

# HOUSING AND EDUCATION COLLABORATIONS TO SERVE HOMELESS CHILDREN, YOUTH AND FAMILIES



National Center for Homeless Education  
October 2023

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

---

- Introduction ..... 1
  
- Understanding the definition of homelessness ..... 2
  - Education Basics ..... 3
  - HUD Basics..... 4
  
- Requirements for collaboration ..... 6
  - Schools and Service Providers Working Together..... 6
  - McKinney-Vento Education Requirements for Housing Collaboration..... 7
  - HUD Requirements for Education Collaboration ..... 7
  
- Tips for successful partnerships ..... 7
  - Local Liaisons ..... 8
  - CoC Program Staff..... 9
  - Collaboration in Practice ..... 10
  - Example from the Field ..... 11
  
- Conclusion ..... 12
  
- References ..... 13
  
- Appendix: Federal Definitions of *Homeless* ..... 14

# Housing and Education Collaborations to Serve Homeless Children, Youth, and Families

This National Center for Homeless Education brief:

- Explores the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and the U.S. Department of Education (the Department) definitions of homelessness;
- Provides basic information to help homeless service providers and homeless education staff understand each other's roles in supporting children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness; and
- Illustrates tips for collaboration between homeless service providers and homeless education staff.

## INTRODUCTION

---

In the 2021-22 school year, public schools identified roughly 1.2 million students experiencing homelessness, according to recent U.S. Department of Education data (NCHE, 2023). The number of students experiencing homelessness enrolled in public schools in the United States has consistently remained over one million students since the 2010-11 school year (NCHE, 2015). From 2004-05 to 2021-22, there has been a 4.4% average annual increase in the number of students experiencing homelessness enrolled in public schools. The high mobility that may occur because of homelessness creates challenges that impact students academically. Addressing these challenges requires cross-sector collaboration with the homelessness response system to provide stable housing for students and their families. When staff in systems collaborate to address the individual needs of students experiencing homelessness, students have better academic and non-academic outcomes, including social-emotional, mental, and physical well-being (Hill, 2020). Cross-sector collaboration is defined as the “linking or sharing of information resources, activities, and capabilities by organizations in two or more sectors to achieve jointly an outcome that could not be achieved by organizations in one sector separately” (Bryson et al., 2006 p. 44, as cited in Bryson et al., 2015 p. 648). True collaboration comes from working across systems to develop a shared understanding of the problem, breaking down language barriers between systems, and creating shared commitments to the solution.

This brief provides State Coordinators for Homeless Education, local homeless education liaisons, and staff of homeless assistance programs, as well as members of Continuums of Care, an overview of the statutory requirements that establish a framework for collaboration between the education and homelessness response systems to support the academic and non-academic needs of students experiencing homelessness. The brief also provides best practices on collaboration between schools and

homeless service providers, including an example in practice spotlighting cross-sector collaboration in Central Florida.

## UNDERSTANDING THE DEFINITIONS OF HOMELESSNESS

---

While both the Department and HUD base their services and eligibility criteria on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (the McKinney-Vento Act), each agency uses a different definition of *homeless* due to differences in the federal statute.<sup>1</sup> Both agencies consider individuals in the following living situations to be experiencing homelessness: camping grounds, emergency shelters, transitional housing, public or private places not designated for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings, cars, parks, abandoned buildings, and bus or train stations. However, several significant differences exist between the definitions of *homeless* used by these agencies.

In addition to those described above, the Department considers persons in the following situations to be homeless:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- Living in hotels, motels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
- Living in substandard housing.

HUD organizes the definition of *homeless* into four categories:

- **Category 1:** Individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, meaning they have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not meant for human habitation (e.g., cars, parks, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations), is living in a publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (e.g., congregate shelters, transitional housing, and hotel and motels paid for by charitable organizations or federal, state, and local government programs), or is exiting an institution where they resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or place not meant for human habitation immediately prior to entering the institution;
- **Category 2:** Individuals with families who will imminently (within 14 days) lose their primary nighttime residence with no subsequent residence identified and no resources or support networks to obtain subsequent permanent housing;
- **Category 3:** Unaccompanied youth or families with children or youth who do not otherwise qualify as homeless under HUD's definition, but who meet the homeless definition under another federal statute and meet three additional criteria established by HUD at [24 CFR 578.3](#);

---

<sup>1</sup>See Appendix A for the full legislative text on the definitions of *homeless* used by the Department and HUD.

- **Category 4:** Individuals and families fleeing or attempting to flee domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that occurred within the primary nighttime residence or make the household afraid to return to the primary nighttime residence with no safe subsequent residence identified, and no resources or support networks to obtain subsequent permanent housing.<sup>2</sup>

As no one system of services alone can meet every need of persons experiencing homelessness, it is crucial for both housing and education professionals to understand the definitions that drive client services in both sectors. Children and youth will benefit directly when cross-agency referrals are made quickly and effectively. This brief cannot capture all the nuances of the definitions and their connections to program requirements. Therefore, it is essential that education and housing professionals review each agency’s full definition and accompanying guidance.<sup>3</sup>

## Education Basics

[Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act](#), reauthorized in 2015 and cross-referenced as Title IX, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended, addresses the educational needs of homeless children and youth. The legislation’s core theme is ensuring educational stability and continuity, including allowing homeless children and youth to remain in a stable school environment and providing continuous access to teachers, programs, peers, and services.

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, students have the right to:

- Receive a free, appropriate public education.
- Enroll in school immediately, even if lacking documents typically required for enrollment.
- Enroll in school and attend classes while the school gathers needed documents.

### ***Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program Funding***

*Federal EHCY funds are allocated to the 50 states, the District of Columbia, and Puerto Rico based on each state's share of Title I, Part A, funds. The outlying areas and the Bureau of Indian Affairs also receive funds. A portion of these funds supports the State Coordinator position and state-level activities to ensure that homeless children and youth have equal access to a free, appropriate public education. States distribute their remaining funds to school districts through a competitive subgrant process. These funds support school districts in facilitating the enrollment, attendance, and success of students experiencing homelessness.*

<sup>2</sup>The Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization Act of 2022 amended Section 103(b) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which provides the statutory authority for Category 4 of HUD's homeless definition. HUD will be carrying out rulemaking to make corresponding changes to the Continuum of Care and Emergency Solutions Grant regulations to qualify individuals and families as homeless through Category 4. For more information, visit: <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2023/01/04/2022-28073/the-violence-against-women-act-reauthorization-act-of-2022-overview-of-applicability-to-hud-programs>.

<sup>3</sup>HUD definition of homelessness: <https://www.ecfr.gov/current/title-24/subtitle-B/chapter-V/subchapter-C/part-578>. Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance: <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcycguidance072716.pdf>.

- Enroll in the local attendance area school or continue attending their school of origin<sup>4</sup> (the school in which they were last enrolled) if that is the parent’s, guardian’s, or unaccompanied youth’s preference and is feasible. If the school district believes the school selected is not in the student’s best interest, the district must provide the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth with a written explanation of its position and inform them of the right to appeal its decision.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin if requested by the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.
- Receive educational services comparable to those provided to other students, according to each student’s needs.

In addition, every school district must designate a local homeless education liaison (*local liaison*) to serve as the key homeless education contact in the district and to ensure that eligible students within the district receive the rights and services to which they are entitled, as outlined above. Every state also has a State Coordinator for Homeless Education (*State Coordinator*), typically based at the State Department of Education, to provide technical assistance and support, as well as ensure that homeless education policies are implemented properly and consistently by districts throughout the state.

Title I, Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act, which supports academic achievement for disadvantaged students in high-poverty schools, has several coordination requirements to serve homeless students. Homeless students are automatically eligible for Title I, Part A services, including education-related support services. Title I, Part A funds may also support parental involvement and supplemental transportation. Districts must provide comparable Title I, Part A services to homeless students enrolled in non-Title I schools by reserving funds for this purpose. District Title I, Part A and McKinney-Vento Programs must collaborate to serve students experiencing homelessness fully. Furthermore, Title I schools operating schoolwide programs must coordinate with housing programs in their attendance area to serve eligible students.

**It is important for shelter and public housing authority staff to learn about federal educational supports for homeless children, youth, and families in their local communities; State Coordinators and local liaisons can assist them in obtaining this information.** Understanding the support available to children and youth experiencing homelessness through the school system will ensure that housing providers can refer eligible students to the school district for needed services, thus facilitating the provision of the broadest array of supports to these vulnerable students.

## HUD Basics

Title IV of the McKinney-Vento Act, as amended in 2009 by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, addresses the housing and related services needs of people experiencing homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless for HUD’s [Continuum of Care](#)

---

<sup>4</sup>School of origin is defined as the school that the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled (42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(3)(G), 2001), for more information on school of origin and school selection see the NCHIE brief [School Selection and Best Interest Determination: Strategies for Educators](#).

(CoC) and [Emergency Solutions Grants \(ESG\)](#) programs and provides funding to re-house individuals and families experiencing homelessness in permanent housing. Through these programs, individuals and families can receive the following types of assistance: street outreach services, emergency shelter, transitional housing, permanent supportive housing that includes rapid re-housing assistance and permanent supportive housing. It is important to understand that certain types of assistance may be limited to those experiencing homelessness under a specific category of HUD's definition (e.g. Category 1) either because of federal limitations or local prioritization of limited resources.

The ESG program provides formula-based funding for street outreach, homelessness prevention, emergency shelter, and rapid rehousing. Eligible grant recipients include states, territories, and local units of government. Grant subrecipients can include non-profit organizations.<sup>5</sup>

The CoC program requires federally defined geographic areas to develop local Continuums of Care that lead local systemic responses to homelessness. CoCs are comprised of direct service providers, local government agencies, indirect service providers, tribes and tribally-designated housing entities (TDHEs), and members of the client community, all of which jointly determine the community's priorities and apply to HUD for funds. The CoC program awards grants competitively for transitional housing, two types of permanent housing, supportive services, safe havens, and the operation of a community-wide data system called the [Homeless Management Information System \(HMIS\)](#). Most urban areas have their own CoCs, while suburban counties often come together to form CoCs that cover larger geographic areas. Many rural and some suburban areas are too small or sparsely populated to have their own CoCs; they often merge into large Continuums known as "Balance of State," while a few states have a single, statewide CoC. Currently, there are nearly 390 CoCs in the country, including 42 Balance of State CoCs.<sup>6</sup>

Recipients of ESG or CoC funds are required to collect and maintain client-level information on the characteristics and service needs of homeless persons in a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). HUD encourages other organizations that work with persons experiencing homelessness to also use the HMIS so that the community can better understand the population and needs of clients receiving homeless services in the area.

Other HUD programs that address homelessness include targeted programs for veterans and people with HIV/AIDS, [Community Development Block Grants](#), and programs to convert surplus military properties into sites for homeless services.

Additionally, HUD funds public housing agencies (PHA) programs and staff, including the Housing Choice (Section 8) Voucher programs for which families and youth experiencing homelessness may be prioritized for services. For example, the Family Unification Program (FUP)<sup>7</sup> provides housing choice vouchers to a

---

<sup>5</sup>Use this [link](#) to locate the ESG Program points of contact in each state.

<sup>6</sup>HUD list of CoCs and Balance of State's: [https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/FY-2021\\_CoC-Names-Numbers\\_Final.pdf](https://www.hud.gov/sites/dfiles/CPD/documents/FY-2021_CoC-Names-Numbers_Final.pdf). For a list of CoC contacts visit: <https://www.hudexchange.info/programs/coc/hud-regional-teams/>, this site can also be used to access contact information for the HUD technical assistance (TA) provider who can answer questions, discuss concerns and challenges, and connect to TA resources.

<sup>7</sup>For information about FUP, including a fact sheet and link to PHAs with FUP vouchers, visit: [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/family](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/family).

limited number of PHAs to prevent the placement of a child in out-of-home care or to assist with reunification of a family if a child is in out-of-home care primarily due to a lack of suitable housing. Under the Foster Youth to Independence Initiative (FYI),<sup>8</sup> in partnership with Public Child Welfare Agencies, PHAs provide FYI vouchers for up to 36 months of housing assistance to youth between 18-24 years of age who have left or will leave foster care. PHA staff includes case managers who advise homeless or highly mobile families with school-aged children on housing and school selection. Additionally, a number of PHAs have a waiting list preference for individuals or families experiencing homelessness, some in partnership with the local CoC.

To effectively utilize these specialized housing vouchers, intentional partnerships must be developed between PHAs, Public Child Welfare Agencies, and CoCs. **It is important for educators to learn about federal housing supports for homeless children, youth, and families in their local communities.** Understanding the supports available to this population through HUD programs will ensure that schools can refer eligible students to housing agencies for needed services, thus facilitating the provision of the broadest array of supports to these vulnerable students.

## REQUIREMENTS FOR COLLABORATION

---

### Schools and Service Providers Working Together

Collaboration between schools and homeless service providers is essential to ending homelessness and reducing its effects on the lives of children and youth.<sup>9</sup> Education is a critical strategy for ending homelessness among families and unaccompanied youth. In the short term, schools provide meals, clothes, physical and mental health care, and safety and stability to children and youth whose lives have been disrupted by homelessness. In the long term, schools provide students with the education they need to obtain employment that provides a living wage that can support financial independence as students transition into adulthood.

At the same time, providing safe and consistent shelter is a critical strategy for ensuring educational success. A stable bed, basic nutrition, health care, and a place to study and store personal items contribute greatly to students' well-being and ability to perform well in school. A stable address also removes barriers to attaining additional support and applying to higher education programs and employers.

---

<sup>8</sup>For information on the Foster Youth to Independence (FYI) initiative visit: [https://www.hud.gov/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/fyi](https://www.hud.gov/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/fyi).

<sup>9</sup>Visit NCHes Collaboration webpage, <https://nche.ed.gov/collaboration/>, for resources providing strategies for collaborating with the homeless response system and other community partners.



## McKinney-Vento Education Requirements for Housing Collaboration

The McKinney-Vento Act requires State Coordinators to coordinate and collaborate with housing agencies, domestic violence agencies, shelter operators, transitional housing facilities, runaway and homeless youth centers, and transitional living programs to minimize educational disruption for and improve the provision of comprehensive education and related services to homeless children, youth, and families. Local liaisons must also coordinate with community agencies to identify homeless children and youth and refer students to health, mental health, and other appropriate services.

## HUD Requirements for Education Collaboration

The amendments to the McKinney-Vento Act by the HEARTH Act of 2009 added new education-related requirements, often referred to as *educational assurances*, for CoCs and homeless service grant applicants. Specifically, to receive funding, CoCs must:

- Collaborate with local education agencies (school districts) to assist in the identification of families experiencing homelessness and inform them of their eligibility for McKinney-Vento services.
- Consider the educational needs of children when placing families in emergency or transitional shelters and, to the maximum extent practicable, place families with children as close as possible to their school of origin so as not to disrupt the children's education.

Project applicants (CoC recipients) are also required to:

- Establish policies and practices that are consistent with, and do not restrict the exercise of rights provided by, the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act and other laws relating to the provision of educational and related services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
- Designate a staff person to ensure that children are enrolled in school and connected to the appropriate services within the community, including early childhood programs such as Head Start, Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA), and McKinney-Vento education services.

## TIPS FOR SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIPS

---

The following are tips for successful partnerships between CoC program staff and local liaisons that increase collaboration for improving identification, referrals, and service delivery for homeless children, youth, and families. Local liaisons and CoC program staff can use the steps provided under the collaboration in practice section as guidelines for getting started.

## Local Liaisons

When seeking to collaborate with CoC program staff, local liaisons should consider the following strategies:

- Learn more about the housing portion of the McKinney-Vento Act. Often, both housing providers and educators view the McKinney-Vento Act as “theirs”; in fact, both the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program and federal Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Programs are authorized by different sections of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The more local liaisons learn about the housing portion of the Act, the more they will understand available services and be able to “speak the same language” as their housing partners.
- Share information and data on educating homeless students to increase awareness of challenges and highlight opportunities to address needs through collaboration with housing programs. Consult with LEA legal and data management departments to ensure compliance with data-sharing policies and procedures.
- When participating in CoC and other housing programs, explain issues related to the educational needs of homeless children and youth and inquire about how homeless children, youth, and families can be better connected to services. Sometimes, people question why school representatives must be at a gathering involving social service providers; local liaisons should be prepared to make the case.
- Ask the CoC and its members to assist with services that the school cannot provide; in turn, reciprocate by offering to provide services to CoC clients. See the HUD Basics and Education Basics sections of this brief for more information about the types of services provided by each program.
- Consider participating in local CoC meetings and ask to create a shared list of acronyms to help break down the barriers of system collaboration that can occur because of the lack of a shared vocabulary. Remember, persistence and patience are key when engaging in a new space.
- Learn how the CoC connects people experiencing homelessness to resources.
- Become familiar with housing challenges and requirements for HUD programs and identify ways to streamline referrals to housing programs.
- Learn more about the particular housing services available in the community, such as the [Family Unification Program \(FUP\)](#), the [Foster Youth to Independence Initiative \(FYI\)](#), and other housing voucher programs that can prioritize homeless families for assistance.
- Include the identification of housing needs in the school’s intake process, with input from housing providers, for homeless students and develop a referral protocol with CoC members.

## CoC Program Staff

When seeking to collaborate with local liaisons, CoC program staff should consider the following strategies:

- Learn more about the education portion of the McKinney-Vento Act. The more CoC program staff learn about the education portion of the Act, the more they will understand available services and be able to “speak the same language” as their education partners.
- Share information and data on housing programs to increase awareness of challenges and highlight opportunities to address gaps in services through collaboration with local liaisons. Consult with HUD legal and data management departments to ensure compliance with data-sharing policies and procedures.
- Partner with local liaisons and other education partners to coordinate and conduct Point-in-Time (PIT) count and other data collection efforts to better understand youth experiencing homelessness.
- Become familiar with the educational challenges that homeless children and youth face and the education rights and services under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act. Identify ways that your CoC program can support these children and youth.
- Identify the local liaison (see the footnote page 10 for information on how to identify the local liaison) in your school district and reach out to introduce yourself. Develop a relationship with your local liaison, invite them to CoC meetings, and institute a recurring agenda item focused on education. Consider an education committee (see the program spotlight on page 10).
- Learn about the school experiences of students experiencing homelessness from the local liaison. Consider co-hosting an education convening with the local liaison(s) in your CoC and inviting other service providers.
- Develop a protocol for case managers and local liaisons to evaluate the best interest of the child in terms of school placement and make housing placements that foster education success. Consider the following strategies:
  - Contact the local liaison to learn more about the education services students experiencing homelessness need.
  - Place the student in housing that allows attendance in the school of origin to the maximum extent practicable to ensure school success by avoiding educational disruptions.
  - Consider the academic programs offered by schools when evaluating housing options for students.
  - Weigh a variety of factors for each individual student. Good questions to discuss with parents or unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) regarding school placement to take into consideration for housing placement include:

- How connected is the student to their school?
- What services are in place to address the student’s needs at the current school?
- What school of attendance would serve the student best?

For more information about school selection under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act, including a checklist to use when considering the issue of school placement, download NCHÉ’s [Guiding the Discussion on School Selection brief](#).

## Collaboration in Practice

### 1. Get in touch.

The first step is simple: get to know each other. School district staff and homeless service providers should contact each other and familiarize themselves with their respective program requirements, client needs, challenges, and available services.

- Education Contacts: Contact information for State Coordinators: Contact information for local liaisons is available by contacting your State Coordinator or local district office.<sup>10</sup>
- Housing Contacts: [Contact information for Continuums of Care](#). Contact information for [HUD field offices](#). Contact information for [public housing authorities](#).

### 2. Meet regularly to exchange information.

Local liaisons should participate in CoC meetings; share data on the homeless children and youth they identify and serve – while adhering to data-sharing policies and procedures; be included in community needs assessments and Point-in-Time counts, and work with CoCs to develop shelter, housing, and other services for families and youth. The Youth Count,<sup>11</sup> a federal interagency initiative on greater identification of unaccompanied homeless youth during the [HUD annual Point-in-Time](#) count, generated new collaborative relationships between CoCs and school districts. While adhering to the provisions of the [Family Education Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#), school districts could disclose aggregate student data and ask for parental consent to disclose individual student data or refer parents and youth to other organizations participating in Point-in-Time counts.<sup>12</sup> Additionally, local liaisons should initiate discussions in CoC meetings regarding the intersections and the differences of the definitions of homelessness used by HUD and the Department of Education, the services available under each definition, and how to navigate the definitions to determine eligibility of services definitions.

---

<sup>10</sup>Visit <https://nche.ed.gov/data/> for State Coordinator contact information. To access the local liaison directory for each state, visit <https://nche.ed.gov/data/>, click on the desired state, and under "State Contact" see the link with the liaison directory. Note: individual states are responsible for maintaining the state's local liaison directory.

<sup>11</sup>The Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) in collaboration with federal partners developed "All In: The Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness" which includes a goal for reducing overall homelessness from the 2022 Point-In-Time count by the year 2025. For additional information visit: <https://www.usich.gov/fsp/framework-for-implementation/>.

<sup>12</sup>See NCHÉ’s [Housing and School Partnership on the Point-In-Time Count](#) fact sheet, for more information on the Point-In-Time count and strategies for how schools can support a comprehensive and effective count of youth experiencing homelessness.

CoCs also should work regularly with their education counterparts to ensure homeless programs identify all eligible clients and that their education needs are being met. CoCs may also want to form a children/youth subcommittee in partnership with the local Youth Action Board,<sup>13</sup> where education and early care issues are discussed in greater depth.

### 3. Inform parents and youth about available services.

- Local liaisons should inform parents and youth of housing and other services provided through housing agencies. They should also have contact information and brochures for these agencies on hand to facilitate referrals to housing agencies.
- Homeless service providers should place posters about the education rights of homeless children and youth, including local liaison contact information, in all their facilities serving families and youth.<sup>14</sup> Additionally, service providers should encourage parents to enroll their children in school immediately and encourage unaccompanied youth to enroll immediately.
- Homeless service providers should incorporate information about the HEARTH Act’s educational assurances into the standard intake process. As a follow-up to the initial intake, homeless service providers may wish to schedule a meeting with the CoCs staff member charged with ensuring school enrollment for school-aged clients or the school district’s local liaison.
- Homeless service providers that serve families and youth regularly should host informational sessions about the HEARTH Act’s education assurances for their staff and clients.

### 4. Develop memoranda of understanding (MOUs) as needed.

Local school districts and CoCs and their members may wish to enter into MOUs to establish protocols for student identification, service referrals, and data or information sharing. These MOUs should specify mutually accepted expectations, protocols, parameters, and best practices for achieving the shared goals of the CoCs and school districts.

## Example from the Field

Collaboration between education and service providers is highly dependent on the willingness of partners to work collectively to identify gaps in referrals and shared goals and create actionable solutions. The example below spotlights the collaboration between K-12 local liaisons and the Central Florida CoC. The partnership was strengthened and defined by the local liaisons’ participation in a HUD-funded demonstration program to increase cross-sector collaboration for supporting youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.

---

<sup>13</sup>A Youth Action Board is a committee of youth and young adults with lived expertise of homelessness that provide guidance and leadership to communities, for more information visit <https://truecolorsunited.org/our-work/youth-collaboration/youth-action-society/>.

<sup>14</sup>Posters and brochures on the education rights of homeless children and youth are available at: <https://nchehelpline.org/>.

## Program Spotlight: Housing and Education Collaboration in Central Florida

Local liaisons in Orange, Osceola, and Seminole counties in Central Florida are working with the CoC to prevent and end homelessness on behalf of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP). Throughout the planning phase, local liaisons attended and contributed to weekly meetings with the CoC, housing providers, and other community partners to develop a Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) that outlines how Central Florida plans to collaborate across systems to improve referrals and supports for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness. As part of this effort, local liaisons provided data highlighting the need for collaboration to increase identification and improve referrals between education partners and community-based organizations.

As a result of the collaboration, the local liaisons have created and are chairing an education and employment committee, with support from the CoC, focused on implementing the education and workforce components of the CCP. Youth and young adults with lived expertise also serve as active members of the committee that support the planning and direction of the committee's work. The committee meets monthly and is continuing to expand its membership to other education partners and community service providers. The committee is currently working on expanding access to postsecondary pathways by streamlining processes for utilizing higher education tuition waivers the state of Florida offers to students experiencing homelessness and youth coming from the foster care system. Collaborating with housing providers, the committee is identifying a postsecondary exploration tool that case managers and systems navigators can use when developing housing plans that consider the holistic needs of youth and young adults. Additionally, the committee plans to develop training materials for housing providers and other community partners on the educational challenges that homeless children and youth face and the education rights and services provided under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act. All committee members have a shared goal to understand how each partner fits into the system, ensuring efficient and effective services for youth and young adults experiencing homelessness.

## CONCLUSION

---

Collaboration between education and housing programs provides the potential for the comprehensive and coordinated provision of services that meet the needs of homeless families, children, and youth. Both education and supportive housing provide pathways out of homelessness. While the purpose of and definitions used by these programs may vary, the overall goal of supporting vulnerable families is the foundation for all such agencies to establish policies and practices that support one another's work.

## REFERENCES

---

- Bryson, John M., Crosby, Barbara C., Stone, Melissa Middleton (2015) Designing and implementing cross-sector collaborations: Needed and challenging. *Public Administration Review*, 75(5), 647-663. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/24757438>
- Hill, R.A. (2020). Wraparound: A key component of schoolwide culture competence to support academic and socio-emotional well-being. *Peabody Journal of Education*, 95(1), 66-72. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0161956X.2019.1702424>
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 42 U.S.C. §11302 (2023). <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title42/chapter119&edition=prelim>
- National Center for Homeless Education. (2023). Student homelessness in America, school years 2019-20 through 2021-22. University of North Carolina Greensboro, NC. <https://nche.ed.gov/data-and-stats/>
- National Center for Homeless Education. (2015). Federal data summary school years 2011-12 to 2013-14: Education for homeless children and youth. University of North Carolina Greensboro, NC. <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/12/data-comp-1112-1314.pdf>
- Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, 42 U.S.C. § 11434 et seq. (2015) <https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title42/chapter119/subchapter6/partB&edition=prelim>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016). Education for homeless children and youths program non-regulatory guidance. <https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716.pdf>

## Appendix: Federal Definitions of *Homeless*

### U.S. Department of Education Definition of Homeless

As established by Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

SEC. 11434a. DEFINITIONS.

(2) The term homeless children and youths —

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); 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; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

(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 (within the meaning of section 103(a) (2)(C));

(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 (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Source: <https://nche.ed.gov/mckinney-vento-definition/>

### U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Definition of Homeless

As established by the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act of 2009

SEC. 103. [42 USC 11302].

GENERAL DEFINITION OF HOMELESS INDIVIDUAL. (a) IN GENERAL. — For purposes of this Act, the term “homeless”, “homeless individual”, and “homeless person” means—

(1) an individual or family who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence;



(2) an individual or family with 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, including a car, park, abandoned building, bus or train station, airport, or camping ground;

(3) an individual or family living in a supervised publicly or privately operated shelter designated to provide temporary living arrangements (including hotels and motels paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low income individuals or by charitable organizations, congregate shelters, and transitional housing);

(4) an individual who resided in a shelter or place not meant for human habitation and who is exiting an institution where he or she temporarily resided;

(5) an individual or family who—

(A) will imminently lose their housing, including housing they own, rent, or live in without paying rent, are sharing with others, and rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by Federal, State, or local government programs for low-income individuals or by charitable organizations, as evidenced by—

(i) a court order resulting from an eviction action that notifies the individual or family that they must leave within 14 days;

(ii) the individual or family having a primary nighttime residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack the resources necessary to reside there for more than 14 days; or

(iii) credible evidence indicating that the owner or renter of the housing will not allow the individual or family to stay for more than 14 days, and any oral statement from an individual or family seeking homeless assistance that is found to be credible shall be considered credible evidence for purposes of this clause;

(B) has no subsequent residence identified; and

(C) lacks the resources or support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing; and

(6) unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children and youth defined as homeless under other Federal statutes who—

(A) have experienced a long-term period without living independently in permanent housing,

(B) have experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves over such period, and

(C) can be expected to continue in such status for an extended period of time because of chronic disabilities, chronic physical health or mental health conditions, substance

addiction, histories of domestic violence or childhood abuse, the presence of a child or youth with a disability, or multiple barriers to employment.

Source: [https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/HAAA\\_HEARTH.PDF](https://www.hud.gov/sites/documents/HAAA_HEARTH.PDF)

# About the National Center for Homeless Education

October 2023

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) operates the U.S. Department of Education’s technical assistance center for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Programs. NCHE is supported by the U.S. Department of Education’s Office of School Support and Accountability. The contents of this brief were developed under a grant from the Department; however, these contents do not necessarily reflect the views or policies of the Department.

Local contact information

Please put the contact information here.

Permission granted to reproduce this document.



NATIONAL CENTER FOR HOMELESS EDUCATION

Phone	800-308-2145
E-mail	<a href="mailto:homeless@serve.org">homeless@serve.org</a>
Address	5900 Summit Avenue #201