October 9, 2019

To: Local Education Agency (LEA) Superintendent

From: Debra Duardo, M.S.W., Ed.D.
Superintendent

RE: Board of Supervisors Motion “Ensuring School Stability for Homeless Youth”

Dear Superintendent:

I am writing to you in response to the passage of a recent Board of Supervisors Motion and our planned response in regard to the educational stability for students experiencing homelessness. Please communicate the information below throughout your LEA in order to ensure that the educational rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness are honored and supported.

Every LEA, which includes school districts and charter schools is required, under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), to ensure that all homeless school-aged children have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as is available to other children and youths. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act serves as the federal education definition of homelessness, and was reauthorized under ESSA. This definition includes children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime address and may include those who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, stemming from financial issues or economic hardship (temporarily doubled or tripled up); staying in motels, hotels, trailer parks, campgrounds temporarily due to lack of alternative accommodations, shelters or transitional housing; abandoned in a hospital; staying in a public or private space that was not meant as sleeping accommodations such as garage, office, storage facility, etc. or those sleeping in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train. This may also include migrant, runaway, pushed out or unaccompanied youth living in any of the situations noted above.

Every LEA must appoint a person to serve as the LEA Homeless Liaison to ensure students experiencing homelessness are properly identified annually, and provide access to needed resources and services, including transportation assistance. Children and youth experiencing homelessness must be immediately enrolled in school regardless if they missed an enrollment deadline or lack of academic records, outstanding fees, fines, textbooks or other items. They also have the right
to attend their school of origin, defined as where the student last attended school, where the student attended when he or she initially became homeless, or any school which the student attended in the last 15 months; or the student has the right to enroll in the current school of residence. These rights extend to children in preschool. Students experiencing homelessness do not need a permit to remain in their school of origin. The student will continue to matriculate with peers while experiencing homelessness. A student in grades kindergarten through eighth grade, upon gaining permanent housing, may remain in the current school placement until the end of the school year, a student in ninth grade or above may remain in the current school placement through graduation.

All LEA’s are required to remove any barriers to enrollment, attendance, and access to programs, including transportation, that may impede a student experiencing homelessness from achieving academic success. This includes referrals to programs for tutoring, afterschool, counseling, medical, nutrition, preschool and housing resources.

The LACOE Homeless Education Program is committed to supporting your LEA as you serve your students and families who are experiencing homelessness. We are here to provide technical assistance and support along with the exploration of best practices. For further assistance, please contact Jennifer Kottke, LACOE Homeless Liaison at (562) 922-6614 or via email at kottke_jennifer@lacoe.edu.

Supporting documentation: