

## Aligning Career Technical Education/Linked Learning and McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Policy & Practice

**Client:** California Department of Education (CDE), Homeless Education Program

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### Issue

Currently, there is a disconnect between the *educational goals* of the McKinney-Vento (MKV) Homeless Assistance Act, the *equity aims* of Career Technical Education (CTE) legislation under Perkins V, and policy implementation — how government agencies seek to implement both in practice.

The McKinney-Vento Act mandates that local education agencies use grant funds and coordinators dedicate effort to enable and support the educational “success” of unhoused youth (though “success” is not defined). Meanwhile, the Strengthening Career and Technical Education for the 21st Century Act (Perkins V) mandates that implementation, evaluation, and improvement of CTE programs include the needs of unhoused youth among other “special populations” of students. However, there is little collaboration and policy overlap between MKV and CTE departments.



In 2022, the California state budget allocated \$500 million to enhance high school students' college and career readiness through the Golden State Pathways Program Act, prioritizing funding for districts serving above-average populations of unhoused youth. **Because of this, there is a timely opportunity to increase access, support, and outcomes for unhoused youth navigating academic programming toward their college and career goals.**

### Methods

- Review of existing legislation, policy, and research
- Qualitative interviews with CTE & Linked Learning, MKV, and student support staff

### Findings

- Research-backed strategies to support the academics of unhoused youth focus on addressing basic needs and enhancing collaboration among staff and external partners.
- Current implementations of CTE & work-based learning (WBL) may perpetuate existing inequities and biases. However, the Linked Learning model (*right*), wherein students learn through industry-specific “pathways,” seeks to address this challenge.
- The Linked Learning model has been used to thoughtfully and successfully support other Perkins V-defined “special populations” of students.
- While Linked Learning mitigated equity challenges for special populations, it did not eliminate them.

### The Linked Learning Model



## Recommendations

### Leverage the Golden State Pathways Program Act as a Linked Learning catalyst



**The Golden State Pathways Program Act could catalyze the growth of promising Linked Learning pathway initiatives throughout California.** If LEAs intentionally build partnerships, design programs, and remove structural barriers for unhoused youth, Linked Learning programs implemented or enhanced through new state funding could close the gap between the educational goals of MKV and the equity aims of CTE policies.

### Develop a system of responsive and collaborative partnerships



**Successful CTE and Linked Learning programs depend on community and industry partnerships.** Partners should be committed to designing practical, innovative, and responsive workplace practices. Partners should proactively consider and work together to improve solutions to challenges that may inhibit the success of diverse students (e.g., language barriers, unstable housing, or other considerations outlined below).

The California Community Schools Partnerships Act, which the legislature expanded in 2022, is focused on leveraging community and government partnerships to improve students' holistic outcomes. Given the significance of partnerships for effective MKV and CTE programming, there is further opportunity to align MKV and CTE programs to Community School initiatives.

### Design & implement high-quality and targeted programming



**Unhoused students are likelier to thrive when LEAs design Linked Learning programs for their specific needs and aspirations.** Each year, Perkins V requires LEAs to conduct a Comprehensive Local Needs Assessment (CLNA) that evaluates the achievement and progress of unhoused youth participating in CTE programs. LEAs should leverage the CLNA to identify areas of improvement for their work with unhoused youth.

Unhoused students face unique socioeconomic barriers in their career development. Unhoused students' Linked Learning pathway experiences should be exceptionally cohesive and aligned with their goals. CTE and MKV coordinators should collaborate to provide academic-specific staff and counselors to support this. Some districts, such as OUSD, have successfully implemented a single, high-quality career pathway for students enrolled in special education, continuation schools, or newcomer programming.

### Remove & reduce participatory barriers and trade-offs



**From the program design stage, LEAs should work with partners to address the barriers to access and trade-offs faced by unhoused youth participating in WBL experiences.** LEAs should first address the basic workplace needs of students, such as competitive stipends, transportation, and professional attire. Offering a variety of times and locations, including on-site at school, for WBL may reduce barriers to equitable participation. Partners should also determine ways to align workplace experiences with existing school schedules and A-G credit systems.

Information about pathways and workplace opportunities, such as internships, should be publicly accessible and available in other languages. It should address the various considerations that unhoused students may have regarding basic workplace needs or seeking, applying for, and participating in WBL opportunities.