Project Connect: Homeless Facts

**Definition of Homelessness**
Children and youth experiencing homelessness lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. This includes children and youth who are:
- sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship;
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds;
- abandoned in hospitals
- awaiting foster care placement
- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing;
- migratory children (if they are living in conditions described above).

**McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**
The McKinney-Vento Act was enacted in 1987 and reauthorized most recently in January 2002. The Act contains nine titles, which provide a range of services to people experiencing homelessness. The Act requires educational access, attendance and success for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

**Educational Rights under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**
Children experiencing homelessness have the right to:
- receive a free public education
- receive transportation to school just like the other students
- begin school even if he/she does not have all of the necessary documentation
- attend the last school he/she went to or attend the school in the new area where he/she is living
- receive the same special programs and services that the other children receive

**Did you know that...**
- families experiencing homelessness comprise 40% of the homeless population
- poverty and lack of affordable housing are key causes of family homelessness
- half of all women and children experiencing homelessness are fleeing domestic violence
- children experiencing homelessness change school seven to eight times per year.
- children experiencing homelessness are usually two to three years behind in school.
- the average age of a homeless individual is nine.
Project Connect: Possible Signs of Homelessness

These characteristics could be attributed to students with other issues as well as those students experiencing homelessness.

**Lack of Continuity in Education**
1. Attendance at many different schools
2. Lack of records needed for enrollment

**Social and Behavioral Cues**
1. Change in behavior
2. “Old” beyond years
3. Protective of parents
4. Poor self-esteem
5. Poor/short attention span
6. Difficulty making friends
7. Need for immediate gratification

**Poor Health/Nutrition**
1. Unmet medical and dental needs
2. Chronic hunger (may hoard food)
3. Fatigue (may fall asleep in class)

**Reactions/Statements by Parent, Guardian or Child**
1. Anger or embarrassment when asked about current address
2. Mention of staying with grandparents, other relatives, friends
3. Comments such as:
   - “We’ve moved a lot.”
   - “We’re staying with relatives.”
   - “We’re going through a bad time.”

**Transportation and Attendance**
1. Erratic attendance or tardiness
2. Inability to contact parents
3. Avoidance of class field trips

**Poor Hygiene**
1. Inappropriate dress for the weather
2. Wearing the same clothes for several days

**Not Ready for Class**
1. Lack of basic school supplies
2. Concern for the safety of belongings
3. Incomplete or missing homework