

Supporting Students in Temporary Housing



Helping Students
Experiencing
Homelessness Transition
to Post-Secondary
Education

• Presented By:

• Wednesday, April 13, 2022

• 9:30am - 11:00am



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Housekeeping

- Links to publications, online resources, organizations, and studies mentioned in this presentation will be provided in the Resource List that accompanies this presentation.
- We will launch polls and ask for your thoughts periodically throughout the presentation and invite you to put your answers in the chat.
- We also invite you to pose questions in the chat; some of these questions requesting quick clarifications will be answered today, but others will be addressed in a Q&A document that will be developed after the webinar.
- For questions about specific situations, we welcome your Helpline calls to discuss these issues at 800-388-2014.
- The Helpline is open 24 hours a day. If you leave a message, you will be called back by the next business day.



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Webinar Format



- Today's session will be recorded.



- Your microphone will be automatically muted.



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- The in-webinar chat will be automatically disabled.



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Who Is In The Room? (Poll #1)

Are you a...

- New McKinney-Vento Liaison (1st Year)
- McKinney-Vento Liaison (2-4 years)
- McKinney-Vento Liaison (5 – 9 years)
- McKinney-Vento Liaison (10 + years)
- School Counselor
- Other School/District Staff



Which region are you from?

- * Western
- * Finger Lakes
- * Central
- * Southern Tier
- * Mohawk Valley
- * Capital
- * Hudson Valley
- * New York City
- * Long Island
- * North Country



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Your Presenter



Diana Bowman

- Former director of the National Center for Homeless Education; still on staff part-time
- 25+ years of experience in the field of homeless education

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What We Will Cover Today

- Importance of post-secondary education
- Challenges youth experiencing homelessness face preparing for post-secondary education
- LEA and school support for college preparation
- Financial support, including completing the FAFSA
- Facilitating a smooth transition to post-secondary education



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What You Will Be Able to Do

- Identify and address challenges that youth experiencing homelessness face in pursuing post-secondary education
- Provide help in completing the FAFSA and obtaining fee waivers
- Identify scholarship resources
- Help students prepare for their transition to college
- Link with local colleges and universities to support students experiencing homelessness



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The Importance of Post-Secondary Education

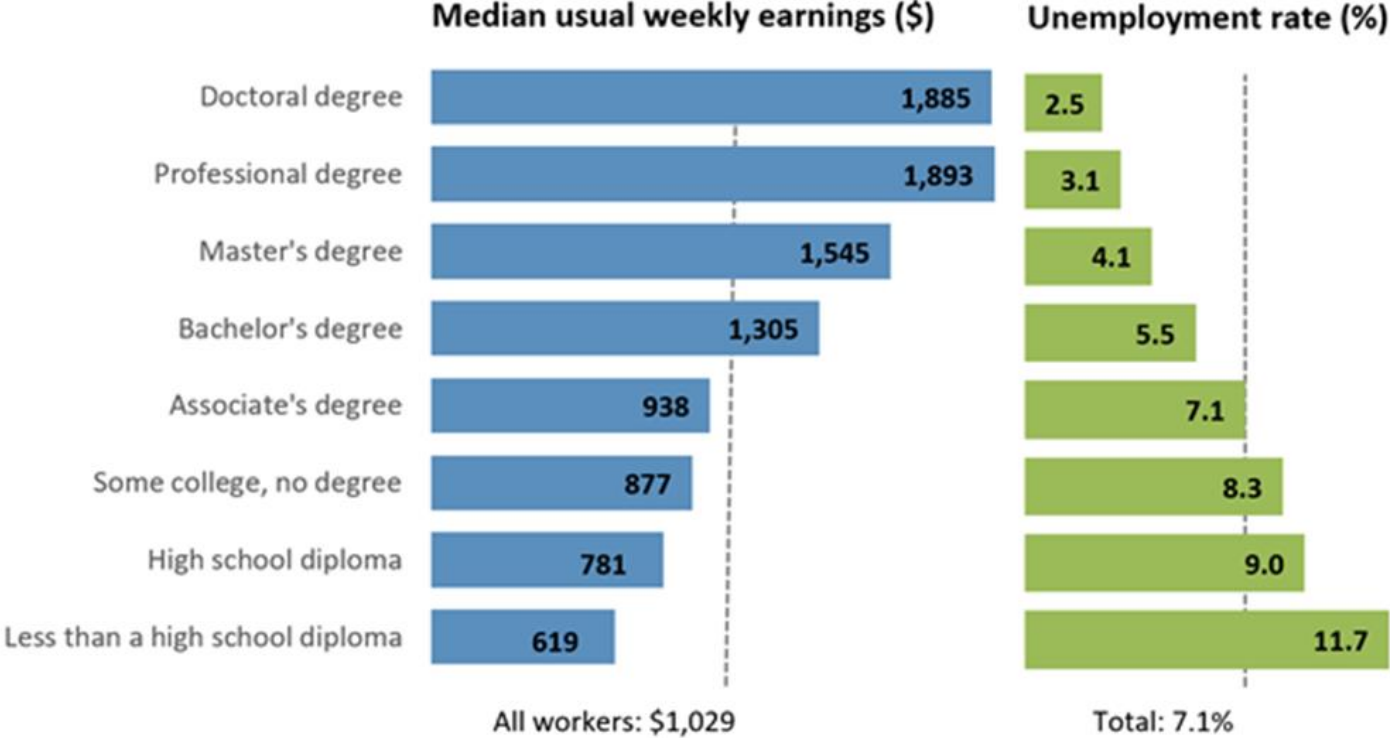


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Earnings and Employment

Earnings and unemployment rates by educational attainment, 2020



Note: Data are for persons age 25 and over. Earnings are for full-time wage and salary workers.
 Source: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.



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College and Other Options

- CTE Programs (Perkins V)
- Vocational and trade school
- Apprenticeships
- Military
- Certificate programs



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What Do You Think? (Poll #2)

What percentage of youth experiencing homelessness think that they will be able to attend college?

- A. Approximately 55 per cent
- B. Approximately 33 per cent
- C. Approximately 15 percent



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What Studies Show

- A California Homeless Youth Project (2017) study found that more than 90 percent of youth interviewed specified a career goal that required education beyond high school. Yet only 16 percent said they believed they would be able to attend or graduate college within the next five years.
- A 2016 Government Accountability Office study found that homeless youth experience challenges that make it harder for them to pursue college.
- According to Chapin Hall's Voices of Youth Count national survey, young adults who experienced homelessness were less than one-third as likely to be enrolled in a four-year college as stably housed peers.



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“I Know What’s at Stake” – Barriers Voiced by Youth

- Limited supports and lack of a college-going culture in the P-12 system
 - Challenges to attaining a high school diploma or equivalent
 - Cultural bias and limited counseling supports, due to low expectations
- College affordability
 - Difficulty with navigating the college application and financial aid process (FAFSA and NY Tuition Assistance Program)
 - For unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) in NY state, the state’s current financial aid system provides less funding to independent students, compared to dependent students
- Limited housing programs for college students

Feeling they don’t belong in college (Kruvelis, 2019)



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Other Barriers

- Poor grades, poor attendance, lack of school engagement
 - Trauma, lack of basic needs, mental health problems interfere with studies
 - Lack of space to study or do homework
 - Employment
 - Difficulty with being focused on school while managing the expectations of adulthood
- Difficulty accumulating credits due to mobility
- Lack of supportive adults to help with navigating systems
 - Reluctance to reach out and ask for help
- Lack of information on what post-secondary options and supports are available



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LEA and School Support for Post-secondary Preparation



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What the McKinney-Vento Act Requires

- LEA homeless liaisons are required to ensure that UHY are informed of their status as independent students for college financial aid and can obtain assistance to receive verification for the FAFSA.
- McKinney-Vento state plans must describe how homeless youth will receive assistance from school counselors to improve their readiness for college



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Supporting UHY

- Ensure their basic needs are being met and that they have a safe place to stay
- Address their mental health and trauma needs
- Connect them with an adult they can build a trusting relationship with
 - UHY often say that they credit one person, such as the local liaison or a school counselor, as the person that helped them the most get through school.
- Pay attention to their grades and attendance; follow up frequently
- Provide credit accrual opportunities
 - Work-based learning programs
 - Alternative ways of earning credits
 - Opportunities for flexible or alternative schedules for youth who must work
- Review state policies for receiving credit for full or partial coursework completed when attending previous schools (NCHE, 2017)



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Helping Youth Experiencing Homelessness Prepare for College

- Reach out to students experiencing homelessness as early as freshman year to discuss post-secondary options: “the pathway to college begins in kindergarten.”
- Discuss the students’ needs and goals. (Utilize NCHE’s *Education Goals And Supports: A Guided Discussion Tool*.)
- Meet with youth staying in shelters; provide information to shelter providers.
- Ensure that students are on track to graduate with college preparatory courses.
- Ensure that they have opportunities to visit colleges.
- Explore college access programs in your state like TRIO and GEAR UP that provide special opportunities for homeless students.



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Helping Youth Experiencing Homelessness Prepare for College

- Make sure students take the ACT/SAT exam.
- Make sure students complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).
 - A national study found that about 30% of students failed to complete the FAFSA, and that one-third of those students would have been eligible to receive federal Pell Grants (Page, L.C. & Clayton-Scott, J, 2015).
- Meet with students experiencing homeless frequently, especially during senior year, to answer questions, serve as a resource, and remind them of deadlines; create a checklist to review each time to keep them on track.
- Help with navigating college application and financial aid systems.
- Help the student develop financial literacy and money management skills.



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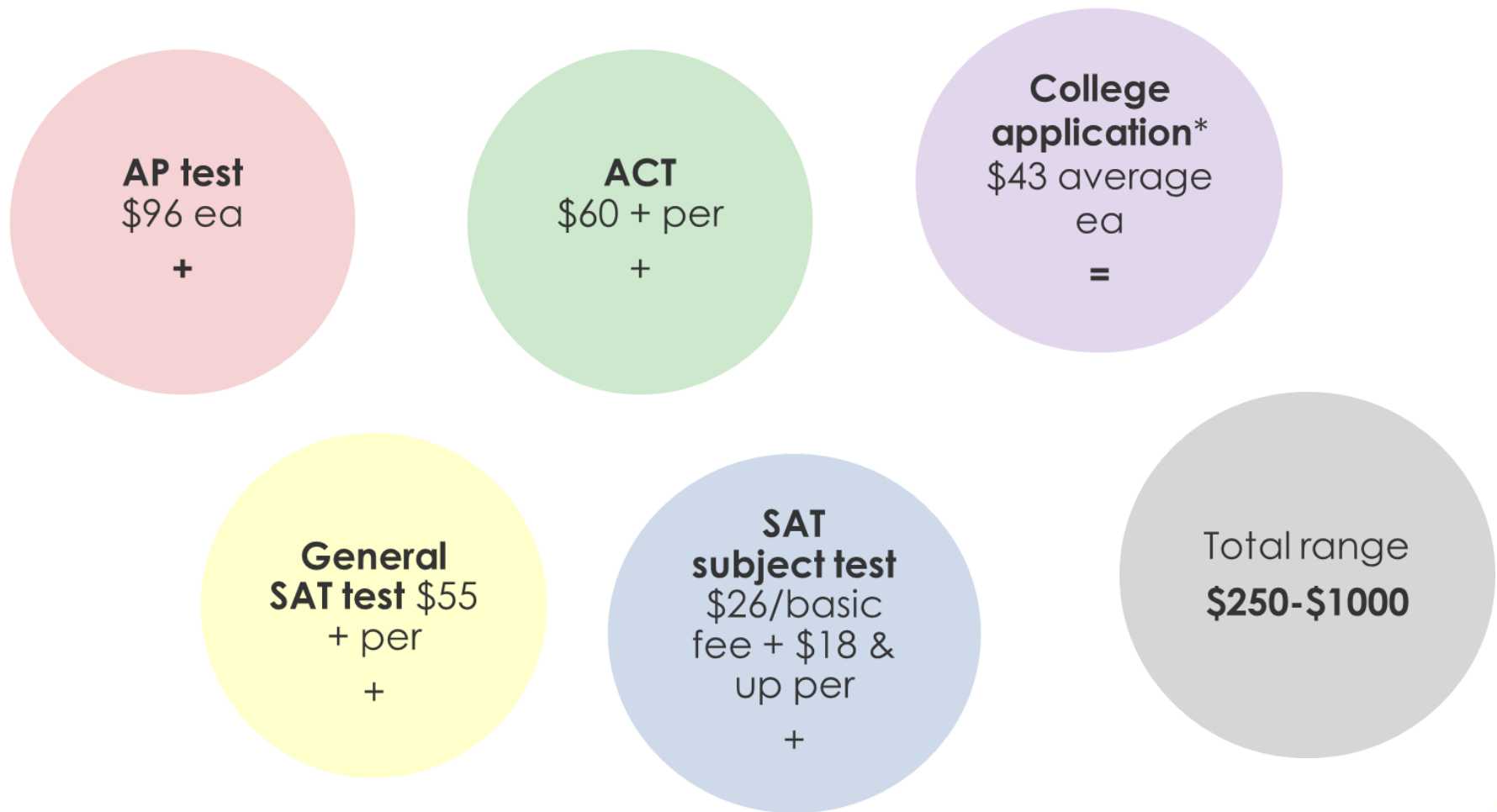
Financial Support for College



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Fees



*The College Board recommends students apply to 5 - 8 colleges.

Fee Waivers - Testing

- Advanced Placement (AP) Exams
 - Most four-year U.S. colleges give students credit, advanced placement, or both, based on AP Exam scores.
 - Waivers are administered at the school; speak with your school's AP coordinator.
- ACT waivers – must be accessed through a school counselor.
- SAT waivers – must be obtained from a high school counselor or an authorized agency.



Fee Waivers – College Application Fees

College Board Program

- Students who qualify for the College Board's SAT fee waiver also qualify to receive up to four Requests for Waiver of College Application Fee forms.

National Association of College Admission Counseling (NACAC) form

- To be completed with the help of the high school counselor
- For graduating high school seniors entering college in the fall
- Same eligibility criteria as the ACT and SAT waivers
- Can be based on income and/or the counselor's knowledge of the family's circumstances



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Fee Waivers – College Application Fees

- Most colleges accept the College Board or NACAC waiver forms; however, individual institutions may have their own fee waiver policies that vary.
- Colleges that use *The Common Application* accept the SAT college application fee waiver.
- Some colleges do not charge application fees for students that apply online.
- You should avoid using McKinney-Vento subgrant funds or Title IA set-aside funds to pay for AP exam, college entrance exam, or college application fees.



Federal Student Aid – The FAFSA

- FAFSA = Free Application for Federal Student Aid (grants, loans, scholarships, and work-study).
- Students applying for federal aid must complete a FAFSA for each school year for which they are seeking federal aid.
- 99% of applications are now completed online.
- A new FAFSA is released in October of each year for the upcoming year.
- 2022-2023 FAFSA was released on October 1, 2021.
 - Valid for students attending school for Fall 2022 and Spring 2023
 - Treatment of the summer term depends on the school
 - Requires prior year tax information



The FAFSA – The Application Verification Guide

The screenshot shows the official website of the United States government, specifically the Federal Student Aid page. The header includes the text "An official website of the United States government." and "Federal Student Aid | PROUD SPONSOR of the AMERICAN MIND®". Below the header, there are navigation tabs for "KNOWLEDGE CENTER", "TRAINING", "FINANCIAL AID DELIVERY", "TITLE IV PROGRAM ELIGIBILITY", and "PARTNER CONNECT SERVICES". The main content area is titled "2022-2023 Federal Student Aid" and features a search bar. A sidebar on the left lists the sections of the "Application and Verification Guide": "Introduction", "CHAPTER 1 The Application Process: FAFSA to ISIR", "CHAPTER 2 Filling Out the FAFSA", "CHAPTER 3 Expected Family Contribution (EFC)", and "CHAPTER 4 Verification, Updates, and". The main content area displays the "Introduction" section, which states: "This guide is intended for college financial aid administrators and counselors who help students begin the aid process — filing the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form, verifying information, and making corrections and other changes to the information reported on the FAFSA." It also mentions that the guide uses terms like "college," "school," and "institution" interchangeably, and defines "Parents" as the primary audience.

- Each year the US Department of Education releases an Application and Verification Guide (AVG) for financial aid administrators and school counselors that specifies all requirements for the FAFSA.



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The FAFSA – Based on an EFC

- EFC = Expected Family Contribution
- Based on the information submitted on the FAFSA, ED calculates the EFC
- Dependent student
 - Must report parent information on the FAFSA
 - EFC is based on parent's and student's income and assets
- Independent student
 - Does NOT report parent information on the FAFSA
 - EFC is based on student's income and assets



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Who is an Independent Student?

Someone who

- was born before January 1, 1999;
- is married as of the date he or she applies;
will be a graduate or professional student when the award year starts;
- is currently serving on active duty for purposes other than training;
- is a veteran of the U.S. Armed Forces;
- has dependents other than a spouse;
- was an orphan, foster child, or ward/dependent of the court at any time since the age of 13;
- is an emancipated minor or in legal guardianship or was when the student reached the age of majority in his or her state; or
- **was determined at any time since July 1, 2021, to be an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or self-supporting and at risk of being homeless. (2022-2023 AVG)**



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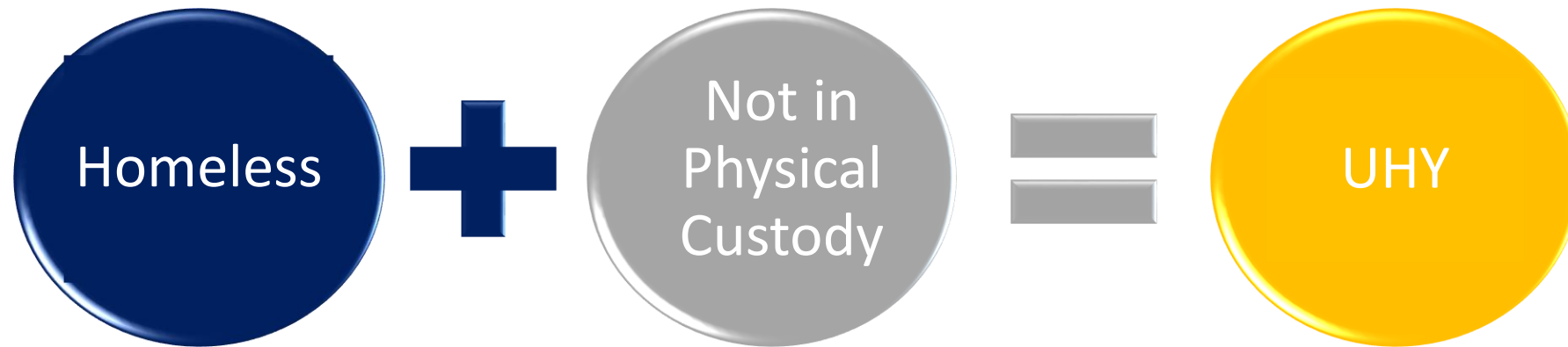


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Unaccompanied, Homeless, At-Risk

A youth who

- Fits the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless and
- Is not in the physical custody of (living with) a parent or guardian



- At risk of homelessness: When a student's housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate; for example, a student who is being evicted and has been unable to find fixed, regular, and adequate housing



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Who Can Determine if a Youth is a UHY?

- A school district homeless liaison
- The director (or designee) of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development
- The director (or designee) of a Runaway or Homeless Youth Basic Center or Transitional Living Program



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Verification

- These authorities may choose to make their determination only if the student is receiving their program's services or if, in the case of a school district homeless liaison, the student is in high school.
- There may be some case-by-case instances where these officials will provide documentation for a person who is no longer officially receiving services.
 - Local liaisons may write subsequent year letters of verification for UHY through the age of 23 for whom they have the necessary information to write such letters. This documentation is acceptable for verifying unaccompanied homelessness.
- The FAA must accept the determination from these authorities. It is not conflicting information if they disagree with an authority's determination that a student is homeless.



Determination by the FAA

- If a student does not have and cannot get documentation from any of the authorities listed, the FAA must determine if he or she is an unaccompanied youth who is homeless or is self-supporting and at risk of being homeless.
 - Any student who is not yet 24 may qualify for a homeless youth determination.
- It is important to make homeless youth determinations on a case-by-case basis.



Determination by the FAA

- The documentation for an FAA's evaluation of the living arrangements of a student must demonstrate that he or she meets the definition of this category of independent student.
 - The determination may be based on a documented interview with the student if there is no written documentation available.
 - FAAs are encouraged to use NCHE's verification form for a documented interview.
 - The documented interview should suffice for the determination.

Making Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Determinations:
A Tool for Financial Aid Administrators

This form may be completed by a financial aid administrator (FAA) who is evaluating a student's eligibility for independent student status. There is no official federal form that FAAs are required to use for unaccompanied homeless youth determinations; this form is provided as an optional tool to assist with this task. For official guidance related to unaccompanied homeless youth and federal financial aid, see the Application and Verification Guide (AVG) portion of the most current *Federal Student Aid Handbook*.

The following information provides guidance to assist FAAs in making a determination if a student seeking independent student status as an unaccompanied homeless youth comes to the attention of a FAA. It is important to note that, while comprehensive, this tool may not adequately represent every homeless situation experienced by youth. As a result, it is important that FAAs make case-by-case determinations to ensure that students are able to receive the maximum amount of aid for which they are eligible.

According to the Higher Education Act of 1965, as amended (HEA), the definition of independent student includes youth who are 1) unaccompanied and homeless, or 2) unaccompanied, self-supporting, and at-risk of homelessness. The HEA uses the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homeless, which includes youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and unaccompanied, which includes youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. The HEA also uses at-risk of homelessness to refer to students whose housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate.

Identification Number: _____

Student Name: _____

FAA Acceptance of Determinations by Other Parties

A school district homeless liaison or the director or designee of an emergency shelter, basic center, or transitional living program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) or the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) is authorized to determine that a student is eligible for independent student status as an unaccompanied homeless youth. In that instance, no further action is required to confirm a student's status as independent.¹

FAA Determination Based on Third-Party Documentation

As mandated by the HEA, if a determination by any of the parties listed in the previous section cannot be made, the FAA must make the determination of unaccompanied and homeless status, or unaccompanied, self-supporting, and at risk of homelessness status.

1. Does the student have documentation that attests that he/she has experienced homelessness at any time since July 1, 2021 from a homeless shelter or service provider, FAA from another college, college access program such as TRIO or GEAR UP, college or high school counselor, mental health professional, social worker, employer, mentor, doctor, clergy, or other relevant third party? Yes No

If yes, list the contact and relationship to the student:

Summary of information provided by the third party:

If the FAA feels that additional supporting documentation is needed, he/she may request contact information for the third party listed above to follow-up by phone or email.

FAA Determination Based on a Documented Interview

If third party documentation is not available, a documented interview conducted by the FAA is sufficient to confirm that a student qualifies as independent as an unaccompanied homeless youth.² The FAA may make the determination based on the following information:

1. In which of the following situations does the student currently reside or in which would the student reside if not staying in on-campus housing? (you may choose more than one):

1 According to the AVG, if the FAA disagrees with an authority's determination, the FAA must accept the determination, but may contact the authority's oversight agency to evaluate the authority's determination.
2 According to the AVG, the determination may be based on a documented interview with the student if there is no written documentation available.
3 According to the AVG, the definition of homeless includes students living in the school dormitory if they would otherwise be homeless.



The FAFSA

- The FAA may seek additional documentation only if there is conflicting information.
 - Additional information should only pertain to establishing the student's living situation.
 - The reasons why the student is unaccompanied or homeless is not relevant.
 - Requests for documentation should not include records protected by doctor-patient privilege, police reports, or child protective services reports.
 - Relevant information can come from recognized third parties such as private or publicly funded homeless shelters and service providers, financial aid administrators from another college, college access programs such as TRIO and GEAR UP, college or high school counselors, other mental health professionals, social workers, mentors, doctors, and clergy.



The FAFSA – What Do You Think? (Poll #3)

A 17-year-old student's parents died, and she was living with grandparents when she started the FAFSA. Now she is living doubled up because she can no longer stay with her grandparents. Can she change the living situation on the form now?

- A.** Yes
- B.** No
- C.** Yes, but only at the beginning of the next school year



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The FAFSA – What Do You Think? (Poll #4)

A 20-year-old comes to you, as the local liaison, saying that he's a UHY and the FAA at his college told him that he must get verification from a local liaison to qualify as an independent student. He never attended school in your school district. What should you do?

- A.** Ask him questions about his living situation and write a verification letter.
- B.** Tell him that you are unable to provide him a verification letter since he never attended school in your district.
- C.** Ask him questions about his living situation and write a letter to the FAA stating the circumstances indicate a homeless situation.



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The FAFSA – What Do You Think? (Poll #5)

A UHY who attended school in your district, for whom you wrote a verification letter, contacted you to say that his FAA disagreed with your verification. The FAA was going to make his own determination because he said that the youth was choosing to couch-surf and has a perfectly good home.

- A.** The FAA should dig deeper into the circumstances behind the student's homelessness.
- B.** Disagreeing with the verification by an authority listed in the AVG is not conflicting information and does not warrant a separate determination.
- C.** The youth should provide the FAA more details on the reasons for couch-surfing to justify his determination as an UHY.



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Changes in the 2023-2024 FAFSA

The Consolidated Appropriations Act signed into law on December 27th 2020 includes the following revisions to the FAFSA related to UHY. Changes include:

- Any student who is determined to be an UHY for a preceding award year “shall be presumed to be independent for each subsequent year at the same institution” unless the student informs the institutions that their circumstances have changed.
- Determinations of homeless and foster status must be made as quickly as practicable.
- The following parties are authorized to determine UHY status: school district homeless liaisons, director or designee of an emergency or transitional shelter, street outreach program, homeless youth drop-in center, or other program serving homeless individuals.



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Changes in the 2023-2024 FAFSA

- FAAs must consider and accept as sufficient documentation from one of the authorized entities, unless there is documented conflicting information. Documentation may include a documented phone call, written statement, or verifiable electronic data match.
- FAA determinations must be based on a written statement from, or a documented interview with, a student that confirms UHY or at risk and must be made independent from the reasons that the student is unaccompanied, homeless, or at risk.

The new FAFSA provisions will go into effect for the 2023-2024 award year and will be reflected on the new FAFSA available on October 1, 2022.



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Other Financial Aid Opportunities

- Explore private scholarship opportunities – encourage students to check with their high school counselor or FAA at the college they choose.
 - Local and state
 - Those offered by specific colleges
 - Schoolhouse Connection
 - NAEHCY
- Explore state tuition waiver laws and policies (NY Tuition Assistance Program).



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Facilitating a Smooth Transition to Post-secondary Education



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Supporting Students (beyond McKinney-Vento)

- Provide them basic supplies – computer, bedding, school supplies, clothing.
- If they will not be living in a dorm, help them to attain housing and to connect with campus and community resources; ensure they have a plan for transportation.
- Help them plan where they will stay over breaks if dorms are closed.
- Connect the student with a campus student support services staff member or homeless liaison on campus, if one is designated.
- Ensure that the high school mentor or trusted adult will continue to be in contact with their student in college.
- Follow up with students to make sure they are maintaining Satisfactory Academic Requirements; otherwise, they will lose their eligibility for financial aid.



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Supporting Students (beyond McKinney-Vento)

- Contact a local college's financial aid office and student services office and offer to provide information on the needs of homeless students and ways the college can support homeless students.
 - Share briefs and resources from NCHE and Schoolhouse Connection.
 - Share NCHE's form for a documented interview to determine eligibility as an independent student; offer to be a resource to assist with this process.
 - Share strategies utilized by other colleges, such as designating a homeless student point of contact or offering homeless student case management, opening a dorm over breaks, operating a campus-based food pantry, coordination between campus support programs and the financial aid office to ensure that students are aware of deadlines for completing the FAFSA each year, raising awareness of homeless students on campus.



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Wrap Up

List in the chat the biggest take away you learned from this presentation or one thing that you will do differently to support homeless youth in their post-secondary education goals.



Hear from Jahnee*

“Though I have made the most of my circumstances, I am still experiencing homelessness. I still feel the effects of years of complex trauma, mental health struggles, and financial barriers as I work to afford college. Throughout these struggles, school continues to be a critical support for me. I am thankful for my school system, Project UP-START (the McKinney-Vento Program at my school), SchoolHouse Connection, and my debate coach Ms. Charles for their unending support...

* This story originally appeared on Homeroom, the official blog of the U.S. Department of Education. Jaynee is a Schoolhouse Connection scholar.



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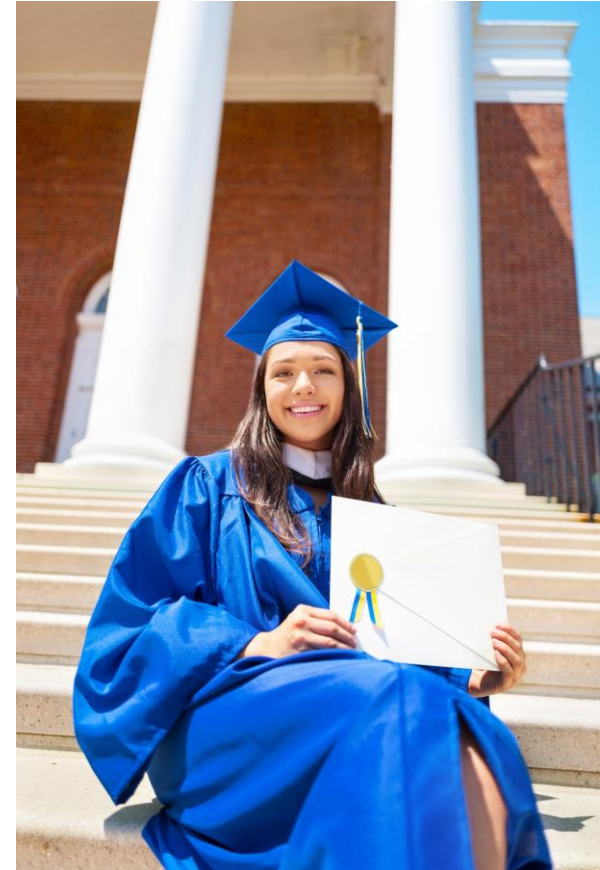


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Wrap Up

“Because of them and my perseverance, I will be walking across the stage on June 7th as a high school graduate and attending college in the fall.

I would say that if you’re reading this and you work with young people experiencing homelessness, know that what you do matters. By showing empathy and providing a safe space for students experiencing homelessness to learn and have their basic needs met, you can help ensure that they too can pursue their goals and find a way out of an often unbreakable cycle of homelessness.”



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For Further Information

- Review the links in the Resource List that accompanies this presentation
- Visit the NCHE website.
- Visit the Schoolhouse Connection website.
- Wait for the written responses to questions posed in the chat.
- Contact NYSTEACHS (800.388.2014) or NCHE (800.308.2145) for help.



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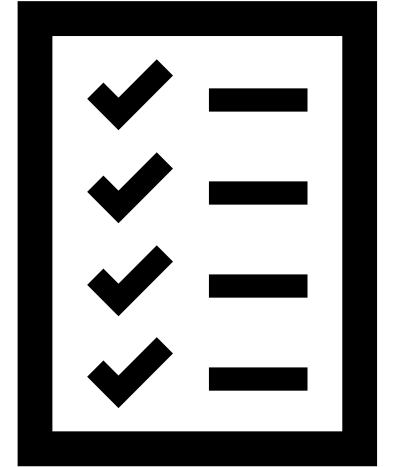


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Session Survey

Please take a few moments to complete our survey.

Survey Link: <https://mi-surveys.com/webinar-collegereadiness041322>



We appreciate your feedback! Responses are used in the planning of upcoming Professional Learning sessions.



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- Help Line (800-388-2014)
- Website (<https://nysteachs.org>)
- Web-based Trainings

Next Webinar:

Understanding the STAC 202 Policy

April 28, 2022



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