



Don't Quit on Them: Understanding and Addressing the Needs of Unaccompanied Youth

California State Homeless
Education Conference

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Meet Your Presenters



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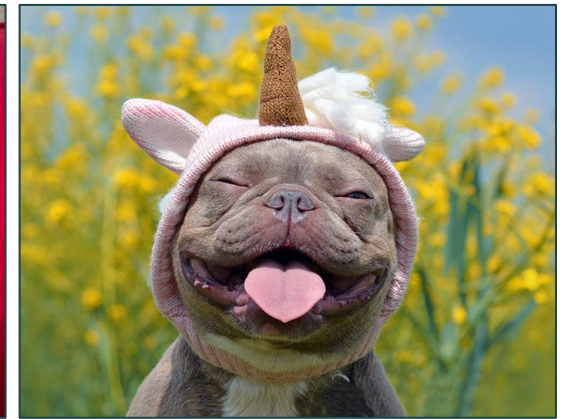
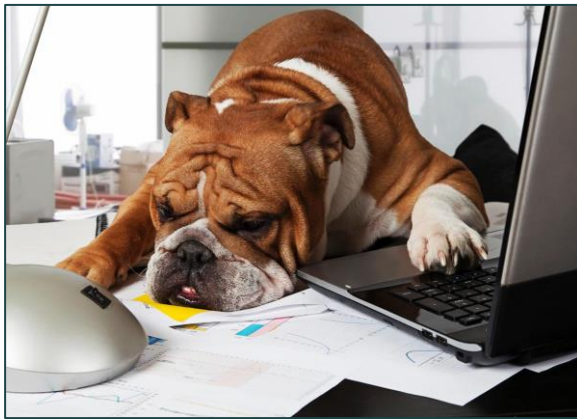


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Icebreaker

Summer is approaching. By raise of hands, what are your summer plans?

Multiple responses allowed.



A.

Working with some fun mixed in

B.

Poolside/beachside lounging

C.

Couchside binge-watching and snacking

D.

Something else (feel free to share)



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Today's Roadmap



- Who are unaccompanied youth?
- Educational rights and supports for unaccompanied youth
- Unaccompanied youth 201 topics
- Resources for more information
- Q&A, discussion, and scenarios



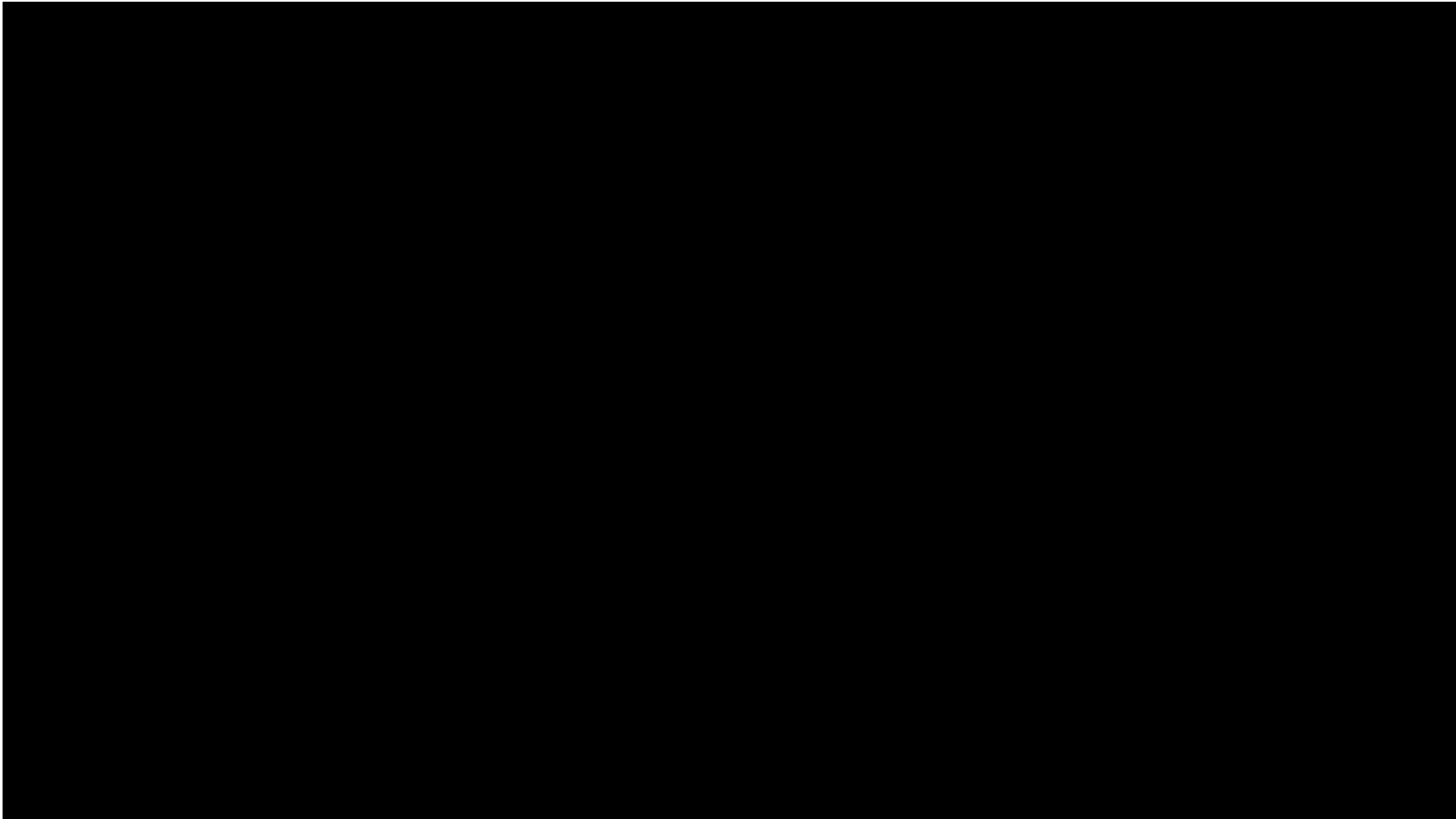
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Who Are Unaccompanied Youth?



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The Homestretch



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McKinney-Vento Act Basics

- Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
 - Was reauthorized by Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act
 - Establishes the definition of *homeless* and *unaccompanied youth* used by U.S. public schools
 - Addresses the unique educational barriers and challenges faced by students experiencing homelessness
 - Requires state education departments to designate a State Coordinator for Homeless Education and school districts to designate a [local homeless education liaison](#)



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Who is Homeless?

Children and youth who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**, including

- Sharing the housing of other persons, *due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason*
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds *due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations*
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters, or abandoned in hospitals
- Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children living in the above circumstances



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Unaccompanied Youth

- The term “unaccompanied youth” includes a homeless child or youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian
- For a student to be an unaccompanied youth, they must be experiencing homelessness and unaccompanied
- The McKinney-Vento Act does not include age-related eligibility criteria, including for unaccompanied youth



“But the student chose to leave...”

- A student may be considered an unaccompanied youth regardless of whether the student was forced from the home or ran away
- The cause of student/parental separation may not be disclosed readily due to its sensitive or private nature
- Determinations of McKinney-Vento eligibility for unaccompanied youth should be made on a case-by-case basis focusing on the nature of the student’s nighttime residence



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Causes of Youth Homelessness

Youth may run away or be forced from the home due to family conflict related to

- Parental abuse or neglect
- The youth's or parent's alcohol or drug use
- The youth's sexual orientation, gender identity, or pregnancy
- Other challenging household dynamics, including economic hardship



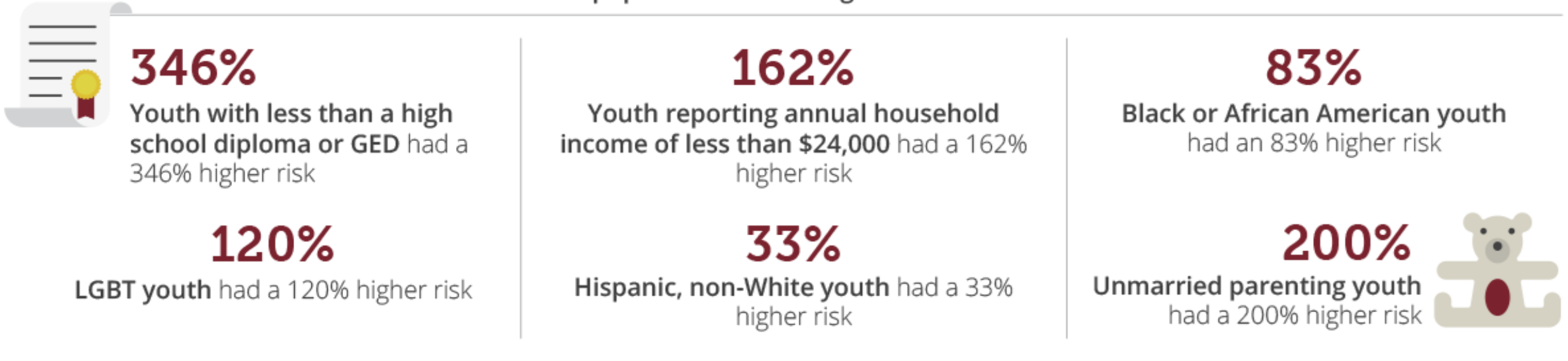
Source: Congressional Research Service,
[*Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics and Programs*](#)



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Risk Factors for Youth Homelessness

Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness



Source: Chapin Hall, [Missed Opportunities: Youth Homelessness in America, National Estimates](#)



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Causes of Youth Homelessness

Homeless youth experience disproportionately high rates of

- Unmet basic needs
- Poor health
- Untreated mental health issues
- Substance use
- Sexual, physical, or criminal exploitation
- School disengagement

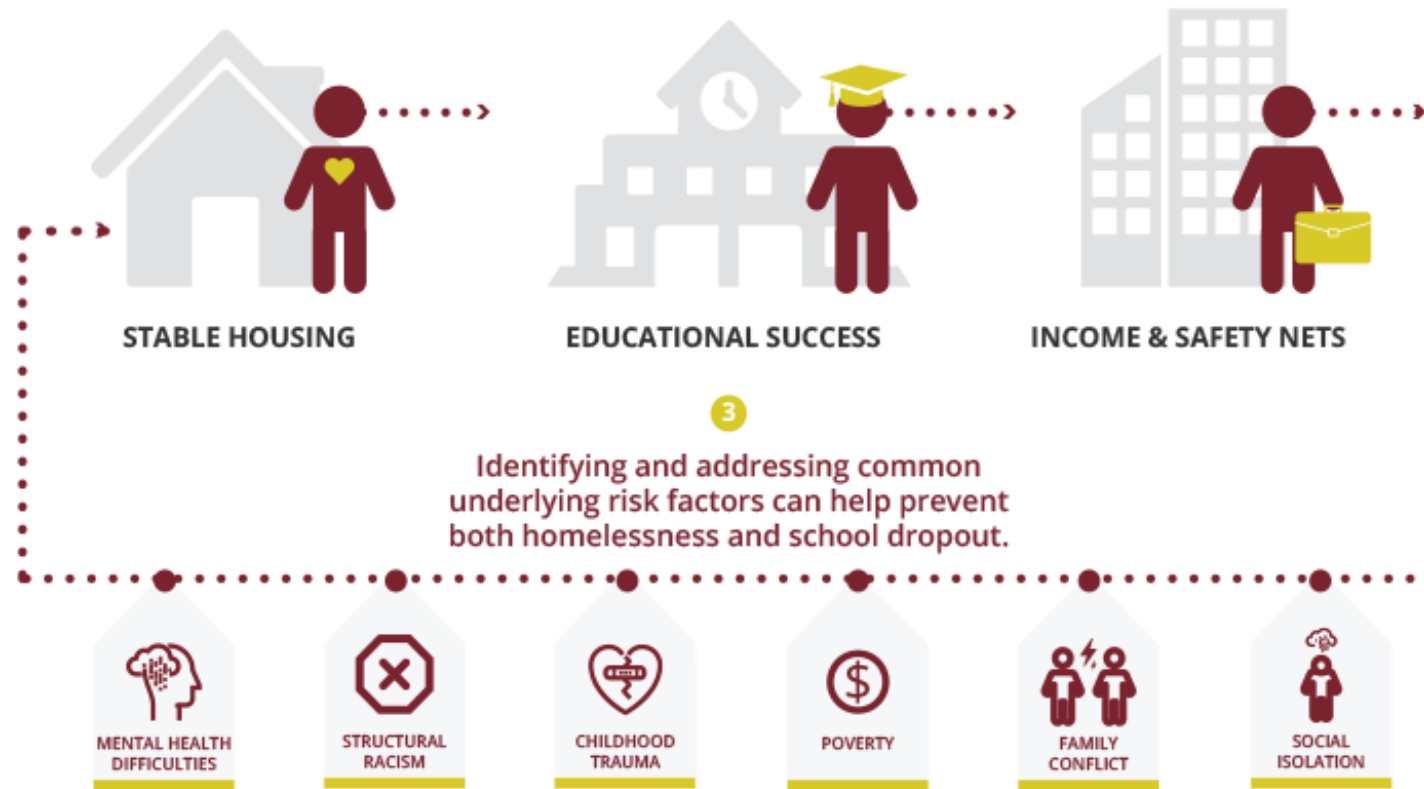


Source: Congressional Research Service,
[Runaway and Homeless Youth: Demographics and Programs](#)



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Opening Doors with Education



Source: Chapin Hall, [Missed Opportunities: Education Among Youth Experiencing Homelessness in America](#)



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Education Rights and Supports for Unaccompanied Youth



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Education Rights and Supports

Unaccompanied youth have the **same educational rights** under the McKinney-Vento Act as students experiencing homelessness with a parent or guardian

- Immediate school enrollment, even if lacking required documentation
- School selection (school of origin or local school)
- School of origin transportation
- College preparation and readiness assistance
- Comparable services
- Title I, Part A services
- Free school meals
- Removal of barriers

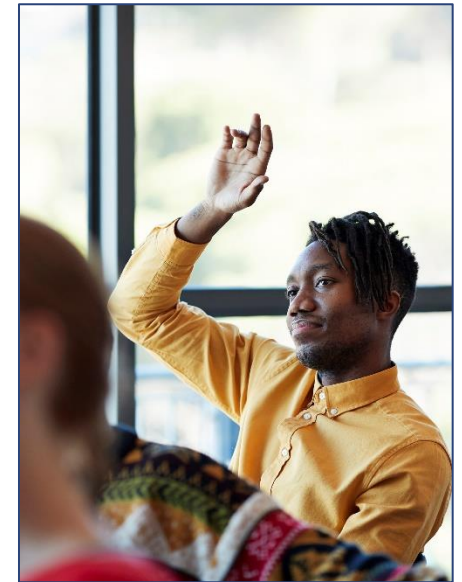
Visit the website of the [California HETAC](#) or the [National Center for Homeless Education](#) for more information



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Rights and Supports Specific to UY

- Immediate enrollment, even without a parent or guardian
- Prioritization of the unaccompanied youth's requested school in best interest determinations
- Targeted support from the local liaison
 - Obtaining needed records once immediate enrollment has occurred
 - Accessing school of origin transportation
 - Accessing the McKinney-Vento dispute resolution process



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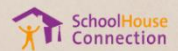
Access to Federal Student Aid

- Local liaisons must inform unaccompanied youth of their **independent student status** on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and assist with verification of this status
- Independent students do not include parent information on their FAFSA, and their federal aid is calculated based only on the student's income and assets

Access a template for documenting independent student status from [SchoolHouse Connection](#)

SAMPLE FORM LETTERS TO DETERMINE INDEPENDENT STUDENT STATUS

For Unaccompanied Youth



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Scenario

A student just disclosed to you that they had to leave their home and are currently moving between the homes of a couple of friends. The situations are temporary until the student can figure something out.

The student mentions that he is struggling with attendance and experiencing a lot of anxiety.

- *How do you respond to the student? What do you say?*
- *What do you need to make sure is done at school?*
- *What resources can you offer the student?*



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Scenario, Part 2

You receive a call from the student's parent letting you know that the student is not homeless because they could come home if they wanted to but are refusing.

The parent says that the school is enabling the student in this behavior, and they want to disenroll him so that they can enroll the student elsewhere. They also threaten to call the cops if the school continues to “harbor the student”.

- *How do you respond to the parent? What do you say?*
- *What, if anything, do you change about the student's homeless determination and enrollment at your site?*



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Unaccompanied Youth 201 Topics



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Caregiver Affidavit

- A caregiver affidavit
 - Allows a caregiver to enroll a child in school and approve their “school-related medical care” (e.g. immunizations and physical exams, including medical exams conducted at school)
 - Does not affect the rights of the student’s parents
 - Does not require notarization
 - Is not required for all unaccompanied youth; schools cannot require unaccompanied youth to have one on file
 - Does not change or affect the student’s status as unaccompanied
- Visit the California Courts [caregiver’s authorization affidavit webpage](#)



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Access to and Sharing of Student Information

Under FERPA, a **parent** means a parent of a student and includes a natural parent, a guardian, or an individual acting as a parent in the absence of a parent or a guardian.
34 C.F.R. § 99.3

- The **Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)** governs access to and sharing of student information
- Parents maintain FERPA rights for minor students; rights revert to the student when they turn 18
- FERPA permits schools to allow students under age 18 to have access to their education records and provide consent for disclosures, as long as:
 - Those rights do not supersede the rights of their parents.
 - Students must be deemed “responsible enough”
- If a parent or guardian is present and attempting to exercise FERPA rights, their rights supersede the rights of others



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Child Welfare Involvement

- [Assembly Bill \(AB\) 652](#) (Penal Code [PC] § 11165.15) clarifies that a youth's homeless or unaccompanied status is not, in and of itself, a sufficient basis for reporting child abuse or neglect
- Schools should not report a student to child welfare based solely on the fact that the student is homeless or an unaccompanied youth
- Child welfare reports should be made only when the school knows or reasonably suspects the student to be the victim of abuse or neglect



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Special Education

- Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), a parent usually serves as the student's educational decisionmaker
- IDEA defines parent as
 - a natural, adoptive, or foster parent;
 - a guardian (but not the state if the child is a ward of the state);
 - an individual acting in the place of a natural or adoptive parent with whom the child lives, or an individual who is legally responsible for the child's welfare



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Special Education

For unaccompanied youth with special education needs who do not have a parent who is willing and/or able to act as educational decisionmaker:

- A **surrogate parent**, who may not be involved with the care or education of the child, should be appointed within 30 days
- A **temporary surrogate parent**, who may be involved with the care or education of the child, may be appointed immediately



Who Signs?

- **Work permits:** A parent, guardian, foster parent, caregiver with whom the minor resides, or residential shelter services provider can sign
- **Athletic forms/permission slips:** Can be signed by the local liaison or a caregiver who signed the caregiver affidavit
- **Medi-Cal:** A person 14-18 years old and who is not living with a parent or caretaker relative can sign
- **CalFresh:** There is no minimum age for CalFresh benefits; youth can apply on their own or as part of the household where they are living



Scenario

A new student enrolls in the 11th grade in your school. She is living with her aunt and uncle and mentions that she does not have contact with her parents.

You learn that she has gaps in her education and school credits. You also learn that she played on the soccer team at her previous school and is interested in playing at your school.

- *What are the important issues to consider in this situation?*
- *What are your next steps to ensure full school participation and progress towards graduation for this student?*



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Scenario, Part 2

The situation with her aunt and uncle apart, so the student begins couch-surfing among her friends from the soccer team.

With all the stress and uncertainty at home, the student has missed 15 days of school and is at risk of not earning credits.

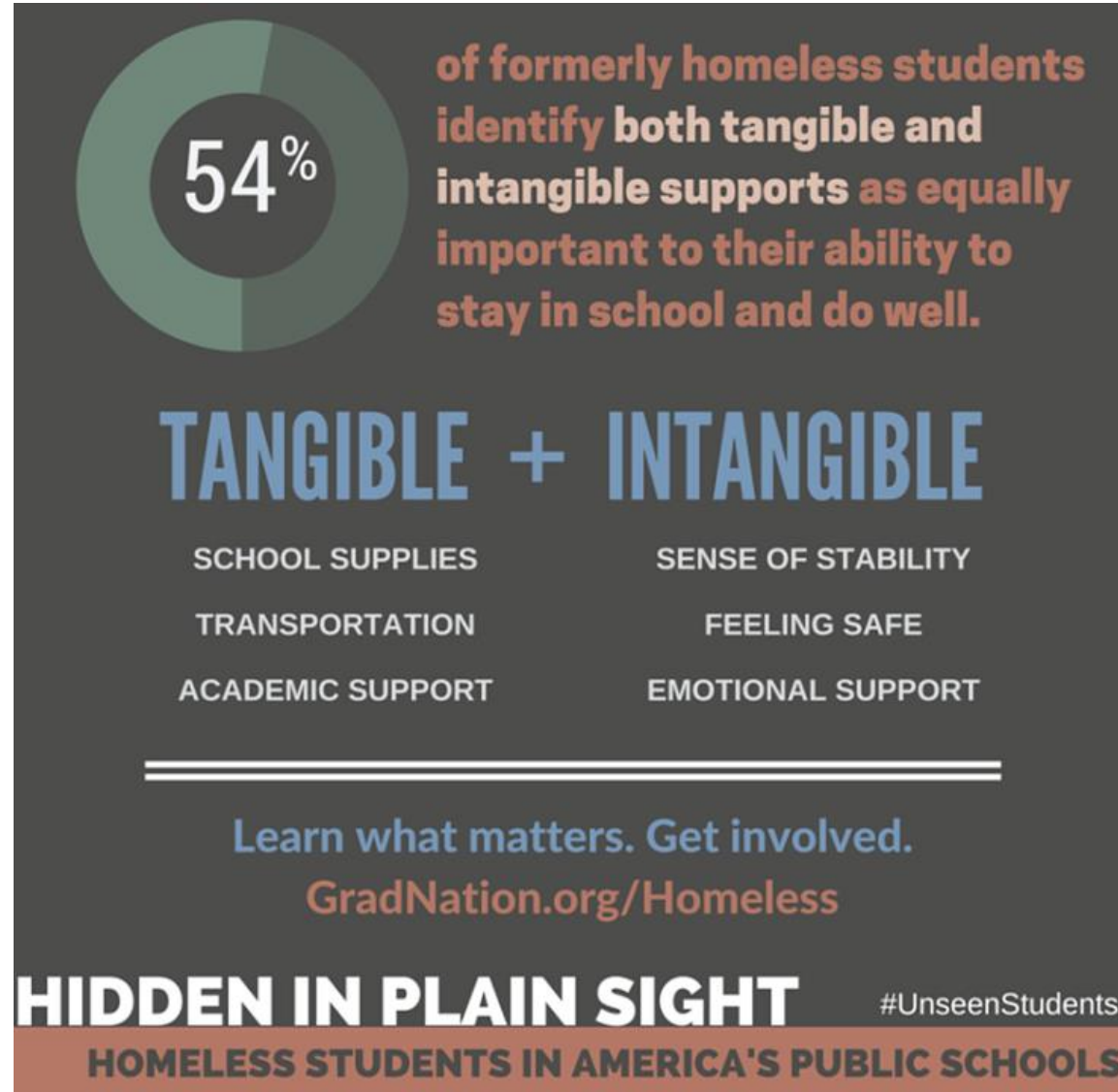
The parents she has no contact with have her ID and birth certificate that she now needs to apply for benefits like CalFresh and Medi Cal.

- *What educational supports can you offer?*
- *How can you help the student access needed benefits?*



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Student Needs



54% of formerly homeless students identify both tangible and intangible supports as equally important to their ability to stay in school and do well.

TANGIBLE + INTANGIBLE

SCHOOL SUPPLIES	SENSE OF STABILITY
TRANSPORTATION	FEELING SAFE
ACADEMIC SUPPORT	EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

Learn what matters. Get involved.
[GradNation.org/Homeless](https://gradnation.org/homeless)

HIDDEN IN PLAIN SIGHT #UnseenStudents
HOMELESS STUDENTS IN AMERICA'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS



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Resiliency

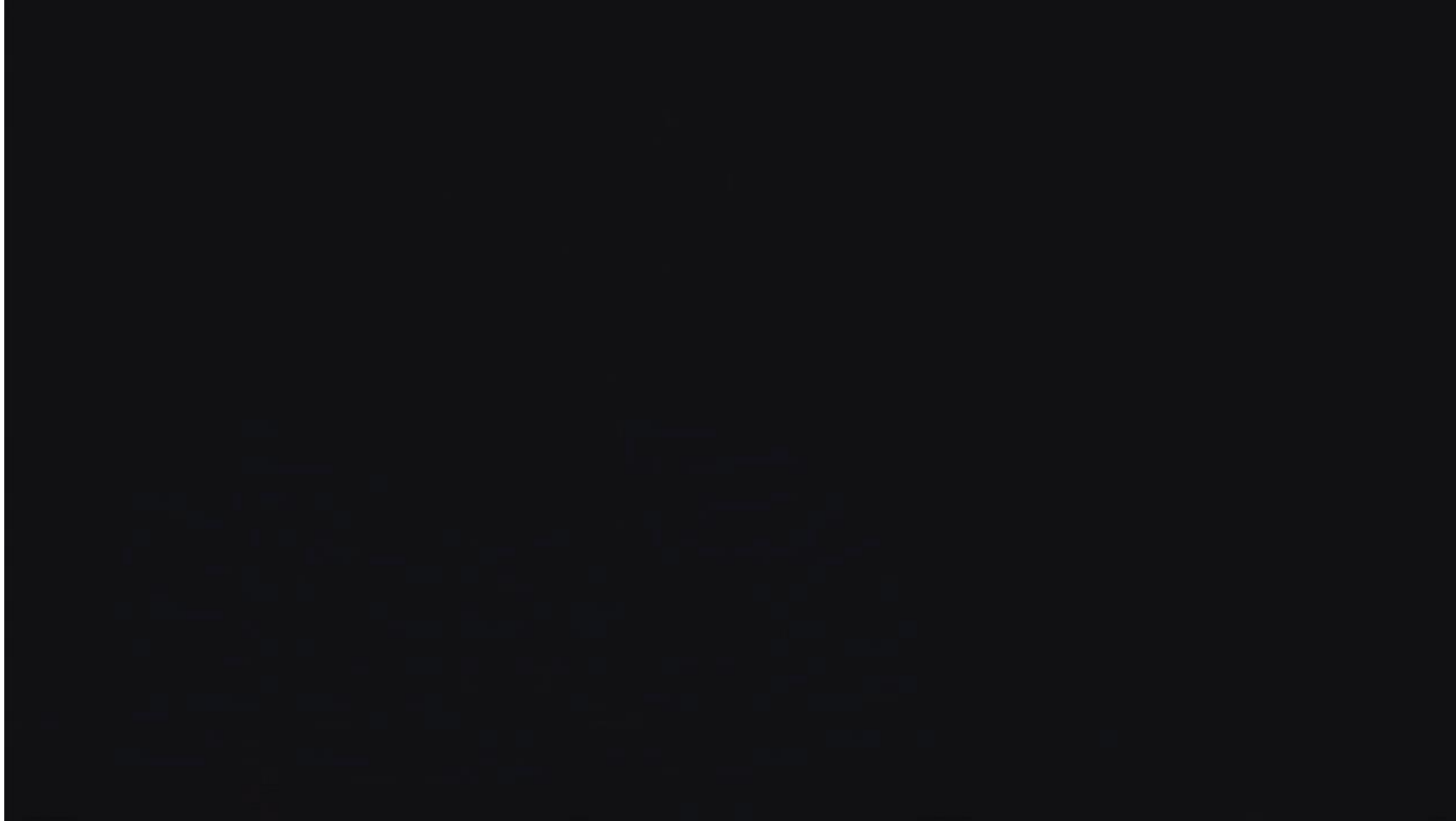
“The deep belief that at one time you really mattered to another human being”

Vincent Feletti, MD



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Don't Quit on Me!



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For More Information

- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE): [*Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homelessness*](#) issue brief
- California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC): [Unaccompanied homeless youth webpage](#)



Thanks for Joining!



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