



# Homeless Program

*By Jan Anderson, FPS Homeless Liaison*

## The McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act

### Words to live by from a student...

“If you were drowning, what would you be thinking about? Your phone or your friends??? No, all you want is to breathe, so when you want success as bad as you want to breathe, then you will be successful. Think about it for a while.”

### What is The McKinney-Vento Act and why does it matter to students and families experiencing homelessness?

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act is a federal law created to support the enrollment and education of homeless students. McKinney-Vento is intended to provide homeless students the same educational opportunities as housed students by removing as many barriers to learning for homeless students as possible.

Fargo Public Schools has a McKinney-Vento (MV) team with five homeless liaisons that work to remove those barriers for students experiencing homelessness.

- Jan Anderson - Hub
- Laura Bennett - District Wide
- Mary Krueger - North Side
- Sara Bernstrom - Middle of Town
- Alexis Rinas - South Side

Learn more about The McKinney-Vento Act [in this YouTube clip](#).

Fargo Public Schools MV data.

- 215 kids identified so far this year. 165 kids last year at this time.
- Students in all school buildings and VA.
- Approximately 50% of FPS students experiencing homelessness are in elementary and 50% are in middle and high school.
- 28 Unaccompanied Homeless Youth - youth not physically living with a parent. Youngest child is in second grade. Five students Grades 2-8. Twenty-three students Grades 9-12.
- Primary Night Time Shelter at time of eligibility:
  - 154 students doubled-up
  - 28 students staying in a hotel
  - 32 students at a homeless shelter
  - 1 student unsheltered



# Homeless Program, continued

- 24 Preschool-aged siblings

Q: What do I do if I think a student is experiencing homelessness?

A: Talk to a building counselor, SWFF, or administrative person. Make a referral via [district electronic form](#) if necessary.

**If you could let the people at school know anything about being homeless, what would you want them to know?**

“It’s hard. It’s hard always wondering where you’re going to sleep. Where to bring your stuff? Is it really worth going to school today or working to get cash at the end of the day for supper?”

“I’d want them to know about the domestic episodes that my mother and her boyfriend had – many of which included me and I couldn’t bear it anymore. No kid should have to be raised around violence.”

“I would want the school to know my situation and take it into consideration whenever it comes to academics. If grades begin to fall, then perhaps have the counselor pull the student aside and ask what’s going on. Many students know the counselor is there to help, but don’t always attempt to seek guidance. Instead have the guidance counselor seek the student in need.”

“The hardest thing about being homeless is watching everybody with their family things and it makes you feel like an outcast if you don’t belong. I remember every year at the last home dual, every kid would walk down to the thrusting mat with their parents and they announced all your achievements. With me it was always a coach or a good friend’s mom or dad. Being homeless feels like nobody cares about you. If not for the great people I’ve met along my life, I would probably be in a crack house somewhere doing God knows what.” (Student now has an apartment, full time job, and is attending college.)

“I would want them to know that financial assistance makes a difference. Most people are homeless because they don’t have money to pay for the expenses.”

“I would want them to know that we don’t mean to have bad attitudes and that we do care about our education. We just hate life for the moment that we’re homeless.”

“To save your money and work as many jobs as you can, because you never know when it will pay off.”

