

Best Practice #1

Starting the School Year off Right

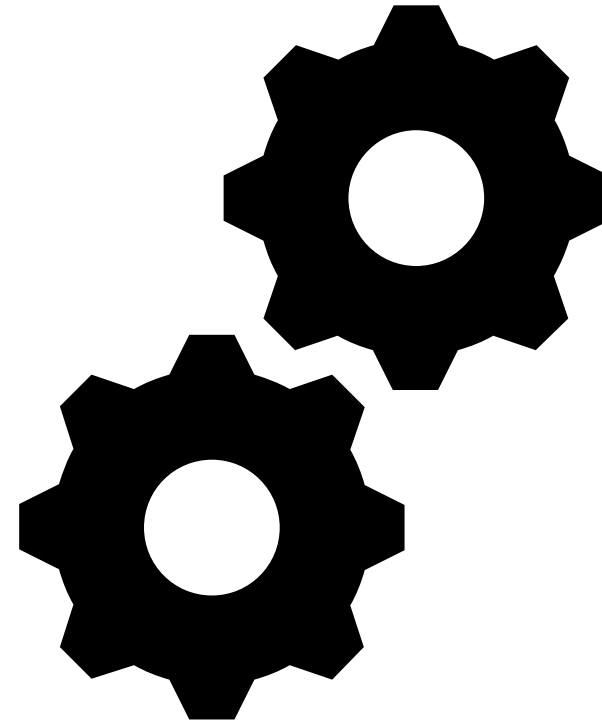
Melissa Woody, McKinney-Vento Program Training Supervisor
August 27, 2026



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Logistics

- This version of this webinar will not be recorded. A later version will be recorded and posted to the OSPI Homeless Education website.
- Webinar slide deck and materials will be sent to attendees after the webinar.
- Please use “Q&A” to submit questions. Questions will be discussed at the designated slide times.



Vision

All students prepared for post-secondary pathways, careers, and civic engagement.

Mission

Transform K–12 education to a system that is centered on closing opportunity gaps and is characterized by high expectations for all students and educators. We achieve this by developing equity-based policies and supports that empower educators, families, and communities.

Values

- Ensuring Equity
- Collaboration and Service
- Achieving Excellence through Continuous Improvement
- Focus on the Whole Child



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Equity Statement

Each student, family, and community possesses strengths and cultural knowledge that benefits their peers, educators, and schools.

Ensuring educational equity:

- Goes beyond equality; it requires education leaders to examine the ways current policies and practices result in disparate outcomes for our students of color, students living in poverty, students receiving special education and English Learner services, students who identify as LGBTQ+, and highly mobile student populations.
- Requires education leaders to develop an understanding of historical contexts; engage students, families, and community representatives as partners in decision-making; and actively dismantle systemic barriers, replacing them with policies and practices that ensure all students have access to the instruction and support they need to succeed in our schools.



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Tribal Land Acknowledgement

I respectfully acknowledge that I am on the homelands of the Cowlitz Indian Tribe, whose people have lived on and cared for since time immemorial. I recognize the continued presence, culture and contributions that are continued to be made today. I also want to provide a thank you for the opportunity to live and work on these lands.

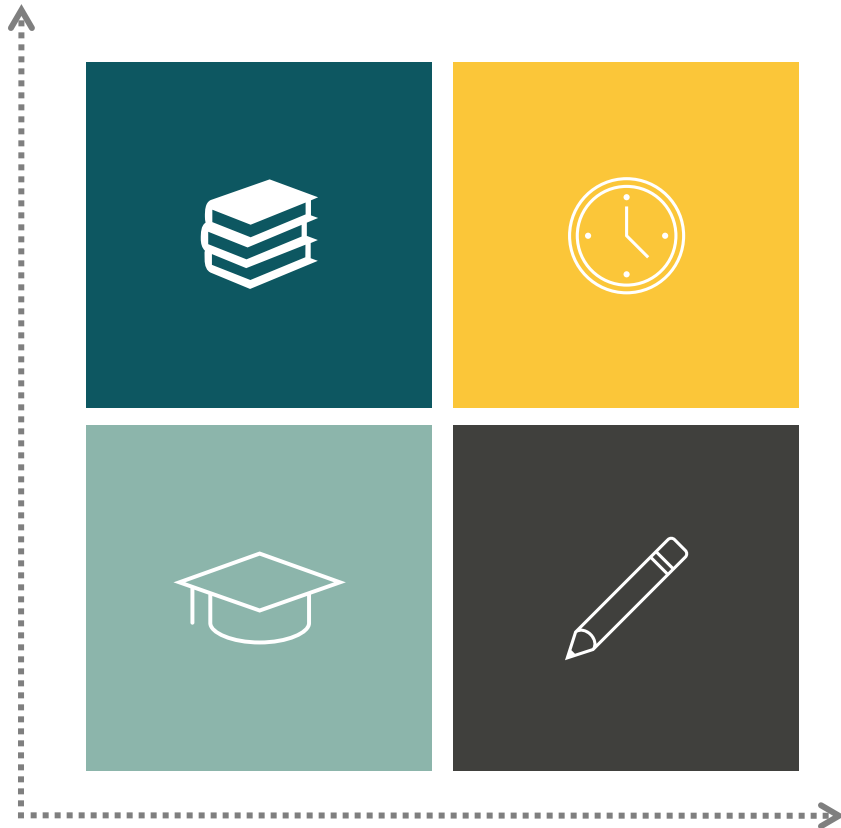
The Cowlitz Indian Tribe are known as the Forever People, Cowlitz means Seekers of the Medicine Spirit.

[Our Story | The Cowlitz Indian Tribe](#)



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Agenda



Welcome to Best Practices #1

Beginning of the School Year

Timelines

Links and Resources



Welcome to the Best Practice Series

A three-part series to discuss basic activities and tasks, answering the question: What Should I Be Doing Now?

October 27, 2026	Starting the School Year Off
January 13, 2027	Coming Back From Winter Break
May 6, 2027	Finishing the School Year Strong



Welcome to Best Practices #1

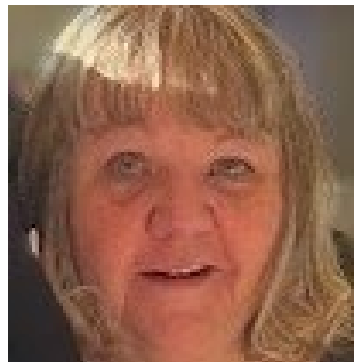
Starting the School Year off Right



Who is the Homeless Education Team?



Keith Woodruff
Homeless Education
of Children and
Youth Assistant
Director



Jill Kawulok
Education of
Children and
Youth EGMS
Supervisor



Vivian Rogers
Decker
Homeless Student
Stability Program
Supervisor



Melissa Woody
McKinney-Vento
Training
Supervisor



Lydia Lemon
Homeless Education
of Children and
Youth In-Training
Administrative
Program Specialist



How can you find us?



- Website [Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- Email homelessed@k12.wa.us
- Phone 360-725-6505

What is Our Goal?

The homeless education team aims to provide access to training, knowledge of the McKinney-Vento Act, grant guidance, technical assistance, and support to all our LEAs with a common goal of removing barriers for students experiencing homelessness.

What is your goal?



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Key Standards

- **Immediate enrollment:** Students must be enrolled without delay, regardless of documentation status, or address.
- **Remove barriers:** Address any obstacles to attendance, retention, or participation.
- **Family engagement:** Maintain and strengthen relationships with families to support stability.
- **Equity and inclusion:** Ensure all students, including those experiencing homelessness, have access to the same opportunities and supports.



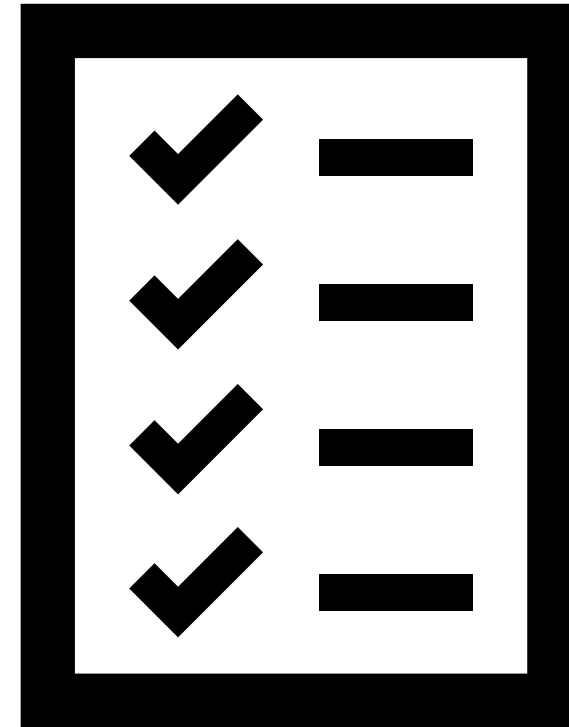
Beginning of the School Year

What should I be doing?

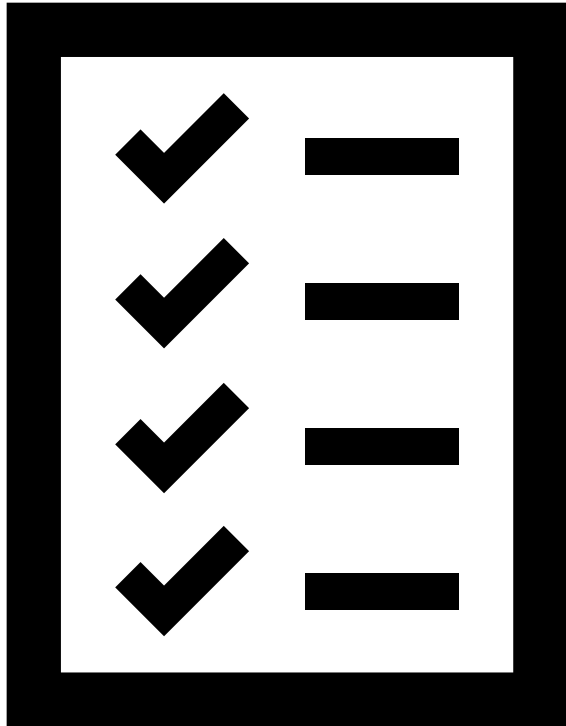


Tasks

- Ensure immediate enrollments for all eligible students, even without standard documentation.
- Contact former McKinney-Vento families to requalify as needed and reconnect them with services.
- Provide McKinney-Vento training to all staff who engage with students to ensure awareness of rights and procedures.



Tasks 2

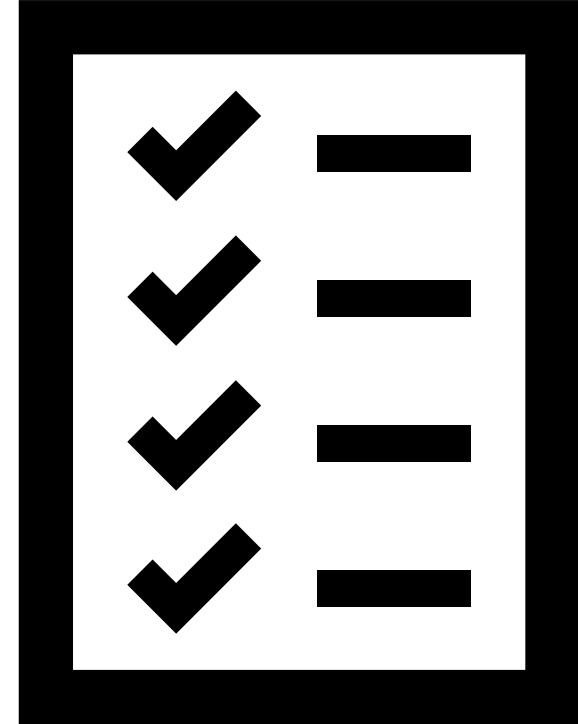


- Send McKinney-Vento eligibility/non-eligibility notification letters to families.
- Post McKinney-Vento Educational Rights posters in all schools and throughout the community.
- Set up transportation for eligible students and assist families in accessing preschool for age-eligible children.

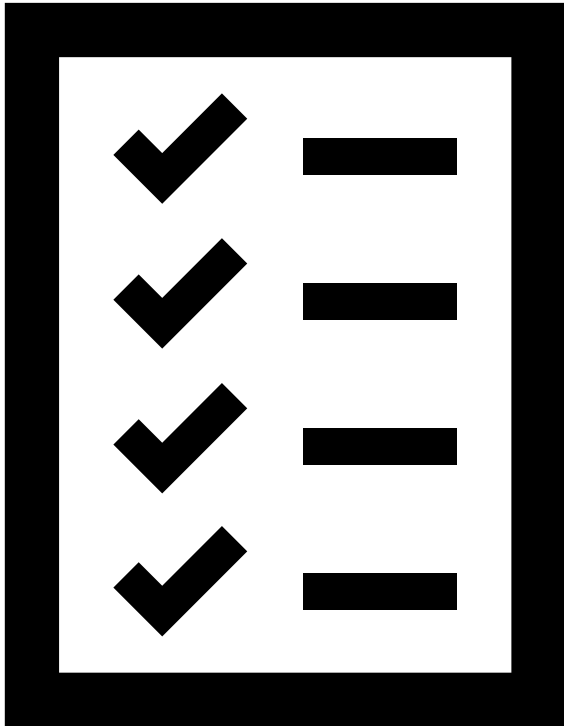


Tasks 3

- Update McKinney-Vento contact information for the district homeless liaison to ensure accurate communications.
- Update/Review District Policy and Procedure, including dispute process.
- Send McKinney-Vento awareness information to all staff and meet with families in need of school supplies or clothing.



Tasks 4

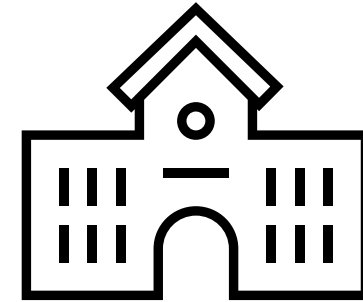


- Facilitate outreach for identification and information to all staff, especially if early intake for newly identified families is not yet complete.
- Collaborate with community partners (e.g., Homeless Advisory Board) to support identification and services.

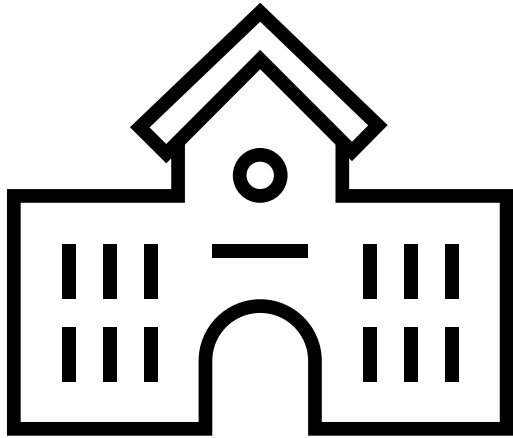


Building Point of Contacts

Each school district must designate a liaison and a point of contact in each school. According to state legislation, each K-12 public school in the state of Washington must establish a McKinney-Vento and Foster Care building point of contact in each elementary school, middle school, and high school. These points of contact are responsible for identifying students experiencing homelessness or foster care and connecting them with the respective school district liaisons. (RCW 28A.320.142)



Who is Who? LEA Liaison or Building Point of Contact?



Building Points of Contact may be better-suited for some duties, such as identification, enrollment, school-based supports, and referrals to outside services.

LEA Liaisons may be better-suited to lead on other duties, such as best interest determinations, federal and state compliance, data collection, transportation, dispute resolution, creating community partnerships, and trainings.



Collaborate and Discuss!

In your break-out room discuss some examples of each of the proactive steps you can take before the year starts.

1. Understand Your Role and Scope
2. Build a Cross-Department Team
3. Train and Raise Awareness
4. Back-to-School Identification Plan
 - Outreach
 - Checklists
 - Collaborate

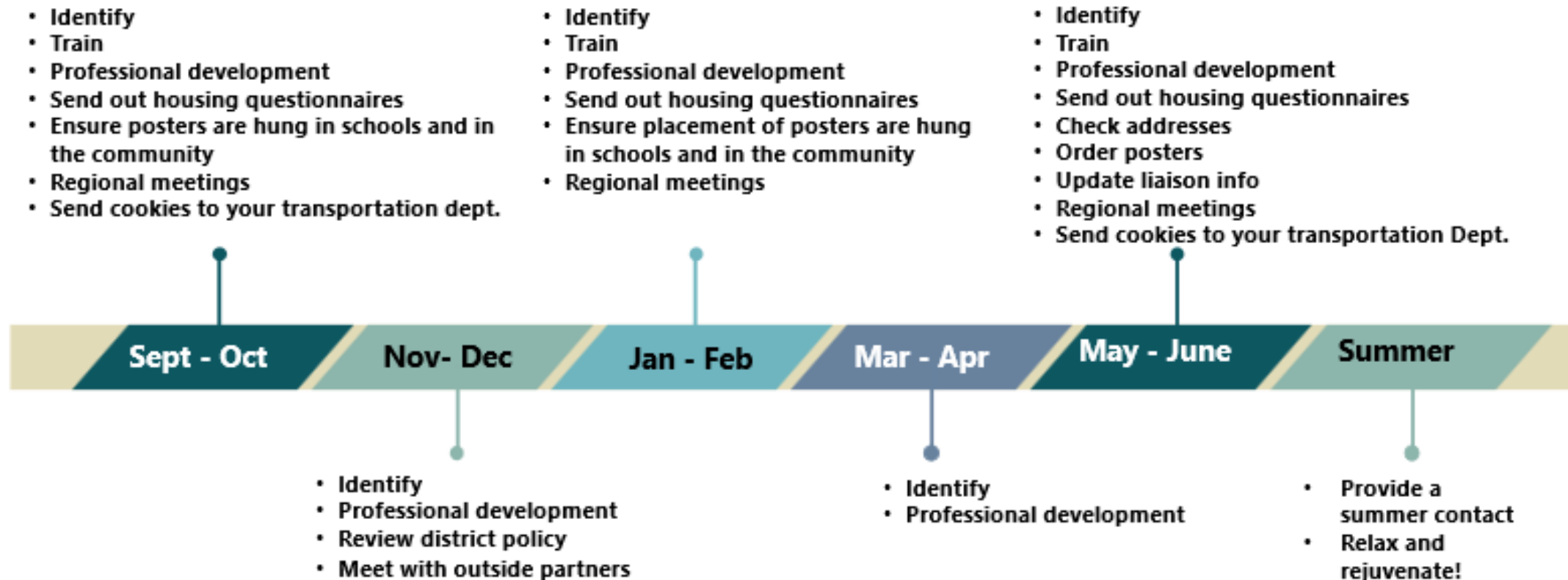
5. Streamline Enrollment
6. Connect Families to Supports
7. Monitor Attendance and Retention
8. Post Educational Rights Information
9. Prepare for Disputes
10. Use OSPI and NCHE Resources



Timelines



Example Timeline



September-October

- Identify students experiencing homelessness
- Train district staff - [School Staff Resource](#)
- Professional development- Watch for upcoming webinars in our weekly newsletter
- Send out [housing questionnaires](#)
- [Order posters](#) and ensure they are hung in schools and in the community
- Regional meetings
- Set up transportation - [Transportation Toolkit](#)
(Click on the above link and scroll down to the transportation tool kit)
- [Update liaison](#) information
- Send cookies to your transportation department
- Self enroll in the Canvas Course [Back-to-School Toolkit](#)



November-December



- Identify students experiencing homelessness
- Train district staff
 - [School Staff Resources](#)
- Review district policy and procedures
 - [Non-regulatory Guidance](#)
- Meet with outside partners



January–June/Summer

- Identify students experiencing homelessness
- Train district staff
- Professional development
- Send out housing questionnaire
- Check addresses
- Order posters
- Update liaison information
- Update training information
- Regional meetings
- Provide a summer contact
- Send cookies to your transportation department

Summer

- Provide a summer contact
- End of year grant duties
- Relax and rejuvenate!

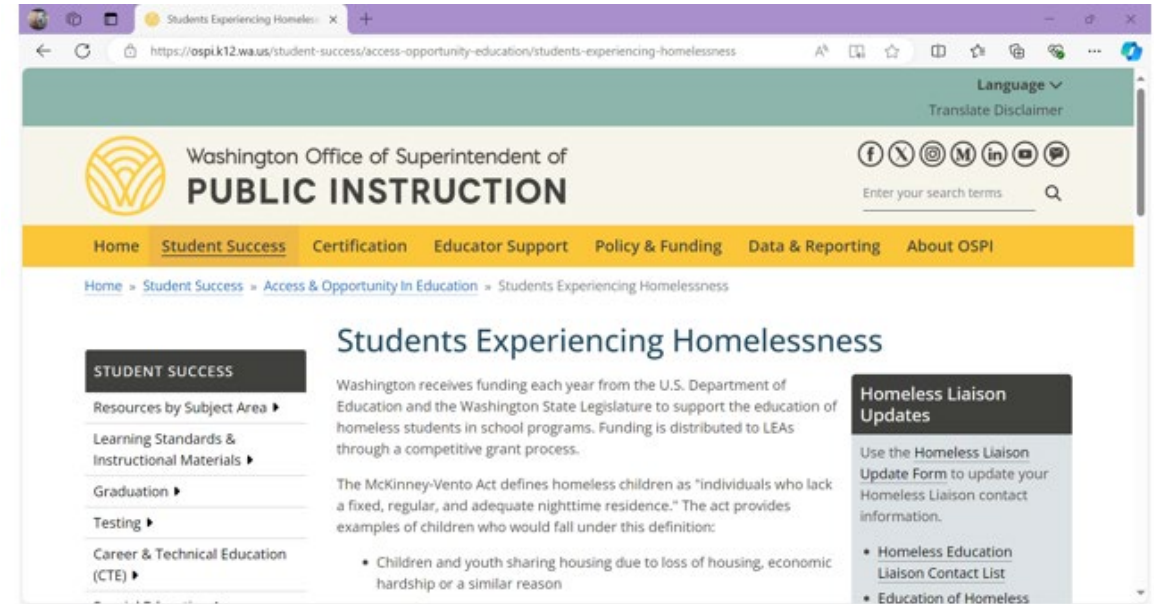


Resources and Links



Explore the Website

Following this webinar, log into our new Canvas course that provides you with a step-by-step navigation through our Students Experiencing Homelessness webpage.



Top Requested Resources

- [OSPI Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- [Homeless Education Inbox](#)
- [Confirming Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Rights and Services](#)
- [Determining Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Rights and Services](#)
- [School Selection and Best Interest Determination](#)
- [Schoolhouse Connection](#)
 - [Back to Basics Webinar](#)
 - [Essentials for a Strong Start Webinar](#)
- [OSPI McKinney Vento Poster Order Form](#)
- [OSPI Dispute Resolution Process](#)
- [One-Pager Liaison Roles and Responsibilities](#)
- [Non-Regulatory Guidance- Education](#)
- [Guidance for Substandard Housing Determination](#)
- [We Need a Little Time...](#)
- [Washington Commerce Office of Homeless Youth \(OHY\)](#)
- [National Center for Homeless Education \(NCHE\)](#)
- [National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth \(NAEH CY\)](#)

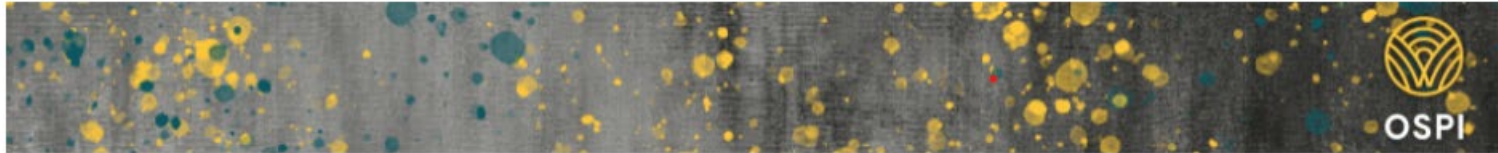


Other Useful OSPI Resources

- Monthly Homeless Education Office Hours are held the **first Friday of each month at 11:00am**. Teams link [HERE](#).
- [Order Posters and Brochures](#) - School districts are required to place public notice of the educational rights of homeless children and youth in areas where they receive services under this Act, such as in school district buildings, shelters, and public libraries.
- [Update Liaison Contact Information](#) - School district should ensure that their designated McKinney-Vento homeless liaison contact information is up to date.
- [School Staff Resource](#)
- [Program Review Checklist](#)
- Please email lydia.lemon@k12.wa.us to sign up for the Homeless Education weekly newsletter
- Technical assistance questions? homelessed@k12.wa.us



Canvas Course



Tasks, Timelines, and Connections

Start the school year prepared and excited!

Self enroll for the [Back-to-School Toolkit Canvas course!](#)



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