



Newport-Mesa
Unified School District

BOARD OF EDUCATION
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The Honorable Maria D. Hernandez
Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
700 Civic Center Drive West
Santa Ana, CA 92701

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AUG 23 2023

Dear Judge Hernandez,

Please see below for the responses to each required Finding as requested in the Orange County Grand Jury report: The ABC's of Educating Children Experiencing Homelessness in Orange County and attached cover letter dated May 19, 2023.

F #	Finding	Agree/ Disagree	Response And Explanation (if required)
F1	Many children experiencing homelessness are not identified as such and therefore do not receive the support and benefits authorized by the McKinney-Vento Act.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	NMUSD includes the mandatory housing questionnaire in the district's yearly registration and data confirmation process. All NMUSD parents/guardians must complete this questionnaire as part of the annual data confirmation process for their child/children. Based on housing questionnaire responses, a parent or guardian self-identifies current housing, the school office staff designates the family as McKinney-Vento in the Aeries Student Information System (SIS), and School Staff (Office Staff, School Community Facilitator, etc.) makes personal contact with many families who may be vulnerable to homelessness to offer additional resources and support. District Office staff are also available to consult on cases if questions or unique needs arise and to support with the housing status identification process.
F2	The lack of mandatory McKinney-Vento Act training of school site office staff, counselors, and teachers contributes to a failure to identify children experiencing	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or	NMUSD Staff is provided annual training both through our District McKinney-Vento Liaison and through the annual District mandatory Keenan

	homelessness.	partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	trainings (included with bully prevention, suicide prevention, child abuse reporting, etc.). The McKinney-Vento Liaison also provides more intensive training for school office staff (school administrative assistants, school office assistants, registrars, attendance technicians, secondary support specialists, and school community facilitators) and site administrators, counselors, school social workers, health assistants, and nurses. This training emphasizes identifying students potentially experiencing homelessness, legal requirements under McKinney-Vento, and resources/support available to students.
F3	There is disparity in the application of McKinney-Vento regulations across Orange County public school districts which results in unequal access to educational benefits for children experiencing homelessness.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	
F4	The majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons are in full-time positions, but because their work includes multiple non-McKinney-Vento responsibilities, most do not have sufficient time to do the work required by the McKinney-Vento Act.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	In Newport-Mesa, the McKinney-Vento Liaison position has historically been held by an administrator in the District Office, with it being a primary responsibility; however, more funding specifically for support to students experiencing homelessness would always be welcomed.
F5	Many McKinney-Vento Liaisons lack needed experience due to a high turnover rate in those positions.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	The previous NMUSD McKinney-Vento Liaison held the position for 4 years. She was well-trained due to her participation in a variety of opportunities, including Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) Homeless Outreach Promoting Educational Success (HOPES) meetings, CA Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC) webinars, CA Department of Education conferences, and the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEH CY) annual conference. The District Homeless Liaison

			collaborates with the OCDE and CDE Homeless Liaisons for questions and support when needed.
F6	McKinney-Vento Act training is not mandatory for the majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	The Federal McKinney-Vento Act requires that McKinney-Vento Liaisons are trained to support McKinney-Vento students. The Federal Program Monitoring Program (FPM) Instrument for Homeless Education is an accountability tool to ensure this is happening. The annual Consolidated Application and Reporting System (CARS) also asks if the Homeless Liaison has attended or participated in training within the past two years. This provides another accountability measure to ensure that liaisons are trained. To fulfill the requirement, the District Homeless Liaison attends various trainings, meetings, webinars, and conferences.
F7	Students experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in an elementary district often do not continue to receive McKinney-Vento benefits when they move to a high school district because the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents the sharing of this information between districts.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	NMUSD is a PK-12 unified school district, with the Aeries Student Information System (SIS) being used universally throughout the District, and their status is maintained as part of their student record. Additionally, with the housing questionnaire now being an annual requirement during registration/data confirmation, it would be expedited that a student would be identified as McKinney-Vento even if they were coming from outside of NMUSD or leaving to go to another District.
F8	McKinney-Vento funds depend on school districts submitting grant proposals, but not all districts have employees trained in writing grant applications, resulting in missed funding opportunities.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	NMUSD evaluates every grant opportunity presented to determine if it is an appropriate fit for the needs of the District. If it is, the District works with a contracted grant writer to respond and apply for that grant.
F9	School districts that do not apply for grants which fund programs benefiting children experiencing homelessness miss potential revenue opportunities.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or	NMUSD evaluates every grant opportunity presented to determine if it is an appropriate fit for the needs of the District.

		partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	
F10	McKinney-Vento is an unfunded federally mandated program; however, school districts which qualify and apply for Title I, Part A funds may obtain revenues that can be used for children experiencing homelessness. These funds are insufficient to meet the needs of the school districts supporting children experiencing homelessness.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	In NMUSD, Title I funds allocated to support McKinney-Vento students are evaluated and assessed annually in partnership with the Department of Special Projects.
F11	A lack of reliable transportation for children experiencing homelessness often results in chronic tardiness and absenteeism.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Transportation is a barrier for some McKinney-Vento families. The District mitigates this barrier by providing transportation for McKinney-Vento students on District bus routes, OCTA public bus passes, and door-to-door transportation in select cases for students living outside of the District boundaries or for students with unique needs.
F12	Chronic Absenteeism Rates of Homeless Students are disproportionately high in comparison with the Chronic Absenteeism Rates of All Students and Socio-Disadvantaged Students.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	
F13	Children experiencing homelessness in Orange County perform at a lower level on standardized tests and have a lower graduation rate than All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	
F14	The percent of Homeless Students graduating who failed to meet state standards on English Language Arts and Math tests is significantly higher than it is for All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	
F15	There is a tendency by school districts to operate in isolation, which prevents productive collaboration on addressing the issue of children experiencing homelessness and the challenges of their education.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see	The Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) conducts regular Homeless Outreach Promoting Educational Success (HOPES) network meetings for Districts to have the opportunity to collaborate and

		right for explanation)	exchange ideas. Collaboration at these meetings is contingent upon Districts attending and participating, and NMUSD has committed to both.
F16	A significant lack of affordable permanent housing contributes to many families being caught in the cycle of homelessness.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	

Please see below for the responses to each required Recommendation as requested in the Orange County Grand Jury report: The ABC's of Educating Children Experiencing Homelessness in Orange County, and attached cover letter dated May 19, 2023.

R #	Recommendation	Implementation	Response And Explanation (if Required)
R1	All Orange County school districts should develop a "Back to School" plan which includes mandatory McKinney-Vento Act training for all district and school administrators, teachers, office staff, and counselors by December 31, 2023, and annually thereafter.	Recommendation has been implemented	NMUSD Staff is already provided annual training through our District McKinney-Vento Liaison and the annual District mandatory Keenan trainings (included with bully prevention, suicide prevention, child abuse reporting, etc.). The McKinney-Vento Liaison also provides more intensive training for school office staff (school administrative assistants, school office assistants, registrars, attendance technicians, secondary support specialists, school community facilitators) as well as site administrators, counselors, school social workers, health assistants, and nurses. This training emphasizes the identification of students potentially experiencing homelessness, legal requirements under McKinney-Vento, and resources/support available to students. This will continue.
R2	Participation in Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) McKinney-Vento Act training programs for all Local Education Agencies (LEA) McKinney-Vento Liaisons should be mandated by October 1, 2023, and annually thereafter.	Recommendation has been implemented	NMUSD District Staff has been prioritizing these trainings already and has historically attended. The District McKinney-Vento Liaison will continue to participate moving forward.

R3	Given that most LEA McKinney-Vento Liaisons are responsible for a number of other duties, and do not have sufficient time to do their McKinney-Vento required work, school districts should identify ways to increase support and/or staff to address the numerous tasks of the Liaisons by October 1, 2023.	Recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be in the future (see right for timeline)	NMUSD has already evaluated this need and has reorganized the structure of support for McKinney-Vento students, including school office staff and school mental staff.
R4	By January 1, 2024, for children experiencing homelessness to receive uninterrupted McKinney-Vento benefits, Orange County school districts should add a section to their mandatory enrollment school form enabling parents/guardians to give permission for their school to share information regarding their child's McKinney-Vento status with other districts that their child may be attending.	Recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be in the future (see right for timeline)	A student's McKinney-Vento status is currently maintained as part of their student record. For the 2023-24 school year, an option will be added to the annual registration and data confirmation process for families to check that they permit us to share information with another District if they change the district of attendance.
R5	By October 1, 2023, each Orange County school district should develop and maintain a centralized list of district employees with grant application writing capability so that they are prepared to apply for available grants to assist in educating children experiencing homelessness.	Recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be in the future (see right for timeline)	Currently, NMUSD contracts with an outside consultant to respond to any grants that are being applied for. To fulfill this requirement, the approved grant writers list will be readily available to all District staff.
R6	By October 1, 2023, a joint task force should be formed by the OCDE comprised of a district-level administrator from each Orange County school district and leadership from non-profit organizations who serve homeless families, to address absenteeism, low test scores, and low graduation rates of children experiencing homelessness.	Recommendation has been implemented	NMUSD supports the recommendation for OCDE and will send a representative to join the County task force.
R7	To address one of the primary barriers to the education of minors experiencing homelessness, the County of Orange should develop a plan to increase the number of family shelters, permanent supportive housing, and low-cost/long term housing for families by January 1, 2024.	Recommendation will not be implemented (see right for explanation)	This recommendation pertains to the County of Orange and not to NMUSD.
R8	By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board	Recommendation has not yet been implemented but	NMUSD District Staff will work closely with the Executive Cabinet team to develop this plan and to

	of Education, a plan to lower the Absenteeism Rates of homeless students.	will be in the future (see right for timeline)	present it to the NMUSD Board of Education by the required date.
R9	By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board of Education, a plan to improve the performance of homeless students in English Language Arts and Math.	Recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be in the future (see right for timeline)	NMUSD District Staff will work closely with the Executive Cabinet team to develop this plan and to present it to the NMUSD Board of Education by the required date.
R10	The Orange County Superintendent of Schools should provide information from the School Accountability Report (SARC) to the Board of Supervisors identifying the number and describing the performance of children experiencing homelessness in Orange County public schools. This data should include the aggregate of students in each district who are experiencing homelessness, their chronic absenteeism rates, and the high school graduation rate, and the percent who meet or exceed state standards in English and Math, starting October 31, 2023, and yearly thereafter.	Recommendation requires further analysis (see right for explanation of scope, parameters, and 6 month timeline of analysis)	This recommendation pertains to the Orange County Superintendents of Schools, not NMUSD.
R11	By July 1, 2024, the County Board of Supervisors should identify and pursue sustainable financial funding to support all Orange County school districts with enrolled children experiencing homelessness, in their effort to successfully meet the unfunded Federal mandate to equitably educate these children.	Recommendation requires further analysis (see right for explanation of scope, parameters, and 6 month timeline of analysis)	This recommendation pertains to the County Board of Supervisors and not to NMUSD.

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Christy Flores

Christy Flores

Director

Engagement, Partnership, & Expanded Learning

cflores@nmusd.us

(714) 424-3691