

Fullerton Joint Union High School District
 1051 W Bastanchury Rd
 Fullerton, CA 92833
 Attn: Allen Whitten

August 9, 2023

The Honorable Maria Hernandez
 Presiding Judge of the Superior Court
 700 Civic Center Drive West
 Santa Ana, CA 92701

Dear Judge Hernandez,

I am writing on behalf of the Fullerton Joint Union High School District in response to the Orange County Grand Jury report on educating children experiencing homelessness.

The Fullerton Joint Union High School District takes great pride in our efforts and ability to identify and address the needs of children experiencing homelessness within our community. Our dedicated staff and administrators have implemented a multitude of programs and support services to ensure that homeless students are promptly identified and receive the necessary resources and assistance to succeed. We are committed to improving their educational outcomes and will continue to work tirelessly to ensure that every student in our district has access to quality education, regardless of their housing situation. With that said, we acknowledge that there is still progress to be made and appreciate the work of the Grand Jury and insights gleaned from this process.

At the August 8, 2023, Board of Trustees meeting for Fullerton Joint Union High School District, the Board approved the Grand Jury Responses as requested by the Orange County Grand Jury dated May 25, 2023.

F #	Finding	Agree/ Disagree	Response And Explanation (if Required)
F1	Many children experiencing homelessness are not identified as such, and therefore do not receive the support and benefits authorized by the McKinney-Vento Act.	Disagree. ... ▾	Partially Disagree- FJUHS D annually sends the McKinney-Vento Assistance Act Housing Questionnaire via online and paper forms during enrollment to identify families in need. Students and families promptly receive educational rights, access to school pantries, and referrals to local organizations for food, eyeglasses, healthcare, etc. Equal access for all students; barriers removed. it is crucial to consider that certain families may choose not to self-identify due to factors like fear, legal status concerns, or feelings of embarrassment. Looking for the signs of

			homelessness and creating a safe and non-judgmental environment can encourage more families to come forward and seek the support they need.
F2	The lack of mandatory McKinney-Vento Act training of school site office staff, counselors, and teachers contributes to a failure to identify children experiencing homelessness.	Disagree. ... ▾	Wholly Disagree- FJUHSD has mandatory monthly meetings with school site administration (Assistant Principal of Student Services) that oversees McKinney-Vento students and monthly meeting with each school sites Family Liaison which provides additional support and resources to students/families experiencing homelessness. In addition to monthly meetings, materials, and OCDE training are provided and encouraged for office staff, counselors, and teachers to use and attend to assist in identifying and supporting our McKinney-Vento population. There are always opportunities for growth and additional materials to identify and support our youth.
F3	There is disparity in the application of McKinney-Vento regulations across Orange County public school districts which results in unequal access to educational benefits for children experiencing homelessness.	Disagree. ... ▾	Wholly Disagree- In FJUHSD, there is a commendable commitment to providing immediate access to educational rights and resources for identified students and families. Equitable access to education and support services is ensured for all students, regardless of their housing situation. Moreover, the district stands out for its special focus on students experiencing homelessness, prioritizing them for additional support, services, and programs. This nurturing approach addresses the unique needs and challenges homeless students face.
F4	The majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons are in full-time positions, but because their work includes multiple non-McKinney-Vento responsibilities, most do not have sufficient time to do the work required by the McKinney-Vento Act.	Disagree. ... ▾	Wholly Disagree- McKinney-Vento liaison for FJUHSD, with the support of Family Liaisons and Administration at each school site focus on supporting homeless students and families identified within the District. Ongoing resources, services, and support are provided to ensure their success. FJUHSD staff is dedicated to removing all barriers and continuously supporting our Mc-Kinney Vento students.
F5	Many McKinney-Vento Liaisons lack needed experience due to a high turnover rate in those positions.	Disagree. ... ▾	Wholly Disagree-The FJUHSD liaison is well established in the position and plans to continue in this position for years to come. Their commitment to supporting homeless students and families is evident

			<p>on a daily basis throughout the District. . The FJUHSD liaison collaborates with prominent organizations such as CDE and OCDE, including participation in the Homeless Outreach Promoting Educational Success (HOPES), the Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC), SchoolHouse Connection, and the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY). By actively engaging with these organizations, FJUHSD strives to create an environment that promotes educational success and addresses the unique challenges faced by homeless students, fostering a more inclusive and supportive educational experience for all.</p>
F6	McKinney-Vento Act training is not mandatory for the majority of McKinney-Vento Liaisons.	Disagree. ... ▾	<p>Wholly Disagree- McKinney Vento Act training is mandatory for the McKinney-Vento Liaison. The liaison attends all Orange County Department of Education training to stay up-to-date on the most current legislation and rights pertaining to McKinney-Vento. Participation in all other meetings, webinars, and conferences is attended to stay current on resources, services, laws, and any information pertaining to homeless education.</p>
F7	Students experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in an elementary district often do not continue to receive McKinney-Vento benefits when they move to a high school district because the Federal Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prevents the sharing of this information between districts.	Agree. T... ▾	N/A
F8	McKinney-Vento funds depend on school districts submitting grant proposals, but not all districts have employees trained in writing grant applications, resulting in missed funding opportunities.	Disagree. ... ▾	<p>Wholly Disagree- FJUHSD does not solely rely on grants for funding. In addition to grants, the district utilizes other funding sources like Title I, Supplemental funds, general funds, the American Rescue Plan- Homeless Children & Youth (ARP-HCY), and donations from community agencies to provide McKinney-Vento benefits and resources to students and families facing homelessness. These funding sources play a crucial role in ensuring that homeless students receive the necessary support and resources to overcome the challenges they face and succeed</p>

			academically. By diversifying their funding streams, FJUHSD can continue to provide comprehensive assistance to homeless students and promote educational stability and success.
F9	School districts that do not apply for grants which fund programs benefiting children experiencing homelessness miss potential revenue opportunities.	Agree. T... ▾	
F10	McKinney-Vento is an unfunded federally mandated program; however, school districts which qualify and apply for Title I, Part A funds may obtain revenues that can be used for children experiencing homelessness. These funds are insufficient to meet the needs of the school districts supporting children experiencing homelessness.	Agree. T... ▾	
F11	A lack of reliable transportation for children experiencing homelessness often results in chronic tardiness and absenteeism.	Disagree. ... ▾	Partially Disagree- transportation challenges can lead to chronic tardiness and absenteeism. In response, FJUHSD supports families by coordinating with District school buses, adding extra stops or routes for McKinney-Vento students. Additionally, FJUHSD collaborates with OCTA's Youth Ride Free Pass program, offering free public transportation options to address the instability caused by frequent relocations.
F12	Chronic Absenteeism Rates of Homeless Students are disproportionately high in comparison with the Chronic Absenteeism Rates of All Students and Socio-Disadvantaged Students.	Agree. T... ▾	
F13	Children experiencing homelessness in Orange County perform at a lower level on standardized tests and have a lower graduation rate than All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.	Agree. T... ▾	
F14	The percent of Homeless Students graduating who failed to meet state standards on English Language Arts and Math tests is significantly higher than it is for All Students and Socioeconomically Disadvantaged Students.	Agree. T... ▾	
F15	There is a tendency by school districts to operate in isolation, which prevents productive collaboration on addressing the issue of children experiencing homelessness and the challenges of their education.	Disagree. ... ▾	Disagree- Districts receive exceptional support and collaborative opportunities from other County Districts, both in-person and virtually. Meetings like HOPES Collaborative, OCDE, HETAC,

			and NCHE allow FJUHSD to collaborate, seek guidance, and support each other in our roles and mission to assist youth and families experiencing homelessness. Furthermore, our District maintains strong partnerships with local non-profit agencies, community partners, and organizations to provide a diverse range of resources and support for our students and families.
F16	A significant lack of affordable permanent housing contributes to many families being caught in the cycle of homelessness.	Agree. T... ▾	

Please see below for the responses to each required Recommendation as requested in the Orange County Grand Jury report and attached cover letter dated May 19, 2023.

R #	Recommendation	Implementation	Response And Explanation (if Required)
R1	All Orange County school districts should develop a "Back to School" plan which includes mandatory McKinney-Vento Act training for all district and school administrators, teachers, office staff, and counselors by December 31, 2023, and annually thereafter.	Recommen... ▾	FJUHSD has a "Back to School" plan in place which training is provided to all district and school administrators, teachers, office staff, and counselors. We are currently looking for a way to keep accountability of each staff member who completed the OCDE online McKinney Vento training video and will continue to improve our training practices. Currently, FJUHSD is waiting for the release of the McKinney-Vento Training Series by SchoolHouse Connection, expected in the first quarter of 2023. Our 2023-2024 district-wide training will be completed by December 2023 as FJUHSD continuously explores new professional development options.
R2	Participation in Orange County Department of Education (OCDE) McKinney-Vento Act training programs for all Local Education Agencies (LEA) McKinney-Vento Liaisons should be mandated by October 1, 2023, and annually thereafter.	Recommen... ▾	FJUHSD actively participates in all Orange County Department of Ed (OCDE) training related to homeless education and McKinney-Vento rights. Additionally, FJUHSD seeks out other relevant webinars and training to support our Homeless Liaison in the role of assisting students and families experiencing homelessness. FJUHSD is committed to continuing this practice to provide the best possible support in this crucial area.

R3	Given that most LEA McKinney-Vento Liaisons are responsible for a number of other duties, and do not have sufficient time to do their McKinney-Vento required work, school districts should identify ways to increase support and/or staff to address the numerous tasks of the Liaisons by October 1, 2023.	Recomme... ▾	The Fullerton Joint Union High School District McKinney-Vento Liaison is to provide comprehensive support to homeless students in our district. Their role involves ensuring that identified students and families receive the necessary resources and assistance to excel academically and personally. Additionally, administrators, liaisons, teachers, and counselors also play a crucial role in identifying and providing direct on-site support to McKinney-Vento students and families, further strengthening our commitment to their well-being and success.
R4	By January 1, 2024, for children experiencing homelessness to receive uninterrupted McKinney-Vento benefits, Orange County school districts should add a section to their mandatory enrollment school form enabling parents/guardians to give permission for their school to share information regarding their child's McKinney-Vento status with other districts that their child may be attending.	Recomme... ▾	Currently, part of the enrollment process is completion of the Housing Questionnaire which allows FJUHS to immediately identify families and deem them eligible immediately for McKinney-Vento benefits which prevent interruptions from benefits. As a 9th-12th grade high school district, we have the advantage of receiving student records from feeder districts, which allows us access to valuable information about incoming students.
R5	By October 1, 2023, each Orange County school district should develop and maintain a centralized list of district employees with grant application writing capability so that they are prepared to apply for available grants to assist in educating children experiencing homelessness.	Recomme... ▾	FJUHS is committed to meeting this goal. To do so, further analysis and discussion will need to take place within our LEA to build a plan to equip district employees with grant application writing skills so FJUHS is prepared to apply for available grants to assist in educating children experiencing homelessness.
R6	By October 1, 2023, a joint task force should be formed by the OCDE comprised of a district-level administrator from each Orange County school district and leadership from non-profit organizations who serve homeless families, to address absenteeism, low test scores, and low graduation rates of children experiencing homelessness.	Recomme... ▾	The Fullerton Joint Union High School District will participate in OCDE's joint task force.
R8	By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board of Education, a plan to lower the Absenteeism Rates of homeless students.	Recomme... ▾	The Fullerton Joint Union High School District (FJUHS) presents annual reports to the Board on the performance rates of homeless students in chronic absenteeism and aims to decrease these rates. These reports provide a comprehensive overview of the current

			situation and propose strategic plans to improve performance in this area. FJUHSD is proactive in updating and refining these plans as new data becomes available, ensuring that the unique needs of homeless students are adequately addressed.
R9	By May 1, 2024, each Orange County school district administration should develop, and present to the District Board of Education, a plan to improve the performance of homeless students in English Language Arts and Math.	Recommen... ▾	At the Fullerton Joint Union High School District (FJUHSD), the Board receives annual reports on the performance rates of homeless students in English Language Arts (ELA) and Math. These reports provide a comprehensive overview of the current situation and propose strategic plans to improve performance in these areas. FJUHSD is proactive in updating and refining these plans as new data becomes available, ensuring that the unique needs of homeless students are adequately addressed.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any questions or concerns.

Thank you.

Sincerely,



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