

PRACTICES IN HOMELESS EDUCATION BRIEF SERIES
**Early Care and Education for Young
Children Experiencing Homelessness**

INTRODUCTION

Research shows that brain development in early childhood lays the foundation for all future learning, behavior and health (Center on the Developing Child, n.d.). This is when children develop the cognitive and social-emotional skills needed to successfully navigate challenges they will encounter the rest of their lives (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2000).

For some children, the earliest years are also marked by an increased risk for adverse childhood experiences,¹ including homelessness, which can negatively impact brain development and result in poorer educational outcomes. Homelessness during infancy and toddlerhood has been linked to social emotional delays (Armstrong, & Tisdale, 2015), poor academic achievement and engagement (Fantuzzo, J., LeBoeuf, W., Brumley, B., Perlman, 2013), and underdeveloped social skills in elementary school (Brumley, Fantuzzo, Perlman, & Zager, 2015). With approximately half of all children who stay in federally-funded emergency and transitional housing programs being age five or younger (Perlman & Fantuzzo, 2010), it is imperative to address the challenges of young children experiencing homelessness.

Quality early childhood education programs can mediate the adverse influence of homelessness, reducing the achievement gap, and positioning children to be ready to enter school, learn, and

¹ For more information on the Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACE) study, see <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/acestudy/index.html>



WHO IS HOMELESS?

As defined in:

- *Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act*
- *The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)*
- *The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act*

The term “homeless children and youth” —

- A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and
- B. includes —
 - i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
 - ii. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...;
 - iii. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
 - iv. migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).



succeed (Perlman, n.d., p. 1). Recognizing the benefits of positive experiences for young children, many early childhood programs prioritize the enrollment of young children experiencing homelessness, but homeless children's participation in such programs remains disproportionately low (U.S. Department of Education, 2016, p. 12) with only 8% of young homeless children being served by Head Start/Early Head Start or McKinney-Vento programs (Administration for Children & Families, 2017, p. 6).

In one study, staff from homeless education, early childhood education, and housing programs identified transportation (27%) and lack of slots/space (25%) as the most frequent barriers for homeless children's access to early childhood services (Perlman, n.d., p.1). The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) in 2015, requires local educational agencies (LEAs) to provide transportation so homeless children can remain in their preschool of origin if the family has to move; yet questions about and struggles with

these requirements remain. Of all preschool-related calls to NCHE's helpline after the passage of ESSA, 42% concerned transportation challenges and 13% related to lack of spaces or slots.

Through strategic and collaborative action, State Coordinators for homeless education (hereafter referred to as State Coordinators) and local homeless education liaisons (hereafter referred to as local liaisons) can help overcome barriers and increase participation in quality early care and education programs for children experiencing homelessness. This document provides information and suggests promising practices to facilitate collaboration between schools, service provider agencies, and early childhood programs to increase the enrollment of children and the provision of services to them and their families.

FEDERAL RESOURCES TO HELP HOMELESS CHILDREN ACCESS EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION

The federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) has a package of resources to assist early care and education providers in ensuring that young children experiencing homelessness are prioritized for services and have access to valuable early childhood services that support their learning and development. The following resources are available at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ece/interagency-projects/ece-services-for-homeless-children>

- Joint guidance document on Meeting the Needs of Families with Young Children Experiencing and At Risk of Homelessness
- Resource guides
- Policy and guidance

PUBLIC PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS

According to the NCHE Data Collection & Reporting Guide (Endres, 2018), "public preschool programs include early childhood education programs for children aged 0-5, funded through tax dollars or other public funds, and for which the LEA is a financial or administrative agent or for which the LEA is accountable for providing early childhood education services. Children may attend preschool at a specific location or participate in a home-based program. Examples of public preschool programs include:

- preschool programs operated or administered by the LEA and considered mandatory under state law;
- Head Start programs receiving funding from the LEA or for which the LEA is the grant recipient;
- preschool special education services operated or funded by the LEA or mandated under IDEA;
- preschool programs and services administered or funded by the LEA thru the use of Title I or similar government grants; or
- home-based early childhood educational services funded and administered by an LEA.



THE MCKINNEY-VENTO ACT AND EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act, as reauthorized by ESSA, entitles homeless children and youth to a free, appropriate public education, including a preschool education. The Act applies to State educational agencies (SEAs) and LEAs, including children in public preschool programs (see definition and program examples in text box above.)

The Act lists the following regarding SEA responsibilities:

- State McKinney-Vento plans must describe procedures to ensure that preschoolers experiencing homelessness have equal access to public preschool programs administered by the SEA or LEA as provided to other children in the state (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(F)(i)).
- States shall use McKinney-Vento funding, in part, to provide services and activities to improve the identification of homeless children and youth (including preschool-aged homeless children) and to enable them to enroll in, attend, and succeed in school, including, if appropriate, in preschool programs (42 U.S.C. § 11432(d)(2)).
- State Coordinators must:
 - gather and make publicly available information about barriers to gaining access to public preschool programs (42 U.S.C. § 11432(f)(1)(B));
 - coordinate with state social service agencies; providers of health, mental health, and child development services; preschool program personnel; community organizations; and other agencies to improve the provision of comprehensive education and related services to homeless preschool-aged children and their families (42 U.S.C. § 11432(f)(4)).
- The Act states the following regarding LEA and local liaison responsibilities:
 - Local liaisons should identify preschool aged children experiencing homelessness through outreach and coordination activities with outside

IDENTIFICATION STRATEGIES

Making special efforts to identify young children experiencing homelessness is critical to understand the scope of homelessness among families with young children and target resources efficiently at the local, state, and national levels.

Identification strategies may include:

- collaborating with IDEA Child Find efforts and Part B and C programs, family shelters, and shelters for pregnant and parenting teenagers;
- working with state and local interagency coordinating councils to share McKinney-Vento information with preschool programs;
- posting information about the McKinney-Vento Act in immunization clinics; pediatricians' offices; low-cost health clinics; libraries; and application offices for Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP);
- incorporating space on K-12 school registration forms where preschool-aged younger siblings can be listed; training Head Start teachers and family support staff to identify homeless children during their enrollment (Head Start applications require a memorandum of understanding that includes data sharing parameters); and
- including the local liaison's contact information on preschool applications as a resource for families who do not have proof of address; the local liaison should follow up with the family and provide service referrals if homelessness is indicated.

agencies (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)).

- LEAs that offer a public preschool education must ensure that homeless children have the same access to that education as is provided to non-homeless children (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)).



- Local liaisons must ensure that homeless children and their families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, and other preschool programs administered by the LEA; and referrals to health care, dental, mental health, and other appropriate services (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(iii)).
- LEAs that provide transportation for non-homeless children must provide comparable transportation services for homeless children (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)(A))
- LEAs may use McKinney-Vento subgrant funds to provide preschool-aged children with developmentally appropriate early childhood education programs not otherwise provided through federal, state, or local funding (42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(6)).

Immediate Enrollment in Preschool Programs

The McKinney-Vento Act requires early care and education programs administered by SEAs and LEAs to enroll children immediately, even if they lack documents typically required for enrollment, including birth certificates, health records, and proof of residency. The Act, however, does not require these programs to exceed legal capacity limits or to enroll children once classes are full.

If a classroom is at capacity, the LEA should refer the homeless child to the closest preschool program with an available slot, as local liaisons must ensure that homeless children receive services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, early intervention (IDEA, Part C), and other preschool programs administered by the LEA (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(iii)).

If the LEA provides transportation for non-homeless children to the public preschool program to which it referred a homeless child, it must provide the same transportation to the child experiencing homelessness. If transportation to a local program is not provided to other children, the LEA may still choose to provide this service for children experiencing homelessness.²

School of Origin

When a child is enrolled in school and becomes homeless, the McKinney-Vento Act requires LEAs to, according to the child's best interest, continue the child in the school of origin³ unless this is against the wishes of the child's parent or guardian (See 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)). This practice often makes the difference between a child attending or being excluded from preschool, since programs are often full, and enrollment priorities are determined by the agency that administers each program. Therefore, children who must leave one program frequently are placed on the wait list for the next, resulting in educational gaps and additional family stress.

STATE SUPPORTS FOR PRESCHOOL ACCESS FOR CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Some states and school districts prioritize enrollment of children experiencing homelessness. Maryland, for example, prioritizes homeless children for public prekindergarten enrollment (Md. Code Ann. § 13A.06.02.03, 2011).

In Illinois, children who are homeless are prioritized for enrollment in state-funded preschool programs. In addition, there are no residential boundaries for preschool programs, so if the local program is at capacity, the homeless child may be enrolled and transported to the nearest state-funded preschool with an open spot.

² States and districts are responsible for reviewing and revising policies, including transportation policies, that may act as barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, or success in school of homeless children and youths. (See 42 U.S.C. § 11431(2), 11432(g)(1)(I)). Therefore, if lack of transportation is a barrier for a homeless preschool student, the LEA may need to provide transportation for that student even if it does not provide transportation to non-homeless children.

³ The term "school of origin" means the school that a child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled, including a preschool. (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(3)(I)(i)).



PROVIDING PRESCHOOL PROGRAMMING WITH TITLE I FUNDS⁴

Children experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for Title I services. LEAs and/or schools receiving Title I funds may use these funds at their discretion but could consider:

- operating a preschool program;
- coordinating with other programs to improve the quality or extend the time of services;
- aligning curriculum and standards to improve transitions between pre-K and kindergarten programs;
- using Title I, Part A set-aside funds, designated specifically for serving homeless children, to provide educationally-related preschool programming, if such programming is not otherwise provided through federal, state, or local funding;
- providing regular screenings of young homeless children to identify developmental delays and risk factors for school failure;
- offering developmentally appropriate educational activities for preschool-aged children while their school-aged siblings receive supplemental educational services;
- providing or making referrals to medical, dental, and counseling services; and/or
- offering outreach services to students.

Additional information is available through the U.S. Department of Education's Non-Regulatory Guidance.⁵

STATE COORDINATORS FOR HOMELESS EDUCATION

According to the McKinney-Vento Act, each state must designate a State Coordinator for Homeless Education to oversee the implementation of the Act within the state (42 U.S.C. § 11432(d)(3)). The specific duties of the State Coordinator include (42 U.S.C. § 11432(f)):

- collecting data regarding the education of homeless children and youth within the state, as required by ED;
- developing and carrying out a state McKinney-Vento plan; and
- facilitating coordination between the SEA and various educational and service provider agencies, including child development and preschool program personnel, to improve the provision of education and related services to homeless children, youth, and families.

Visit <https://nche.ed.gov/data> to access State Coordinator contact information.

Transportation to Early Childhood Programs

LEAs that transport non-homeless children also must provide comparable transportation services for homeless children (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)(A)). In addition, transportation to the school of origin must be provided when requested by a parent or guardian (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(J)(iii)).

LEAs must continue to provide transportation to and from the school of origin to formerly homeless

⁴ Title I of ESEA also supports the needs of children who are homeless by expanding the use of funds reserved for homeless children and youths to encompass all children who are homeless, not just those in non-Title I schools (ESEA section 1113(c)(3)(A)(i), (c)(3)(C)).

⁵ U.S. Department of Education Non-Regulatory Guidance - Early Learning in the Every Student Succeeds Act: Expanding Opportunities to Support our Youngest Learners at <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/essaelguidance10202016.pdf>



students who become permanently housed for the remainder of the academic year during which the child becomes permanently housed (42 U.S.C. § 11432 (g)(3)(A)(II)). All transportation must be arranged promptly to ensure immediate enrollment and so as not to create barriers to homeless students' attendance, retention, and success (see 42 U.S.C § 11431(2) and 11432(g)(1)(I)).

LEAs receiving McKinney-Vento subgrant funds may use these funds to defray the excess cost of school of origin transportation (EHCY Guidance, H-1, No. 5). LEAs may also use Title I, Part A set aside funds⁶ to cover these excess costs (ESEA section 1113(c)(3)(C)(ii) (II)). Additionally, school districts may collaborate with Head Start, Even Start, and other early childhood providers to provide transportation necessary to enable young children experiencing homelessness to attend SEA- and LEA-administered public preschool programs.

⁶ Under section 1113(c)(3)(A) of ESEA, an LEA must reserve sufficient Title I funds to provide services to homeless students that are comparable to those provided to students in Title I schools, including providing educationally related support services to children in shelters and other locations where homeless children live. Services should be provided to assist homeless students to effectively take advantage of educational opportunities. The homeless set-aside may be used to provide services to homeless students in Title I schools that are not ordinarily provided to other Title I students. (ESEA section 1113(c)(3)(C)(ii)).

⁷ Nothing in the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits LEAs from disclosing data in aggregate, or in another form that is not personally identifiable (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

ED's [Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program: Non-regulatory Guidance](#) (U.S. Department of Education, 2017) includes a wealth of information on State Coordinator and local liaison collaborations between LEAs and service providers such as Head Start and IDEA.

Ensuring that young children experiencing homelessness have access to quality early care and education is most likely to happen when undertaken by a group of committed partner agencies. NCHE recommends the following steps to begin laying the foundation for collaboration:

1. Find out what's out there.

Use the Early Care and Education Landscape chart on page 13 to become familiar with your state or local landscape. Chart the programs that exist, program eligibility criteria, administering agencies, and services offered in your area.

2. Identify who's out there.

Venture out into the landscape. Gather contact information for the directors of all early care and education programs in your community and send an email to introduce yourself. You may wish to share data about the number of homeless preschool- and school-aged children in your community or state and information about local shelters.⁷ Request a meeting to become acquainted with one another and each other's programs.

Many early care and education programs convene advisory councils in which State Coordinators and local liaisons participate and share information. For example:

- **Early intervention (IDEA Part C)**

Part C of IDEA authorizes early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth through two years old). As part of the IDEA component known as Child Find, states are required to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, including children with disabilities who are homeless and in need of early intervention or special education services.



Under IDEA Part C, every state must establish an Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) (20 U.S.C. § 1441(a)(1), 2011). The ICC advises and assists the SEA in the coordination and development of a comprehensive statewide system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, or at risk for developing disabilities, and their families. Primary responsibilities of the ICC include:

- identifying sources of fiscal and other support for services for the early intervention program,
- assigning financial responsibility to the appropriate agency, and
- promoting interagency coordination.

The ICC must include a representative of the office of the State Coordinator (20 U.S.C. § 1441(b)(1)(K), 2011). Contact information for state ICC chairs is available at <http://ectacenter.org/contact/iccchair.asp>. Local interagency coordinating councils also exist at the county or other local level; the state ICC chair can provide additional information about local efforts.

• **Early childhood special education (IDEA Part B)**

Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) authorizes special education and related services for children with disabilities ages 3-21. Under IDEA Part B, every state must establish and maintain a State Advisory Panel (SAP) (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(21), 2011). The SAP advises the SEA on the implementation of IDEA, including:

- advising the state regarding:
 - * unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities;
 - * developing evaluations and reporting data to the U.S. Secretary of Education;
 - * developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring; and
 - * developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities; and

- commenting publicly on special education rules or regulations proposed by the state.

In addition, Federal Regulations require that due process officer findings, decisions, appeals, and reviews be transmitted to the SAP (Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities, 2011)

The SAP must include state and local McKinney-Vento personnel (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(21)(B)(v), 2011). More information about SAPs, including a list of state contacts and recommended activities for strengthening SAP effectiveness, is available at <https://collab.osepideasthatwork.org/sap-sicc>

• **Head Start**

Administered by HHS, Head Start is a federal program that promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Head Start programs offer a variety of service models, depending on the needs of the local community. As part of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, the federal Head Start Program adopted the McKinney-Vento EHCY definition of homeless (42 U.S.C. § 9832(11), 2011), and was charged with implementing policies and procedures to ensure that homeless children are identified and prioritized for enrollment (42 U.S.C. § 9835(m)(1), 2011). Visit <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/center-locator> to find a Head Start or Early Head Start program near you.

Each state has a Head Start State Collaboration office, whose purpose is to facilitate collaboration among Head Start agencies. Visit <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/state-systems> to locate contact information for your Head Start State Collaboration office.

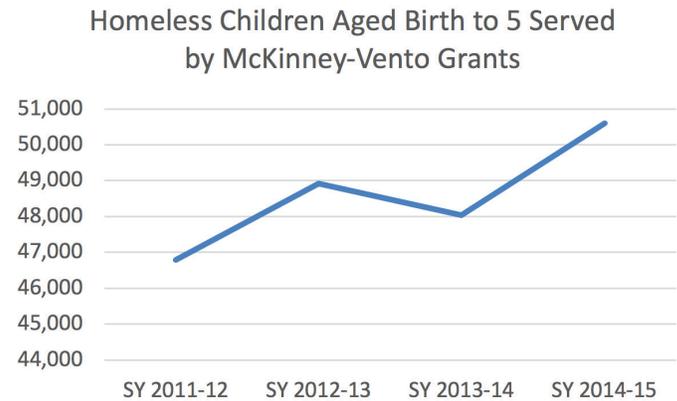
Further, as authorized by the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. § 9837b(b)(1)(A)(i), 2011) 45 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, Guam, and American Samoa have established State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care (SACs) to lead and ensure statewide coordination and collaboration among the wide



SEA- AND LEA-LEVEL DATA ON PRESCHOOL- AGED CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

SEAs and LEAs must collect data on preschool-aged children (ages 3-5, not kindergarten) enrolled in public preschool programs and those who are served⁸ with McKinney-Vento subgrant funds in LEAs receiving a subgrant. In addition, LEAs receiving subgrant funds must collect data on children birth-3 who are served through the LEA subgrant.⁹

Both charts below provide a four-year comparison of young children served by McKinney-Vento subgrants. The numbers for each subpopulation served have remained relatively steady although the combination of age groups reveals a slightly more erratic trend.



SEVERAL FEDERAL PROGRAMS ADDRESS EARLY LEARNING

The Office of Early Learning and Office of Special Education have primary responsibility for ED's key early learning investments. The Interagency Policy Board on Early Learning operated by ED and the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), aims to improve the quality of early learning programs and outcomes for young children, particularly those with high needs. The Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD) under the Office of the Administration for Children & Families at HHS, uses a joint federal approach to improve early childhood education and development. ECD includes the Offices of Child Care and Head Start, and the Interagency Team.¹⁰ In addition, the Child Care Development Block Grant requires states to develop their own strategies to better serve homeless children.

⁸ The definition of served includes homeless children who have been served in any way through McKinney-Vento funds regardless of their enrollment in school or preschool. Services would include both direct services, as outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act [42 U.S.C. § 11433], and indirect services, such as those provided by a staff member whose position is supported through McKinney-Vento funds and who is involved in the administration of the McKinney-Vento program but does not necessarily provide direct services. An example of an indirect service includes outreach activities for which a staff member's time is paid and results in an increase in the identification of homeless students.

⁹ These data are collected at the LEA-level through the EDEN Submission System (ESS) for the EDFacts data repository. To access, contact your State Coordinator for Homeless Education or SEA EDFacts Coordinator.

¹⁰ Also see ECD's [Early Childhood Assessment Tool for Family Shelters](#); [Birth to 5: Watch Me Thrive!](#); and [Early Childhood Homelessness in the United States: 50-State Profile](#).



array of early childhood programs and services in the state, including child care, Head Start, IDEA, the development of a high quality, comprehensive system of early childhood development and care, preschool and infants and families programs, and pre-kindergarten programs and services. State and local McKinney-Vento personnel may be invited to participate and/or may request to present before the Council. Visit <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/early-learning/state-advisory-councils> to locate contact information for your State Advisory Council.

- **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program**

The **CCDF Program**, administered by the **Office of Child Care (OCC)**, provides children birth-12 in vulnerable families with access to affordable, high-quality early care and after-school programs. The CCDF allows states to serve families through a single, integrated child care subsidy program and coordinate CCDF with Head Start, pre-k, and other early childhood programs.

CCDF programs have specific requirements concerning homeless children including permitting enrollment while required documentation is obtained, conducting training and technical assistance on identifying and serving homeless families, specific outreach to homeless families, and coordinating with other programs serving young children experiencing homelessness.

Each state houses a division or office that oversees the administration of CCDF grant funds within the state. Every three years, states receiving CCDF funds must submit to the OCC a plan detailing how these funds will be spent. Contact information for state CCDF Administrators, is at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-grantee-state-and-territory-contacts> and links to every state's plans are at <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/state-plans>.

- **Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program**

The **MIECHV Program**, administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration in partnership with the ACF, facilitates collaboration and partnership at the federal, state, and community levels to improve health and development outcomes for at-risk children through evidence-based home visiting programs. The overarching focus of the MIECHV Program is to give pregnant women and families, particularly those considered at-risk, necessary resources and skills to raise children who are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy and ready to learn.

MIECHV includes grants for state and territory formula awards, innovation awards, and awards made through the Tribal Program. While the MIECHV Program does not target young homeless children specifically, many of them will fall under one of the at-risk categories designated as priority populations. Visit <https://mchb.hrsa.gov/maternal-child-health-initiatives/home-visiting-overview> to learn more about the MIECHV program.

3. Demonstrate the value of collaboration for all involved agencies.

Early care and education colleagues are likely to be busy and focused on their programmatic requirements, as are State Coordinators and local liaisons. To encourage and inform collaboration, it is important to collect and share data on:

- the number of preschool-aged children experiencing homelessness in your state or school district,
- how many preschool-aged children receive early childhood education services in your state or school district, and
- what barriers prevent preschool-aged children from accessing services.

This information will support collaboration by helping to identify programmatic needs, establish



the goals and priorities of collaborative efforts, and convince potential partners of the need to work together.

To frame collaboration as a win-win endeavor, consider the following:

- Describe the services your program can offer to children and families who are homeless.
- Reference the requirements in the McKinney-Vento Act and early childhood legislation to collaborate, conduct outreach, and provide services to homeless children and families.
- Explain how collaboration can help meet the goals of the early childhood program, such as assisting with IDEA Child Find requirements and Head Start data collection.
- Offer to assist with community needs assessments by providing data on homeless families identified by the LEA.



4. Get to know your collaborators.

Meet with early care and education colleagues. Explain the preschool-related provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act. Share information about the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless (see sidebar on page 1) and the students served by your program. Visit early childhood programs and learn about their services, eligibility criteria, enrollment process, priorities, and challenges.

Once the relationship is established, get together on a monthly or quarterly basis to maintain communication and grow the collaboration.

5. Begin working towards goals.

Jump-start the collaboration by focusing efforts on a few tangible goals. Over time, as collaborators meet goals together, more ambitious projects will seem possible. The starting point will vary by program and community, but initial conversations between collaborators may address the following questions:

How can we

- provide professional development across our programs, so that all staff members understand each program's mandates and priorities?
- refer families and children for services between programs?
- streamline enrollment processes for families who are homeless by obtaining releases to share information, enabling us to share enrollment paperwork with one another?
- share participant data across programs?
- coordinate transportation?
- agree to reserve slots for homeless children if local liaisons commit to keeping them full?
- develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between our agencies to address collaborative issues?



EXAMPLES OF COLLABORATION FROM THE FIELD

McKinney-Vento programs across the country have developed strong collaborations with early care and education programs, resulting in greater program access for young children experiencing homelessness. The following examples may serve as models for collaboration in your area:

State and Local Collaborations

In North Carolina,

- the NC Homeless Education Program (NCHEP) offered mini-grants to LEAs to encourage better identification, discover strategies to support students and families, and develop local processes to build communication and supports.
- The Early Child Education Title I Consultant, Head Start Director, and Early Child Foundation of NC conducted workshops with LEAs and community partners to identify what to put in their district plans regarding 0-5-year old children and offered mini grants to 5 LEAs to focus on serving young children in their plans. NCHEP then offered additional funding to LEAs that agreed to include specific activities for homeless children.

In Connecticut, the Office of Early Childhood, Department of Social Services, and Department of Housing work together to better target supports to homeless families with young children. In addition to healthcare and housing components, the collaborative provides homeless families with priority access to early care and education by:

- Making homeless families categorically eligible for the Care4Kids child care subsidy (removing other eligibility requirements).
- Prioritizing enrollment for children experiencing homelessness in publicly-funded early care and education settings (School Readiness, Child Day Care, Preschool Development Grant, Smart Start, etc.) and prohibiting residency and documentation requirements for those families.

State Coordinators in other states may wish to contact their state CCDF administrator to make

him or her more aware of the extent of child and family homelessness within the state; the needs of young homeless children and their families; and the federal support for priority eligibility for homeless children and families, co-pay waivers, and grace periods for immunizations.

The Connection in Bridgeport, CT developed Home Works, a program that employs a Family Navigator to serve as the liaison between Head Start/Early Head Start programs (run by ABCD, a local nonprofit) and the Coordinated Housing Network of the Continuum of Care (CoC). The navigator coordinates referrals and enrollment for homeless families with eligible children who are on the CoC's coordinated access homeless wait list. This involves

- Examining Homeless Management Information Systems data through a memorandum of agreement (MOA) and identifying families with children who are on the housing waiting list,
- Working with the CoC Care Manager to get children enrolled in school or prioritized for Head Start, and
- Facilitating appointments and coaching Head Start and Early Head Start parents to ensure families get all the CoC housing services for which they qualify.

In the future, they plan to offer supportive housing with case management services to families with young children.

In Wyoming, Fort Washakie Elementary School, on the Wind River Indian Reservation, has an MOU with the local Head Start. Their partnership includes:

- Meeting at the end of each school year to discuss the special education needs of children transitioning from Head Start to kindergarten;
- Conducting Common Formative Assessments (CFAs) to follow growth data and make instructional changes;
- Inviting Head Start staff to attend monthly data drill downs when kindergarten staff assess every child's progress toward their behavioral and academic SMART (Specific, Measurable,



Achievable, Relevant, and Timely) goals. With a greater understanding of this process, the preschool staff can better prepare students to successfully transition to kindergarten; and

- Ensuring transparent, consistent instruction.

In Kansas, a growing number of LEAs combine funding from sources including IDEA, Head Start, state at-risk, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), and local fees. These braided funds provide the flexibility needed to accommodate each child's needs in a fully integrated early childhood setting. LEAs have found that the long-term benefit of providing early learning in an inclusive environment pays off in improved outcomes for students and a diminished need for supplemental supports in higher grades.

Several Kansas communities also combine resources across a variety of state and local social service, education, transportation, health, and housing agencies to assess needs and provide one-stop access to services. Local liaisons play a key role in coordination of services and communication with families.

The result is enriched connection of families to services, increased cross-agency coordination, better utilization of scarce resources, and expanded capacity for parental self-advocacy. Data collected shows spending resources on coordination and communication of services results in improved family outcomes and homeless prevention.

CONCLUSION

Although it can take time to fully understand the early care and education landscape, it is a challenge worth the effort of State Coordinators and local liaisons. Through collaboration with early care and education colleagues, McKinney-Vento personnel can help overcome the barriers that separate young homeless children and families from the support they need to be successful. The result will be an increase in homeless children's participation in quality early care and education programs, an improvement in their school readiness, and an increase in their success in school and beyond.



US ED Programs	Eligibility	Services Provided	Homeless-Specific Provisions	Contact & General Information
<p>Early childhood special education (IDEA Part B), a federally funded program authorizing special education and related services for children with disabilities</p>	<p>Children ages 3-5 who are in need of special education and related services due to a disability</p>	<p>Specially designed preschool instruction and related services, such as speech-language, audiology, psychological, school health, and social work services; physical or occupational therapy; and transportation. Parents and the school district agree to an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a written document that is developed for each eligible child with a disability that outlines the services the child will receive.</p>	<p>IDEA requires states to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities aged birth to 21, including those experiencing homelessness, who need special education services. This process is called Child Find.</p> <p>Timely assessments and continuity of services are required for highly mobile children.</p>	<p>Early childhood special education is administered by school districts. Check with your local school district administration.</p> <p>General information: U.S. Department of Education https://sites.ed.gov/idea Office of Special Education State Leads for Part B and Part C Contact Information https://www2.ed.gov/policy/speced/guid/idea/monitor/state-contact-list.html IDEA State Advisory Panels (SAP) and State Interagency Coordinating Councils (SICC) http://www.stateadvisorypanel.org Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center State Coordinator Contact Information http://ectacenter.org/contact/619coord.asp Center for Parent Information and Resources http://www.parentcenterhub.org Information about special education and homelessness https://nche.ed.gov/special-education</p>
<p>Early intervention (IDEA Part C), a federally funded early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities</p>	<p>Children birth to 3 with a developmental delay or physical or mental condition likely to result in a developmental delay</p>	<p>Specially designed services for the child and family, provided in their natural environment. Services may include speech-language, audiology, psychological, health or social work services; home visits; physical or occupational therapy; and transportation. Parents and the early intervention lead agency agree to an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), a written document that is developed for each eligible infant or toddler with a disability that outlines the services the child and family will receive.</p>	<p>IDEA requires states to identify, locate, and evaluate all infants and toddlers with disabilities, including those experiencing homelessness, who are in need of special education services. This process is called Child Find. Services must be provided to infants and toddlers with disabilities, including those experiencing homelessness, and their families, and may be provided where the child spends most of their time, such as a homeless shelter or child care center.</p> <p>States must ensure the meaningful involvement of homeless families in the planning and implementation of the Part C program.</p>	<p>Early intervention programs are administered by local lead agencies, which may include school districts, mental health agencies, or community organizations.</p> <p>General information: U.S. Department of Education https://sites.ed.gov/idea The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center http://ectacenter.org/partc/partc.asp State Part C Coordinator Contact Information http://ectacenter.org/contact/Ptccoord.asp Center for Parent Information and Resources http://www.parentcenterhub.org</p>



Other Programs	Eligibility	Services Provided	Homeless-Specific Provisions	Contact & General Information
State prekindergarten and preschool programs	All but seven states now provide prekindergarten programs for 4-year-olds; some states also accept 3-year-olds.	<p>Education-focused half-day and full-day programs in schools or through community partnerships.</p> <p>Some programs provide referrals for health and developmental screening, provide supportive services to families, and offer opportunities for parent involvement.</p>	<p>In addition to the McKinney-Vento Act provisions explained in this brief, some states prioritize homeless children for enrollment in early care and education programs.</p> <p>Examples: Homeless 3- and 4-year olds are automatically eligible for prekindergarten in Texas. Maryland’s prekindergarten program focuses specifically on enrolling 4-year-old children from economically disadvantaged or homeless families.</p>	<p>State prekindergarten programs are usually administered by school districts. Check with your local school district administration.</p> <p>General information: National Institute for Early Education Research http://nieer.org</p>
Head Start, a federally funded comprehensive child development program	Children ages 3-5 and their families. Federal regulations require that at least 90% of children enrolled in each program be from families with an income at or below the poverty line and at least 10% of children enrolled have a disability.	<p>Promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services. Provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services, usually in a center-based setting. Limited transportation.</p> <p>Some programs are full-day. Specialized programs include Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (birth to age 5) and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start.</p>	<p>Children and families experiencing homelessness and children in foster care are categorically eligible for services. They do not need to provide proof of income to qualify. Programs are required to identify homeless children, prioritize their enrollment, and allow their enrollment while enrollment documentation is obtained.</p> <p>Programs also must collaborate with McKinney-Vento and other programs in the community that serve homeless infants and toddlers.</p>	<p>Head Start programs may be administered by school districts, local government agencies, or community organizations.</p> <p>General information: The Office of Head Start https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov Head Start State Collaboration Offices https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/head-start-collaboration-offices-state</p>
Early Head Start, a federally funded comprehensive child development program	Pregnant women and children age birth to 3 and their families. Federal regulations require that at least 90% of children enrolled in each program be from families with an income at or below the poverty line and at least 10% of children enrolled have a disability.	<p>Promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services. Provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services in a home-based or center-based setting. Limited transportation. Some programs are full-day. Specialized programs include Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (birth to age 5) and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start.</p>	<p>Children and families experiencing homelessness and children in foster care are categorically eligible for services. They do not need to provide proof of income to qualify. Programs are required to identify homeless children, prioritize their enrollment, and allow their enrollment while enrollment documentation is obtained.</p> <p>Programs also must collaborate with McKinney-Vento programs and other programs in the community that serve homeless infants and toddlers.</p>	<p>Early Head Start programs may be administered by school districts, local government agencies, or community organizations.</p> <p>Early Head Start general information https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/programs/article/early-head-start-programs</p>



Other Programs	Eligibility	Services Provided	Homeless-Specific Provisions	Contact & General Information
Subsidized child care	Prekindergarten services for infants, toddlers, and preschool- aged children; and before- and after- school care. Eligibility requirements vary by state and include a maximum income level.	Subsidized child care centers: Publicly subsidized child care centers and family childcare homes provide early education and child care, often on a sliding-fee scale. Child care vouchers: Parents may use subsidy vouchers with the provider of their choice. Typically, there is a waiting list.	Some states may grant preferences to families with children experiencing homelessness, although this is not required. The federal ACF encourages child care programs to offer priority eligibility to homeless children and families, waive their co-pays, and provide grace periods for immunizations.	Child care subsidies are administered by a variety of state agencies; child care providers are located across communities. General information: Early Childhood Training and Technical Assistance System (ECTTAS) https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov CCDF Grantee State and Territory Contacts https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/resource/ccdf-grantee-state-and-territory-contacts Child Care Aware® of America: (including locator for the nearest child care resource and referral agency, which can provide the contact information for local child care providers and may process child care vouchers) http://www.childcareaware.org
Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program, a federally-funded program providing evidence-based maternal and early childhood home visiting services to children and families in at-risk communities	Expectant mothers and fathers, and primary caregivers of children birth to kindergarten entry living in at- risk communities identified by a needs assessment	Home visiting services to expectant parents and families with young children. At least 75% of grant funds must be spent on programs to implement evidence-based home visiting models.	Priority populations for MIECHV include families in at-risk communities identified through a needs assessment, low-income families, pregnant women under age 21, families with a history of child abuse or neglect, families with a history of substance abuse, families that have users of tobacco in the home, families with children with low student achievement, families with children with developmental delays or disabilities, and military families.	MIECHV is administered by state lead agencies. General information on MIECHV and Tribal MIECHV https://mchb.hrsa.gov/maternal-child-health-initiatives/home-visiting-overview https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecl/home-visiting/tribal-home-visiting

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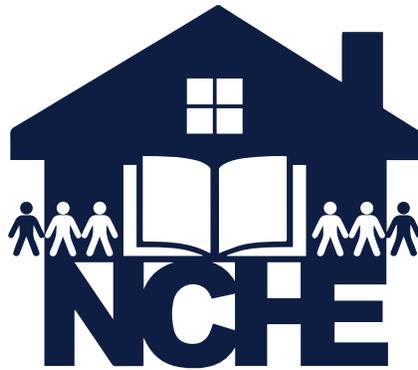
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Every state is required to have a State Coordinator for Homeless Education, and every school district is required to have a local homeless education liaison. These individuals will assist you with the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. To find out who your State Coordinator is, visit the NCHE website at <https://nche.ed.gov/data>.

For more information on the McKinney-Vento Act and resources for implementation, call the NCHE Helpline at 800-308-2145 or e-mail homeless@serve.org.

Local Contact Information:

A large, empty, rounded rectangular box with a dark blue border, intended for local contact information.