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News Release

National Conference Encourages Homeless Children And Youth To Soar To Reach New Peaks

Commissioner of Education Dwight D. Jones will kick-off the 21st annual National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Conference on Sunday, Nov. 15 at 8:15 a.m. at the Denver Marriott City Center, 1701 California St., in Denver. The conference continues through Tuesday, Nov. 17.

"The timing of this conference is critical. This past year, we have seen significant increases in the number of families and students experiencing homelessness in our Colorado communities and throughout the nation," said Commissioner Jones. "This is the largest NAEHCY conference to date, with more than 850 people from across the U.S. coming together to share and learn from one another on how we can increase impact for our most vulnerable students."

Each year an estimated 1.5 million children and youth experience homelessness in our nation's towns, cities and counties. The 21st annual NAEHCY conference is a unique showcase for best practices and services from across the country. It is the only national conference dedicated to improving the well-being of homeless children and youth.

The conference will include information on building and improving homeless education programs; confirming eligibility for McKinney-Vento Services; connecting community and school resources; strategies for working with child welfare; and mental health needs of homeless children.

In conjunction with the conference and national efforts, Colorado has designated November as Homeless and Runaway Youth Awareness Month.

"Local communities are key to the success of this year's campaign," said Dana Scott who administers the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Programs at CDE. "This year's sold-out conference confirms the tremendous amount of support to ensure that every child and youth experiencing homelessness is successful—academically, personally and socially."

Activities have been planned throughout the month including:

- *Creative Project* – Youth in each community are capturing the experience of youth homelessness in an artistic fashion (painting, photography, etc.). The art will be displayed in local venues throughout the month.
- *Public Service Announcements* – Television and radio public service announcements will be aired throughout the month.
- *Media Campaign* – Statewide and local media releases and press kits will be distributed. Stories of individual youth from each community are being collected and will be targeted to specific media outlets.
- *Green Light Project* – In conjunction with the national efforts, this project encourages community members to replace their porch light with a green light or wear a green light bulb lapel pin during November to show support and start community dialogue on the issues facing homeless youth.
- *Mentoring Summit and Rural Collaborative for Homeless Youth Training Summit* – The Rural Collaborative for Homeless Youth and the Advisory Committee on Homeless Youth, Prevention Workgroup will host a summit focused on developing mentoring strategies for youth at high risk of homelessness across Colorado. The Rural Collaborative will also participate in training on the National Safe Place model, human trafficking and teen dating violence prevention. Click to view the [Mentoring Summit Invitation](#).
- *Local Community Events* – Local community groups are planning donation drives, fundraisers, volunteer recruitment activities and other awareness raising activities to benefit local youth serving organizations.

The McKinney-Vento Act was enacted to address the numerous barriers homeless children face in obtaining a free, appropriate public

education. The program was originally authorized in 1987 and, most recently, reauthorized as Title X, Part C of the Federal No Child Left Behind Act of 2001. The Act ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. For more information, visit

http://www.cde.state.co.us/cdeprevention/homeless_index.htm

About NAEHCY

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth is a national grassroots membership association, serving as the voice and the social conscience for the education of children and youth in homeless situations. NAEHCY connects educators, parents, advocates, researchers and service providers to ensure school enrollment and attendance and overall success for children and youth whose lives have been disrupted by the lack of safe, permanent and adequate housing. For more information, visit www.naehcy.org

For more information, contact Mark Stevens, 303-866-3898, or Megan McDermott, 303-866-2334, in the CDE Office of Communications. To sign up for the CDE e-mail news service, please visit

<http://www.cde.state.co.us/Communications/index.html>.

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