Los Angeles County Office of Education

National Homeless Youth Awareness Month Toolkit 2026

Prepared by the Homeless Education Program (HEP)





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The History Behind November Awareness



A Month of Awareness, Advocacy & Action

On **July 11, 2007,** the U.S. Congress recognized November as National Homeless Youth Awareness Month, bringing national attention to the experiences of young people facing homelessness and the importance of education, advocacy and community support.

November is also recognized as National Runaway Prevention Month (NRPM), a national awareness initiative led by the National Runaway Safeline (NRS).

In **2024**, NRS introduced Youth H.O.P.E. Month, emphasizing four key areas:

H	O	P	E
Homelessness	Outreach	Prevention	Education

Bringing Awareness to Los Angeles County

Each year, LACOE recognizes National Homeless Youth Awareness Month, reaffirming its commitment to educational access and support for students experiencing homelessness.

Learn More & Get Involved

Explore the National Runaway Safeline's Youth HOPE Month resources, including awareness materials, social media tools and opportunities to participate.
Resource: National Runaway Safeline – Youth HOPE Month

About This Toolkit



Developed by the Los Angeles County Office of Education's Homeless Education Program, this toolkit provides practical resources and activities to help schools, districts, charter schools and community partners raise awareness and support students experiencing homelessness.

Whether you're planning a schoolwide awareness campaign or looking for simple ways to get involved, you'll find ready-to-use information, activities and resources to support your efforts throughout November and beyond.

Who Should Use This Toolkit?



District & Charter Schools

Educators & school staff



Homeless Liaisons

Student & family support



Community Partners

Organizations & service providers

What's Inside?

Awareness activities • Key information • Ready-to-use materials • Student and family resources

Why November Matters!

Housing instability is not always visible. Students may continue showing up to school each day while navigating changes in housing, transportation, access to basic needs or other challenges outside the classroom.



60,000+

students in Los Angeles County were identified as experiencing homelessness as of June 2025.

Schools and community partners can make a meaningful difference by creating environments where students feel seen, supported and connected.

Awareness helps us:

Reduce Stigma

Build greater understanding of student homelessness.

Recognize Needs

Identify students who may need support.

Connect to Support

Connect students and families with resources.

Promote Stability

Support school stability and educational success.

Awareness is the first step! Connection and support are what turn awareness into action.

Los Angeles County Office of Education

HOMELESS EDUCATION PROGRAM

CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS SERVED[1] IN 2025-26

OVERVIEW



59,923

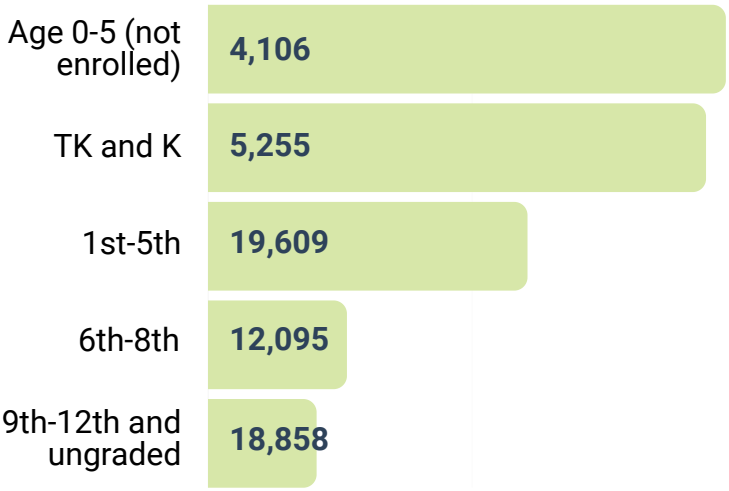
Homeless children and youth, from birth through grade 12 were identified and served across the 80 school districts and 195 charters who responded to LACOE's annual data collection.

BY DWELLING TYPE

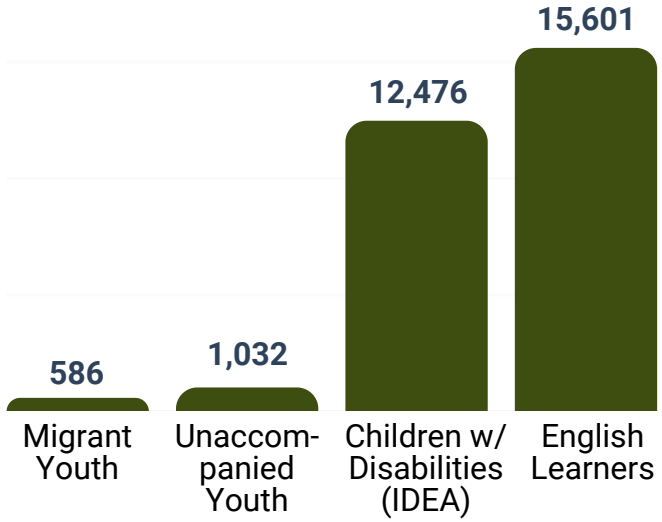


- Temporarily Doubled Up **81%**
- Temporarily Unsheltered **4%**
- Temporary Shelter **9%**
- Hotel/Motel **6%**

BY AGE AND GRADE SPAN



BY STUDENT GROUP



Note: Data are not mutually exclusive and therefore not summative to the total served.

[1] The definition of "served" includes homeless children who have been served in any way through McKinney-Vento funds. Services would include both direct services, as outlined in Section 723 of the McKinney-Vento Act and indirect services, such as those provided by a staff member whose position is supported through the EHCY.

Note: The data presented in this infographic is sourced from the California Annual Homeless Education Data Collection, reported by Local Educational Agencies (LEAs). It is crucial to acknowledge that the reported number of children and youth may be an undercount, due to the complexities of identifying and documenting homelessness among students. This issue is highlighted in the 2019 California State Auditor's report, which also revealed that many LEAs identified less than five percent of economically disadvantaged youth as homeless, a benchmark frequently used by homeless education experts to estimate the likely number of students experiencing homelessness at any given time.

Understanding Students Experiencing Homelessness

Homelessness Doesn’t Always Look the Same.



Under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, children and youth experiencing homelessness are those who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.

Homelessness Isn't Always Visible

Students experiencing homelessness may be living in a variety of situations, including:



Doubled-up

Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason.



Hotel/Motel

Staying temporarily because adequate alternative housing is not available.



Shelter

Living in emergency or transitional shelter.



Cars

Sleeping in cars or other places not meant for regular sleeping.



Unaccompan-ied Youth

Experiencing homelessness without a parent or guardian in physical custody.

Why Awareness Matters

Housing instability can affect students' attendance, academic performance, emotional well-being and access to educational opportunities. Understanding these challenges helps educators recognize potential needs and connect students and families with appropriate support.

Get Involved: Plan Your Campaign

Big or small, every action makes a difference!
Choose one or more ways to recognize National Homeless Youth Awareness Month in your school or district. Use this page to plan your activities throughout November.



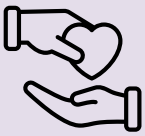
Wear Green
Encourage staff and students to wear green every Friday in November to show support.



Build Awareness
Share a homelessness fact, host a staff discussion or highlight McKinney-Vento rights.



Spread the Word
Share awareness graphics, resources and messages through social media.



Give Back
Coordinate a school supply, hygiene item, or clothing drive based on local needs.



Recognize Champions
Celebrate homeless liaisons, school staff and partners supporting students.



Engage Partners
Connect with local organizations to strengthen resources and support for families.

See the Students. Recognize Their Strengths.

Every student has a story beyond their housing situation.

Students experiencing homelessness navigate challenges that often go unseen. From changing living arrangements and transportation barriers to uncertainty about where they will sleep, many continue showing up to school, building relationships and working toward their goals.

Behind every statistic is a student with unique strengths, interests, hopes and potential.

As educators, homeless education liaisons and community partners, we have an opportunity to recognize those strengths, create a sense of belonging and remind students that their housing situation does not define who they are or what they can achieve.

Turn Awareness into Action

Here are a few simple ways we can support students experiencing homelessness:



Listen

Create space for students and families to share their needs.



Support

Connect students with resources and meaningful assistance.



Empower

Recognize students' strengths and celebrate their potential.

National Homeless Youth Awareness Month 2026 Planning Worksheet

Brainstorm

What ideas, activities or messages would you like to highlight this November?

Week-by-Week Plan

Use this space to plan your activities for each week of November.

Week 1	Week 2	Week 3	Week 4
Nov 2 - 6	Nov 9 - 13	Nov 16 - 20	Nov 23 - 30

Campaign Checklist

- ☐ Choose activity
- ☐ Invite your team
- ☐ Gather resources
- ☐ Spread the word
- ☐ Celebrate & share

Supplies

What materials will you need?

People to Contact

Who can support your campaign?

Learn and Explore

Meet the Big 5: Homeless Education Organizations

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)
National resources, training, data and technical assistance.

SchoolHouse Connection (SHC)
Advocacy, educational rights and practical resources.

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)
Professional learning, advocacy and resources for educators.

California Homeless Youth Project (CHYP)
California-focused research, publications and policy information.

Homeless Education Technical Center (HETAC)
California-specific guidance, trainings, toolkits and awareness resources.

Explore Data, Research & Learning Resources

Data & Research

- HEP Children & Youth Served 2025–26
- CDE Homeless Youth Data
- NCHE Homelessness in the U.S.
- DataQuest

Fact Sheets & Reports

- Determining McKinney-Vento Eligibility
- SHC Fact Sheet 2026
- 5 Facts Educators Need to Know
- 2026 Greater L.A Homeless Count

Awareness Videos & Initiatives

- HETAC McKinney-Vento Training
- HETAC Awareness Videos
- SHC Educational Videos
- Homeless Innovative Program (HIP)

Articles & Readings

- Infant & Toddler Homelessness
- SHC Youth Homelessness
- Rising Student Homelessness
- Hidden Homelessness

Ready-to-Use Awareness Materials



Explore Our Resources

Your one-stop hub for ready-to-use November awareness materials!

Access the NHYAM 2026 Resource Folder



Wear Green Flyer

Encourage staff and students to wear green on Fridays in November.

- Wear Green Fridays - Flyer Option 1
- Wear Green Fridays - Flyer Option 2



Virtual Backgrounds

Show your support during virtual meetings with awareness backgrounds.

- HETAC NHYAM meeting backgrounds
- LACOE NHYAM meeting background



Social Media Graphics

Ready-to-share graphics and messages for social media.

- HETAC NHYAM Social Media Messages
- HETAC Social Media Graphics (.zip file)



Outreach Templates

Ready-to-use messages for emails and school announcements.

- HETAC NHYAM Press Release
- HETAC NHYAM Board Resolution



Posters & Printables

Awareness posters, green ribbon signs and school display materials.

- CDE/HETAC Educational Posters
- SHC Flyers & Posters
- NCHE Awareness Materials

Chronic Absenteeism

Every School Day Matters

Students experiencing homelessness may face attendance barriers due to transportation challenges, frequent moves, and housing instability. **Chronic absenteeism** means missing 10% or more of the school year, including excused and unexcused absences. **Just two days a month can add up!**

What Can Schools Do?

- **Recognize** attendance barriers without placing blame on students or families.
- **Build** trusting relationships with families to identify challenges and offer support.
- **Connect** students to transportation assistance, school supplies and other resources.

Explore Resources



Understanding Chronic Absenteeism
Explore the causes, impacts and strategies for addressing chronic absenteeism among students experiencing homelessness.
Read: In School Every Day



Attendance Works Resources
Access tools and strategies to improve student attendance.



Watch & Reflect
Explore videos highlighting attendance challenges and housing instability.

- How to address tardiness and absences
- How to address missing the bus
- School Shelter Partnership



Remember: Attendance Is About More Than Showing Up.
By addressing barriers, building relationships and connecting families with support, we help students stay engaged in school.

Financial Aid & FAFSA

Supporting Students Beyond High School

Students experiencing homelessness may qualify for financial aid to pursue college or career education. Understanding the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), California Dream Act Application (CADAA) and available resources can help students take the next step toward their educational goals.

What Can Schools Do?

- Help students understand financial aid options and application deadlines.
- Connect students with counselors, homeless liaisons and financial aid support.
- Encourage students to attend financial aid workshops and application events.

Explore Resources

Federal Student Aid | FAFSA

Access the FAFSA application and learn about federal financial aid.

- FAFSA Tips for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth (Webpage)

John Burton Advocates for Youth (JBAY)

Explore FAFSA/CADAA guidance, training and resources for professionals supporting youth experiencing homelessness.

- Completing the FAFSA: Visual Guide (PDF)
- FAFSA/CADAA Completion Resources (Webpage)

California Student Aid Commission | Cash for College

Find free workshops and assistance with financial aid applications.

Remember: Every Student Deserves a Path Forward.

Helping students navigate financial aid can make higher education more accessible and support their goals beyond high school.

Keep Learning: 2026–27 HEP Trainings

Continue learning beyond November! Join LACOE's Homeless Education Program for professional opportunities throughout the 2026-27 school year.

Mini-trainings

Short, focused sessions on timely topics and helpful resources.



Los Angeles County Office of Education

Homeless Education Program
Mini-Training Schedule 2026-27

Date	Time	Topic	OMS Registration
Tuesday, August 11, 2026	9 a.m. – 11 a.m.	Starting the Year Off Right: All things Homeless Education	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276097
Tuesday, September 8, 2026	9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Identification, SHQ & #s	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276100
Thursday, October 8, 2026	9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Transportation	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276108
Wednesday, November 18, 2026	9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Navigating Doubled-Up Families	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276110
Tuesday, December 8, 2026	9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Parent Support & Engagement	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276116
Wednesday, January 20, 2027	**9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**	Homeless Education 101	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276120
Wednesday, February 17, 2027	9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Students Experiencing Homelessness and Suspension	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276127
Wednesday, March 17, 2027	9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Special Education	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276124
Wednesday, April 21, 2027	**9 a.m. – 11:30 a.m.**	Homeless Education 101	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276131
Wednesday, May 19, 2027	9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Mental Health, Trauma and Students Experiencing Homelessness	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276138
Wednesday, June 16, 2027	9 a.m. – 10:30 a.m.	Planning for the 2027-28 SY	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276140

Please note: Registration links for trainings open three months in advance. If the training is not within three months of the current date, the link will not be active, so please remember to check back later. You must register through OMS link in order to receive the Zoom link.

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[View Mini-Trainings Flyer]

Specialized Trainings

In-depth learning on key topics to support students experiencing homelessness.



Los Angeles County Office of Education

Homeless Education Program
Specialized Trainings 2026-27

Date	Time	Topic	OMS Registration
Wednesday, August 26, 2026	2 p.m. - 3:30 p.m.	End-of-Year Data Collection	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276099
Wednesday, September 30, 2026	9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Data 101: ABCs of Homeless Education Data	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276101
Tuesday, October 13, 2026	9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	CES Coordinators Updates	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-283660
Tuesday, November 10, 2026	9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Homeless Education Guide Review	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-283662
Wednesday, December 9, 2026	9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Homeless Liaison Responsibilities	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-283663
Wednesday, January 27, 2027	9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Data 101: ABCs of Homeless Education Data	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276122
Thursday, February 11, 2027	9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	CES Coordinators Updates	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-283664
Wednesday, March 10, 2027	9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Homeless Education 201-Scenariothon	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-283665
Thursday, April 22, 2027	9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Homeless Website Exploration	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-283666
Wednesday, May 5, 2027	9 a.m. - 10:30 a.m.	Student Housing Questionnaire Exploration	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-283668

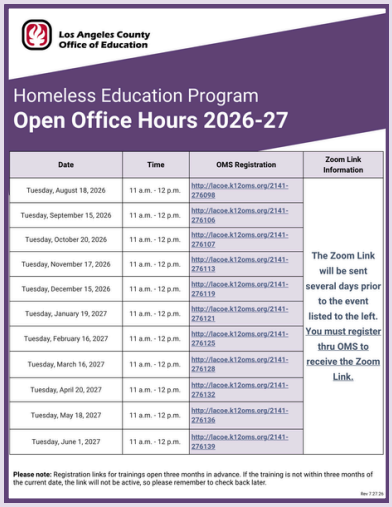
Please note: Registration links for trainings open three months in advance. If the training is not within three months of the current date, the link will not be active, so please remember to check back later. You must register through OMS link in order to receive the Zoom link.

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[View Specialized Training Flyer]

Open Office Hours

Drop in, ask questions, get support and connect with the HEP team.



Los Angeles County Office of Education

Homeless Education Program
Open Office Hours 2026-27

Date	Time	OMS Registration	Zoom Link Information
Tuesday, August 18, 2026	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276098	The Zoom Link will be sent several days prior to the event listed to the left. You must register thru OMS to receive the Zoom Link.
Tuesday, September 15, 2026	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276106	
Tuesday, October 20, 2026	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276107	
Tuesday, November 17, 2026	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276113	
Tuesday, December 15, 2026	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276119	
Tuesday, January 19, 2027	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276121	
Tuesday, February 16, 2027	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276125	
Tuesday, March 16, 2027	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276128	
Tuesday, April 20, 2027	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276132	
Tuesday, May 18, 2027	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276136	
Tuesday, June 1, 2027	11 a.m. - 12 p.m.	http://lacoe.k12oms.org/2141-276139	

Please note: Registration links for trainings open three months in advance. If the training is not within three months of the current date, the link will not be active, so please remember to check back later.

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[View Open Office Hours Flyer]

Subscribe to our HEP Monthly Newsletter

Subscribe to our HEP newsletter for training announcements, program updates and helpful resources!

Community Resource Directories

A free mobile app and website that connects youth, families and adults to local resources for housing, food, mental health and more.

- Search by location
- Youth, family and adult resources
- Available in multiple languages
- Visit WIN APP



Find free and reduced-cost programs and services in your area.

Search for local resources, including housing, food, healthcare, transportation and more.

- Search by ZIP Code
- Local programs and services
- Available in multiple languages
- Visit Findhelp



School on Wheels

Provides free tutoring and educational support to K-12 students experiencing homelessness.

- One-on-one tutoring
- School supplies and basic needs
- Support for K-12 students
- Visit School on Wheels webpage

Tips for Educators and Liaisons

Help connect students and families with local resources.

- Share resources with families
- Assist with accessing services
- Follow up on additional needs



Show Us How You're Raising Awareness!

We want to see how your schools and districts are recognizing **NHYAM!**
Whether you're wearing green, hosting an awareness activity, sharing resources or supporting students in creative ways, we'd love to hear about it.



Send Photos

Share pictures of your activities, events and awareness displays.



Include a Brief Description

Tell us what you did and how you supported your students and school community.



Share Your School or District

Let us know your school or district name.



Your highlights may be featured in our LACOE Homeless Education Program newsletter and/or on our Instagram.



Email your submissions to
kottke_jennifer@lacoe.edu



Photo Submission Guidelines: To protect student privacy, please avoid photos identifying students experiencing homelessness. Instead, share photos of staff participation, awareness activities, bulletin boards or school displays.

Meet the HEP Team & Stay Connected

Homeless Education Program Team

Dr. Jennifer Kottke
Project Director II

Maricela Salgado
Bilingual Secretary

Melissa Esquivel
Senior Program Activities Specialist

Miriam Serrano
Administrative Analyst

Annissia Benjamin
Education Coordinator, SPA 3

Danielle Gray-Smith
Education Coordinator, SPA 1

Dorthea Garbutt
Education Coordinator, SPA 7



Stay Connected

🌐 Homeless Education Program Website

📩 Subscribe to Our Monthly Newsletter

📱 Follow LACOE HEP on Social Media