

## **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 Continuity in Education***

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

### ***Poor Health/Nutrition***

- Lack of immunizations and/or immunization records
- Unmet medical and dental needs
- Respiratory problems
- Skin rashes
- Chronic hunger (may hoard food)
- Fatigue (may fall asleep in class)

### ***Transportation and Attendance Problems***

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

### ***Poor Hygiene***

- Lack of shower facilities/washers, etc.
- Wearing same clothes for several days
- Inconsistent grooming

### ***Lack of Personal Space After School***

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

### ***Social and Behavioral Concerns***

- A marked change in behavior
- Poor/short attention span
- Poor self-esteem
- Extreme shyness

- Unwillingness to risk forming relationships with peers and teachers
- Difficulty socializing at recess
- Difficulty trusting people
- Aggression
- “Old” beyond years
- Protective of parents
- Clinging behavior
- Developmental delays
- Fear of abandonment
- School phobia (student wants to be with parent)
- Anxiety late in the school day

***Reaction/Statements by Parent, Guardian, or Child***

- Exhibiting anger or embarrassment when asked about current address
- Mention of staying with grandparents, other relatives, friends, or in a motel, or comments, such as
  - “I don’t remember the name of the last school.”
  - “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.”
  - “We’re going through a bad time.”

*Common signs adapted from flyers developed by the National Center for Homeless Education.*