



## **2023-2024 UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH VERIFICATION FORM**

The student identified below indicated on his/her Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) that at some point on or after July 1, 2021, he/she was an unaccompanied youth, homeless or at risk of being homeless. Please complete the agency section of the form.

### **STUDENTS – COMPLETE THIS SECTION**

Student Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_ Student ID: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Mailing Address – Student: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Student: Return this form with any relevant supporting documentation to the Office of Financial Aid at Brookdale Community College.

### **AGENCY – COMPLETE THIS SECTION**

I am providing this letter of verification as a (check one, and then provide name, phone number, and other contact information):

\_\_\_ McKinney-Vento School District Liaison

\_\_\_ Director or Designee of a HUD Funded Shelter

\_\_\_ Director or Designee of a RHYA Funded Shelter

Name (print): \_\_\_\_\_

Organization / School: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Per the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (Public Law 110-84), I affirm that I am authorized to verify this student's living situation. No further verification by a college Financial Aid Administrator is necessary. If there are additional questions or more information is needed about this student, please contact me at the number listed above.

I hereby confirm that: \_\_\_\_\_

*Student Name (print)*

Check one:

<p><input type="checkbox"/> Can be certified as being an “Unaccompanied homeless youth” after July 1, 2022. This means that, after July 1, 2022, student was living in a homeless situation, as defined by Section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Act, and was not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Can be certified as an “unaccompanied, self-supporting youth at risk of homelessness” after July 1, 2022. This means that, after July 1, 2022, student was not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, was able to provide for his/her own living expenses entirely on his/her own, and is at risk of losing his/her housing</p>
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Signature of Liaison / Director \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## **MORE INFORMATION ABOUT UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH**

**Who Are Unaccompanied Homeless Youth?** Unaccompanied homeless youth are young people who lack safe, stable housing and who are not in the care of a parent or guardian. They may have run away from home or been forced to leave by their parents. Unaccompanied youth live in a variety of temporary situations, including shelters, the homes of friends or relatives, cars, campgrounds, public parks, abandoned buildings, motels, and bus or train stations.

Between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth run away from their homes each year.<sup>i</sup> Generally, youth leave home due to severe dysfunction in their families, including circumstances that put their safety and well-being at risk. Unfortunately, physical and sexual abuse in the home is common; studies of unaccompanied youth have found that 20 to 50% were sexually abused in their homes, while 40 to 60% were physically abused.<sup>ii</sup> Parental drug use or alcoholism and conflicts with stepparents or partners also provoke youth to run away from home.<sup>iii</sup> In a survey of unaccompanied youth in California, over half felt that being homeless was as safe as or safer than being at home.<sup>iv</sup>

**What About College? Can Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Apply for Federal Financial Aid?** Yes, with assistance from advocates. Due to their severe poverty, homeless unaccompanied youth are extremely unlikely to be able to access postsecondary education without federal student aid. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the federal application form that students must complete in order to apply for virtually all types of financial aid: Pell Grants, State Grants, Institutional Grants, Tuition Waivers, Work Study, and Loans. The FAFSA requires most students to provide financial information from their parents or guardians in order to determine student eligibility for aid; the application also requires a parental/guardian signature. While these requirements are logical for most applicants, they can create insurmountable barriers for unaccompanied homeless youth. These youth do not receive financial support from their parents and do not have access to parental information. Thus, despite their great need for financial assistance, unaccompanied homeless youth cannot supply the information required by the FAFSA and are prevented from accessing financial aid.

**Who are McKinney-Vento District Liaisons?** Under subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, every school district is required to designate a liaison for students experiencing homelessness. Homeless liaisons have a number of legal responsibilities under the Act, including identifying youth who meet the definition of homeless and are unaccompanied. The education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act is overseen by the U.S. Department of Education. For more information, see: <http://www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/legislation.html>

**What are HUD-funded Shelters?** The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) administers funding for homeless shelters and services under Title IV of the McKinney-Vento Act. These funds are distributed to communities through a competitive grant process. For more information, see: <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpd/homeless/programs/index.cfm>

**What are RHYA-funded Shelters?** The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services administers the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs. These programs provide funding for Basic Centers, Transitional Living Programs, and Street Outreach programs that serve runaway and other unaccompanied homeless youth. For more information, see: <http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/fysb/content/youthdivision/index.htm#sub1>

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<sup>i</sup> Hammer, H., Finkelhor, D., & Sedlak, A. (2002). "Runaway / Thrownaway Children: National Estimates and Characteristics." *National Incidence Studies of Missing, Abducted, Runaway, and Thrownaway Children*. Washington DC: Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention. See also Greene, J. (1995). "Youth with Runaway, Throwaway, and Homeless Experiences: Prevalence, Drug Use, and Other At-Risk Behaviors." *Research Triangle Institute*. Washington DC: U.S. Dept. of Health and Human Services; National Runaway Switchboard, <http://www.1800runaway.org/>.

<sup>ii</sup> Robertson, M. & Toro, P. (1999). "Homeless Youth: Research, Intervention, and Policy." *Practical Lessons: The 1998 National Symposium on Homelessness Research*. Washington DC: U.S. Dept. of Housing and Urban Development. Retrieved July 18, 2007 from <http://aspe.os.dhhs.gov/progsys/homeless/symposium/3-Youth.htm>. See also MacLean, M.G., Embry, L.E. & Cauce, A.M. (1999). "Homeless Adolescents' Paths to Separation from Family: Comparison of Family Characteristics, Psychological Adjustment, and Victimization." *Journal of Community Psychology*, 27(2), 179-187.

<sup>iii</sup> Robertson & Toro, *supra*, note 10.

<sup>iv</sup> Bernstein, N., *supra* note 1.