

What is the difference between a homeless child and an unaccompanied youth? Homeless children live with a parent or guardian and the entire family may be considered homeless (e.g. staying in a shelter, staying in a motel/hotel, doubled up with other family members or friends due to economic hardship). An unaccompanied youth, for whatever reason, does not live with a parent or guardian (e.g. lives with a boyfriend, friend, aunt/uncle, cousin, grandparent). In both cases, the children and youth are considered “homeless” and eligible for services.

What can I do if I am “homeless”?

If you are a homeless student or know someone who is homeless and would like to get help, please talk to a school staff you trust or contact a HEAT staff (727-588-6305). Discussions about being homeless are confidential. The HEAT staff want to help you get to school, stay in school, and be as successful as you can be in school.



Why are the homeless numbers so under-reported?

As with so many adults, children and youth are reluctant to be stereotyped as homeless and want to keep their personal lives private. But once the benefits are explained, many of them appreciate the help and support.

Contact:

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Any disputes between schools, parents or districts will be resolved by the local Homeless Liaison (Althea Hudson, 727-588-6305)

Homeless Children and Youth

What You Should Know

Educational Rights of Students Under the
McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

"I'm just crashing with friends for now. It's cool."



"My mom kicked me out. I'll just sleep in my car or the park."

"My Grandparents let me stay with them for a while. After that..."

Today's children have challenges that haven't been seen for generations such as a lack of affordable housing, high foreclosure rates, unemployment, and an unsteady economy.

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act seeks to assist America's youth in dealing with some of the hardships of being homeless or in a transitional living situation. People in the community, neighbors, agency staff, and school personnel that have contact with students are encouraged to seek assistance for homeless children and youth. These efforts may open doors for a successful and enduring future.

In early 2011, Pinellas County Schools identified over 2600 students as being homeless or unaccompanied youth. Those numbers represent students of all ages. It is important to know the rights of homeless children and unaccompanied youth so they can be provided services and benefits under the Federal McKinney-Vento Act.

Services for Homeless or Unaccompanied Youth

School Selection

Enroll in "School of Origin" or school of "Best Interest"

Immediate Enrollment without Documentation

The student has 30 days to provide required documents and must be allowed to stay in school during this time.

Transportation

The school or HEAT staff can request Pinellas County Schools (PCS) bus transportation. Even if a student moves several more times during the school year – PCS transportation can be provided for the remainder of that school year. If there is a delay in getting the bus assigned, the HEAT staff may be able to provide a student with a limited number of Pinellas Suncoast Transit Authority (PSTA) bus passes or there are a limited number of gas vouchers.

Free Breakfast and Lunch Meals at School

Once determined to be "homeless" the student is automatically eligible for free meals for the remainder of the school year.

School Supplies

Free backpacks and/or school supplies are available

College Assistance

- SAT & ACT Waivers– limited availability per school
- Post-Secondary Education options for Juniors and graduating Seniors (e.g. Free Application for Federal Student Aid – FAFSA, potential for waivers of college application fees & tuition)

Referrals to local community resources

Such as: emergency shelters, housing, rental/mortgage assistance, utility assistance, meals/food, clothing, childcare, legal assistance, domestic violence, health/dental/mental health services

*Pinellas County Schools has a program called the Homeless Education Assistance Team (HEAT) that can assist these students.
www.pcsb.org/homeless-education*