



## La Habra City School District

500 North Walnut Street, La Habra, CA 90631-3769

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August 24, 2023

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

Dear Judge Hernandez:

The La Habra City School District (District) provides this letter in response to the Orange County Grand Jury Report, "The ABC's of Educating Children Experiencing Homelessness in Orange County." 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 school personnel devoted to identifying and serving these students and families. The District appreciates the opportunity to review and respond to the Report and for the feedback and subsequent insight provided and gained as a result of the investigation conducted by the Grand Jury.

Please see below for the responses to each required Finding as requested in the Orange County Grand Jury Report.

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 explanation).	The District provides opportunities throughout the year for families to be identified under the McKinney-Vento Act (MV). For students returning to the District, parents/guardians are asked to complete data confirmation through a student information system (AERIES) which includes the residential questionnaire. This occurs on an annual basis. Additionally, for those who were identified the previous school year under MV, school-based community liaisons are asked to confirm current residential status through letters and phone calls. For new students to the District, the residency questionnaire is included in

			each registration packet with opportunities for direct follow-up at the school site based on the families' responses.
<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 explanation).	The school-based community liaisons are trained on an annual basis in August by District MV Liaisons. The site community liaisons are then tasked with the responsibility to train their school teams. The teams include administrators, teachers, classified staff (office), counselors and psychologists.
<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 explanation).	All students in the District are given the same access to educational opportunities and resources at school regardless of their status.
<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.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding.	
<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 explanation).	The District retains stable staff in most positions including the District and site-level community liaisons. When new team members join, they are provided regular training through the District and Orange County Department of Education teams.
<b>F6</b>	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 explanation).	The MV Act training is required and provided annually to the staff by the District and Orange County Department of Education.
<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	Disagree. The Respondent disagrees wholly or partially with the finding (see explanation).	The District has a strong partnership with the feeder high school district. There are opportunities to facilitate transition meetings during the students' 8th grade year between the two middle schools and high school district. In addition to transition

	the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents the sharing of this information between districts.		services, the elementary and high school district work collaboratively to ensure continuity of care in times of crisis if siblings are enrolled in both districts.
<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.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding.	
<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.	
<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.	
<b>F11</b>	A lack of reliable transportation for children experiencing homelessness often results in chronic tardiness and absenteeism.	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding.	
<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.	
<b>F13</b>	Children experiencing homelessness in Orange County perform at a lower level on standardized tests and have a lower graduation	Agree. The Respondent agrees with the finding.	

	rate than All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.		
<b>F14</b>	The percentage 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 explanation).	The District serves students in transitional kindergarten (TK) to eighth grade. The District does not have access to graduation rates.
<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 explanation).	The District has strong partnerships with various community partners to expand resources related to food, clothing and hygiene access and counseling. The District is exploring additional partnerships to support transportation and housing needs.
<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.

<b>R #</b>	<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Implementation</b>	<b>Response And Explanation (if Required)</b>
<b>R1</b>	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 will be implemented.	
<b>R2</b>	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 will be implemented.	

<b>R3</b>	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 requires further analysis (see explanation of scope, parameters, and 6-month timeline of analysis).	At this time, the District hired various program specialists to help support the work of MV liaisons. The team will conduct a work analysis to determine additional support if needed.
<b>R4</b>	By August 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 explanation for timeline).	The District will work with neighboring districts to determine the ability to add Release of Disclosure to the enrollment process. At a minimum, the District will explore utilizing the releases when families are identified under MV.
<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.	Recommendation has not yet been implemented but will be in the future (see explanation for timeline).	At this time, the District hired various program specialists to help support the work of MV liaisons including grant writing.
<b>R6</b>	By October 1, 2023, 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.	Recommendation will be implemented.	
<b>R8</b>	By June of 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.	Recommendation will be implemented.	
<b>R9</b>	By June of 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 will be implemented.	
<b>R10</b>	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	Recommendation will be implemented.	

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.		
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If you have questions or concerns, please feel free to contact us.

Sincerely,



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