

Homeless Children And McKinney Vento Policy Act

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Introduction

McKinney Vento Policy Act provides support and assistance to homeless children. The Act remains one of the primary legislative responses to homelessness at a federal level. The Federal Task Force on Homelessness emerged in 1983 with the aim of providing information to the local authorities on obtaining surplus federal property. The Homeless Person Survival Act became part of the policy in 1989, which focused on providing emergency relief measures and long-term solutions against homelessness. It adopted programs such as supplemental security income, food stamps, medical aid, and aid for families. McKinney renamed the act the McKinney Vento Act. Vento Act consists of fifteen programs that concentrate on providing services to homeless people, including transition housing, emergency shelter, job training, education, primary healthcare, and permanent housing. The Vento program was amended four times with several enhancements and expansions. The purpose of the Act was to target majority population and improving survival opportunities (EDSC, 2013).

The changes of the 1990s focused on supporting children by involving local educational agencies to assure homeless children's access to education. The Act expanded opportunities for attaining public education after receiving state grants. The Rural Homeless Housing Assistance programs further increased the chances of survival for the homeless in America. The education of homeless children and youth programs exhibited flexibility in the use of funds as they identified the rights of homeless preschoolers to acquire free education. Another concern of the policy was to provide shelter to the children, which could contribute towards an improved lifestyle. The creation of a new process under the McKinney Act involved local redevelopment agencies that assisted homeless persons. The significance of the Vento programs increased with time due to increased funding and expansion. The program also faces challenges as the issue of homelessness increases with time. The most prominent features of the program involve a concept of free education, which provides better living opportunities to the poor and homeless (Foscarinas, 1996).

Social Problem

Homelessness remains one of the crucial social problems in America, affecting the growth and development of children. Children belonging to poor backgrounds face difficulties due to their parent's financially unstable state. A report presented by the National Center for Homelessness states that one in every thirty American children is homeless. Evidence indicates that 2.5 million American

children are homeless, depicting a rise of 8 per cent in 2014 compared to the previous year. The situation is alarming, depicting the need for taking stringent actions that could provide homes to the children. Poverty remains one of the common factors contributing towards homelessness. Children belonging to low working-class and poor backgrounds lack adequate living facilities (NBC, 2014). Homelessness is a social problem because it affects the present and future of a child. Poor Americans are unable to provide houses for their children due to rising property prices. Social factors contributing to homelessness involve lack of affordable housing, financial instability, family breakdown and inadequate mental health services (NHC, 2011).

In America, lack of permanent housing remains one of the significant factors contributing to homelessness. Children live in temporary shelters, vehicles, abandoned buildings and even on streets, reflecting their unstable conditions. The number of homeless people in America was reported as 564,708 by the National Alliance for Endless Homes. The facts of 2016 depicted that 21.8 per cent of the Californian population experienced homelessness. The homeless population in New York was 15.7%. Homelessness reflects the exceptional struggles of children to adjust to society. Homelessness remains high in Los Angeles, Boston and Washington, D.C. The availability of affordable housing remains relatively low in American states (Neiditch, 2017).

Homelessness affects the mental and physical capabilities of the children, which also influences their education gaps. Homelessness has a multitude of problems influencing the child throughout his life. Millions of children encounter the problem of homelessness, resulting in their lack of access to adequate living facilities. Lack of food, education and medical services are common problems. The children develop the feeling that society has discarded them and that they have no importance in life. Children who are homeless exhibit high levels of stress and mental instability. A social problem is also apparent as homelessness displays a gap between the rich and the poor. Serious health problems include tuberculosis, malnutrition, diarrhoea and hepatitis. Children without homes remain vulnerable to violence, crimes and social injustice (Mago et al., 2013).

Description Of The Policy

McKinney Vento Act represents the initial steps of the American state towards establishing a national agenda for taking action against the eradication of homelessness. It represents a landmark legislation due to the introduction of a better approach to taking care of the lives of poor homeless children. McKinney Vento Act constructed programs to provide relief to the children facing homelessness. The program works to save lives and help children regain stability. The policy's goals are to save many homeless children in America and provide economic, social, and mental opportunities. The policy provided permanent and stable housing to many homeless children, thus improving their futures. The policy focused on keeping homeless children at houses at reasonable costs. Affordable shelters provide efficient solutions to deal with the problem at a public level. Proper housing and shelters focus on removing negative feelings, thus increasing children's opportunities for growth. The policy focused on providing residential facilities to homeless children (NBC, 2014).

The policy addresses the problem of homelessness at a local and federal level to cater for the needs of a vast majority. Healthcare for Homeless (HCH) is also part of the policy that aims to provide medical assistance to homeless children. The prevalence of diseases such as cholera, tuberculosis and hepatitis is high among poor homeless children, so the program provides vaccines and adopts preventive measures that protect children from developing complex diseases. Health-related services for homeless children enhanced their living conditions. The HCH programs involved innovative approaches to enhancing the health of children through improving access to healthcare services. HCH programs also focus on acquiring grants required to provide better and enhanced health to homeless children. It emphasizes identifying the needs of the children. The competitive grant program funding medical health, physical health and social services remained part of the program. The Healthcare and Education Reconciliation Act provided funding of \$11 billion in 2015. The capacities will focus on further meeting the needs of the children. The preventive measures against acute and chronic diseases provide further support to the children. Specially designed emergency departments also work to provide on-time service. The HCH programs link the medical aid programs with the residential programs, including medical respite and permanent supportive housing. The policy resulted in high-cost service utilization. Cooperative agreements between private and state agencies maximize the chances of revenues. The central concern of the policy is to break the connections between poor health and homelessness. Improving outcomes of healthcare interventions also remains part of the strategy. The adoption of the policy at the national level targets to remove health disparities and provide equal medical opportunities to the poor. It also concentrates on the promotion of best practices through research, education, technical assistance, training and advocacy (NHC, 2011).

Mckinney Vento policy also introduced the Youth Education program with the goal of providing free educational facilities and learning opportunities to the children. The program developed a scenario to target poor and homeless children who lacked access to equal education due to their poor backgrounds. The program involved policies and strategies that targeted homeless children. The provision of free public-level education to children increased their future learning capabilities. Providing training and technical assistance also remains part of the program. The purpose was to improve the enrollment rates of homeless children and improve their attendance rates by supporting them through grants and aid. The Education Student Success Act was a further enhancement of the policy that emphasized improving the educational performance of the students and promoting a positive learning environment. Free public education, free preschool education and youth education remain part of the policing. The policy ensured that the children lacking access to permanent shelter develop capabilities and learn under the same standards as other children. The education program focused on adopting education liaisons to identify and assist families and children. The policy ensured that the secretary and the federal agencies provided grants for education programs. It concentrated on the elimination of barriers influencing the low enrollment and attendance of the children. The youth must be able to meet the educational challenges and perform better in academic life. Grants were used appropriately to carry out the state's plan for education enhancement. Appropriate use of grants and sub-grants remained part of the policy. The trainers identified the needs of the homeless children and tried to provide special learning opportunities to the children exhibiting psychological

problems. The policy involved the guardians of children. Collaboration between the instructors and the families improved the comprehensive education of the children. The collaboration between different agencies plays an effective role in discussing matters related to a child's development. In the case of children under juvenile delinquency, the educational instructors also communicate with the juvenile agencies (EDSC, 2013).

Population

The HCH program targeted the poor populations, including both boys and girls, that faced the problem of homelessness. The initial condition of selection was unstable housing or having no shelters. In 2010, it allocated funds of \$2.1 billion to provide assistance to 1,018,084 people. The program ensured the provision of healthcare services to children who had no homes. The healthcare department served a population of 827,519 homeless children, 44% of whom were females. Among the targeted population, 91% were living below the poverty line, and 66% had no health insurance. The findings reveal that 38.1% of patients had no shelters, while 13.7% lived in transitional living facilities. The remaining population included those living with those living in motels and apartments (20%) and on the streets 9.3% (NHC, 2011).

The education program targeted the children who were homeless and faced difficulties with enrollment, paying fees and maintaining low attendance. The education programs targeted families that encountered economic hardships and were unable to provide quality education to their children. It targeted children living in transitional shelters and had no permanent home. It also ensures the provision of education to the children who live in open spaces, car parking and abandoned buildings. The total amount allocated for the educational facilities involved \$150,000 during the year 2001 (EDSC, 2013).

Social Welfare Policy

The social welfare policy deals with improving the overall welfare of children by helping them overcome deprivations. The welfare policy focuses on raising awareness of the population regarding homelessness and its issues. Children encounter the problem of homelessness in cities, countries and across the state. The welfare policy involves national efforts to identify and respond to the issue of homelessness and associated factors such as trauma and poverty. The social welfare policy concentrates on providing social services and support that mitigates the adversities of homelessness on children. It trains and assists social services in the provision of trauma-based care. It identified best practices that minimize the threats of personality deterioration. Child welfare relies on social, economic and health perspectives. To maximize the welfare outcomes, the social welfare policy emphasizes providing effective healthcare facilities, social services and education (NHC, 2011).

The social welfare policy focuses on investigating community initiative reports regarding abuse,

neglect and harmful living conditions. It addresses the causes of neglect and abuse to identify safety-related issues and formulates a future strategy for dealing with the situation. The welfare policy ensures the provision of adequate care and provides them with a home-like environment. Securing permanent placements is one of the biggest concerns of the policy as it shows connections with other aspects of development. Child abuse was one of the highly reported issues in the case of homeless children, playing a negative role in their development. Welfare policy including Child Protective Services (CPS) determines state's guidelines for ensuring the safety of the homeless children. Children removed from their homes are under the legal custody of the welfare agency, which must take adequate measures to provide safe living opportunities (Foscarinas, 1996).

The overall assessment of the McKinney Vento program depicts that the problem of homelessness has grown in recent years. The actions are inadequate to fulfil the needs of all homeless children. Lack of grants and financial aid limits the capacity of the agency as many children still avail no benefit from the medical and education assistance programs. The program did not abate homelessness, representing threats of further increase. The shortcomings of the policy depict the need to target a wider population and provide them with healthcare and educational services. The policy needs to address the issue of instability encountered by the homeless children and provide jobs to the young people.

The analysis of the McKinney reform indicates the state still needs to enhance the program goals (Anderson, 1995).

- The policy poses weaknesses as it is difficult to identify homeless children according to the given criteria. Schools that are unable to identify liaisons face difficulty in assisting the families (Neiditch, 2017).
- Schools involved in the provision of free education lack confidentiality related to family circumstances (Mago et al., 2013).
- Students and staff often create negative environments that a negative role and affects the learning capabilities of the homeless children. They may develop negative feelings that undermine their academic performance (EDSC, 2013).
- Indifferent treatment from teachers and educators deteriorates personality and develops a sense of rejection (NBC, 2014).
- McKinney's policy does not concentrate on identifying the factors affecting the educational performance of homeless children (Anderson, 1995).
- Irrespective of the policy's efforts, the attendance and enrollment of homeless children at schools remain low, depicting many children are unable to avail the benefits (Foscarinas, 1996).

Conclusion

The McKinney Vento Policy Act remains one of the visible attempts of the state to overcome the problem of homelessness. The program involves a comprehensive framework working to promote the

safety of homeless children through the provision of permanent shelters. Homeless children face difficulties in adjusting to schools, causing their low enrollment and absenteeism. Health problems such as tuberculosis and hepatitis are the result of poor living facilities. The state acquired grants to provide better housing, medical aid, and education to homeless children. The healthcare program for homeless children aims to provide healthy lifestyles, while the education policy provides free education to these children. The practical implications of the policy reveal shortcomings as the number of homeless children increases every year. The education program reveals weaknesses, as many homeless children are unable to overcome the feelings of rejection. The program needs to target massive populations and identify policy weaknesses.

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