BRIEF

Maximizing Access & Success for Special Populations

Supporting Learners Experiencing Homelessness in Career Technical Education

Career Technical Education (CTE) policies and programs have increasingly focused on supporting the needs of historically marginalized learners and closing access and performance gaps among learner groups. Perkins V, the latest iteration of federal CTE legislation known as the <u>Carl D. Perkins Career and Technical Education Act</u>, is part of this trend. The law defines nine learner groups as special populations and includes a number of provisions that address expanding access to and supporting success within CTE programs for special populations. This brief will describe strategies for supporting one of these special populations: learners experiencing homelessness.

SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN PERKINS V

LEARNER GROUPS DEFINED AS SPECIAL POPULATIONS IN PERKINS V:

- Out-of-workforce individuals
- English learners
- Individuals experiencing homelessness
- Individuals with disabilities
- Single parents, including single pregnant women
- Youth who are in/have aged out of the foster care system
- Individuals preparing for careers that are non-traditional for their gender
- Youth with a parent who is a member of the armed forces and is on active duty
- Individuals from economically disadvantaged families, ex. low-income youth and adults





CTE educators are developing strategies to support learner groups who, while not special populations under the law, may need additional supports, including **migrant and undocumented**, **LGBTQ+**, **justice-involved and Tribal learners**.

DEFINING LEARNERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Perkins V defines learners experiencing homelessness the same way as the <u>McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act</u>, which defines homeless children and youth as individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.¹ This definition also includes youth experiencing homelessness due to loss or economic hardship, those living in unconventional settings such as cars or abandoned buildings, and migratory children facing homelessness under similar circumstances.

In the 2021-22 academic year, more than 150,000 CTE participants were identified as learners experiencing homelessness across secondary and postsecondary programs nationwide. Of these learners, more than 46,000 are CTE concentrators.² One of the eight stated purposes of Perkins V legislation is to "increase employment opportunities for populations that are chronically unemployed or underemployed," including learners experiencing homelessness, and this population is much less likely to graduate high school and be positioned for success in further education and careers.³

STRATEGIES FOR LEARNER EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Learners experiencing homelessness were first defined as a special population in Perkins V, so states and local CTE leaders are in the early phases of implementing strategies to support this learner group.. Potential state ($\frac{1}{2}$) and local (\bigcirc) approaches include:

Cross-agency coordination and partnerships $ilde{\mathbb{m}}$ igvee

State homeless education and CTE leaders can collaborate to understand the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act and how its provisions can be leveraged to support learners experiencing homelessness in CTE programs.⁴ For instance, when developing Comprehensive Local Needs Assessments, state leaders can engage agencies representing individuals experiencing homelessness and collaborate with state coordinators to identify key stakeholders to consult. State coordinators can also identify local institutions serving a significant number of learners experiencing homelessness so state and local CTE leaders can better understand and address population needs.

Mitigation of costs $ilde{\mathbb{m}}$ lacksquare

On the local level, CTE programs and institutions can eliminate application and participation fees and provision uniforms and materials to remove barriers to access for learners experiencing homelessness. States can provide institutions with a grant equivalent to the value of waived tuition and fees to eliminate financial disincentives.





Expanded postsecondary supports $\mbox{ } {f \hat{m}} \ {f Q}$

Including a question about homelessness on postsecondary applications allows learners to self-disclose voluntarily and can facilitate access to a range of learner supports. Coordination among financial aid offices, student services and campus housing can then connect individuals to community-based resources, such as food banks or low-cost health care. Institutions can plan to support learners experiencing homelessness when campus housing closes by establishing host homes or other accommodations. Program leaders can provide wraparound transportation support and food during in-person meetings and other engagement activities.

Intentional engagement and outreach $ext{ } ilde{\mathbf{n}} \ \mathbf{9}$

State and local CTE and homeless education leaders can work together to develop strategies for outreach in places frequented by learners experiencing homelessness, including schools, shelters, public libraries and soup kitchens. CTE representatives can share information about how CTE can support these learners with local homeless education liaisons, school counselors and community partners serving youth.⁵ Additionally, state and local leaders can share how learners can enroll in CTE programs while recognizing that some individuals experiencing homelessness may rely on mobile devices for internet access or be without certain forms of identification.







Informed staff training 🏛 🕈

State and local leaders can provide professional development opportunities so that relevant program staff, instructors, counselors and partners can ensure that learners experiencing homelessness can access and succeed in CTE programs. These professional supports can be provided within and across CTE and homeless education programs, including partnering to provide joint training to align efforts appropriately.

Financial aid policies 🏛

States can include academic and career counseling in financial aid programs to assist learners experiencing homelessness, among other populations, in persisting in and completing postsecondary education. State and local leaders can build on already established foster youth financial aid programs to include the unique needs of learners experiencing homelessness.

Accessible program spaces 💡

Learners experiencing homelessness may lack a reliable place to store materials or study uninterrupted. Local leaders can provide dedicated space for learners to store their learning materials at the program site and/or provide flexibility in access to the program space to allow learners to have an appropriate study location if needed.

Dual enrollment opportunities 🏛 💡

Learners experiencing homelessness can benefit from dual enrollment programs by maximizing credit accrual at a postsecondary institution while earning credits for high school graduation. Dual enrollment increases the likelihood that learners experiencing homelessness will attend and complete college while saving money toward a degree or certificate.⁶

For additional resources, visit Advance CTE's <u>Perkins V Section</u>, the Maximizing Access and Success for Special Populations in Career Technical Education <u>series page</u> in the Learning that Works Resource Center and ACTE's <u>Perkins Implementation</u> page.





REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The strategies described in the previous section are not mutually exclusive, and not all will be appropriate based on the needs of your population of learners experiencing homelessness. Before enacting new strategies, assess the current state of learners experiencing homelessness in your CTE programs and dig into root causes of barriers and challenges:

- What do learners experiencing homelessness tell you about their needs, challenges and successes?
- What does your data show about the CTE participation and concentration of learners experiencing homelessness?
- What does your data show about the performance of learners experiencing homelessness?
- How do you ensure that programs of study lead to family-sustaining wages that will provide economic mobility for learners? How do you promote these opportunities to learners experiencing homelessness?
- How do you communicate with learners experiencing homelessness?

- On the secondary level, what dual enrollment opportunities are available? How many learners experiencing homelessness take advantage of these opportunities?
- On the postsecondary level, how do you encourage learners experiencing homelessness to self-disclose so they can be eligible for services?
- What support services are available for learners experiencing homelessness? How are they made aware of these services?
- Which agencies or community organizations could you connect with to support learners experiencing homelessness?
- How robust are partnerships at the state level between CTE and other divisions/departments that support learners experiencing homelessness?





CASE STUDY

The Passport to Careers program helps Washington learners in foster care or experiencing unaccompanied homelessness prepare for careers.⁷ Those eligible for the program can choose between two education pathways: Passport to College, which leads to a postsecondary degree or certificate, or Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities, which connects learners to an apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program. The program includes financial assistance toward the cost of earning a postsecondary credential or job training and provides career guidance counselors to assist with navigating program options and benefits.

Learners who enroll in the Passport to College program receive support services from college staff, a financial assistance scholarship, and priority consideration for State Work Study and the Washington College Grant. Learners enrolling in the Passport to Apprenticeship Opportunities program receive funds to cover tuition, fees, work clothes and occupation-related tools for their apprenticeship or pre-apprenticeship program. In the 2021-22 academic year, 943 learners were served through the Passport to Careers program.

RESOURCES TO SUPPORT LEARNERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

- Upward Bound Program (U.S. Department of Education, 2023)
- How Can High-Poverty Schools Engage Families and the Community? (Edutopia, 2016)
- YouthBuild Pre-Apprenticeship Program (U.S. Department of Labor)
- Fast Facts Report for the Student Support Services Program (U.S. Department of Education)
- Enrolling Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in School (National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE)





¹ Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq. (2010). https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/USCODE-2010-title42/html/USCODE-2010-title42-chap119-subchapVI-partB-sec11434a.htm

² Perkins Collaborative Resource Network. (n.d.). Perkins V enrollment data. https://cte.ed.gov/pcrn/explorer/enrollment/perkins-v

³ American Youth Policy Forum. (n.d.). Youth experiencing homelessness. https://www.aypf.org/youth-populations/homeless/

⁴ Advance CTE. (2020). Improving equity in and access to quality CTE programs for students experiencing homelessness. https://careertech.org/resource/making-good-on-the-promise-improving-equity-in-and-access-to-quality-cte-programs-for-students-experiencing-homelessness/

⁵ JFF. (2021). Dual enrollment for students from special populations: Improving college transitions for English learners, students with disabilities, foster youth, and young people experiencing homelessness. https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/ED611249.pdf

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Washington Student Achievement Council. (n.d.). Passport to Careers guide: About Passports to Careers. https://wsac.wa.gov/passport/about