

## **Improving Access to Education for Students who are Homeless or in Foster Care Act – A Summary**

Although children and youth who experience homelessness or live in Foster Care represent the full range of academic talents and abilities, these situations create serious barriers to school enrollment, attendance, and success. Extreme poverty, residential instability, lack of documentation, and lack of awareness of programs and resources are often identical for postsecondary education as they are for K-12 education. Currently these issues are not addressed in the Higher Education Act.

- Fifty percent of foster youth in the U.S. graduate from high school, compared to 85 percent of youth overall.
- Seventy percent of teens in foster care desire to go to college.
- A report from Casey Family Programs indicated that, nationwide, fewer than 27 percent of foster youth who graduated high school went on to college as compared to 52 percent of the general population. Moreover, the college dropout rate among foster youth is far higher than the rate among other students.
- The McKinney-Vento Act requires State and local educational agencies to ensure that homeless children and youth receive a free and appropriate public education, but these provisions do not reach beyond secondary education.
- Higher education offers students experiencing homelessness the best hope for escaping poverty and homelessness as adults.

**The Improving Access to Education for Students who are Homeless or in Foster Care Act will improve homeless and foster care students' access to, and completion of, Higher Education through:**

**Early Intervention:** Homeless and foster care youth do not have the traditional family network to encourage or assist them in planning for a college education. These youth need help to select a college, apply for admission and obtaining financial aid. This legislation will target resources from established programs, such as GEAR Up and TRIO, toward homeless and foster students.

**Independent Student Status:** By assisting these youth to become independent students we will increase their access to student aid, for financial aid purposes. Improving their chances for a smooth transition into, and completion of, higher learning.

**Best Practices:** By creating and monitoring a demonstration project we will establish a model for improved recruitment and retention of homeless and foster care students in higher education.