

Common Signs of Homelessness

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

Lack of Educational Continuity

- Attendance at many different schools
- Missing records needed to enroll
- Inability to pay fees
- Gaps in skill development
- Mistaken assessment of abilities
- Poor organizational skills
- Poor ability to conceptualize

Poor Health Nutrition

- Missing immunizations & medical records
- Unmet medical & dental needs
- Respiratory problems
- Skin rashes
- Chronic hunger or food hoarding
- Fatigue (may fall asleep in class)

Transportation & Attendance Problems

- Erratic attendance and tardiness
- Numerous absences
- Lack of participation in afterschool activities
- Lack of participation in field trips
- Inability to contact parents

Lack of Personal Space After School

- Incomplete or missing homework
- Unable to complete special projects
- Lacking basic school supplies
- Loss of books and supplies on regular basis
- Elevated concern for safety of belongings

Poor Hygiene

- Lacking shower facilities/washer, etc.
- Wearing clothes several days
- Inconsistent grooming

Social & Behavioral Concerns

- A marked change in behavior
- Poor self-esteem
- Extreme shyness
- Unwilling to form relationships with peers & teachers
- Difficulty trusting people
- Aggression
- “Old” beyond years
- People pleasing/clinging behavior
- Development delays
- School phobia (afraid to leave parent)
- Anxiety, especially late in the school day

Reactions or Statements by Parents, Guardians, or Students

- Exhibiting anger, embarrassment, or avoidance when asked about current address
- Statements about staying with grandparents, other relatives, friends, or in motels
- Statements such as:
 - “We’ve been moving around a lot.”
 - “Our address is new; I can’t remember it.”
 - “We’re staying with relatives until we get settled.”