



Being their Advocate

Assisting Unaccompanied
Homeless Youth

Agenda

- Homeless youth statistics
- Application fees
 - College entrance exam fees
 - College application fees
- Seeking financial aid and scholarships
 - FAFSA for accompanied homeless youth
 - FAFSA for unaccompanied homeless youth
- Florida fee exemptions
- Ideas for creating a local network



Homeless Youth Statistics

- 1.3 million homeless youth
 - 75 percent have dropped or will drop out of school
 - 46 percent reported physical abuse
 - 38 percent reported emotional abuse
 - 16 percent reported sexual abuse
 - 5 percent die each year as a result of assault, illness or suicide
- Youth ages 12-17 are more at risk of becoming homeless than adults

Homeless Criteria

- Anyone who lacks a **fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**—
 - Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
 - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations
 - Living in emergency or transitional shelters
 - Abandoned in hospitals



Raise your Hands

- What do you consider your current knowledge level to be regarding college access for homeless students?
 - Expert
 - Average
 - Beginner
 - I need help!



College Admissions Checklist

- Take college entrance exams
 - SAT, ACT
 - Utilize fee waiver programs
- Complete and submit college applications
 - Utilize fee waiver programs
- Complete and submit the FAFSA
- Access additional resources
 - [Applying 101](#)
 - Guide to life after high school ([Seniors](#))



College Admissions Checklist

- Encourage students to look at institutions with different price points
 - Award Letter Comparison [Tool](#)
 - Advanced Award Letter Comparison [Tool](#)
 - Consider starting at 2-year and transitioning to 4-year
 - Consider off-campus housing if dorms are not available



Raise your Hands

- Describe your experience working with unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) to access federal financial aid?
 - Successful experience
 - Painful experience
 - No experience
 - What's a UHY?



FAFSA Basics

- FREE Application for Federal Student Aid
 - www.fafsa.gov
 - Complete annually



Dependent versus Independent

- Accompanied homeless youth = dependent
- Unaccompanied homeless youth = independent



UHY Determininers

- Local homeless education liaison
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) shelter director or designee
- Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) shelter director or designee
- Financial Aid Administrator (FAA)

UHY Verification Form

PLACE ON AGENCY LETTERHEAD

**Homeless Youth Verification
For the Purposes of State Fee Exemptions**

Re: Name of Student
DOB: x/x/xxxx
SSN: xxx-xx-xxxx
Current Mailing Address of Student (if none, please list name, phone number, and mailing address of current contact): _____

- I am providing this letter of verification as a (check one):
- A McKinney-Vento School District Liaison: _____
 - A director or designee of a HUD-funded shelter: _____
 - A director or designee of a RHYA-funded shelter: _____

This is to verify that this student has been living in a homeless situation. Should you have additional questions or need more information about this student, please contact me at the number listed below.

This letter is to confirm that NAME OF STUDENT:

- Please check below:
- was a homeless youth after July 1, XXXX.
- This means that, after July 1, XXXX, NAME OF STUDENT was living in a homeless situation, as defined by Section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Act.

Authorized Signature	Date
Print Name	Telephone Number
Title	
Agency	



2014-15 Application & Verification Guide

- Unaccompanied homeless youth, like incarcerated students, may use the address of your school as their own on the FAFSA
- Youth = 21 or younger or still enrolled in high school on the date he/she signs the FAFSA
- Ages 22-23 = need a dependency override for independent status
- Age 24 or older = independent status



Role of the FAA per the AVG

- If a student does not have, and cannot get, a determination from a local liaison, RHYA provider, or HUD provider, a financial aid administrator must make a determination of unaccompanied homeless youth status
 - A financial aid administrator has the authority to make the determination



FAA Determination of Student Status

- Use discretion and sensitivity
 - Some information may be confidential (doctor/patient privilege)
 - Child welfare or law enforcement documentation may not be available
 - Consult with others, if needed
- Notify student of appeal process, if necessary



Working Together on Campus

- Identify a safe single point of contact at each postsecondary institution
 - Can centrally store personal documentation
 - Can develop streamlined approach for other campus services
 - Can create annual single verification form

Additional Resources

- 2014/15 AVG
 - <http://ifap.ed.gov/fsahandbook/attachments/1415AVG.pdf>
- College Access and Success for Students Experiencing Homelessness Toolkit
 - <http://www.naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/toolkit.pdf>
- State Homeless Education Program
 - <http://www.fldoe.org/bsa/title1/titlex.asp>

Florida Fee Exemption

- Per section 1009.25, Florida Statutes, certain students **are exempt from the payment of tuition and fees**, including lab fees, at a school district that provides postsecondary career programs, Florida College System institution, or state university



Florida Fee Exemption

- To qualify, students must provide documentation
 - Institution may require additional documentation
- Homeless definition for fee exemption differs from FAFSA definition
 - Student may qualify for one and not the other



Local Network Example

- Santa Rosa County
 - 2010/11 – created partnership between Northwest Florida State College, Pensacola State College and University of West Florida
 - 2011/12 – Completed the following action items:
 - Facilitated College Day Field Trips for Juniors & Seniors
 - District Homeless Liaisons worked with students to complete the FAFSA, scholarship applications and college applications
 - Staff worked with HS Counselor to monitor progress
 - Via Challenge Grant, supplied students with supplies (i.e., laptop, calculators, etc.)



Another Network Success!

- Polk County
 - Polk State College hosted a College Day
 - Provided breakfast and lunch
 - Worked with the Hearth Project to provide transportation
 - Provided campus tour
 - Met with both Admissions and Financial Aid staff
 - Completed college application and began financial aid process



Another Network Success!

- Polk County
 - My Brother's Keeper
 - Hearth Project
 - Assisted PSC in creating a college version
 - Partnered with the Red Cross for free lifeguard training
 - Provides access to other resources



Raise your Hands

- What is your most valuable “take-home” point from today’s session?
 - FAFSA information
 - ACT/SAT and college admission waivers
 - Florida tuition/fee exemptions
 - Information about local networking
 - All of the above

Contact Us

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