Best Practices for Identifying and Enrolling Homeless Children in Programs

“A Seat on the Rug”
The Ounce of Prevention

May 25, 2016

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Agenda for today...

• Become familiar with important McKinney-Vento Act concepts, including:
  – Identification
  – Best Practices for identifying homeless families
  – Best Practices for enrolling homeless children in ECE programs

• Engage in discussion and Q&A
The McKinney-Vento Act

- Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.) Originally passed in 1987
- Reauthorized in 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act
- ESSA: $85 million authorized funding to SEAs
  - Largest percentage increase of all federal education programs
  - SEAs award competitive subgrants to LEAs
- Establishes the definition of homeless used by schools
- Ensures that children and youth experiencing homelessness have immediate and equal access to public education, including preschool
- Provides for educational access, stability, and support to promote school success
- Addresses the unique barriers faced by many homeless students
MK-V Definition of Homeless...

- Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including—
  - Sharing the housing of other persons (“doubled up”) due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
  - Living in hotels, motels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations;
  - Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
  - Abandoned in hospitals;
  - Awaiting foster care placement;
MK-V Definition of Homeless...

• Primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;

• Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings;

• Defined as “migratory children” who are living in the above circumstances;

• Unaccompanied youth who are living in the above circumstances.
“Fixed, Regular, and Adequate”

- Fixed
  - Securely placed; not subject to change or fluctuation
    - A fixed residence is one that is stationary, permanent, and not subject to change.

- Regular
  - Normal, standard
    - A regular residence is one which is used on a regular (i.e. nightly) basis.

- Adequate
  - Sufficient for a specific requirement; lawfully and reasonably sufficient
    - An adequate residence is one that is sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.
The Dynamics of Doubling Up:

- Doubled-up arrangements often serve as temporary shelter, but may not last or may place the family or youth in danger.

- A shelter stay is not always an option:
  - Shelters don’t exist in every community
  - Shelters often are full
  - Shelter policies may create barriers
  - Shelters may generate safety concerns
  - Shelters may have stay limits
“Sharing the Housing of Other Persons...”

- Implies that the child or youth is staying in someone else’s residence

- Clarifying questions:
  - Does the family or youth have any legal right to be in the home?
  - Can the family or youth be asked to leave at any time with no legal recourse?
Educational right to...

- Attend school, no matter where they live or how long they have lived there
- Continue in the school they last attended before becoming homeless (school of origin) or the school they last attended
- Receive transportation to the school they last attended before their family became homeless or the school they last attended
- Attend school and participate in school programs with children who are not homeless
- Enroll in school without giving a permanent address
- Enroll in and attend classes while the school arranges for the transfer of school and immunization records or any documents required for enrollment
- Receive the same special programs and services, if needed, as provided to all other children served in these programs
- Receive transportation to school and to school programs comparable to that provided to children who are not homeless
Barriers and challenges

- Lack of awareness and understanding of homelessness
- Lack of program availability/capacity
  - Half day programs are not accessible
  - Programs not offered during off hours
- Lack of outreach to/identification of homeless families
  - Rigid program requirements and structures
  - Complicated program application/enrollment procedures
  - Lack of transportation
  - High mobility
- Families lack documentation required to apply/enroll (birth certificates, health records, etc.)
- Lack of meaningful data on homeless families
Barriers to Early Childhood Programs for Families Experiencing Homelessness

- Lack of Awareness
- High Mobility
- Lack of Transportation
- Lack of documentation for enrollment
- School selection
General Resources

- Illinois State Board of Education, Early Childhood Division
  - http://www.isbe.net/earlychi
  - Illinois State Board of Education, McKinney-Vento Homeless Ed.
    http://isbe.net/homeless

- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
  - http://www.naehcy.org

- National Center on Homeless Education
  - http://www.serve.org/nche

- National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center
  - http://www.nectac.org

- Horizons for Homeless Children
  - http://www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org
Policy Resources

- NAEHCY: www.naehcy.org, Barbara Duffield, bduffield@naehcy.org
- National Center on Homeless Education: www.serve.org/nche
- National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty: www.nlchp.org
- Zero to Three, http://www.zerotothree.org
- National Head Start Assoc., http://www.nhsa.org/
- Center for Law and Social Policy, http://www.clasp.org/
- Center on Budget Policy and Priorities, http://www.cbpp.org/
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Homeless Information Hotline
1-800-215-6379

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