

Definition of Homeless

The U.S. Department of Education defines as homeless anyone who, ***due to a lack of housing***, lives in ***inadequate or temporary*** settings, such as:

- Emergency or transitional shelters
- Motels, hotels, trailer parks, camp grounds, abandoned in hospitals, awaiting foster care placement
- Cars, parks, public places, bus or train stations, abandoned buildings
- Doubled up with relatives or friends because of a loss of housing or economic hardship

The goal of the FCPS Homeless Program is to identify and support homeless children within the school system. The McKinney-Vento Act, federal legislation in effect since 1987, requires a designated liaison who is responsible for “ensuring that homeless children and youth enroll in and succeed in school, and that such children and youth and their families receive the educational services for which they are eligible.” The Homeless Program facilitates enrollment of homeless children, ensures access to educational services, minimizes potential barriers to education, provides outreach to homeless families, and assists unaccompanied homeless youth. The Homeless Program also provides transportation support and basic resources to ensure homeless students maintain school enrollment and have access to necessary resources.

Resources

Fairfax County Coordinated Services Planning (CSP) - 703-222-0880

CSP provides information, referral, linkage, and advocacy to public and private human services available to Fairfax County residents. Through partnerships with community-based organizations and other Fairfax County agencies, CSP assists callers with the following services: basic needs, financial assistance, health care services, and referrals to services and resources.

Contact Information

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HOMELESS LIAISON OFFICE
SOCIAL WORK SERVICES
Office of Intervention & Prevention Services
Department of Special Services
Fairfax County Public Schools

COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP



HOW YOU CAN SUPPORT FCPS FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



SOCIAL WORK SERVICES
HOMELESS LIAISON OFFICE
FAIRFAX COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

Myths and Facts about Homelessness in Fairfax County

Myth - Most homeless people are single men.

FACT - Close to 60 percent of all homeless persons in Fairfax County are in families, and 35 percent are under age 18. *

Myth - Homeless people don't work.

FACT - 60 percent of adults in homeless families in Fairfax County are employed.*

Myth - Homeless children do not go to school.

FACT - Two thousand two hundred seventy-eight (2,278) FCPS students were identified as homeless during the 2010-11 school year.**

Myth - Homeless people only live in the city.

FACT - Fairfax County is home to the second largest number of people without homes in the region, second only to Washington, D.C.***

Myth - People choose to be homeless.

FACT - The main reason people become homeless in Fairfax County is because their income does not keep pace with the increasing cost of housing. Other reasons include domestic violence, disabilities, and lack of basic life skills.*

Sources:

* 2011 Point-in-Time Count of Homeless Persons Fairfax-Falls Church Community

** FCPS Homeless Program

*** Metropolitan Washington Council of Governments

How to Get Involved

There are several ways your organization can get involved in helping homeless students and their families. For more information about how to support one of these programs, please contact the Homeless Liaison Office at 571-423-4332. Here are some ideas to get you started:

Weekend Food Backpack Program: Provide non-perishable, kid-friendly foods to be sent home with students identified as having a need for additional food on weekends and during school breaks. Support an existing food pantry. Conduct a food drive to provide healthy snacks for students who are hungry and without a snack for the day.


Coats for Kids: Provide financial support to FCPS' annual coat distribution to ensure students who need a coat receive one. Collect new coats, mittens, hats, and scarves for students who otherwise would go without these essential items.


Back-To-School Basics: Conduct a back-pack or scientific calculator drive or make a financial contribution to ensure FCPS students start the school year with the supplies they need to succeed.


Housing for Homeless Youth: Partner with Alternative House, a local non-profit organization offering housing assistance to ensure homeless, unaccompanied youth are supported while they attend school and work toward graduation.


College-Bound Homeless Youth: Provide support in the form of financial assistance, laptops, and other necessities to support homeless youth as they prepare for higher education.


Gift Cards: Donate gift cards that families can use to purchase the items they need the most (groceries, clothing, gas).


Holiday Assistance: During the holidays, many families are unable to provide meals and gifts for their children. Adopt a family through a local holiday assistance program.


Mentoring and After-School Tutoring: Volunteer in a tutoring program or mentoring program to provide much needed support to children who are homeless or who have been identified as being in need of extra help.


Advocacy: Volunteer or participate in a community program or event that supports countywide efforts to prevent and end homelessness.