

POVERTY AND HOMELESSNESS



*This fact sheet was made in partnership with the **Kansas Department of Education Educating Homeless Youth Program.***

Poverty and homelessness are difficult situations that some students face every day. These circumstances can impact a child's ability to focus, attend classes, and general school success, among other struggles.

Understanding the population impacted, and the various forms in which these situations occur, can help schools and educators to identify students who are exposed to these challenges and encourage implementation of resources and interventions.

Who Is Impacted?

- According to the 2015 Kansas KIDS Count report,¹ approximately 18.4% of Kansas children (under the age of 18) live in poverty.
- During 2014/2015, a total of 143 Kansas school districts² identified 9,715 students who were considered homeless. Living situations for these students included:
 - ✓ Doubled-up (8,173 students)
 - ✓ Shelters or transitional housing (942)
 - ✓ Unsheltered (cars, parks, etc.) (95)
 - ✓ Hotels/motels (505)

Homelessness: Beyond Traditional Stereotypes

The term "homelessness" brings to mind a variety of ideas and views. For example, traditional stereotypes may elicit a mental image of an individual living on the street; however, the definition of homelessness encompasses a range of situations, including:

- Doubling-up or living with another family as a result of losing one's house or other economic difficulty; or any one these settings ... hotel, camping ground, bus station, park, motel, emergency shelter, vehicle, abandoned building.
- Children and youth who have been left in hospitals.

What Does It Look Like?

*Adapted from KSDE Educating Homeless Children and Youth Fact Sheet.*³

According to Section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, the term “homeless children and youth” refers to individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

- A *fixed residence* is one that is stationary, permanent, and not subject to change.
- A *regular residence* is one that is used on a regular (e.g., nightly) basis.
- An *adequate residence* is one that is sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.

Effects of Homelessness and Poverty

Homelessness and poverty can impact students in a variety of ways. Lack of adequate housing or living in poverty permeates all aspects of a student’s life, including physical health, emotional health, school success, and relationships with peers. Detailed below, these areas can be caused by numerous factors and result in various outcomes.⁴

Health

- Hunger
- Less access to medical/dental care
- Decreased access to areas or opportunities for play and activity
- Low birth weight

Mental Health

- Less access to mental health care
- Increased reporting of child abuse and neglect
- Increased experience of violent crimes
- Chronic stress
- Low self-esteem
- Anxiety
- Depression

Academics

- Absenteeism
- Lack of reliable transportation

AT-RISK POPULATIONS

- Weakened peer relationships (if students are fearful of having their situation known by others)
- Frequent moving between schools
- Developmental delays
- Grade repetition
- School expulsion or suspension
- Decreased attention, concentration, or memory

What Schools Can Do

Adapted from the KSDE Educating Homeless Children and Youth Fact Sheet.²

The McKinney-Vento Act requires each school district to designate a homeless liaison. This individual ensures that the following responsibilities,⁵ along with others, are met:

- Students have full and equal opportunity to succeed in school.
- Homeless youth and their families receive eligible services.
- Students receive free breakfast and lunch.
- Parents or guardians are informed of educational and related opportunities available to children and given meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children.
- Parents or guardians and unaccompanied youth are fully informed of transportation services and assisted in accessing transportation.

A list of liaisons for each school district in Kansas may be found on the [KSDE Educating Homeless Children and Youth](#) website.

In addition to these requirements, school staff may wish to consider the following interventions to aid students throughout these difficult times, while being mindful of a child's right to confidentiality:

- Ensure students have access to the necessary tools to complete assignments, or utilize appropriate modifications.
- Foster strong relationships with the student and the family.
- If change is stressful for the student, make the student aware of upcoming fluctuations in schedules or routine.
- Support the student's social-emotional skills.
- Consider that access to early child education services can be helpful in combating the negative effects of homeless and poverty.

References

- ¹ Kansas Action for Children. (2015). *Kansas KIDS COUNT*. Retrieved from <http://kac.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/2015-Final-State-Report.pdf>
- ² Kansas State Department of Education. (2015). *Education for homeless children and youth (McKinney-Vento) 2014-2015 homeless data*. Retrieved from <http://ksde.org/Portals/0/Title%20Programs%20and%20Services/Homeless/Data-2014-2015KansasEHCY.pdf>
- ³ Kansas State Department of Education. (2015, June 12). *Education for homeless children and youth (McKinney-Vento) fact sheet*. Retrieved from <http://www.ksde.org/Portals/0/ECSETS/FactSheets/FactSheet-Homeless.pdf>
- ⁴ Brooks-Gunn, J., & Duncan, G. J. (1997). The effects of poverty on children. *Children & Poverty*, 7(2), 55-71. Retrieved from https://www.princeton.edu/futureofchildren/publications/docs/07_02_03.pdf; McCoy-Roth, M., Mackintosh, B. B., & Murphey, D. (2012, February). When the bough breaks: The effects of homelessness on young children. *Child Trends: Early Childhood Highlights*, 3(1), 1-11/ Retrieved from <http://www.childtrends.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/2012-08EffectHomelessnessChildren.pdf>; American Psychological Association. (n.d.). *Effects of poverty, hunger and homelessness on children and youth*. Retrieved from <http://www.apa.org/pi/families/poverty.aspx>; Jensen, E. (2009). How poverty affects behavior and academic performance. In E. Jensen (Ed.), *Teaching with poverty in mind* (Chapter 2). Retrieved from <http://www.ascd.org/publications/books/109074/chapters/How-Poverty-Affects-Behavior-and-Academic-Performance.aspx>
- ⁵ Kansas State Department of Education. (2015, June 12).

Resources

- **KSDE Educating Homeless Children and Youth Program**
<http://www.ksde.org/Agency/Division-of-Learning-Services/Early-Childhood-Special-Education-and-Title-Services/Title-Services/Educating-Homeless-Children-and-Youth>
- **Guidelines for Reporting Homeless Students in KIDS**
<http://kidsweb.ksde.org/Documents>
- **NCHE National Center for Homeless Education**
<http://www.serve.org/nche>
- **National Association for the Education of Homeless Students and Youth**
<http://www.naehcy.org>