

Potential Warning Signs of Homelessness

Note: While these are considered warning signs, please recognize that they only offer *general* guidance. There is significant variability within the school-age homeless population. Individual students may differ greatly from the following general characteristics.

Reaction/Statements by Parent, Guardian, or Child

- Exhibiting anger or embarrassment when asked about current address
- Mention of staying with grandparents, relatives, friends, or in a motel or comments, such as:
 - “I don’t remember the name of our previous school.”
 - “We’ve been moving around a lot.”
 - “Our address is new; I can’t remember it.” (May hide lack of permanent address)
 - “We’re staying with relatives until we get settled.”
 - “We’re going through a bad time right now.”
 - “We’ve been unpacking, traveling, etc.,” to explain poor appearance/hygiene.

Lack of Continuity in Education

- Attendance at many different schools
- Inability to pay fees
- Lack of personal records needed to enroll
- Gaps in skill development

Poor Health/Nutrition

- Fatigue (may fall asleep in class)
- Chronic hunger (may hoard food)
- Lack of immunizations and/or immunization records
- Unmet medical and dental needs
- Lack of shower facilities/washers, etc.

Transportation and Attendance Problems

- Inability to contact parents
- Erratic attendance and tardiness
- Lack of participation in after-school activities
- Absences on days when students bring special treats from home
- Numerous absences
- Lack of participation in field trips

Lack of Privacy and/or Personal Space After School

- Lack of basic school supplies
- Consistent lack of preparation for school
- Loss of books and other supplies on a regular basis
- Unable to complete special projects (no access to supplies)
- Incomplete or missing homework (no place to work or keep supplies)
- Concern for safety of belongings
- Refusing invitations from classmates

Social and Behavioral Concerns

- Protective of parents
- Fear of abandonment
- Anxiety late in the school day
- Clinging behavior
- School phobia (student wants to be with parent)

)