

# Facts About California's New Academic Standard Requirements for Students Experiencing Homelessness (Assembly Bill 2416)

Effective January 1, 2021, California adopted new rules that require colleges to consider homelessness as an extenuating circumstance when evaluating appeals for the loss of financial aid.

## WHAT IS SATISFACTORY ACADEMIC PROGRESS?

Federal and state financial aid programs require that campuses adopt policies that ensure that students are making Satisfactory Academic Progress (SAP) as a condition of continuing to receive financial aid. A school's policy will tell a student:

- the grade-point average they need to maintain
- how quickly they need to be moving toward graduation
- whether they are allowed to appeal their school's decision that they haven't made satisfactory academic progress
- how they can regain eligibility for federal student aid.

Most colleges do offer the opportunity to appeal the loss of financial aid due to SAP, but appeals processes vary tremendously by campus. Colleges have significant latitude under federal regulations to define the criteria for a successful appeal.

## IN WHAT WAY DO COLLEGES NEED TO MODIFY THEIR EXISTING APPEALS PROCESSES?

Campuses now need to update their SAP appeals policy to provide that homelessness is an extenuating circumstance for students who are otherwise unable to meet the requirements deemed to constitute "satisfactory academic progress" at the institution they attend, and that extenuating circumstance may be considered by the institution to alter or excuse compliance with those progress requirements.

## HOW IS HOMELESSNESS DEFINED FOR THE PURPOSES OF THIS BILL?

A student is considered homeless if they meet the definition in the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 11302(a)) or in subsection (2) of Section 725 of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. Sec. 11434a(2)).

This includes students who are living in a place not designed as a sleeping accommodation (streets, car, abandoned building), staying in a shelter, will imminently lose their housing, or is fleeing domestic violence. This also includes anyone who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including those "couch surfing" or living in substandard housing.