

CITY AND BOROUGH OF JUNEAU SCHOOL DISTRICT

BOARD AGENDA ITEM

DEPARTMENT:
Student Services Department 7.4

X INFORMATION
 ACTION

TITLE: Student Services Report (*Acting Director of Student Services*)

JSD Students and Families in Transition Program (Homeless)

The primary purpose of the Students and Families in Transition Program (SFIT) is to provide assistance and support to JSD students who are experiencing homelessness. This program works to ensure that educational programs for students are not interrupted while the student is in transition. Our objective is to provide quality, collaborative academic support with timely identification of homeless students so they are able to succeed in school without educational barriers due to temporary living circumstances.

This program originated through the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act (McKV). Reauthorized under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), this law protects homeless students, by mandating equal access to educational programs and services.

What does homelessness look like according to the McKinney-Vento Act? Who is eligible?

Eligible children and youth are students who lack a fixed, regular and adequate place to sleep at night. The McKV definition used to determine program eligibility includes:

- Students who live in shelters or temporarily in hotels and motels due to lack of housing.
- Unsheltered students who live in vehicles or campsites
- Students who are “doubled up” with friends or extended family members on a temporary basis because they’ve lost housing due a lack of affordable housing or loss of employment.
- Students who couch-surf between friends or extended family.
- Students who are temporarily living in substandard housing (no heat, water, electricity, overcrowding or the dwelling possesses a threat to health such as toxic mold)
- Unaccompanied youth who live in a previously stated situation without a parent or legal guardian for reasons such as deployment, incarceration or death.

What can the JSD Students and Families in Transition program provide to eligible students?

- Immediate School Enrollment
- Free school meal benefits
- Transportation to and from school
- School supplies
- Hygiene and clothing supplies to participate in educational programs
- Assistance in obtaining vital records
- Referrals to local service agencies and public programs

Why would a student or family want to participate in the SFIT program?

Students who don’t have stable housing face special challenges and hardships when it comes to

success in school. It's hard to learn if you're worried about your next meal or whether you'll have a warm, dry place to sleep at night. Students who frequently change schools or are chronically absent lose out on valuable learning time and often fall behind their peers which often translates to a future of uncertainty and homelessness as an adult. When a student is enrolled in our program, they are given safety and stability during the school day throughout the school year. They will be warm, well fed and have access to their education without barriers.

Funding and Program Dynamics

The JSD SFIT program is federally funded and regulated through the McKinney-Vento competitive grant, ARP-HCY I and ARP-HCY II grants and partly by Title IA set aside funds that are reserved for the support, enrollment and success of homeless children and youth, in coordination under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The SFIT program is comprised of at least one McKinney-Vento Liaison (School Counselor) at each school site and the Head Liaison/Coordinator who is historically the Director of Student Services. There is one half time Administrative Assistant (.53 FTE) who is the day-to-day primary contact who determines eligibility of students and coordinates support and program compliance between Liaisons, students, JSD specialists and outside agencies. Additional hours are necessary, planned and budgeted for. The AA also works with OCS Foster Student enrollment, transportation and meal benefits.

Current Enrollment Statistics

SFIT program enrollment:

- **83** JSD students (**2%** of JSD enrollment) are experiencing homelessness currently. This number is up 59% from this time last year
- **44** Students are Female, **39** students are Male
- **15** of the 83 enrolled students are Unaccompanied Minors (defined above)
- The JSD/OCS Foster Care Program has **55** students enrolled. (In addition to the McKV homeless count.)

Breakdown of homeless children and youth by school level:

- **47** students are elementary students
- **15** students are in middle school
- **21** students are enrolled in high school

Ethnic background:

- **14%** of homeless students identify as Caucasian
- **2%** African American
- **16%** Hispanic
- **1%** American Indian
- **30%** Alaska Native
- **36%** Multi Ethnic, No Hispanic
- **1%** Native Hawaiian, Pacific Islander