



# Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Homeless Students



Louisiana Homeless Education Conference

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# Meet Your Presenters



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# Get to Know NCHE

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- NCHE operates the U.S. Department of Education's homeless education technical assistance and information center
- Website: <https://nche.ed.gov/>
- Helpline: 800-308-2145 or [homeless@serve.org](mailto:homeless@serve.org)
- Products & Listserv: <https://nche.ed.gov/resources/>
- Social Media
  - Twitter: [@NCHEducation](https://twitter.com/NCHEducation)
  - Facebook: [facebook.com/NCHEducation](https://facebook.com/NCHEducation)



# Session Outline

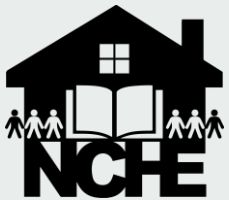
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- Who are unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY)?
- What are good strategies to identify them?
- What are their educational rights?
- How should we serve them in school?
- How can we help them transition to post-secondary education?





**Who are unaccompanied homeless youth  
(UHY)?**



# Who is Homeless?

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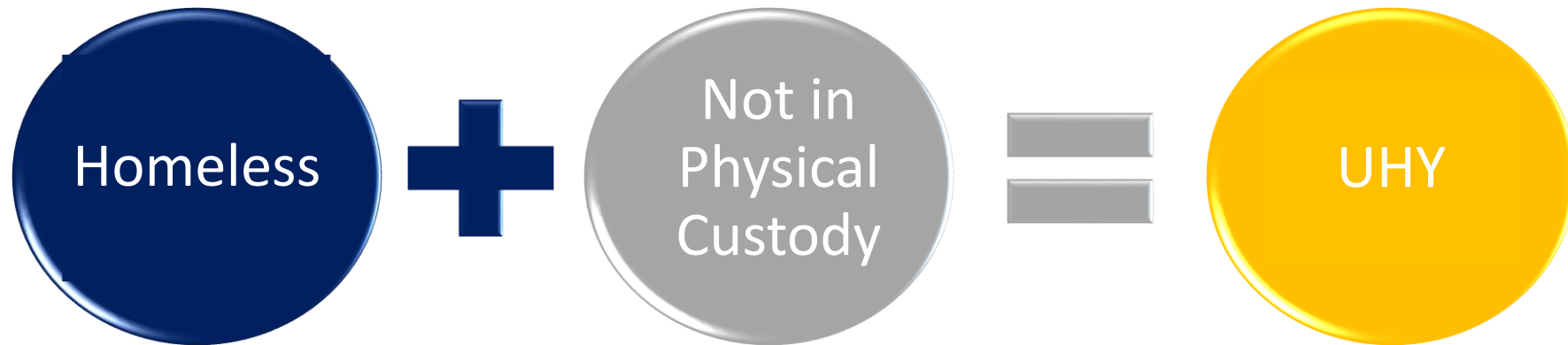
- Children or youth who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence**, including:
  - Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (“doubling up”)
  - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of adequate alternative accommodations
  - Living in emergency or transitional shelters
  - Living in a public or private place not designed for humans to live
  - Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or a similar setting
  - Migratory children living in the above circumstances

42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)



# Who is an Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?

1. Student's living arrangement must meet the definition of homeless, **AND**
2. Student must be considered *unaccompanied*, defined as "not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian"



See NCHE's *Unaccompanied Youth Eligibility Flowchart* at <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/app-9a.doc>

# Willow

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Willow moved in with her grandmother after Willow and her mother decided they should live apart for a while. If the mother and grandmother signed a provisional custody mandate, grandma has adequate space in her home, and has agreed to care for Willow.

- Does Willow meet the MV eligibility criteria?

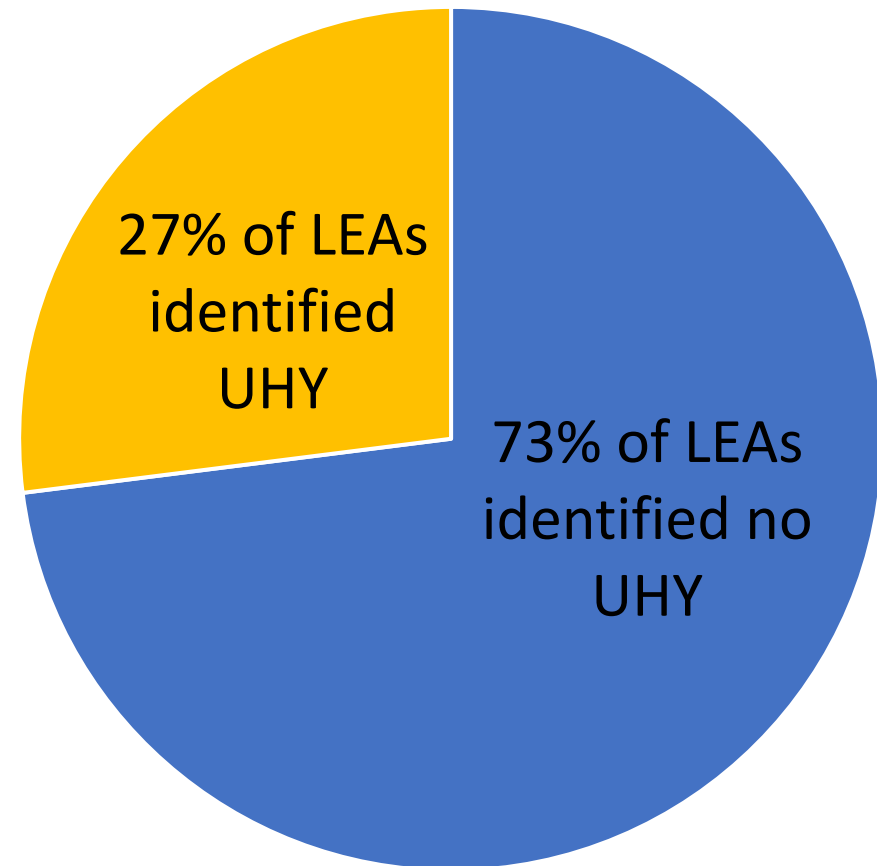
Later, Willow decides she doesn't want to follow grandma's rules, so she goes to stay with her boyfriend's family.

- Now, does Willow meet the MV eligibility criteria?



# Highlights of LA's LEA Data - 2018-2019\*

- Only 27% of LEAs identified any UHY
- Of the 11% of LEAs that identified 10 or more UHY, nearly a quarter reported that over 40% of all homeless students are unaccompanied



\*Data Sources:

EdFacts <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/data-files/school-status-data.html>

NCHE <http://profiles.nche.seiservices.com/StateProfile.aspx?StateID=22>

# Liaison Responsibilities with UHY

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- Liaison (or designee) assists with
  - Immediate enrollment and school selection (giving priority to the views of UHY)
  - Transportation to school of origin
  - Dispute resolution
    - UHY receive written notice about disputes & can initiate dispute resolution process
  - Removal of barriers to credit accrual
  - Verification of independent student status for FAFSA

(42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(E))



# Specific Provisions for UHY

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- No MV age limits
  - Use state age limit for public education
- UHY can enroll without proof of guardianship (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(H)(iv))
- Youth can be eligible regardless of whether they were asked to leave or ran away
- Parent or guardian can be permanently housed while the student is homeless and vice versa

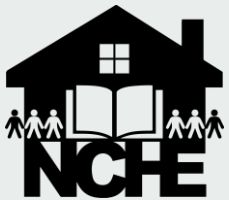
# Best Practices

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- Review NCHE's unaccompanied homeless youth brief at <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/youth.pdf>
- Discuss living arrangements in a private place
  - Use trauma-informed principles
  - Be sensitive when asking personal questions as youth may not trust adults
  - Avoid using the word homeless; instead, ask about temporary or transitional situations
  - For doubled-up youth, ask for their permission to speak with the host family; sometimes the youth and host have very different expectations



What are good strategies to identify  
UHY?



# UHY Identification Strategies

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- Make all school staff aware of specific needs of UHY, including nurses, bus drivers, cafeteria staff, and custodians
- Collaborate with dropout prevention staff, truancy officers, and other attendance staff to identify current students and those who have dropped out
- Post educational rights information where youth congregate
- Add MV eligibility criteria and liaison contact info to the school website & student handbook

# Identification Strategies

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- Help teachers include homelessness into curriculum
  - Garners student help to spread the word
  - See ideas in NCHE's *Research Summary: Teaching and Classroom Strategies for Homeless and Highly Mobile Students* at <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/res-summ-teach-class.pdf>
- Distribute information at school and community events
- Coordinate school- or district-wide events for National Hunger and Homeless Awareness week and/or National Homeless Youth Awareness month (both in November)

# Identification Strategies

- Collaborate with local youth-serving organizations
  - Provide information for them to share
  - Use a joint referral or a release form to allow school & agency to refer students to each other





# Identifying Out-of-School Youth

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- Visit areas where out-of-school youth congregate and provide liaison's contact info
- Include MV rights on information designed to entice out-of-school youth to re-enroll
- Use social media and public service announcements

# NCHE Youth Awareness Materials

- Download or order products at <https://nche.ed.gov/resources/>
  - Youth educational rights poster
  - Higher education poster
  - *Surviving on Your Own* youth booklet
- Post awareness materials where UHY hang out, including laundromats, parks, campgrounds, skate parks, clubs & organizations





How should we serve UHY in schools?



# UHY Enrollment Reminders

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- Cannot require a caregiver to obtain legal guardianship prior to enrollment (42 USC § 11432(g)(3)(C)(i))
- Cannot discontinue enrollment due to student's inability to (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(H)(iv))
  - Identify a caregiver, guardian, or parent
  - Produce guardianship or other paperwork
- Parental consent is not required for transfer of records to an enrolling school (FERPA) (20 USC § 1232(g)(b)(B))

# Enrollment Strategies

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- Develop forms to replace proof of guardianship
  - Sample caregiver authorization forms <https://nche.ed.gov/unaccompanied-youth/>
- Three common methods for enrollment
  - Student enrolls himself/herself
  - Caregiver enrolls student
  - Local liaison enrolls the student

# Mario

Due to dysfunction at home, Mario left home and is temporarily staying with a friend's family in another school district. He has qualified for MV services and would like to remain in his school of origin.

What should you do?



# Strategies for Extra Curricular Participation

- Enrollment includes full participation in all school activities 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(1)
- MV subgrant funds may be used to assist with program fees, if needed
- Options for signing and decision-making for UHY to participate in school activities
  - Youth sign for themselves
  - Local liaison signs for the youth
  - Caregiver signs for the youth



# Strategies for Serving UHY

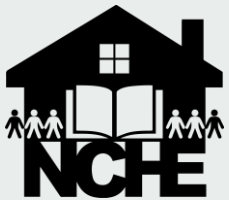
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- Become familiar with state and local policies, e.g., minor medical consent, reporting, etc.
  - Inform students up-front about situations that must be reported to child welfare or law enforcement
- Arrange before- and after-school support
- Offer place to study, store belongings, shower, & do laundry
- Refer to Career and Technical Education (CTE), TRIO, and other programs serving vulnerable populations
- See the NCHE-Advance CTE brief at <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/Making-Good-on-the-Promise-CTE-Homelessness.pdf>





How can we help UHY transition to  
postsecondary education?



# Transition to Postsecondary Education

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- School counselors must advise all MV students about and improve their readiness for college 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(K)
- For UHY, liaisons
  - Must inform students of their status as independent students for the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) and assist with verification of that status
  - May make subsequent year verifications if they have the necessary info to make the determination of unaccompanied and homeless or self-supporting and at risk of homelessness 42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(6)(A)(III)

Watch NCHE's *Paving the Way to College* webinar at <https://nche.ed.gov/resources/>. Click on Training.



# College Cost Reduction & Access (CCRAA) Provisions on UHY (P.L. 110-84)

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- UHY status can be verified by local liaison, HUD or RHYA shelter worker, or college financial aid administrator (FAA)
  - NCHE's eligibility tool for FAAs <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/faa-tool-2021-2022.pdf>
- As independent students on FAFSA, UHY
  - Don't need to provide a parent/guardian signature or income information
  - Receive financial aid based solely on their own income & assets
- NCHE information on support, waivers, etc. at <https://nche.ed.gov/higher-education/>
- NCHE Scholarship Page <https://nche.ed.gov/scholarships>

# NCHE's Education Goals and Supports: A Guided Discussion Tool

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- Tool for educators, homeless response service providers, and other community partners working with youth and young adults (YYA) experiencing homelessness to guide YYA clients through a discussion of their interests and skills.
- Can be used during the intake process/at the time of identification of the YYA, or later after the YYA's basic needs, such as housing and food, have been met.
- Download NCHE's [\*Education Goals and Supports: A Guided Discussion Tool\*](#) and begin using it now!

Questions?

# Additional NCHE Resources

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- UHY resources at <https://nche.ed.gov/unaccompanied-youth/>
- *Homeless Liaison Toolkit*
  - Chapter Three: Identification of Students Experiencing Homelessness  
<https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/3.docx>
  - Chapter Four: Determining Eligibility <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/4.docx>
  - Chapter : Unaccompanied Homeless Youth  
<https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/9.docx>

# Contact NCHE

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NCHE Helpline

- [homeless@serve.org](mailto:homeless@serve.org)
- 800-308-2145

