse, depression, and even suicide.²³

Given this context, school can be an oasis for homeless youth, where they can find security and support and obtain the skills they need to survive safely on their own. Yet, three-fourths of California homeless youth surveyed by the CRB were not in school. Most of the 54 youth surveyed were between 17 and 24, yet very few (six) had graduated from high school or attained a GED. This data is consistent with national surveys of homeless youth on their own.²⁴ At the same time, a majority of California youth surveyed expressed the desire to return to school and had life goals (such as becoming a teacher or social worker or working in the medical field) that require extensive education to achieve.²⁵

EDUCATING HOMELESS YOUTH IN CALIFORNIA

FEDERAL MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS ASSISTANCE ACT

The federal *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*, Subtitle VII-B (referred to as the *McKinney-Vento Act*), is designed to increase the school enrollment, attendance, and success of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Passed in 1987 and reauthorized as part of the No Child Left Behind Act in 2001, it is the only federal law dedicated specifically to supporting the educational success of homeless students. The *Act* establishes educational rights for homeless students and provides states with funding to support their school access, attendance, and success. It is a critical tool in any effort to help homeless youth meet their educational goals.

Each state, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico receive *McKinney-Vento Act* funds from the U.S. Department of Education (USDE).^{*} States receive an allocation between \$150,000 and \$8.3 million that is determined according to a formula based on the number of children in poverty in the state, without regard to the number in homeless situations. However, data on poverty and homelessness are related: poverty data for education purposes is based on the number of students receiving free and reduced school meals, and all homeless students are automatically eligible for free school meals.

Each state educational agency is entitled to reserve up to 25 percent of its *McKinney-Vento Act* funding for state activities. The remaining funds must be awarded in competitive sub-grants to local educational agencies. Sub-grant awards must be based on the local educational agency's need for funding, as well as the quality of the application.

The *McKinney-Vento Act* contains many provisions designed to support the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Key provisions of the *McKinney-Vento Act* include:

- Students who are homeless can remain in one school if that is in their best interest, even if their temporary living situation is located in another school district or attendance area. Schools must provide transportation.²⁶
- Children and youth who are homeless can enroll in school and begin attending immediately, even if they cannot produce normally required documents, such as birth certificates, proof of guardianship, immunization records, or proof of residency.²⁷
- Every local educational agency must designate a homeless liaison to ensure the *McKinney-Vento Act* is implemented in the district or county. Homeless liaisons must do outreach to identify homeless youth, assist them with school enrollment, and refer them to health and other community services.²⁸

^{*} *McKinney-Vento Act* funding has been level at \$61.9 million for the last two years. Due to this funding level, only half of all homeless students identified and enrolled in schools nationally receive direct services through *McKinney-Vento* dollars.

CALIFORNIA LAWS RELATING TO HOMELESS STUDENTS

- Gives county boards of education the authority to enroll homeless children in community schools (along with expelled students and those on probation or parole). [CA Education Code §1981]
- Defines the term “homeless children;” however, the definition conflicts with the *McKinney-Vento Act* and therefore is legally invalid for education purposes. [CA Education Code §1981.2]
- Conforms with three of the twelve homeless-related amendments to the federal *Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act* of 2004 (IDEA). IDEA provides special education and related services to children and youth with disabilities, including those who are homeless. California’s laws address a minor procedural change for parents of homeless children requesting dispute resolution hearings; clarify the state’s duty to identify, find and evaluate homeless children with disabilities; and affirm the obligation to appoint a surrogate parent for unaccompanied homeless youth. [CA Education Code §§56301 and 56502(c)(1); CA General Code §7579.6]
- Adds “homeless students” to the state law designed to support the educational achievement of foster children; notes that it is the intent of the Legislature that homeless students “have a meaningful opportunity to meet the challenging state pupil academic achievement standards to which all pupils are held.” [CA Education Code §48850(a)]
- Establishes the residency of homeless students for accounting purposes, to calculate the amount of state general education funding allocated to each local educational agency. [CA Education Code §§1982 and 2558.2]

- Every state must designate a state coordinator to ensure the *McKinney-Vento Act* is implemented in the state.²⁹
- Both state coordinators and homeless liaisons must collaborate with other agencies serving homeless youth and families to enhance educational attendance and success.³⁰
- State and local educational agencies must review and revise their policies and practices to eliminate barriers to the enrollment and retention in school of homeless children and youth.³¹

CALIFORNIA’S HOMELESS EDUCATION STRUCTURE

State Level

California receives more *McKinney-Vento Act* funding than any other state. The California Department of Education (CDE), the state educational agency, received \$8.6 million in *McKinney-Vento Act* funds for the 2005-06 school year and \$8.3 million for 2006-07. Even this considerable grant is insufficient to serve homeless students in California. *McKinney-Vento Act* funds serve less than half (42 percent) of the close to 170,000 homeless students enrolled and identified by schools in the 2005-06 school year.³²

CDE has established an Office of State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. This office is staffed by one education specialist with 80 percent of her time dedicated to implementing the *McKinney-Vento Act*, and one financial administrator with 90 percent of her time dedicated to funding and grants administration for the *Act*.

Federal law permits states to reserve up to 25 percent of their grants for state-level activities (over \$2 million for California). CDE reserved \$401,000 for 2005-2006 and for 2006-07,

roughly five percent of the total grant to fund state activities.

The California State Coordinator conducts two in-depth *McKinney-Vento* conferences annually for local educational agencies that receive *McKinney-Vento* sub-grants. She offers workshops at conferences of other education programs to inform educators who specialize in other education policy areas about the *McKinney-Vento Act*. The State Coordinator also provides county offices of education with modest grants and a variety of *McKinney-Vento* training tools to enable them to provide training to school districts in their counties.

CDE conducts little monitoring of local educational agencies' implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act*. During the 2006-07 school year, CDE monitored 160 local educational agencies for compliance with a variety of education laws. However, only 18 of those were monitored for *McKinney-Vento Act* compliance. This sparse monitoring is attributable primarily to the State Coordinator's limited time and capacity.

California has few laws that contain provisions specific to the education of homeless students; these are identified in the box on page 10. There are two additional legal requirements that affect homeless youth daily. First, California specifically gives youth living with non-guardian caregivers the right to enroll in school and has created a caregiver's enrollment form.³³ Although not exclusive to homeless youth, this statute has streamlined school enrollment for homeless youth with caregivers. Second, California law requires school personnel to report suspected child abuse and neglect to law enforcement or the child welfare department.³⁴ The impact of this law and this issue is discussed in the section "Making Schools Safe and Supportive."

Local Level

Local educational agencies provide direct educational services to students. California is home to a total of 1,112 local educational agencies, including 58 county offices of education and 1,054 school districts.³⁵ As required, each agency has designated a *McKinney-Vento* homeless liaison to implement the *Act* in the county or school district. The *McKinney-Vento Act* does not require the homeless liaison to be a full-time position, and although data is not available, anecdotal evidence and interviews indicate that there are few, if any, full-time liaisons in California.

As the *McKinney-Vento Act* requires, CDE disburses all the funds it does not reserve at the state level – roughly \$8 million – to local educational agencies via competitive sub-grants. Eighty-two of the 1,112 local educational agencies in the state receive sub-grants. Appendix B contains a list of the funded local educational agencies and the amount of each grant.

Only 42 percent of the 169,722 homeless students identified and enrolled in schools in California attend local educational agencies that receive *McKinney-Vento* sub-grants. The proportion is roughly the same for homeless high school students: 40 percent of the 33,956 identified high school students are served by sub-grants. Even those county

offices of education and school districts that receive *McKinney-Vento* sub-grants incur expenses related to homeless students that are greater than the funding they receive.

In addition, all local educational agencies that receive federal funding through Title I, Part A of the *No Child Left Behind Act* are required to reserve a portion of that funding to provide services to homeless children and youth. However, California dedicates no state funding to supporting the educational success of homeless students specifically.

Since federal funding is insufficient and there is no supplemental state funding, all local educational agencies use general education funds to implement the *McKinney-Vento Act* and to provide services such as transportation to homeless students. Some also pursue donations through local faith-based organizations, civic groups, and businesses to pay for school supplies, clothing, school fees, and other materials or services.

DATA ON HOMELESS STUDENTS

The *McKinney-Vento Act* requires each state educational agency to provide data to the USDE. Among the data the USDE must collect is “the number and location of homeless children and youth.”³⁶ For many years USDE accepted mere estimates of homelessness, rather than requiring states to submit verifiable data.

In 2004, for the first time, USDE required states to collect data on the actual enrollment of homeless students in all local educational agencies. Local educational agencies receiving *McKinney-Vento* sub-grants were asked to provide additional data on:

- number of homeless students served
- number of preschool, migrant and unaccompanied youth
- educational support services
- barriers to the education of homeless children and youth
- academic progress of homeless children and youth

Nationally, and in California, many local educational agencies have not yet submitted complete or accurate data.³⁷ Since these data collection requirements have only been in place for three years, many local educational agencies are still struggling to design effective data collection and reporting procedures. The State Coordinator is providing technical assistance to homeless liaisons to assist them in developing more reliable data systems.

However, the relationship between data and funding is indirect on the local level. Data on the number of homeless children and youth in a particular local educational agency does not determine the *McKinney-Vento* funding the local educational agency receives. Funding reaches only 82 school districts and county offices of education in California, through a competitive grant process based in part on need, and in part on the quality of the application. As a result, the lack of a direct relationship between data and funding may act as a disincentive for schools to expend significant time and cost in identifying homeless children and youth.

CDE's data report to USDE for the 2005-06 school year is attached as Appendix C. California reported 169,722 homeless children and youth enrolled in school in 2005-20; 34,441 of those students were attending secondary schools or adult education programs. Under the USDE's requirements, only the 82 local educational agencies that received sub-grants were asked to report specifically on homeless youth without parents. Those agencies served 1,501 homeless youth.

The number of potential homeless students is undoubtedly considerably larger than reported; 410 of California's 1,054 school districts (39 percent) reported that they had no homeless students enrolled. Many others reported homeless students in the single digits. In some cases, school districts that are located next to each other report vast discrepancies in the number of homeless students enrolled.

This uneven and missing data may be explained by: 1) school districts not identifying the homeless children and youth who are enrolled; 2) school districts not enrolling homeless children and youth; or 3) no homeless youth in their communities. The latter possibility is the least likely, since research on homelessness indicates that youth homelessness is prevalent in urban, suburban, and rural areas, with no significant variations based on socio-demographic or geographic factors.³⁸

Many factors can contribute to schools not identifying those homeless youth who are enrolled. Some of these factors are related to weaknesses in data collection in schools. For example, homeless liaisons may not have established adequate data collection systems or databases and/or may not conduct ongoing trainings on data collection for school personnel such as registrars, secretaries, counselors, and administrators. School personnel may not interview enrolling students appropriately to solicit information about potential homelessness. Further, legitimate privacy issues may impede accurate data collection, as many homeless youth hesitate to disclose their living situations or may request that counselors or teachers not share information about their living situations.

Statistics on the number of homeless youth who are not in school indicate that some of the school districts that report no homeless youth may be missing youth who are not enrolled. Despite the *McKinney-Vento Act's* requirements for immediate school enrollment of homeless youth, some schools erect enrollment barriers related to documentation, residency, and lack of guardianship. Even in school districts whose

STATE EFFORTS TO IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION

The California State Coordinator collects homelessness data as part of local educational agencies' consolidated application for federal funding. Every local educational agency completes and submits this application – through a computerized, on-line format – as a prerequisite for receiving federal education funding. The State Coordinator provides every local educational agency with detailed data collection instructions and a list of best practices for identifying homeless students. To encourage county offices of education and school districts to collect and submit data on homelessness, the computerized form will not accept an application without homeless data. Further, if the homeless data entered is zero, the State Coordinator requires a follow-up explanation of how the agency reached the conclusion that there were no homeless students enrolled. Finally, the State Coordinator prioritizes those county offices of education and local educational agencies that reported no homeless students for technical assistance.

policies comply with the *McKinney-Vento Act*, registrars and secretaries who have not received training in those policies are likely to turn homeless youth away.

Perhaps even more significant than policies or practices within school districts are the systemic barriers outside of school that prevent homeless youth's enrollment. The physical and emotional stressors of homelessness present formidable obstacles. Three-fourths of homeless youth surveyed in California in the CRB study had left school without graduating, in line with national statistics.³⁹ Since local educational agencies only report data on enrolled students, they are likely reporting on only one-fourth of the homeless youth in California.

KEY ISSUES FOR HOMELESS YOUTH IN MEETING THEIR EDUCATIONAL GOALS

Homeless youth leave school for a variety of reasons. For example, it is extremely difficult for young people to attend school if their basic needs for shelter, food, clothing, and health care are not being met. In general, homeless youth are unlikely to seek services from schools, particularly if they perceive schools as unwelcoming, unsupportive, or even potentially dangerous. Typical school policies such as waiting lists, class and activity fees, and requiring parental signatures pose barriers to the enrollment of homeless youth. Inadequate efforts to reengage those young people who have left school also limit youth's enrollment. Finally, lack of interagency coordination is also a contributing factor, as collaboration among schools and youth-serving agencies could promote school enrollment and also enhance data-sharing. This section discusses each of these issues in more depth.

MEETING BASIC NEEDS

"It's very difficult to talk to a youth about education when he doesn't have a place to stay. We need to provide the whole package for these kids."

Karen Fessler, Education Advocate
Project Connect-Cincinnati Public Schools, Ohio

The most significant barrier to homeless youth's educational success is the fact that they must struggle daily to provide for their basic needs, while managing the extreme physical and emotional stress of homelessness.⁴⁰ In the CRB survey of homeless youth in California, the reasons the young people gave for leaving school were entangled with their trajectories into homelessness and with the realities of homelessness itself.⁴¹

Shelter/Housing

It is extremely difficult for a young person to concentrate on school when he or she is forced to sleep in parks, abandoned buildings, and on the street. Not surprisingly, the last evaluation of the federally-funded youth shelter program found that shelters and transitional living programs produced positive outcomes for participating youth in the area of education: school participation among youth in shelters doubled after services commenced, compared to the participation rate 30 days prior to accessing the shelter, and the proportion of youth in transitional living projects attending college was three times that of homeless youth who were not in a transitional living program.⁴² Another study found that shelter use resulted in decreased school expulsions, suspensions and detentions, and increased self-esteem.⁴³

The state of California currently funds or has funded several shelter and transitional housing programs.⁴⁴ The federal *Runaway and Homeless Youth Act* also funds 32 emergency shelters and 18 transitional living programs for homeless youth in the state. Unfortunately, these initiatives barely scratch the surface of the need for emergency shelter, transitional housing, and independent living programs for homeless youth in California.

The Division of Juvenile Justice, which administers the Youth Center and Youth Shelter Bond Act Program, recently noted that “there is tremendous unmet need for these types of programs.”⁴⁵ Federal *Runaway and Homeless Youth Act* shelter programs in California alone turned away 427 youth in 2006.⁴⁶ This figure does not account for the well-documented fact that most homeless youth do not come into contact with shelters at all.⁴⁷ In fact, studies have found that as few as one in twelve homeless youth ever come into contact with the shelter system.⁴⁸

Many shelters and housing programs refuse to serve youth based on their age, gender, or lack of a guardian. Other shelters do not accept homeless families intact, which often separates teenage boys, in particular, from their families and forces them to fend for themselves. Further, many emergency shelters limit a youth’s stay to two or three weeks, forcing them into almost constant mobility and making it extremely difficult for youth to stay in school and focus on their education and mental health needs.

Finally, youth’s access to many federally-funded services, shelter, and housing is limited based on the youth’s particular living situation. Programs funded through the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) are unable to serve youth who are staying temporarily with friends or relatives or in motels. This is because HUD defines the term “homeless” to exclude individuals staying temporarily in others’ homes or in motels.

However, due to the shortage of shelter space and exclusionary shelter rules, and to avoid sleeping outside, many homeless youth stay in such temporary accommodations. Public schools, which are required by the education subtitle of the *McKinney-Vento Act* to serve youth staying temporarily in others’ homes or in motels, have documented that a full 66 percent of homeless children and youth enrolled in school in California, roughly 112,000 students, live in such situations. In the CRB survey of homeless youth in California,

thirty percent of those interviewed said they had spent the previous night at a friend’s or relative’s house. Seven percent said they had slept at a hotel.

Since they work with thousands of homeless children and youth who are not eligible for HUD services, many McKinney-Vento liaisons advocate for an expansion of HUD’s definition of homeless.

Due to HUD’s current definition of homelessness, none of those youth are eligible for HUD-funded services, shelters, transitional living programs, or housing. Since HUD’s definition prevents HUD programs from serving the more than 100,000 homeless youth in California who find temporary shelter in motels or with friends or relatives, other federal programs and state programs are even more critical resources for these young people.

Health and Mental Health

Homeless youth are at an elevated risk for physical illnesses and mental health problems.⁴⁹ Without access to health care, these difficulties will severely limit young people’s ability to attend school consistently and to concentrate on their educational goals.

While several California statutes support access to medical and mental health care for youth, including homeless youth (see box at right), barriers remain. For example, there are no provisions for youth under age 15 to access general medical and dental care without parental consent. Homeless youth may also face barriers in securing medical insurance without the signature and advocacy of a parent.

Other Public Benefits

Since they are not in the care of parents or guardians, homeless youth must meet their own basic needs. Public benefits such as food stamps, Supplemental Security Income, Cal-Learn and Cal-Works offer youth access to nutrition and income that can help them meet those needs.

However, homeless youth face many barriers to accessing public benefits. For example, Cal-Learn and Cal-Works have housing requirements that homeless youth may not be able to meet. Although a parental signature is generally not required, youth on their own are often refused benefits without their parent's signature. Homeless youth may also lack information about the services for which they are eligible, transportation to benefits offices, and the capacity to advocate on their own behalf or obtain representation to ensure they receive the services to which they are entitled. Barriers that prevent homeless youth from accessing public benefits and social services are barriers to their educational success.

“Minors are eligible for food stamps, a medical card, and a cash grant. But the public aid workers usually won’t give them the benefits. They just tell the youth to go home. Now, if a caseworker or I go with them, then they get the benefits.”

Sue Kanthak, Homeless Program Coordinator
Rockford Public Schools, Illinois

School-Based Resources

Among the basic needs homeless youth must meet on their own are food, personal hygiene, clothing, transportation, and physical and mental health. The public school

ACCESS TO HEALTH CARE IN CALIFORNIA

- ✓ Youth age 15 and older can consent to general medical and dental care.
- ✓ Youth ages 12 and older can consent for treatment for infectious diseases and sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV, outpatient mental health care, and drug and alcohol treatment.
- ✓ Youth of any age can consent for their own medical treatment related to birth control, pregnancy, and family planning, as well as in any “situation... requiring immediate services for alleviation of severe pain or immediate diagnosis of unforeseeable medical conditions which, if not immediately diagnosed and treated, would lead to serious disability or death.”

CA Family Code §§6922(a), 6924,
6925, 6926, and 6929(b);
CA Business & Professions Code §2397

SECURING PUBLIC BENEFITS

Many homeless liaisons, mentors, and educational advocates accompany youth to public benefits offices and medical clinics when they are applying for benefits or seeking medical care to ensure they are not denied access.

system offers a wealth of resources that can assist homeless youth in meeting those needs, including:

- ✓ School meals (homeless youth are automatically eligible for federal free breakfast and lunch programs and are not required to complete an application)⁵⁰
- ✓ Resources of home economics classes, such as laundry and cooking facilities
- ✓ Showers
- ✓ Personal hygiene supplies
- ✓ Lockers
- ✓ Clothing banks
- ✓ Bus passes
- ✓ School nurses and on-campus health clinics
- ✓ School counselors and social workers
- ✓ Parenting classes, daycare, and other resources for teen parents

**BEST PRACTICE:
USING SCHOOL RESOURCES**

It is common for high schools across the country to provide homeless youth with bus passes to attend school. Youth can also use the passes to travel to other appointments.

Other examples of schools opening up their pre-existing resources to homeless youth include:

- A high school in Bethel, Washington provides homeless youth with access to the school nurse, school showers and locker rooms before school, study space in the school library after school, and a supply of socks, underwear, toiletries, and school supplies in all the counseling centers.
- A high school in Cincinnati, Ohio lets homeless youth use school showers and do their laundry in the home economics class laundry facility before school.

These resources are already in existence on thousands of school campuses. Making them accessible to homeless youth does not require additional funding, but rather creativity and a willingness to “think outside the box.” Many schools have adopted policies and practices to provide young people with access to these resources (see box at left). Such policies and practices protect the dignity and privacy of homeless youth by ensuring that they can take advantage of services discretely, often before or after school.

Although allowing youth access to school resources may seem challenging, experienced homeless liaisons emphasize that only slight adjustments to standard school policies are necessary.

For example, the Alameda Unified School District provides students with a full-service health clinic on every high school campus, through a partnership with the Alameda County Public Health Department. The clinics are open to all students and the broader community, which

allows them to meet the needs of homeless youth who are in school, as well as attract other homeless youth who are not attending school. Each clinic contains information on school enrollment and at least one staff member who has received training on the *McKinney-Vento Act*, and on homeless youth and on school dropout recovery strategies.

MAKING SCHOOLS SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE

“Your reputation precedes you. Students start to bring friends in. If you help them, they will come.”

Jonathan Zook, Teacher/Homeless Liaison
Project Return, Portland Public Schools, Oregon

The risks inherent in being homeless and on their own force homeless youth to become experts at protecting themselves and fighting for their daily survival. Despite their desire to pursue their education, they are very unlikely to engage in school if they perceive school as a dangerous place. In fact, many studies have found that homeless youth tend to distrust adults and rarely initiate contact with service providers.⁵¹

Implementing strategies to make schools safe and supportive environments attracts homeless youth to school and nurtures their academic success. Researchers, educators, and service providers working with homeless youth highlight one basic principle for establishing partnerships with youth for their educational and personal success: schools must build trust with youth.

Educational Advocate or Mentor

“Personal contact right from the outset is key. Youth who have every reason not to trust anyone find out they can trust people here. We are cheerleaders, advocates, and nags, depending on what the youth needs. And they find out we are on their side and want to work with them.”

Diane Demoski, School Nurse, Burchell High School
Matanuska-Susitna School District, Alaska

Research shows that when at-risk youth are linked with a well-matched, screened, and trained mentor, they are likely to improve their academic achievement while decreasing their involvement with the juvenile justice system.”⁵² Educators who have worked successfully with homeless youth have found similar results. They advise that assigning a consistent adult educational advocate or mentor to partner with each student from the moment he or she arrives at school until graduation is the key to engaging youth and making school a safe and supportive place for them.

Many school districts have implemented mentorship programs for homeless youth. Their experience shows that mentoring significantly increases youth’s engagement in school, attendance, and success. Mentorship and educational advocacy programs for homeless youth take various forms. For example, in Portland Public Schools, Oregon, the *McKinney-Vento* homeless liaison acts as an educational advocate for homeless youth. The liaison is a certified teacher, with his office in the high school with the highest concentration of homeless youth. He keeps updated records on youth’s attendance and grades and checks students’ progress regularly. If a student’s attendance level or grades fall, the liaison intervenes to help the student get back on track.

In Rockford School District, Illinois, funding available through Title I, Part A of the *No Child Left Behind Act* pays for a full-time tutor who works exclusively with homeless

**BEST PRACTICE:
MENTORING PROGRAM**

California's Pupil Motivation and Maintenance (M&M) Program is a highly successful mentoring program that includes positive attendance programs, Coordination of Service Teams, Student Success Teams, and resiliency-creating strategies. However, its defining feature is a dedicated dropout prevention specialist, or Outreach Consultant.

Outreach Consultants serve as case managers and create "success plans" for students, which set individual student goals and courses of instruction based on educational strengths and interests. They provide the kind of individual attention, consistency, and accountability that youth need to focus on their educational goals despite the demands of their living situations. Outreach Consultants can also be a resource to draw out homeless youth who have been hesitant to identify themselves as homeless.

seniors. The tutor spends one day a week at each of the district's five high schools. Like Portland's liaison, the tutor reviews each student's attendance records and grades and sets individual goals with the students. They meet weekly, so the students are constantly monitored and kept on track for graduation.

In yet another variation, homeless youth at Burchell High School in Alaska are each assigned a mentor from among high school staff. Every adult in the high school serves as a mentor, and each works with no more than fifteen students. The mentor follows the student's attendance, progress, and needs on a daily basis.

"Most Butte County high schools employ Outreach Consultants who provide outreach, referral, and support to any students in need on their campuses. They are not specifically hired to outreach to homeless youth, but they are great resources for this population. Our County Office McKinney-Vento program works closely with all of the outreach consultants at the school sites."

Meagan Meloy, Program Coordinator
Butte County Office of Education, California

The California Department of Education has collected data demonstrating the success of Outreach Consultants and the California Pupil Motivation and Maintenance (M&M) program (described in the box above): *"The employment of an outreach consultant has proven to be a remarkable support for some of the most challenged schools in California. Dropout rates in the high schools are down.... Although the M&M program is focused on preventing school dropouts, it also has a significant impact on school-wide student achievement.... In 2002, 65 percent of M&M schools in California met or exceeded their API [Academic Performance Index] target compared to 52 percent of California schools."*⁵³

Unfortunately, funding for the M&M program (described in the box above) is so limited that it touches only 350 school campuses in the state.

Programs and Procedures for Vulnerable Populations

It is never easy to feel different from one's peers. This is particularly true during adolescence. If young people feel unwelcome, marginalized, or uncomfortable in school, they are less likely to attend. Therefore, programs and procedures to welcome and

support students who may feel isolated are important elements in enhancing their engagement and success in school.

Several subgroups of young people who sometimes stand out from their peers tend to be overrepresented among homeless youth. For example, in one study 20 to 40 percent of homeless youth identified themselves as gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender, compared to only three to five percent of the overall population.⁵⁴ Homeless youth are also more likely than other youth to become pregnant, to have large gaps in school attendance, and to have experienced trauma both at home and while homeless.⁵⁵

According to homeless liaisons and others who work with homeless youth, mentors and educational advocates play a key role in welcoming students and assisting them to find their niche in the school community. Other helpful programs and procedures include:

- Designating a safe drop-in space where youth can go any time they feel overwhelmed or stressed, such as the school nurse's office.
- Offering ongoing orientation activities throughout the school year, so youth entering after the start of the year can tour the school, meet key staff, be informed of school rules and expectations, and learn about academic and non-academic activities.
- Assigning new students a compatible peer mentor to orient them to school customs and activities.
- Establishing clubs and support groups for students who tend to be marginalized in school.
- Conducting campus-wide sensitivity and awareness activities.

These measures make schools safe and welcoming for homeless youth and serve to enhance their educational success.

State Reporting Requirements for Referral to Law Enforcement or Child Welfare Services

Under California law the following professionals who work in schools are mandated reporters of known or “reasonably suspected” child abuse or neglect:

- A teacher, teacher's aide, or other instructional aide.
- A classified employee of any public school.
- An administrative officer or supervisor of child welfare and attendance, or a certificated pupil personnel employee of any public or private school.

DEFINITION OF NEGLECT

General child neglect is defined as “the negligent failure of a person having the care or custody of a child to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, medical care, or supervision.” Severe child neglect includes “those situations of neglect where any person having the care or custody of a child willfully causes or permits the person or health of the child to be placed in a situation such that his or her person or health is endangered, as proscribed by Section 11165.3, including the intentional failure to provide adequate food, clothing, shelter, or medical care.”

CA Penal Code §11165.2

- Any employee of a county office of education or the California Department of Education, whose duties bring them into contact with children on a regular basis.
- An employee of a school district police or security department.⁵⁶

Educators make more referrals of suspected abuse or neglect than any other group of mandated reporters in the state. For example, between October 2005 and September 2006, educators referred 89,332 children and youth for suspected abuse or neglect.⁵⁷ However, subsequent investigations found that over half of those referrals were unfounded (false or “inherently improbable”).⁵⁸ These referrals made up 30.7 percent of the total unfounded referrals in California, far more than those of any other group of mandated reporters. Educators made another 15,388 inconclusive referrals (insufficient evidence to determine whether abuse or neglect occurred) and 13,996 referrals that were not investigated. Of the thousands of reports of abuse and neglect made by California educators, only 15.5 percent were substantiated.⁵⁹

California’s definitions of severe and general neglect could lead some educators to suspect that homeless youth are neglected, and therefore feel compelled to refer such youth to law enforcement or social services. Without reasonable limitations, these reporting requirements can erect significant barriers to the enrollment and assistance of homeless youth in school. It is hard to imagine a youth desiring to be taken into police custody or returned by police to a home the youth has fled.

It is also important to recognize that a very high percentage of homeless youth are or have been under the care of the child welfare system and feel the system has failed them. Many studies have found that homeless youth tend to distrust adults and rarely initiate contact with service providers, particularly child welfare.^{60*}

Homeless youth are very unlikely to seek traditional services, fearing that they will be returned to a home or placement that may be unsafe.⁶¹ If a young person believes that enrolling in school will result in him/her being taken into custody by the police or the child welfare system, there is little chance he/she will do that. In that context, requiring schools to report homeless youth to law enforcement or child welfare creates a nearly insurmountable barrier to school enrollment for many young people.

IMPLEMENTING MCKINNEY-VENTO

The sole purpose of subtitle VII-B of the federal *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act* is to improve educational access and success for children and youth experiencing homelessness. As such, the *McKinney-Vento Act* requires schools to enroll homeless

* California law (Education Code §49370) also requires school personnel to report missing children to law enforcement, who can then investigate the situation and protect the safety of the youth. Since most homeless youth have either been forced to leave home by their parents or have fled dysfunctional homes, relatively few are reported missing by parents. However, if school staff suspect that a young person may have been reported missing, they can immediately investigate that suspicion by contacting the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children.

youth immediately, even if they cannot produce documents typically required for enrollment, such as school records, proof of guardianship, immunizations, and proof of residency.⁶² The *Act* gives youth the right to remain in one school the entire time they are homeless, with transportation provided, as long as it is in their best interest.⁶³ To ensure these rights are implemented, the *Act* requires every state to establish an Office of the State Coordinator and every school district and county office of education to designate a homeless liaison.⁶⁴

Many provisions of the *McKinney-Vento Act* are designed to support the school attendance and success of homeless youth, specifically. For example, states are required to create professional development and awareness programs for school personnel about runaway and homeless youth.⁶⁵ States and homeless liaisons are required to identify youth who are homeless, with particular emphasis on those who are not in school, and provide them access to appropriate secondary education and support services.⁶⁶

To address systemic barriers to educational success for homeless students, the *McKinney-Vento Act* requires both state and local educational agencies to revise their policies to eliminate barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless young people in school.⁶⁷ Therefore, the California Department of Education (CDE), county offices of education, and school districts throughout the state must ensure that homeless youth can enroll in school and become positively engaged so that they remain.

CDE's efforts to implement the *McKinney-Vento Act* have been more effective and extensive since the *Act* was reauthorized in 2001. However, as interviews with homeless youth in the CRB study indicate that as many as three-quarters were out of school and/or had left school without graduating, it is obvious that there is more work to be done.⁶⁸

California is among the largest states in the country, with 1,054 school districts and 58 county offices of education.⁶⁹ Statewide implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act* is challenging. However, there are several fairly simple strategies that could improve implementation of the law and support the educational success of homeless youth across the state.

McKinney-Vento Staffing at the California Department of Education

California's Office of State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth is staffed by one education specialist with 80 percent of her time dedicated to implementing the *McKinney-Vento Act* and one financial administrator with 90 percent of her time dedicated to funding and grants administration for the *McKinney-Vento Act*. The Office of State Coordinator has many mandated duties, including providing technical assistance to local educational agencies and ensuring that they comply with the *McKinney-Vento Act*.⁷⁰ It is difficult to imagine how one, part-time employee could fulfill that requirement in a state with over 1,100 local educational agencies and 169,722 homeless children and youth identified by schools.

“The State Coordinator does a very good job and is extremely dedicated to the needs of homeless children. However, given California’s size and the number of homeless children and youth we serve, the state needs more staffing--particularly to provide technical assistance to those districts that do not receive McKinney-Vento funding.”

Jeri Cohen, Homeless Education/Foster Youth Services Coordinator
West Contra Costa Unified School District, California

Other large states have recognized that adequate staffing at the state level is essential for consistent, statewide implementation of the law. For example, over 195,000 homeless children and youth were identified in Texas in 2005-06 (a significant increase over the previous year’s census of over 140,000, due to the impact of Hurricane Katrina). The same year Texas received \$5.4 million in *McKinney-Vento Act* funding. The Texas State Coordinator’s office employs five full-time staff and an additional 1.25 full-time equivalents who serve as the fiscal agents for the statewide program.

McKinney-Vento Act Professional Development and Technical Assistance

The *McKinney-Vento Act* requires State Coordinators to provide professional development and technical assistance to local educational agencies.⁷¹ Currently, the California State Coordinator conducts two in-depth *McKinney-Vento* conferences annually, which are exclusively for local educational agencies that receive *McKinney-Vento* sub-grants. Of the 1,112 local educational agencies in California, 82 received sub-grants in 2006-07, leaving 1,030 agencies without this valuable professional development.

BEST PRACTICE: WEB-BASED TRAINING

Technology is a powerful tool for sharing information. In Indiana, a full-time State Coordinator supports the implementation of the *McKinney-Vento Act* in 335 school districts serving 7,457 identified homeless children and youth. To maximize the reach of her professional development efforts, the State Coordinator has developed a web-based training program, which allows her to share key information, track who is attending the training session, and test participants at the end.

Obviously, one part-time state-level staff member cannot provide professional development and technical assistance to 1,100 educational agencies. To her credit, the State Coordinator has developed creative solutions to leverage the limited time and funding she can dedicate to *McKinney-Vento* activities. For example, as often as her schedule allows, she offers workshops at conferences of other education programs. The State Coordinator has also implemented a novel train-the-trainer program to leverage her professional development efforts by providing county offices of education with a modest grant and a variety of *McKinney-Vento* training tools for them to use in training districts in their county. In the 2005-06 school year, 46 of the 58 county offices of education participated and provided training to school districts in their counties.

However, twelve counties chose not to participate in the State Coordinator’s train-the-trainer initiative, leaving school districts in those counties with no professional development on the *McKinney-Vento Act*. Even most participating counties did not reach

every school district in their county. Since California has no state law, regulation, or policy requiring homeless liaisons to participate in trainings, it is unclear how many liaisons have received professional development on the *McKinney-Vento Act*. However, it is safe to say that hundreds of school districts in California receive little or no training on the *McKinney-Vento Act* and are not adequately prepared to implement it. This lack of training limits schools' ability to identify and appropriately serve homeless youth.

Further, the *McKinney-Vento Act* requires every state to enact "programs for school personnel (including principals, attendance officers, teachers, enrollment personnel, and pupil services personnel) to heighten the awareness of such personnel of the specific needs of runaway and homeless youths."⁷² Although the State Coordinator's trainings provide an overview of the *McKinney-Vento Act's* application to homeless youth, CDE offers no specific trainings highlighting the needs of homeless youth and none targeted to school personnel such as principals, attendance officers, teachers, and enrollment personnel. Again, the State Coordinator does not have the capacity to reach every school campus in California. However, school personnel who are not aware of the specific needs of homeless youth will be less equipped to serve them appropriately. Awareness activities are also a critical strategy for identifying homeless youth in schools.

"In the traditional high school, the most important thing is that the staff has been trained and understands the challenges the youth are facing, and they don't set up barriers to these kids every day. The principals, attendance officers, teachers and front office staff need to 'get it' and come at it from the right perspective."

Karen Fessler, Education Advocate
Project Connect-Cincinnati Public Schools, Ohio

Monitoring Compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act

The *McKinney-Vento Act* requires CDE to ensure that all local educational agencies in the state comply with the Act.⁷³ Monitoring of local educational agencies' compliance with education laws is a proven strategy to increase compliance. CDE has adopted a system called Categorical Program Monitoring to monitor local educational agencies' compliance with a variety of categorical educational program and fiscal requirements.⁷⁴ Every year approximately one quarter of all educational agencies are considered for monitoring and subject to an onsite visit. In the 2006-07 school year, of the 350 educational agencies that were considered for monitoring, approximately 160 were actually monitored. The selection is based upon specific criteria determined by CDE.

Only 18 of those educational agencies were monitored for *McKinney-Vento Act* compliance, leaving over 1,000 educational agencies in the state virtually free of accountability for the *McKinney-Vento Act*. CDE's goal is to monitor 25 school districts and county offices of education for compliance with the *Act* in the 2007-08 school year. Again, the sheer number of school districts in California makes consistent monitoring a challenge. However, there is a great deal of room to grow between 25 and 1,100.

The main reason *McKinney-Vento Act* monitoring is so limited in California is that the State Coordinator does not have the capacity to travel to perform additional monitoring visits. To leverage her time, the State Coordinator is implementing a version of her train-the-trainer program to encourage county offices of education to assist with monitoring. She anticipates that county offices of education that receive *McKinney-Vento* funding will monitor one or two school districts in each of 11 regions. With additional personnel and resources, the State Coordinator could expand the county monitoring program significantly. Further, the Categorical Program Monitoring could include monitoring of *McKinney-Vento Act* compliance even when the State Coordinator is not able to travel, if the State Coordinator were to train other members of the monitoring team on basic *McKinney-Vento* requirements.

McKinney-Vento Staff in School Districts and County Offices of Education

The *McKinney-Vento Act* requires every local educational agency in the country to designate a homeless liaison.⁷⁵ The law does not require that the position be full-time, and it is unknown whether there are any full-time liaisons in California. *McKinney-Vento* homeless liaisons have a long list of legal responsibilities, including ensuring that:

**FOSTER CARE/
HOMELESS YOUTH LINK**

Increased state funding for homeless liaisons would be consistent with recent state efforts to improve educational outcomes for California’s estimated 80,000 foster children. These efforts include a \$19 million appropriation for the Foster Youth Services Program (FYS), which provides educational support services for children and youth in foster care.

- ✓ Both foster and homeless youth tend to experience high mobility and trauma, as a result many similar services are needed by both groups.
- ✓ The state enacted a requirement that each local educational agency designate a foster care education liaison. In many educational agencies, foster care liaison is simply a further duty added to the workload of homeless liaisons, such that liaisons have less time to devote to their efforts to serve homeless students.

- homeless children and youths are identified by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies.
- homeless children and youths enroll in, and have a full and equal opportunity to succeed in, schools of that local educational agency.
- homeless youths receive educational services for which they are eligible and referrals to health care services, dental services, mental health services, and other appropriate services.

Many California homeless liaisons have developed model programs and been recognized as leaders in their field. For example, this report highlights promising practices from the public schools of Alameda County, Fresno, Butte County, West Contra Costa Unified, and Eureka City.

However, others struggle to comply with their basic duties due to lack of time, training, or capacity. It is clear that school districts are failing to identify and serve a large percentage of homeless young people.

Particularly in areas with a higher concentration of homeless children and youth, dedicated homeless liaisons could do more outreach, reach more youth, ensure enrollment, connect youth with appropriate services, serve as mentors or educational advocates,

and increase community collaborations. Further, with more time to dedicate to the *McKinney-Vento Act*, homeless liaisons would be able to provide more technical assistance and training on school campuses, which would increase schools' capacity to identify and serve homeless youth.

Statewide Enrollment and Educational Decision-Making Procedures

“You can set up lots of programs, but if people don’t have protocols and procedures in place to make sure homeless youth can access them, it’s not much good.”

Cathy Requejo, Project HELP Supervisor
Austin Independent School District, Texas

Since homeless youth by definition live apart from their parents and legal guardians, they generally attempt to enroll in school independently or with the assistance of a friend, relative, or mentor. Under the *McKinney-Vento Act*, schools cannot turn homeless youth away from school based on the lack of a parent or guardian.⁷⁶ To facilitate statewide implementation of this requirement and help prevent homeless youth from being denied access to school, the *McKinney-Vento Act* mandates that states address enrollment delays caused by guardianship issues.⁷⁷

Some states have complied with the mandate by enacting laws regarding the enrollment of homeless youth. For example, New York has passed an Education of Homeless Children statute, which establishes a “designator” who may choose the school district and enroll the student in school. The definition of designator includes a parent, guardian, “the homeless child, if no parent or person in parental relation is available,” or “the director of a residential program for runaway and homeless youth... in consultation with the homeless child, where such homeless child is living in such program.”⁷⁸

California has passed legislation that specifically gives youth living with non-guardian caregivers the right to enroll in school, whether or not they are homeless, and has created a caregiver’s enrollment form.⁷⁹ While these laws have streamlined school enrollment for homeless youth with caregivers, they do not assist the many homeless youth who are not in an adult’s care. The lack of state guidance regarding how schools should go about enrolling youth on their own contributes to delays in enrollment and to youth being turned away from school.

Once homeless youth are in school, questions about educational decision-making often erect barriers to their participation in school activities. Generally, school procedures are based upon the fundamental assumption that a parent, guardian, or adult caregiver is present. School services and activities such as special academic programs, extra-curricular activities, athletics, school-based health care, and field trips generally require parental notification, signature or consent. School procedures do not adequately address educational decision-making for youth who are on their own.

FLEXIBLE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

“I work weird hours and I don’t really have a place to do anything. It makes it kind of hard to do work and turn it in.”

Homeless youth in California

“The key for us has been a huge variety of academic programs. There have to be many paths to success. Some youth do fine in a traditional high school program. Other kids need a change. The variety is fantastic.”

Steve Brown

Director of Community Schools/Community Connections
Bethel School District, Washington

Homeless youth are as unique and varied as all young people. Their educational needs and interests also vary widely, from students who will experience success in traditional high schools and continue on to college, to those who prefer to pursue career and technical training, to those who are returning to school after a long absence and need more flexible alternatives. To permit homeless youth to access the educational options that best meet their specific needs, schools must accommodate the realities and demands of homelessness and independence. Most importantly, such accommodations require flexibility.

Flexibility in Enrollment and Application Deadlines and Fees

Many homeless young people can benefit from special academic services such as supplemental education services, gifted and talented programs, and career and technical education. Non-academic activities, such as sports and clubs, are often critical for engaging young people in school and guiding them toward graduation. Therefore, it is important to ensure that homeless youth can access all the academic and non-academic school activities for which they are eligible.

Enrollment and application deadlines present barriers to homeless youth’s participation in a wide variety of academic and non-academic programs. Due to the instability of their living situations, many homeless youth are highly mobile, changing communities and schools several times a year. Enrollment and application deadlines can effectively bar these youth from activities simply because they were not in the school or the community when the deadline passed.

Open enrollment policies are critical for homeless young people, so they can begin attending school and participating in school activities whenever they attempt to enroll. For example, Texas has enacted such a policy for foster youth; it states that “a durational residence requirement may not be used to prohibit that child from fully participating in any activity sponsored by the school district.”⁸⁰ A law applying this standard to homeless youth would help ensure that young people can participate fully in school.

Fees to participate in certain classes or activities also pose barriers to homeless youth. As they struggle to meet their basic needs, homeless youth rarely have money for extra costs such as athletic uniforms, lab fees, or school trips. When fees prevent youth from

participating in school activities, school districts have responded in a variety of ways, including waiving fees, using funds reserved for homeless students under Title I, Part A of the *No Child Left Behind Act*, and using donations. Such flexible practices ensure that homeless youth are not denied access to school services and activities due to their dire financial circumstances.

Partial Credits and Credit Recovery Programs

“Highly mobile youth are not served well by the semester system. A kid who loses stability for two weeks could fall so far behind that he loses the whole semester. Too many students are enrolled and told they have no chance at earning credits for a given semester because of late enrollment or lack of usable ‘exit’ grades from another school. This is setting kids up for failure and using the system as a bludgeon against the situations of these students.

Increased flexibility will only help the students in these situations.”

Jonathan Zook, Teacher/Homeless Liaison
Project Return, Portland Public Schools, Oregon

Due to their inherent instability, it can be very challenging for homeless youth to earn credits and advance toward graduation in the traditional semester system. A short absence from school can lead to losing credit for the entire semester. In 2004, the state of California responded to this reality by enacting a novel law that requires schools to accept partial credit for coursework satisfactorily completed in another school (see boxes at right and on page 35).

Where it has been implemented, this law has benefited homeless and other highly mobile students significantly. For example, Fresno Unified School District uses a computer database, called Power School, which calculates and awards partial credits automatically. Teachers put student grades into Power School, and the database awards one credit when the student completes 15 hours of work. Currently, every middle school and high school in Fresno is on-line, and elementary schools are in the process of adopting the database. Fresno has also developed detailed policies for awarding partial credits upon enrollment and withdrawal of highly mobile students, and a simple credit verification form to facilitate the process.⁸¹

Unfortunately, implementation of the partial credit law has not been consistent statewide.⁸² Inter-district issues appear to be a significant barrier to homeless students receiving their credits. For example, even with Fresno’s model system, if a previous school refuses to send information on partial credits or to accept Fresno’s information, the student does not receive credits. Although California law contains provisions to

SCHOOL FEES

California law prohibits fees from preventing any student’s participation in field trips and requires schools to “coordinate efforts of community service groups to supply funds for pupils in need of them.”

CA Education Code
§35330

COURSEWORK CREDIT

“Each public school district and county office of education shall accept for credit full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed by a pupil while attending a public school, juvenile court school, or nonpublic, nonsectarian school or agency.”

CA Education Code
§48645.5

streamline the transfer of records for highly mobile students, many schools still fail to request or transfer records in a timely manner.⁸³ One school district does not have the authority to hold another school district accountable; yet, without inter-district collaboration and accountability, the partial credit system cannot function.

“There needs to be someone that has more jurisdiction to hold stakeholders accountable. With youth assigned from out of county, we have trouble finding the units or documentation proving they should have some units. Worse yet, sometimes we don’t find them in enough time to stop the student from repeating a course. Once the student is gone, we can’t hold an out of county agency accountable. Often, we post credits, but don’t even know where to send the records, and no one asks.”

Ann-Maura Cervantes
Assistant Director of Student Services and School Attendance
Clovis Unified School District, California

Credit recovery programs are the logical companion to the award of partial credits. These programs allow youth to fill in the gaps left by partial credits to obtain a full semester’s or year’s worth of credit. Further, by allowing youth to work at their own pace and outside typical school hours, credit recovery programs can greatly accelerate students’ graduation. Particularly for older homeless youth, this flexibility can be the key to their success.

Commonly, credit recovery programs use accredited computer-based courses or written packets to award youth credits in the context of supervised independent study programs. They tend to be offered before or after normal school hours or during study hall periods so students can participate simultaneously in a regular education program, a job, or other responsibilities. Importantly, the youth are enrolled in high school and can access all school activities and services, including regular classes, meals, mentors, counselors, nurses, tutoring, clubs, and sports.

In fact, California law requires that independent study students have full access to the services and resources of the school.⁸⁴ A teacher provides support and structure, and youth complete the work at school. Those two elements are critical for many homeless youth, who lack adult guidance and a quiet place to study.

Credit recovery programs are self-paced. Youth experiencing a time of great instability in their lives might work more slowly, while youth who are able to focus intensely on school can earn credits in a matter of weeks. Credit recovery programs are most successful if the computer courses and packets are adapted to match the student’s interests.

Alternative Educational Programs

“We have an alternative high school that works really well for many of our kids. They can go to school in three-hour chunks, either in the morning or afternoon. They attend a classroom with a teacher there to help them, but they work at their own pace, with packets or on the computer. They have a celebration every time a youth gets a credit. As soon as they get their credits, they graduate, but they still participate in our big, regular graduation ceremony in June.”

Sue Kanthak, Homeless Program Coordinator
Rockford Public Schools, Illinois

Most homeless youth have many more responsibilities than their housed peers, as they struggle to meet basic needs and make decisions without parental guidance. In some cases, these responsibilities may make attending a traditional high school difficult. Particularly those young people who are working full-time, are pregnant or parenting, or are older than typical high school students may prefer alternative education programs. For them to meet their educational goals, they must have access to alternative programs that meet their needs.

Of course, since homeless youths’ educational strengths and needs vary greatly, it would be highly inappropriate for educators or service providers to presume that a homeless youth cannot succeed in a traditional high school or would prefer an alternative program. Homeless youth should be informed of all available options and assisted in accessing the program that can best meet their preferences, needs, goals, and interests.

Ensuring access requires adopting flexible exceptions to enrollment and application deadlines and fees for homeless youth, as described above. It also requires ensuring that alternative programs have sufficient capacity to serve all the homeless youth who need them. Finally, adequate monitoring to ensure high quality among alternative programs is important.

California is home to a wide variety of alternative programs that have successfully served many homeless youth, including:

- ✓ *Evening High Schools*: provide high school curriculum after normal school hours
- ✓ *Continuation High Schools* (525 schools serving 69,601 students in October 2005):⁸⁵ provide high school curriculum to youth at-risk of not graduating from high school and offer flexible school hours, career orientation, work-study, and other specialized services
- ✓ *Career Technical Education*: teach youth skills that can help them find stable employment
- ✓ *Work Experience programs*: provide paid or unpaid on-the-job experiences for secondary school students through training agreements with employers
- ✓ *Regional Occupational Centers and Programs*: offer career and workforce preparation for high school students and adults

- ✓ *Diploma Plus High Schools* (a total of two in operation in the 2007-08 school year)⁸⁶: offer high academic standards and career development to students 15 years old and older who are at risk of not graduating from high school
- ✓ *Workforce Development* : partnership with the Workforce Investment Act and other programs to provide high school credit for work experiences
- ✓ *Middle College High Schools*: allow students to attend classes at flexible hours and earn high school and community college credits simultaneously, in a personalized environment, generally located on college campuses
- ✓ *Portable Assisted Study Sequence Program*: self-contained, semi-independent study courses which enable students to earn high school credits while accommodating challenges of scheduling and mobility

Most of these programs share certain key features, including a high degree of individualized support, flexible scheduling, an emphasis on career education and employment, rolling enrollment, and the freedom for students to work at their own pace. Further investment in these and other alternative programs would provide many homeless youth the opportunity to meet their educational and professional goals.

REENGAGING DISENGAGED YOUTH

California has developed dropout prevention and recovery programs, such as those funded through the Pupil Retention Block Grant.⁸⁷ However, the high percentage of homeless youth who are out of school demonstrates that these programs reach only a small fraction of homeless youth. That failure is likely due in part to a lack of capacity, since regular dropout recovery programs are not focused on the particular needs of homeless youth.

Homeless youth tend to face a confluence of unparalleled challenges. For example, they generally have no stable shelter, adult guidance, consistent physical or mental health care, or reliable source of food or basic needs. They are highly likely to have been victimized in their homes and on the street. They tend to distrust adults and rarely initiate contact with service providers, which makes outreach to them extremely challenging.

Homeless liaisons and other service providers emphasize that, to engage homeless youth in school, any dropout recovery program must include hands-on outreach in the community by adults who are trained in effective communication with homeless youth, the challenges and needs of homeless youth, and in the specific, responsive services and activities that schools can provide. These “Engagement Specialists” must be prepared to meet young people where they are physically and emotionally and must be equipped to respond to their most urgent needs immediately, either through resources at school or collaborations within the community. Engagement Specialists who provide tangible, immediate benefits are more likely to build the trust necessary to reengage youth in their education.

Most importantly, Engagement Specialists must listen to youth.

“Well-intentioned people sometimes come with their perspective of what the needs are, or ought to be. They put their energies into working toward what they believe the youth needs, instead of asking the youth and putting their energies into working with the youth as a team to meet what the youth identifies as his or her needs.”

Cathy Requejo, Project HELP Supervisor
Austin Independent School District, Texas

Many school districts have found success partnering with Peer Outreach Workers who go to skate parks, campgrounds, convenience stores, fast food restaurants, parks, and other areas where youth on their own can be found. This word-of-mouth publicity from peers who feel comfortable and successful in their school programs has been one of the most effective strategies to reengage youth in school.

As soon as a young person is ready to return to school, the Engagement Specialist must have the ability to immediately connect the student with the educational environment that is appropriate for his or her preference, needs, and interests. If youth must wait to reenter school, they may lose faith, or they may redirect their energies back to basic survival. Therefore, homeless youth must be exempt from waiting lists or enrollment deadlines. They should also immediately be involved in programs to provide support for reentry and ongoing guidance, such as mentors, education advocates, and California’s Alternative Education Outreach Consultant Program.

BEST PRACTICE: ENGAGING YOUTH

McKinney-Vento Act homeless liaisons with experience drawing homeless youth back into school offer the following tips for Engagement Specialists:

“You have to build trust. The youth are not used to having people stand by them, so they will challenge you and wait for you to abandon them, too. Realize that you can’t understand everything that is going on in their lives. Be honest and talk to them like real people.”

Karen Fessler, Education Advocate
Project Connect
Cincinnati Public Schools, Ohio

“When choosing a school program, talk with youth about their needs, strengths, experiences, and goals. Then make sure they have immediate access. Be consistent, tangible and reliable, and word will travel.”

Jonathan Zook, Teacher/
Homeless Liaison, Project Return
Portland Public Schools, Oregon

“First, listen. Then, let them know the services that are available related to what they’ve told you about their situation. Name three specific services you will provide them or things you will do for them immediately, and tell them you will continue to be engaged together to help them meet their goals. And then, follow through.”

Cathy Requejo
Project HELP Supervisor,
Austin Independent School District, Texas

IMPACT OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES POLICIES AND PRACTICES

“They need the freedom to make the mistakes that typical adolescents make, without homelessness being the consequence.”

Deanne Pearn, Director of Community Relations
First Place, Oakland, California

“Don’t just place us, help us! And follow up on us!”

Homeless youth in Chicago⁸⁸

Abuse and neglect are primary causes of homelessness among youth. Child welfare agencies exist to address such issues. Therefore, a very significant number of homeless youth are receiving, have received, or should have received services from the child welfare system.

Thousands of young people in California become homeless after running away from abusive homes or being forced to leave home by neglectful parents. This indicates that, in many cases, the system’s services are not sufficient to provide families with the support necessary to prevent youth homelessness. And youth who should have received services are never served.

Others have received services, but unsuccessfully. Many youth who do receive assistance that prevents their homelessness in the short term still find themselves homeless in the longer term; they abscond from foster care placements they perceive as inappropriate, choosing life on the street over the services child welfare offers. Studies show that of youth who are in foster care at age 16, one in five “exit” foster care by running away.⁸⁹ A study in New York found that young people who run away from child welfare are even more at risk for homelessness than those who age out when they turn 18.⁹⁰

In fact, many studies have shown that being in the care of the child welfare system leads many youth into homelessness. Nationally, 26 percent of homeless adults and 34 percent of homeless young people aged 20-24 spent time in foster care. Among homeless teenagers aged 18-19, the figure jumps to 61 percent: six of every ten homeless 18- and 19-year olds have been in foster care.⁹¹ In comparison, only three percent of the overall population has spent time in the child welfare system.

These statistics are particularly important in California, because California is home to one out of every five foster children in the nation, a total of roughly 80,000 children and youth. Five thousand youth in California “age out” or complete their eligibility for foster care each year. Sixty-five percent of them do so without a place to live, and up to half experience homelessness before their 20th birthday.⁹² Thus, the child welfare system in California, and nationally, fails to prepare most of its wards for independence. Even upon completing their eligibility for services, most do not have a place to live when they leave care.

Child Welfare Services and Educational Outcomes

Recent changes in California law have increased the child welfare system's accountability for educational outcomes. For example, when making out-of-home placements, child welfare agencies must endeavor to promote educational stability. The choice of placement must be based in part on its proximity to the youth's school.⁹³ However, school staff charged with facilitating the school enrollment and attendance of foster children indicate that this law is being implemented inconsistently.⁹⁴

Notably, California is home to many state and local programs that support the independence and education of foster youth, including several national models. Given the significant overlap between foster care and homelessness, these programs offer services of great value to both groups. However, only foster care youth, or former foster care youth, qualify for these services.

Given that most homeless youth who have not received child welfare services either fled their homes to escape abuse or have been kicked out of their homes by neglectful parents, restricting important services to those who have been involved in the system is an artificial distinction that denies appropriate services to young people who need them. Such restrictions treat homeless youth who have not been in foster care as a separate population, leaving them with fewer resources to address their needs.

Among the model California programs for foster youth that could provide critical services to other homeless youth are:

- The National League of Cities recently highlighted efforts in San Francisco to assist youth leaving foster care. San Francisco has increased permanent, affordable supportive housing and transitional housing for emancipated foster youth and established an Independent Living Skills Center for young people

FOSTER CARE PROVISIONS RELEVANT TO HOMELESS YOUTH

Assembly Bill 490 (2004), expressed the intent to improve the educational outcomes for children and youth in foster care, and enacted:

“In fulfilling their responsibilities to these pupils, educators, county placing agencies, care providers, advocates, and the juvenile courts shall work together to maintain stable school placements and to ensure that each pupil is placed in the least restrictive educational programs, and has access to the academic resources, services, and extracurricular and enrichment activities that are available to all pupils. In all instances, educational and school placement decisions must be based on the best interests of the child.”

CA Education Code §48850(a)

“Each local educational agency shall designate a staff person as the educational liaison for foster children.”

CA Education Code §48853.5(b)

“At the initial detention or placement, or any subsequent change in placement of a foster child, the local educational agency serving the foster child shall allow the foster child to continue his or her education in the school of origin for the duration of the academic school year.”

CA Education Code §48853.5(d)(1)

“[T]he foster child shall immediately be enrolled in the new school. The new school shall immediately enroll the foster child even if the foster child has outstanding fees, fines, textbooks, or other items or moneys due to the school last attended or is unable to produce records or clothing normally required for enrollment, such as previous academic records, medical records, proof of residency, other documentation, or school uniforms.”

CA Education Code §48853.5(d)(4)

- transitioning out of foster care.⁹⁵
- Los Angeles County has developed a model inter-agency collaboration to raise the educational achievement of foster youth. The County Education Coordinating Council (ECC) brings together, for the first time, the major stakeholders responsible for the educational performance of foster and probation youth. Its 23 members include the leadership of school districts with significant numbers of youth in care, county departments, the juvenile court, city and county children's commissions, advocacy and planning groups, community agencies, and youth and their caregivers. Among the ECC's achievements are:
 - ✓ Obtaining a fee waiver from Los Angeles Universal Preschool (LAUP) for foster parents, parents whose children are under the auspices of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), and teen parents in the foster care or juvenile justice systems.
 - ✓ Establishing a pilot program within DCFS and Probation to fill available openings in State Preschool, Early Head Start, Head Start, and LAUP programs with foster children and the children of foster and probation youth.
 - ✓ Ensuring improved access of foster and probation youth to the Los Angeles Unified School District's Beyond the Bell after-school programs.⁹⁶
 - Alameda County's Department of Social Services and First Place, an Oakland nonprofit agency, partnered to obtain state funds through the Transitional Housing Program for Emancipated Foster Youth. First Place provides safe, affordable housing to youth 16 to 23 years old who are preparing to age out of foster care or who have recently aged out of care. Through intensive case management, independent living skills, and financial support, the youth are able to maintain their housing and transition successfully from foster care. First Place youth are four times less likely to be homeless than other foster youth, and 50 percent more likely to be employed.⁹⁷

COORDINATING EFFORTS AND INVOLVING YOUTH AS PARTNERS

“Interagency collaboration is essential to developing effective services for homeless students. Issues such as education, health care, mental health, housing, and alcohol or other drug abuse can be addressed through a coordinated, multidisciplinary approach.”⁹⁸

Juane Heflin, Council for Exceptional Children

“If we're talking only to the adults in their lives and not to them, we're failing.”

Cathy Requejo, Project HELP Supervisor
Austin Independent School District, Texas

In their quest to meet their basic needs, homeless youth may seek help from a wide variety of public and private agencies. For example, there are 339 federal programs

serving disadvantaged youth, spread across 12 federal departments. These services and target populations frequently overlap. This federal fragmentation translates into state and local fragmentation, as state and local governments receive the bulk of federal funding through a variety of different state and local agencies. According to the final 2003 report of the *White House Task Force on Disadvantaged Youth*, “the fragmentation of Federal youth policy is compounded by fragmented state spending which leaves local communities piecing together program dollars from a wide variety of funding streams, each with its own regulatory and reporting requirements.”⁹⁹

Unfortunately, few agencies other than schools design their procedures with youth’s educational success in mind. To obtain services youth are generally forced to travel to several different offices. This may take time away from work or school and entail significant transportation expenses. Since different agencies have different application processes, youth are forced to explain personal and often painful details to many different caseworkers, and complete countless forms.

Collaborations enable agencies to work together to craft more comprehensive strategies to help homeless youth meet their basic needs and achieve long-term self-sufficiency. Broad-based agency collaborations can also help young people navigate the maze of agencies by supplying more integrated services, cutting down on paperwork, and reducing delays in providing service. In addition, collaborative efforts can increase efficiency and reduce duplication of services, which can translate into an expansion of services. For all these reasons, the U.S. General Accounting Office recommends that programs with similar goals, target populations and services be coordinated, consolidated, or streamlined as appropriate to ensure that goals are consistent and that program efforts are mutually reinforcing.¹⁰⁰

Collaboration between the Education and Housing Systems

Among the most important collaborative partners are emergency and transitional shelters, independent living programs, and affordable housing providers. The *McKinney-Vento Act* requires state and local educational agencies to collaborate with such programs.¹⁰¹ However, such coordination frequently does not occur. This may be due in part to the lack of time, training, and capacity necessary to initiate collaboration among homeless liaisons.

The federal *Runaway and Homeless Youth Act* also requires its shelters and transitional living programs to coordinate with homeless liaisons.¹⁰² However, other housing programs generally do not have similar requirements.

Such coordination can facilitate school enrollment and attendance for young people. It can help ensure that homeless youth are aware of available educational services and their educational rights. It can also increase housing providers’ efforts to facilitate school success for homeless youth.

For example, Eureka City Schools and local shelters jointly developed a procedure for assessing youth’s educational needs and goals upon intake to the shelter. Shelter case

managers complete an education referral form and immediately fax it to the homeless liaison. The homeless liaison travels to shelters to conduct school enrollment on-site and offer services and referrals.

“As soon as a youth checks into one of these shelters, the person doing the intake faxes me the education referral form. I then immediately contact the kid and go enroll and/or deliver services, like backpacks, school shoes, and connections to school and community services.”

Maureen Chase
Director of the Homeless Education Project
Eureka City Schools, California

In Anchorage, Alaska, a dynamic collaboration between one of the school district’s homeless liaisons* and shelter and housing providers led to a protocol that actually

increases homeless youth’s access to housing. The homeless liaison and youth complete a form stating that the liaison has identified the youth as homeless, the liaison forwards the form to the housing agency, and the youth receives a priority for housing.

MODEL PROGRAM: STATE COLLABORATIVE

The Youth Empowerment Program of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio has developed a model state-level collaboration, led by youth. The State Youth Board, the Youth Housing Committee (which includes all youth-serving state agencies), and the state coalition on homelessness and poverty have developed a list of common goals and are working together to meet the needs of youth from high school to age 24.

“We’ve spent the last seven years developing this. Education is a key piece: any homeless agency that serves youth under 18 and receives state money has to demonstrate that they partner with schools. Also, any agency receiving state money has to attend at least one training on youth issues every year that covers educational rights and needs; 260 people participated in our last training.”

Angela Lariviere
Youth Advocacy Director
Coalition on Homelessness and
Housing in Ohio

State-level Collaboration

The *McKinney-Vento Act* contains specific coordination requirements for the California Department of Education (CDE), including coordinating and collaborating with providers of services to homeless youth, such as domestic violence agencies, shelter operators, transitional housing facilities, runaway youth centers, and transitional living programs for youth.¹⁰³ Due to the limited capacity of the Office of State Coordinator however, CDE has not engaged in such collaboration.

State-level collaboration can streamline young people’s access to a wide variety of critical services. “Coordination allows the state to reduce or avoid duplication, improve service delivery, and address service gaps by departments.”¹⁰⁴ Many states have developed strong inter-agency collaborative structures to coordinate youth policy and service delivery to homeless and other disadvantaged youth.

For example, in 2002 Colorado passed the *Homeless*

* The Anchorage School District has four full-time homeless liaisons, funded in large part through Title I, Part A of the *No Child Left Behind Act*.

Youth Services Act “to create a vehicle through which services to homeless youth statewide could be improved by coordinating current services and facilitating interagency collaboration to identify gaps, remove barriers, improve access and share information.”¹⁰⁵ In Oregon, the Governor created a 24-member Ending Homelessness Advisory Council with a specific mandate “to coordinate programs relating to homeless youth.”¹⁰⁶

The Maine Children’s Cabinet created a Homeless Children’s Initiative, which led to passage of an Act to *Help Homeless Young People Return to Home or Safe Living Situations* in 1999.¹⁰⁷ The Act mandated the development of comprehensive community plans for youth who become homeless. In response, the three Regional Children’s Cabinets and their local partners made tremendous strides in collaboratively implementing creative ways to deliver services to youth who are homeless or may become homeless statewide, including increasing funding by \$50,000 in each region to expand pilot programs for homeless youth.

California has not created similar state-level structures targeted at homeless youth.

Local-level Collaboration

Homeless liaisons and other service providers stress that broad, multi-agency coordination on the local level is also essential to ensure that homeless youth can enroll in, attend, and succeed in school. These collaborations streamline service delivery for homeless youth. They can also support schools’ efforts to identify homeless youth, conduct outreach, and support youth’s enrollment, attendance, and success in school. Following are some of the myriad agencies that must be brought to the table:

- ✓ School districts and county offices of education
- ✓ Emergency and transitional shelters and independent living programs
- ✓ Street outreach programs
- ✓ Housing authorities and other providers of permanent, affordable housing
- ✓ Child welfare agencies
- ✓ Social service departments
- ✓ County health and mental health departments
- ✓ Mayors and city governments

MODEL PROGRAM: LOCAL COLLABORATIVE

West Contra Costa Unified School District’s homeless liaison Jeri Cohen has been a key partner in Building Blocks for Kids (the BBK), a broad new local collaborative in Richmond’s “Iron Triangle.” The BBK brings together 17 city and county agencies, both public and private, as well as both state senators and Congressman George Miller, to provide services to at-risk children and youth. To date, the BBK has raised \$255,000 in foundation grants and initiated an afternoon summer camp and health initiative. Notably, the BBK is recruiting a team of leaders from among those families and youth who are receiving services and engaging the community, block by block.

“Under the banner of Building Block for Kids, seventeen public and private agencies work together to provide outreach and identification of homeless children, families and youth and provide the wrap around and support services necessary to ensure the academic, physical and social success of these youth and their families.”

Jeri Cohen, Coordinator
Homeless Education/Foster Youth Services
West Contra Costa
Unified School District
Richmond, CA

- ✓ Continua of Care funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- ✓ Family reunification services
- ✓ Legal services providers
- ✓ Juvenile justice and juvenile probation
- ✓ Faith-based organizations
- ✓ Food banks
- ✓ Workforce Investment Act services
- ✓ Colleges and universities
- ✓ Community organizations, such as Stand Up 4 Kids
- ✓ 211 call system
- ✓ Businesses and the chamber of commerce
- ✓ Community foundations

Many local communities have developed highly successful collaborations to support homeless youth. For example, Portland Oregon’s Homeless Youth Continuum, a collaboration among three private agencies and Multnomah County, is considered to be a national model of excellence.¹⁰⁸ In 1998, Multnomah County redesigned its homeless youth services because of a report citing a fragmented and uncoordinated service delivery system and a lack of accountability for youth outcomes. The new configuration resulted in the forming of a “continuum” of services for homeless youth with coordinated services, a common data collection system, and shared outcomes. The three agencies also share:

- a centralized triage process — one screening shared by all partners, with youth agreeing to cooperate with all the agencies involved
- a central database that applies to all agencies and is able to evaluate system outcomes
- best practice philosophies about goals, methods and outcomes
- a comprehensive continuum of support, with partners providing treatment programs for addiction and mental health

Bangor, Maine was the birthplace of another national model, the Rapid Response Program. Created with an initial \$150,000 funding stream from the state legislature, Rapid Response brings together over 25 state and local agencies, both public and private, to work as a team to provide intensive intervention within the first 72 hours of a youth’s homelessness. The program focuses on providing stable housing, keeping the youth in the same community and school, and delivering family intervention, support, and mediation in a search for long-term solutions.

An independent evaluation of the program by the University of Maine School of Social Work found that the program resulted in significant decreases in drug and alcohol use, victimization, suicide, gang involvement, police involvement, pregnancy, and prostitution. Overall health and well-being were significantly improved and school attendance and success were so profoundly impacted that 100 percent of the youth served were enrolled in school or working and functioning well. The Rapid Response Program is now spreading across the state of Maine.¹⁰⁹

As part of such extensive collaborative efforts or on their own, memoranda of understanding among agencies to address barriers to information-sharing can help all agencies work together to meet youth's needs and keep each other apprised on educational progress and warning signs. Information sharing is a strategy to ensure that all service providers, and particularly educators, have the information they need to support youths' educational success. Many agencies have created protocols to permit the sharing of information pertinent to education, while adopting strong policies to protect youth's privacy.

For example, the Florida Legislature passed a law requiring that the Department of Children and Families (DCF) and school districts establish information-sharing protocols.¹¹⁰ As a result, 33 school districts have agreed to provide school reports and transcripts to DCF; 27 counties agreed to increase efforts to gain consent from the natural parents, legal guardians, or the court to share school records; and 31 counties agreed to improve technology to facilitate the efficient sharing of information. In 15 counties, DCF provides schools with a regularly updated electronic list of children in care, and school districts in 23 counties agreed to provide the DCF information about available school services.¹¹¹ To evaluate the impact of information-sharing, Broward County is currently developing a comprehensive data collection and research protocol to assess the effectiveness of the interagency agreements.

Youth as Partners

Young people should be active participants in all youth-serving efforts. Homeless youth are the most experienced and well-informed experts regarding their own strengths, challenges, needs, and goals. A previous publication of the California Research Bureau described the importance of actively involving youth in policymaking, noting that:

BEST PRACTICE: SHARING INFORMATION

In February of 2006, Jane Cardoza, Presiding Judge of the Dependency Division of Fresno's Juvenile Court, entered a Standing Order permitting the Department of Children and Family Services to disclose relevant information which could aid in the child's education to appropriate school personnel, and requiring school officials to limit the use of that information to assisting in meeting the youth's educational needs. In her Order, Judge Cardoza found "it to be in the best interest of any child who comes within the jurisdiction of the juvenile dependency court to facilitate the sharing of information about the child, which will aid in that child's education." She also found that "it is in the best interest of children covered by the Order and in the public's interest to have timely sharing of appropriate information."

“Young people have a lot to contribute. They bring energy and fresh and unique perspectives; they may offer ideas and solutions that have not been considered, or offer a new approach to an old idea. Youth also bring a unique range of knowledge about youth issues.”¹¹²

In addition to benefiting the collaborations, service providers, and youth receiving the services, youth involvement also contributes to the self-esteem and success of those who participate. For example, the homeless young people who participate in the Youth Empowerment Program of the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (described in the box on page 38) tend to experience more educational success than their peers. Two youth program participants have even received national awards for their individual contributions to the needs of homeless young people.

POLICY OPTIONS

While not necessarily the recommendations of the California Research Bureau, the following are potential policy options, presented by Key Issue:

MEETING BASIC NEEDS

- Create more emergency and transitional shelters, independent living programs, and affordable permanent housing programs for homeless youth, and ensure access to existing programs.
- Ensure that homeless youth are not denied public benefits or social services, including medical and mental health care, due to the lack of parental consent.
- Ensure access to school-based resources to meet basic needs.

MAKING SCHOOLS SAFE AND SUPPORTIVE

- Increase state support and funding for programs for homeless youth that provide ongoing mentoring/educational advocates.
- Increase state support and funding for programs that make schools safe and welcoming for groups of over-represented homeless youth, including young people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender, pregnant or parenting, older than traditional high school age, recovering from trauma, or recently returned to school after a period of nonattendance.
- Improve the data collection, identification, and outreach efforts of local education agencies.
- Clarify state reporting requirements to ensure that homeless youth are able to enroll in school without being referred to law enforcement or child welfare, unless there is an immediate danger to their health or safety.

IMPLEMENTING THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT

- Add staff to the *McKinney-Vento* State Coordinator's Office and increase the following activities:
 - Expand the State Coordinator's train-the-trainer program to increase the capacity of county offices of education to provide professional development to school districts, and require county office of education homeless liaisons to participate.
 - Increase the professional development of the California Department of Education on the *McKinney-Vento Act*, and homeless youth specifically, to encourage all school districts to participate.
 - Require all local education agency homeless liaisons to participate in at least one *McKinney-Vento Act* training annually that is offered or approved by CDE.

- Require that basic information about the *McKinney-Vento Act* and homeless youth is included at least once a year in the ongoing, mandatory trainings of principals, school counselors, teachers, school security officers, child welfare and attendance officers, secretaries, school nurses, and other staff.
- Monitor more local educational agencies for compliance.
- Require or encourage increases in dedicated *McKinney-Vento* staff in school districts and county offices of education, particularly those that are heavily impacted by homelessness, to enhance compliance with the *McKinney-Vento Act*.
- Ensure that local educational agencies set aside Title I, Part A funds to serve homeless youth, and encourage the use of such funds to increase dedicated McKinney-Vento staff.
- Enact a state law clarifying the right of homeless youth to enroll in school and establishing uniform procedures for such enrollment to ensure that they are not denied entry into school. Consider including a liability shield to protect schools from liability by reason of enrolling the youth without parent or guardian consent. (A limited liability shield would help address some school administrators' concerns that enrolling homeless youth could expose them to lawsuits by parents; concerns that sometime lead schools to refuse to enroll homeless youth.)
- Enact state policies and procedures for educational decision-making for homeless youth so they can participate fully in school services and activities that normally require parental notification, signature, or consent, such as special academic programs, extra-curricular activities, athletics, school-based health care, and field trips.

FLEXIBLE POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

- Require that enrollment and participation deadlines cannot prevent homeless youth from participating in classes, programs and activities for which they are eligible.
- Require that enrollment and participation fees cannot prevent homeless youth from participating in classes, programs and activities for which they are eligible.
- Issue a statewide CDE policy instructing school districts in procedures to calculate and accept partial credits, with specific protocols for inter-district records transfers and awards. Make schools accountable for compliance.
- Increase state support for credit recovery programs to allow homeless youth to continue earning credits and advancing toward graduation despite their instability and mobility.
- Adopt policies to facilitate homeless youth's access to appropriate alternative programs that serve the student's particular needs.

REENGAGING DISENGAGED YOUTH

- Provide state funding for full-time homeless liaisons in school districts heavily impacted by homelessness. Liaisons' duties include identifying and enrolling homeless youth in school, and entering into collaborative relationships with homeless youth service providers.
- Require that existing school dropout recovery programs receive training on homelessness and conduct outreach to homeless youth.
- Establish a new dropout recovery program targeted to homeless youth.

IMPACT OF CHILD WELFARE SERVICES POLICIES AND PRACTICES

- Improve state child welfare policies to assist families and youth in crisis to prevent youth homelessness, including policies such as:
 - Increase rapid-response family crisis services in abusive and neglectful home situations to help prevent youth from needing to run away or being forced out of their homes. These services could concentrate on populations known to be overrepresented among homeless youth, such as lesbian, gay, bisexual and/or transgender youth, and pregnant teenagers.
 - Increase programs to support the economic well-being and stability of families to help alleviate pressure at home and allow more youth to remain with their families rather than become homeless.
 - Adopt policies and procedures to reduce the number of youth who abscond from child welfare placements, including policies to create more appropriate placements for older youth, strengthen connections with supportive adults, supervise placements more closely, and require that young people's wishes be given significant consideration in selecting placements.
 - Provide more effective transition planning for youth, including discharge planning and independent living skills.
 - Increase the child welfare system's accountability for educational outcomes.
- Provide homeless youth who have not been in foster care with access to programs that support the independence and education of foster youth to eliminate artificial distinctions between those two overlapping groups of at-risk youth.

COORDINATING EFFORTS AND INVOLVING YOUTH AS PARTNERS

- Increase state- and local-level coordination among all youth-serving agencies, with the goal of facilitating service delivery to youth, meeting their basic needs, and promoting their educational success.
- Adopt policies to ensure that shelter and housing providers support the educational success of youth in their care, such as:
 - Require that shelter and housing providers that receive state funding, or are subject to state licensing, post notice of students' rights under the *McKinney-*

Vento Act and California's AB 490, explain those rights to young people upon intake, and assist students in exercising those rights.

- Require that shelter and housing providers that receive state funding or are subject to state licensing engage in ongoing coordination with schools in their area.
- Enact some basic requirements to support youth in reaching their educational goals, including some measure of accountability for that support for shelter and housing providers.
- Ensure that young people are included as active participants in all collaborative and state-level youth-serving efforts.

APPENDIX A

EDUCATION CONTACTS FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The following individuals generously shared their time and expertise with the author of this report. The key findings and strategies contained herein are largely the fruit of their creativity and commitment.

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Homeless Education Project
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Eureka, CA

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Burchell High School
Matanuska-Susitna Borough School District
Palmer, AK

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Washington, DC

Christina Endres, Consultant
Education for Homeless Children and Youth
Indiana Department of Education
Indianapolis, IN

Karen L. Fessler, Education Advocate
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APPENDIX B

EDUCATION FUNDING FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Proposed Funding Results for Fiscal year 2006-07
(subject to budget and administrative adjustments)

| County | Local Educational Agency | Amount |
|--------------|--|--------------|
| Alameda | Alameda City Unified School District | \$100,000.00 |
| Alameda | Berkeley Unified School District | \$90,000.00 |
| Alameda | Hayward Unified School District | \$90,000.00 |
| Alameda | Oakland Unified School District | \$145,000.00 |
| Alameda | San Leandro Unified School District | \$100,000.00 |
| Butte | Butte County Office of Education | \$100,000.00 |
| Contra Costa | Contra Costa County Office of Education | \$140,000.00 |
| Contra Costa | West Contra Costa Unified School District | \$135,000.00 |
| El Dorado | El Dorado County Office of Education | \$110,000.00 |
| El Dorado | Placerville Union Elementary School District | \$70,000.00 |
| Fresno | Fresno Unified School District | \$145,000.00 |
| Glenn | Glenn County Office Of Education | \$100,000.00 |
| Humboldt | Eureka City Unified School District | \$100,000.00 |
| Kern | Bakersfield City School District | \$120,000.00 |
| Kern | Kernville Union Elementary School District | \$60,000.00 |
| Kings | Kings County Office of Education | \$90,000.00 |
| Lake | Lake County Office of Education | \$125,000.00 |
| Lassen | Lassen County Office of Education | \$45,000.00 |
| Los Angeles | Los Angeles County Office of Education | \$160,000.00 |
| Los Angeles | El Monte Union High School District | \$100,000.00 |
| Los Angeles | Glendale Unified School District | \$80,000.00 |
| Los Angeles | Long Beach Unified School District | \$100,000.00 |
| Los Angeles | Los Angeles Unified School District | \$145,000.00 |
| Los Angeles | Norwalk-LaMirada Unified School District | \$135,000.00 |
| Los Angeles | Pasadena Unified School District | \$90,000.00 |
| Los Angeles | William S. Hart Union High School District | \$35,000.00 |
| Los Angeles | Compton Unified School District | \$85,000.00 |
| Los Angeles | Rowland Unified School District | \$135,000.00 |
| Marin | Marin County Office of Education | \$75,000.00 |
| Mariposa | Mariposa County Office of Education | \$40,000.00 |
| Mendocino | Mendocino County Office of Education | \$115,000.00 |
| Monterey | Monterey Peninsula Unified School District | \$65,000.00 |
| Orange | Orange County Office of Education | \$155,000.00 |

| | | |
|-----------------|---|--------------|
| Orange | Anaheim City School District | \$110,000.00 |
| Orange | Capistrano Unified School District | \$110,000.00 |
| Orange | Centralia Elementary School District | \$75,000.00 |
| Orange | Fullerton Joint Union High School District | \$60,000.00 |
| Orange | Huntington Beach Union High School District | \$65,000.00 |
| Orange | Santa Ana Unified School District | \$110,000.00 |
| Placer | Roseville Joint Union High School District | \$120,000.00 |
| Riverside | Riverside County Office of Education | \$140,000.00 |
| Riverside | Riverside Unified School District | \$110,000.00 |
| Sacramento | Sacramento County Office of Education | \$140,000.00 |
| Sacramento | Elk Grove Unified School District | \$95,000.00 |
| Sacramento | North Sacramento Elementary School District | \$125,000.00 |
| Sacramento | Rio Linda Union Elementary School District | \$85,000.00 |
| Sacramento | Sacramento City Unified School District | \$100,000.00 |
| Sacramento | Natomas Unified School District | \$85,000.00 |
| San Benito | Hollister School District | \$60,000.00 |
| San Bernardino | San Bernardino County Office of Education | \$150,000.00 |
| San Bernardino | Chino Valley Unified | \$85,000.00 |
| San Bernardino | Colton Joint Unified School District | \$125,000.00 |
| San Bernardino | Morongo Unified School District | \$80,000.00 |
| San Bernardino | Ontario-Montclair Elementary | \$135,000.00 |
| San Bernardino | San Bernardino City Unified School District | \$120,000.00 |
| San Bernardino | Upland Unified School District | \$90,000.00 |
| San Diego | Escondido Union Elementary School District | \$145,000.00 |
| San Diego | San Ysidro Elementary School District | \$130,000.00 |
| San Diego | Sweetwater Union High School District | \$75,000.00 |
| San Francisco | San Francisco Unified School District | \$120,000.00 |
| San Joaquin | San Joaquin County Office of Education | \$120,000.00 |
| San Joaquin | Stockton Unified School District | \$100,000.00 |
| San Luis Obispo | San Luis Obispo County Office of Education | \$35,000.00 |
| San Luis Obispo | Lucia Mar Unified School District | \$70,000.00 |
| San Mateo | San Mateo County Office of Education | \$90,000.00 |
| Santa Barbara | Santa Barbara County Office of Education | \$150,000.00 |
| Santa Clara | San Jose Unified School District | \$100,000.00 |
| Santa Cruz | Santa Cruz County Office of Education | \$150,000.00 |
| Santa Cruz | Pajaro Valley Unified School District | \$130,000.00 |
| Shasta | Shasta County Office of Education | \$45,000.00 |
| Siskiyou | Siskiyou County Office of Education | \$50,000.00 |
| Solano | Fairfield-Suisun Unified School District | \$115,000.00 |
| Sonoma | Sonoma County Office of Education | \$125,000.00 |
| Stanislaus | Stanislaus County Office of Education | \$90,000.00 |
| Tehama | Tehama County Office of Education | \$80,000.00 |

| | | |
|----------|--|--------------|
| Tulare | Cutler-Orosi Joint Unified School District | \$80,000.00 |
| Tulare | Lindsay Unified School District | \$65,000.00 |
| Tuolumne | Tuolumne County Office of Education | \$40,000.00 |
| Tuolumne | Jamestown Elementary School District | \$50,000.00 |
| Ventura | Ventura County Office of Education | \$140,000.00 |
| Yuba | Yuba County Office of Education | \$65,000.00 |
| Yuba | Marysville Joint Unified School District | \$115,000.00 |

Source: California Department of Education; retrieved August 28, 2007 from <http://www.cde.ca.gov/fg/fo/r16/homeless06result.asp>.

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