

Fullerton School District  
1401 W Valencia Drive  
Fullerton CA 92833  
Attn: Rossana Fonseca

August 16, 2023

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

Dear Judge Hernandez,

I am writing on behalf of the Fullerton School District in response to the Orange County Grand Jury report on educating children experiencing homelessness. We appreciate the diligent work of the Grand Jury in highlighting the challenges faced by children experiencing homelessness in our community.

We are proud to share that the Fullerton School District has been actively working to address the needs of children experiencing homelessness within our community. Our dedicated staff and administrators have implemented various programs and support services to ensure that these students receive the necessary resources and assistance to succeed. We are committed to improving their educational outcomes and will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that every student in our district has access to quality education, regardless of their housing situation. Nevertheless, we acknowledge that there is still progress to be made.

In the 2022-2023 academic year, the Fullerton School District was selected by the California Department of Education to undergo Federal Program Monitoring specifically for Homeless Education. The district demonstrated complete compliance in all areas and was praised by the California Department of Education for its outstanding program. Furthermore, the evaluator expressed interest in using Fullerton School District's documents and practices as benchmarks for other districts in the state.

At the August 15, 2023, Board of Education meeting for Fullerton School District, the Board approved the Grand Jury Responses as requested by the Orange County Grand Jury on the attached cover letter dated May 19, 2023.

The District has thoroughly reviewed and considered the Findings and Recommendations in the Report. In accordance with California Penal Code sections 933 and 933.05, the Grand Jury has requested that the District respond to Findings and Recommendations made in the Report. The District responds to the Grand Jury's Findings and Recommendations with the following:

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.	The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.	Partially Disagree: In the Fullerton School District, the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act Housing Questionnaire is distributed to families during the Annual Information Review (AIR) Process. Throughout the year, the district provides opportunities for families to be identified under McKinney-Vento, including annual data confirmation for returning students and residency questionnaires for new students. School-based Social Services Assistants and Community Liaisons are also involved in confirming the status of previously identified students through various means of communication. However, it is important to note that not all families choose to self-identify due to various factors, including fear, legal status, or embarrassment.
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 homelessness.	The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding.	Wholly Disagrees: For the last five years, the Fullerton School District has mandated that all staff, including school office staff, counselors, and teachers, receive training on the McKinney-Vento Act. In addition, our school district goes above and beyond to include bus drivers and other staff that may work outside the school campus, yet still interact with students. By requiring all staff to have this training, the district is able to identify better and support students who may be experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.
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.	The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding.	Wholly Disagree: In the Fullerton School District, once students and families are identified, they are immediately provided their educational rights and access to resources. The district ensures that all students, regardless of their housing situation, receive equal

			<p>access to education and support services.</p> <p>Additionally, the district prioritizes students experiencing homelessness to participate in additional support, services, and programs.</p>
<b>F4</b>	<p>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.</p>	<p>The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding.</p>	<p>Wholly Disagrees: The Fullerton School District prioritizes supporting students experiencing homelessness through its McKinney-Vento Liaison and a team of staff members at designated school sites. The McKinney-Vento Liaison is dedicated to fulfilling the responsibilities outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act and focuses on supporting students experiencing homelessness in the district. This includes ensuring that identified students and their families receive the necessary resources and assistance to succeed academically and personally. The Fullerton School District has increased its support for families experiencing homelessness by adding 16 staff members at designated school sites to provide case management and support to McKinney-Vento families, further reinforcing the district's commitment to helping students experiencing homelessness.</p>
<b>F5</b>	<p>Many McKinney-Vento Liaisons lack needed experience due to a high turnover rate in those positions.</p>	<p>The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding.</p>	<p>Wholly Disagrees: The previous Fullerton School District McKinney-Vento Liaison served in the position for six years, bringing invaluable expertise and dedication to the role. The newly appointed Liaison is well-equipped to continue supporting our families, with extensive experience in assisting individuals facing homelessness, acquired through previous positions in various homeless shelters and agencies.</p>
<b>F6</b>	<p>McKinney-Vento Act training is not mandatory for the majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons.</p>	<p>The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding.</p>	<p>Wholly Disagrees: For the last six years, the Fullerton School District McKinney-Vento Liaison has been required to participate in all Orange</p>

			County Department of Education trainings held throughout the year. These comprehensive trainings specifically address the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act, allowing the liaison to remain up-to-date with any recent changes.
<b>F7</b>	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.	The respondent agrees with the finding.	
<b>F8</b>	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.	The respondent disagrees wholly with the finding.	Wholly Disagrees- The Fullerton School District (FSD) relies on various funding sources to support students and their families experiencing homelessness. These funds include Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) Unduplicated Supplemental and Concentration Funds, grants, Title I, and the ARP-HCY program. These funds are crucial for ensuring educational stability and success for stability.
<b>F9</b>	School districts that do not apply for grants which fund programs benefiting children experiencing homelessness miss potential revenue opportunities.	The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.	Partially disagrees- The Fullerton School District actively seeks out grant opportunities in order to obtain the necessary funds and continually identifies new sources of funding.
<b>F10</b>	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.	The respondent agrees with the finding.	
<b>F11</b>	A lack of reliable transportation for children experiencing homelessness often results in chronic tardiness and	The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.	Partially Disagrees- The Fullerton School District provides students and their parents who are

	absenteeism.		experiencing homelessness with bus passes for the Orange County Transportation Authority. Additionally, the district is committed to providing safe and appropriate transportation services to our students. In the event that the district's transportation department can not provide such services, we contract out non-school bus transportation services.
<b>F12</b>	Chronic Absenteeism Rates of Homeless Students are disproportionately high in comparison with the Chronic Absenteeism Rates of All Students and Socio-Disadvantaged Students.	The respondent agrees with the finding.	
<b>F13</b>	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.	The respondent agrees with the finding.	
<b>F14</b>	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.	The respondent agrees with the finding.	
<b>F15</b>	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.	The respondent disagrees partially with the finding.	Partially Disagree: For decades, the Fullerton School District, has worked closely with non-profit organizations, community leaders, and government agencies to provide a broad range of resources that can assist our families in achieving stability and meeting their needs.
<b>F16</b>	A significant lack of affordable permanent housing contributes to many families being caught in the cycle of homelessness.	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 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. (F1, F2, F3)	The recommendation has been implemented.	The Fullerton School District has a "Back to School Plan," which requires that all staff participate in training on the McKinney Vento Act annually. After completing the training, staff members must fill out a completion verification form. This yearly practice is implemented to guarantee that all staff members are informed and educated on the latest updates for identification and other relevant aspects of the McKinney Vento Act.
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. (F1, F3, F5, F6)	The recommendation has been implemented.	The Fullerton School District Homeless Liaison attends and actively participates in all training programs related to the McKinney-Vento Act organized by the Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) throughout the year. Training attendance is mandatory in fulfilling their job responsibilities, and annual participation is required.
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. (F4)	The recommendation has been implemented.	The Fullerton School District McKinney-Vento Liaison has the main responsibility of supporting homeless students in our district by ensuring that identified students and families receive the necessary support and resources to succeed academically and personally. Additionally, there are 16 staff members at designated school sites whose job role includes providing assistance to McKinney Vento identified families and offering case management services to these families.
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	The recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be	By December of 2023, the Fullerton School District will include a section in their Annual Information Review (AIR) form enabling parents/guardians to permit their

	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. (F7)	implemented in the future.	school to share information about their child's McKinney-Vento status with other districts that their child may be attending.
<b>R5</b>	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. (F8, F9, F10)	The recommendation has been implemented.	The Fullerton School District has developed and maintained a centralized list of district employees with grant application writing capability so that they are prepared to apply for available grants which would assist in educating children experiencing homelessness. The Fullerton School District will continue to expand and add employees with grant application writing capabilities to its list.
<b>R6</b>	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. (F.11, F.12, F13, F14, F15)	The recommendation has not yet been implemented, but will be implemented in the future.	The Fullerton School District will participate "should" OCDE form a joint task force.
<b>R8</b>	By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board of Education, a plan to lower the Absenteeism Rates of homeless students. (F11, F12)	The recommendation has been implemented.	The Fullerton School District (FSD) presents annual reports to the Board regarding chronic absenteeism rates within the homeless education subgroup and outlines plans to lower these rates. As new data emerge, the Fullerton School District will update and adjust these plans to better address the needs of students experiencing homelessness to ensure their educational stability and success. The staff overseeing the McKinney-Vento student services program at Fullerton School District will continue to maintain a plan to decrease the chronic absenteeism rate for students experiencing homelessness.
<b>R9</b>	By May 1, 2024, each Orange County	The	The Fullerton School District (FSD)

	<p>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. (F13, F14)</p>	<p>recommendation has been implemented.</p>	<p>presents annual reports to the Board regarding English Language Arts (ELA) and Math performance rates within the homeless education subgroup and outlines plans to increase these rates. As new data emerge, Fullerton School District updates and adjusts these plans to address the needs of students experiencing homelessness and ensure their educational success. The staff overseeing the McKinney-Vento student services and program at Fullerton School District will continue to maintain a plan to increase English Language Arts (ELA) and Math performance rates.</p>
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Please accept the information provided herein as the District's responses to the Orange County Grand Jury's Factual Findings and Recommendation in the Report. Once again, we appreciate the time and attention that the Grand Jury devoted to this very important issue.

Sincerely,  
  
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 Fullerton School District  
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