

Anaheim Union High School District  
501 N. Crescent Way  
Anaheim, CA 92801  
Attn: Dr. Adela Cruz

August 23, 2023

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

Re: Anaheim Union High School District's Response to the 2022-23 Orange County Grand Jury Report on *The ABC's of Educating Children Experiencing Homelessness in Orange County*

To: The Honorable Maria D. Hernandez:

The Anaheim Union High School District (District) commends the Grand Jury for its time and attention devoted to studying this very important issue and publishing the Grand Jury Report dated May 25, 2023 entitled: *The ABC's of Educating Children Experiencing Homelessness in Orange County* (Report). The District is committed to serving all students, and recognizes that there are unique challenges facing children and families experiencing homelessness and challenges for our District and our school personnel devoted to identifying and serving these students and families.

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.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	AUHSD cannot verify that "many" children in Orange County experiencing homelessness are not identified as such and therefore do not receive McKinney-Vento services. AUHSD has done a thorough job of identifying our McKinney-Vento population. The dwelling type questions are embedded in the online

			enrollment process, registrars receive yearly training. This alerts our support staff, social workers, counselors, and community engagement specialists. McKinney-Vento posters are posted in all school front offices.
<b>F2</b>	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.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	AUHSD provides yearly training for staff, registrars, family and community and engagement specialists, social workers, and other staff receive yearly training and toolkits. This helps our staff understand the rights of homeless youth, the services available, and protocols on how to address the needs based on barriers to housing and basic needs.
<b>F3</b>	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.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	AUHSD provides yearly training for staff, registrars, family and community and engagement specialists, social workers, and other staff receive yearly training and toolkits. This helps our staff understand the rights of homeless youth, the services available, and protocols on how to address the needs based on barriers to housing and basic needs. We provide a tiered approach to services. Students may only need support with enrollment, school supplies, or basic needs. Families in need of housing assistance are referred to the three-way partnership we have in place with the Anaheim City and the Illumination Foundation. Families are provided with emergency shelter, transitional housing, or services that move them into permanent housing.
<b>F4</b>	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	AUHSD employs social workers, family and community specialists, and other staff who support each site with the needs of the students. The McKinney-Vento Liaison is focused on program implementation of a system

		right for explanation)	of identification, tiered services, community partnerships, and professional development, and support with enrollment and dispute resolution process when needed.
<b>F5</b>	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 current AUHSD Liaison has been in the position for 12 years. Through her effort our district has developed a comprehensive system of support that includes tailored professional development. The McKinney-Vento Liaison attends quarter meetings at OCDE where policy, services, and supports is provided. The McKinney-Vento Liaisons also utilizes the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) .
<b>F6</b>	McKinney-Vento Act training is not mandatory for the majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	A joint task force should be formed by the OCDE composed 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. OCDE will lead a Steering Committee (referred to in R6 as “joint task force”) through the Homeless Outreach Promoting Educational Success (HOPES) Collaborative Network Meetings
<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.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	Because AUHSD is a 7th - 12 grade district, our McKinney-Vento Liaison and staff work closely with feeder school districts to track the transition of our McKinney Vento students as they enroll into 7th grade. The dwelling type questions are embedded into the enrollment process and registrars are trained yearly and are able to identify students accordingly. OCDE will lead a Steering Committee (referred to in

			R6 as “joint task force”) through the Homeless Outreach Promoting Educational Success (HOPES) Collaborative Network Meetings.
<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.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	AUHSD has a liaison that has successfully written grant proposals which were all awarded. Moving forward, it will be imperative that new liaisons are trained to write the EHCY grant.  Support for school district liaisons should be available because districts do not typically hire grant writers nor do they provide training for existing staff.
<b>F9</b>	School districts that do not apply for grants which fund programs benefiting children experiencing homelessness miss potential revenue opportunities.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	All school districts should apply for these grants. However, support with grant writing and training are important for the school district.
<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.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	AUHSD uses a percentage of Title 1, Part A funds for the McKinney Vento program. School districts need additional and dedicated funds to support and to meet the needs of McKenny-Vento students. A group that consistently struggles are unaccompanied minors, funding to support their unique needs, for example, is lacking.
<b>F11</b>	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)	AUHSD uses several transportation services for students. What is needed is additional funding to support the high needs of youth. Districts provide transportation support for both foster youth and McKinney-Vento youth.
<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.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding	AUHSD is building alternative education programs, such as online schools, independent study programs paired with support services, such as transportation services. Students are

			able to attend their school of origin, school of residence, or an alternative education site. The district provides mental health services when needed, basic needs and school items when needed. During the 22/23 academic school year, AUHSD implemented an Attendance Task Force that made recommendations for each site to address chronic absenteeism for all students, including youth experiencing homelessness.
<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.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	This statement is very broad and does not apply to all students.
<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.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	This statement is very broad and does not apply to all students.
<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.	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see right for explanation)	AUHSD has both formal and informal agreements with multiple agencies in the area of housing, basic needs, food, et. AUHSD has a formal agreement with Anaheim City who supports our Homeless Assistance Program with Illumination Foundation.
<b>F16</b>	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 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	AUHSD provides yearly McKinney-Vento training, ongoing consultation with the MV Liaison, and ongoing support for individual students.
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	The AUHSD McKinney-Vento Liaison participates and in collaboration with the district's Education Division Team leaders develops professional development for the district's staff and the community.
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 been implemented	The district has in place social workers, counselors, family and community engagement specialties at all schools who support students and families. This includes district mid-level managers the support the current McKinney-Vento Liaison.
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 been implemented	AUHSD's enrollment process includes questions about dwelling or housing status.
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 been implemented	District staff are proactive in researching and applying for available grants.

<p><b>R6</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Recommendation has been implemented</p>	<p>OCDE will lead a Steering Committee (referred to in R6 as “joint task force”) through the Homeless Outreach Promoting Educational Success (HOPES) Collaborative Network Meetings. This Steering Committee is embedded within the existing HOPES Collaborative, allowing information to be disseminated with minimal barriers or delay. OCDE HOPES Collaborative supports county-wide efforts to address issues specific to youth experiencing homelessness. In addition, OCDE has developed three (3) subcommittees comprised of OCDE staff, district personnel, and community partners addressing chronic absenteeism, graduation rates, and low-test scores. These subcommittees will meet 1x per month beginning September 2023 through April 2024. Each subcommittee will review current practices, evidence supporting those practices, and then share practices and findings with the Steering Committee (AKA joint task force) in April 2024. The Steering Committee is composed of district liaisons who will then disseminate within their specific LEAs.</p>
<p><b>R8</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Recommendation has been implemented</p>	<p>During the 22/23 academic school year, AUHSD implemented an Attendance Task Force that made recommendations for each site to address chronic absenteeism for all students, including youth experiencing homelessness.</p>

<p><b>R9</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Recommendation has been implemented</p>	<p>For the 2023-2024 school year, the core subjects support structure has evolved to include a direct connection to the LCAP recommendations for Plurilingual Scholars, Scholars with Disabilities, and Foster Youth/McKinney-Vento students, providing support for instructors to make connections to how instructional routines can specifically support students from the aforementioned subgroups. Additionally, starting in the 2022-23 school year, AUHSD entered into a three-year grant with the Orange County Department of Education and a research group, Inflexion, to support student identity in STEM. Teachers and curriculum specialist engaged in professional development workshops centered on how to create student-centered classrooms, supporting Plurilingual Scholars, Scholars with Disabilities, and Foster Youth/McKinney-Vento students, and how to help students engage in the standards for mathematical practices via the data cycle.</p>
<p><b>R10</b></p>	<p>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.</p>	<p>Recommendation has been implemented</p>	<p>This data is included in the SARC report for each school. The reports are published yearly, submitted to OCDE, and available for public view on each school's website.</p>

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns. Thank you.



501 NORTH CRESCENT WAY, ANAHEIM, CA 92801  
STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Sincerely,



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