

Quick-Reference: Supporting Homeless Youth at Risk for Suicide

(For Teachers, Counselors, and School Staff)

Recognizing Possible Signs of Housing Instability

- Frequent absences or tardiness
- Wearing the same clothes repeatedly, poor hygiene
- Sleeping in class
- Talking about moving often or staying with different friends/family
- No school supplies or reluctance to go home

Warning Signs of Suicide Risk

- Withdrawal from friends or activities
- Sudden drop in grades or engagement
- Expressions of hopelessness ('What's the point?')
- Talking or writing about death or suicide
- Dramatic mood changes

Immediate Action if Risk Is Suspected

- Take all comments seriously—never assume it's a joke.
- Stay with the student—do not leave them alone.
- Activate your school's crisis response protocol immediately.
- Contact your McKinney-Vento liaison and school counselor.
- Connect to crisis resources: - 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline – Call/Text 988 - Trevor Project – Text START to 678678 (for LGBTQ+ youth)

Best Practices for Ongoing Support

- Build trust: Greet students by name, show consistent care.
- Use trauma-informed strategies: Predictable routines, flexibility with deadlines, and safe spaces.
- Engage peers: Encourage mentoring and inclusive classroom culture.
- Maintain privacy: Avoid public disclosure of a student's housing status.
- Collaborate: Work with counselors, social workers, and community partners.

Key Contacts

District McKinney-Vento Liaison:	_____
School Counselor/Psychologist:	_____
Local Youth Mental Health Agency:	_____