



Integrating Faith and Professional Practice as a School Counselor in Public Education



Holly Doolittle, LCSW PPSC

Licensed Clinical Social Worker,
Pupil Personnel Services Credential

Educational Background

Bachelor's Degree May 1991
Augustana College

Master's Degree June 1996
University of Chicago
Social Service Administration
Clinical focus Children & Families

Master's of Arts Degree June 1996
Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago
Pastoral Care & Counseling



First Job
July 1996-
Sept. 1998



Loma Linda Behavioral
Medicine Center
Mental Health Social Worker

Led groups for individuals in
a day treatment (PHP)
psychiatric setting

Second Job

Moved to San Diego and began working at Sharp Mesa Vista Hospital Dec. 1998

Worked as a psychiatric social worker on an in patient unit for children & adolescents

- obtained my LCSW in 2004 after 3200 clinical hours supervised by a liocensed clinical social worker



Provided case management, family counseling, group and individual cocounseling for children in a psychiatric hospital

Next Stop...

Back to school for a PPS credential at San Diego State August 2005, finished credential in May 2006. 9Grace was born June 2006!)

Applied to work in school district and got hired January 2007!

Began working at SDUSD as a School Counselor in a special education program with students with autism and other behavioral health issues



Jobs held in SDUSD

**2007-
2011**

- STARS School Counselor
Clairemont High School
- Taft Middle School
- Layed off in reduction of force
2011

**2011-
2014**

- Hired as a Licensed Mental
Health Clinician in Office of
Children & Youth in Transition

**2014-
2017**

- Non-Public School Counselor

**2017-
2025**

- School Counselor with Home &
Hospital Transition Supports
School

Hired July 2025 as a SDUSD District Head Counselor-Youth in Transition

Dept. of Counseling & Student Support Services	
Populations Served:	~115,000 total students
Homeless	~ 8,000+ students experiencing homelessness
Foster	~ 1500 students in foster care or dependents of the court
Military Families	~over 8,000 military student families
Juvenile Court Involved Students	~1,200 student in juvenile hall schools in a year
Newcomers/Immigrants	~Between 1,500 and 3000 students enroll each year



McKinney Vento Definition of Homelessness

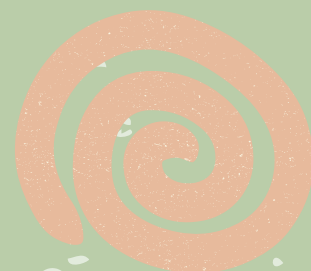
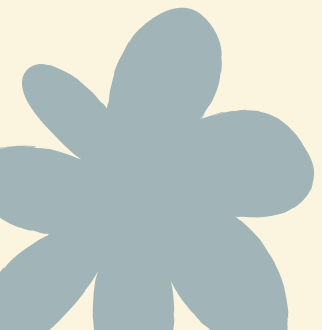
The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children and youths as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

- Sharing the housing due to economic hardship
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, shelters
- Primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are children who are living in similar circumstances listed above



Youth in Foster Care

- Court has taken jurisdiction over the child due to presence of abuse and/or neglect in the home
- 18-21 are considered non-minor dependent and may participate in a transitional living case plan

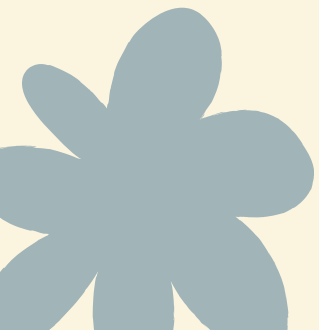





Military Connected Youth

Military-connected students are:

- students who are official dependents of an active duty Military Service member
- one degree of separation from their military sponsor
 - the connection may be biological, because of an adoption, through foster parenting, or with in loco parentis authorization.





Youth Transitioning from the Juvenile Court System

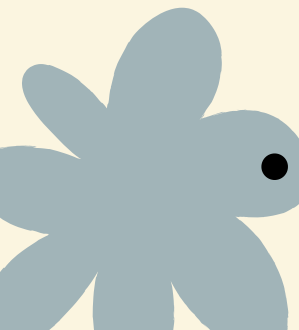
- Students who have been incarcerated, are on probation and return to their school site





Refugees/Newcomers to the United States

- A refugee is someone who has been forced to flee his or her country because of persecution, war or violence
- <https://www.unrefugees.org/refugee-facts/what-is-a-refugee/>
- Populations may also include: Asylees, Cuban/Haitian entrants, Special Immigrant Visa (SIV) holders, Amerasians, Iraqi and Afghan Special Immigrants, Lawful Permanent Residents, Unaccompanied Refugee Minors and Victims of Trafficking.
- Example of Identification Documents
- [Refugee Resettlement Program status and documentation requirements](#)
- Migrant Youth
- children of **migratory agricultural workers** and youth who themselves are migratory agricultural workers
- San Diego County Office of Education Supports





McKinney Vento Definition of Homelessness



[Watch video on YouTube](#)

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McKinney Vento Act

A student experiencing homelessness who does not graduate high school is

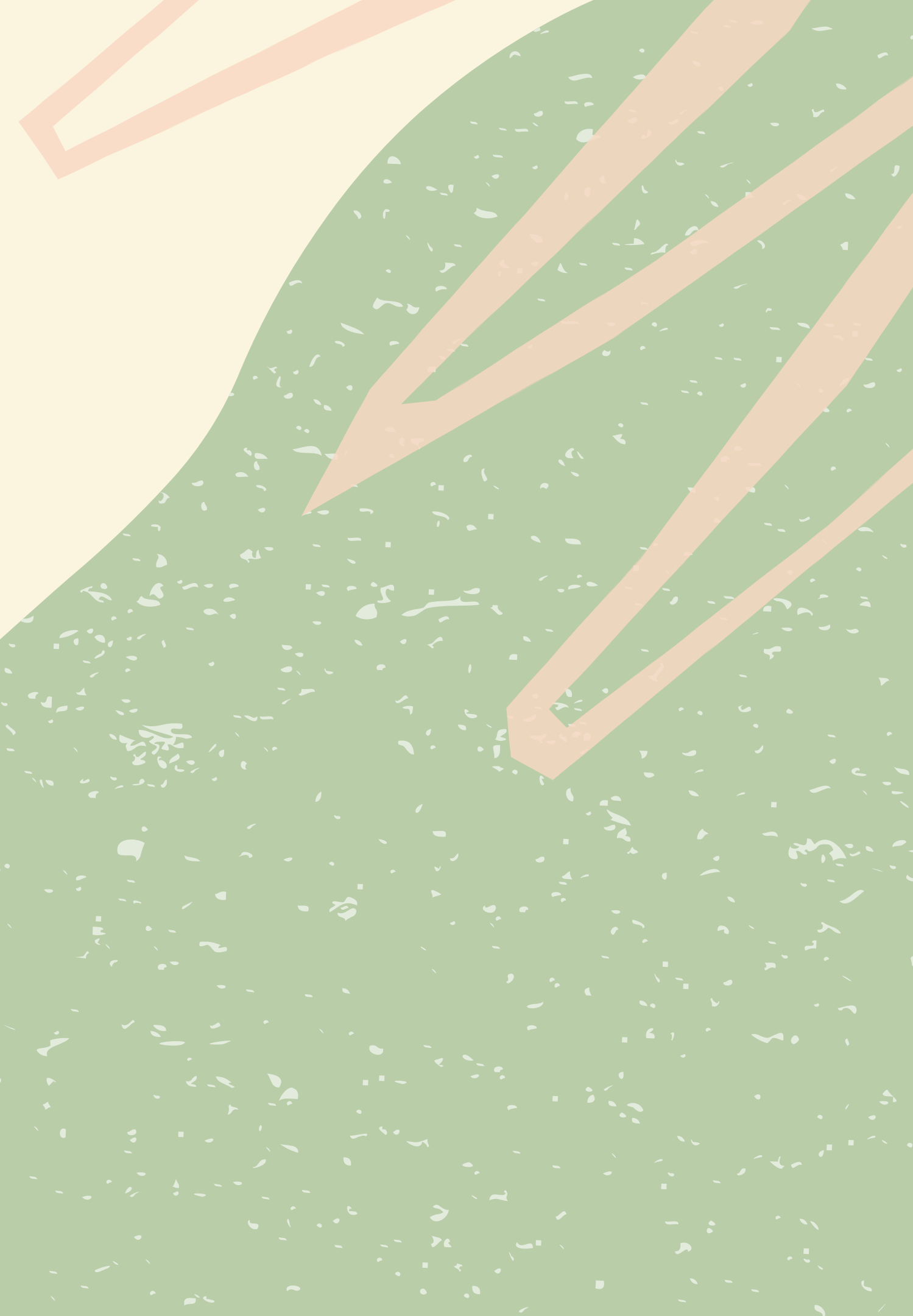
346%


more likely to experience homelessness as an adult.



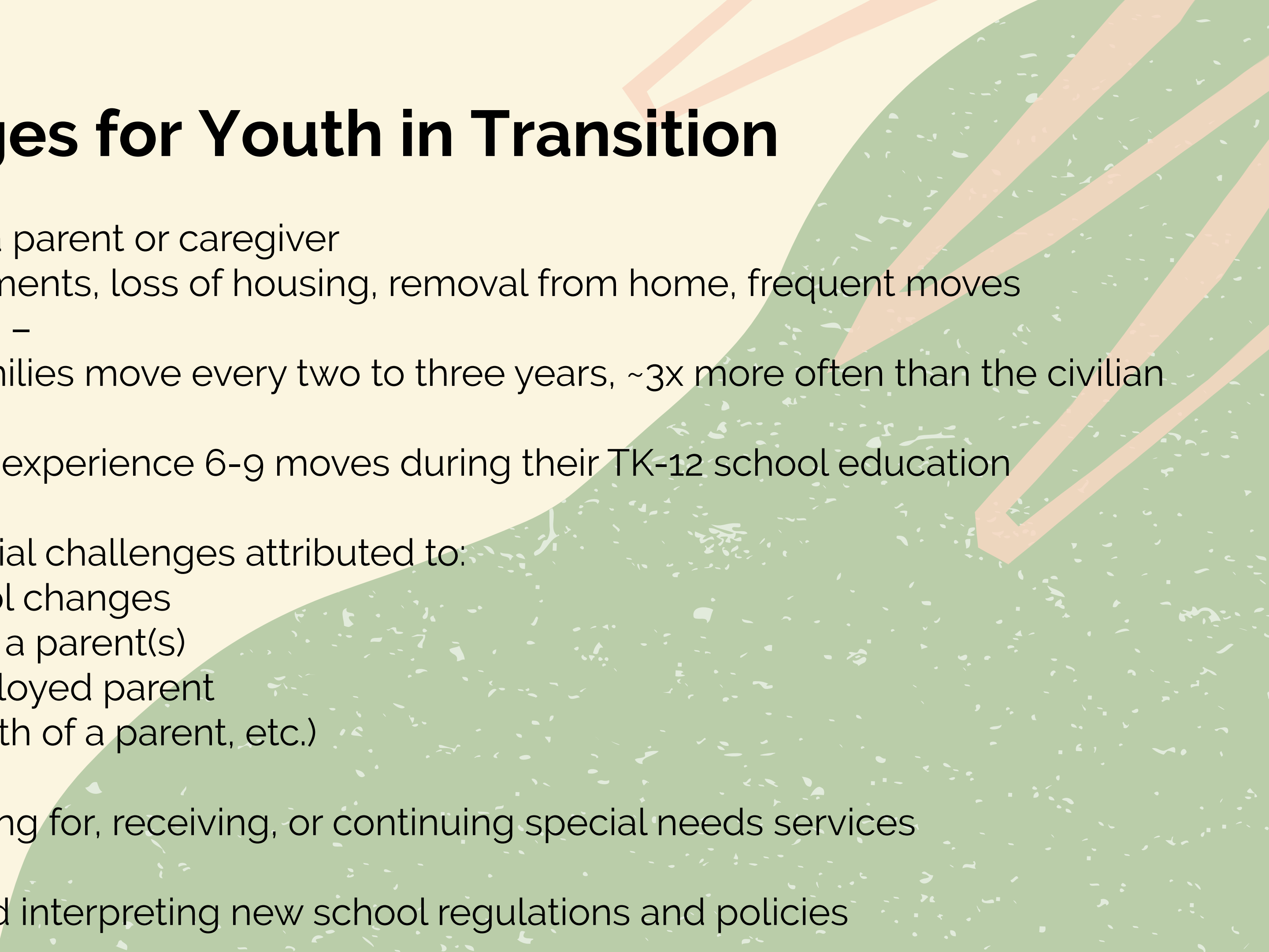
Causes of Homelessness

- Poverty
- Underemployment
- Lack of affordable housing
- Domestic violence
- Mental illness
- Unaccompanied youth: family conflict
- Natural disasters (FLOODS!)





Challenges for Youth in Transition



- Separations from a parent or caregiver
 - due to deployments, loss of housing, removal from home, frequent moves
- High mobility rates –
 - active duty families move every two to three years, ~3x more often than the civilian population
 - students often experience 6-9 moves during their TK-12 school education
- Academic and social challenges attributed to:
 - frequent school changes
 - deployment of a parent(s)
 - return of a deployed parent
 - injury to or death of a parent, etc.)
 -
- Difficulties qualifying for, receiving, or continuing special needs services
- Understanding and interpreting new school regulations and policies



Challenges for Youth in Transition, continued....

- making new friends and finding a new peer group in a new school
- adjustment to a new school, community, and home
- at-risk for depression and anxiety due to relocation, deployment of a parent(s), etc.
- Adjusting to new curriculum/instructional methods/school climate/culture
- Physical and social emotional effects as a result of experiencing trauma.



What can I/we do?

This is where God and my
faith come into play....

The more healthy relationships a
child has, the more likely he will
be to recover from trauma and
thrive. Relationships are the
agents of change and the most
powerful therapy is human love.

Bruce D Perry

PICTUREQUOTES.COM



- Help to enhance connections
- Sensitivity: Confidentiality
- Respect ownership of items
- Ensuring access to resources for food
- Connect to resources at school
- Resources for success in school such as school supplies, chargers, headphones, face masks
- Provide links to resources in the community



'I feel like he stabbed me in the chest': Parents seek answers in hit & run that killed 6-year-old

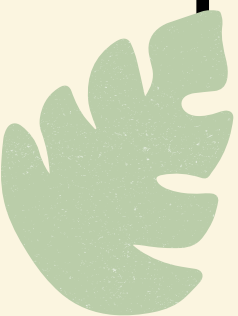
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 FOX 5 San Diego & KUSI News

Supporting students, staff and teachers in
their grief



Although I may not pray with them in these moments, my prayers are always with them,
Psalm 34:18, Matthew 5:4, Revelations 21:4





The Lord is close to the
brokenhearted and
saves those who are
crushed in spirit.

Psalms 34:18

Blessed

ARE THOSE *who*
mourn, FOR THEY
WILL BE *comforted*.

Matthew 5:4

He will wipe every tear from their eyes.
There will be no more death or
mourning or crying or pain, for the old
order of things has passed away.

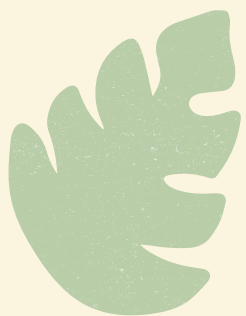
REVELATION 21:4

Seeing a smile and excitement in the students faces, is where I see God in my work, Matthew 18 2-5, Psalm 8:2





If you'd like to help our families experiencing homelessness, you can donate to our dept. for our ADOPT-A-FAMILY Christmas (Holiday) basket give away. We are currently accepting gift card and other donations for Christmas baskets filled with items for families like toys, underwear, socks, and toiletries.



ADOPT-A-FAMILY

San Diego Unified's Youth in Transition Program is hosting our annual "Adopt-A-Family" event to support our struggling families during the holiday season.

Please help us by donating:



GIFT CARDS



SOCKS



TOYS



WINTER
JACKETS

Adult underwear and women's sports bras are also needed!

Please send donations to:

Children and Youth in Transition (CYT)

4100 Normal Street, Annex 14

San Diego, CA 92103



Thank you for your time and attention!

