Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18

PA Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program

~ Region 7 ~

Who are the homeless?

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This includes children who are:

- ✓ Sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason
- ✓ Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds
- ✓ Living in emergency or transitional shelters or agencies
- ✓ Abandoned in hospitals
- ✓ Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or a similar setting

Who are the homeless? (continued)

- ✓ Migratory children: Children living in similar circumstances (previous slide). The term migratory children means children who are, or whose parent(s) are migratory agricultural workers, including migratory dairy workers, or migratory fishermen, and who have moved from one school district to another in the preceding 36 months, in order to obtain temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work.
- ✓Unaccompanied (not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian). This includes children who have run away, been thrown out of their home, been abandoned, or separated from their parent for any other reason (abuse).
- ✓Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as regular sleeping accommodations for human beings.

McKinney-Vento Act

Ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

These rights and protections include:

✓School stability

✓School access

✓Support for academic success

***This is a federal law that supersedes conflicting state laws or local policies.

School Selection

- ✓Local Education Agencies (LEAs) must continue the education in the school of origin or enroll the child in school in any public school that non-homeless students who live in the attendance area where the child is actually living are eligible to attend.
- ✓School of origin is the school the child attended when permanently house or was last enrolled.
- ✓To the extent feasible, LEAs must keep children in their school of origin unless it's against the wishes of the parent/guardian or unaccompanied youth.
- ✓The child's right to attend their school of origin extends for the duration of their homelessness and remainder of the year.

School Selection (continued)

- ✓Provide written explanation as to why attending school of origin is not in best interest (when applicable)
- ✓If the child becomes permanently housed during the academic year, they can finish the remainder of the year in the school of origin and the district must transport
- ✓If a child becomes homeless in between academic years, they are entitled to attend their school of origin for the following year
- ✓Written explanation to the parent required (from the LEA) if they send the child to another school, along with right to appeal

School Selection (continued)

- ✓ In the case of unaccompanied youth, prioritize youth's wishes
- ✓Placement must be made regardless if the child is with or without parent
- ✓Presume keeping student in school of origin if in student's best interest.

Enrollment

- ✓LEAs must immediately enroll the child despite lack of records
- ✓“Enroll” and “enrollment” are defined to include attending classes and participating fully in school activities
- ✓Enrolling school must immediately contact previous school for records (academic records, immunizations, IEP’s, etc.)
- ✓ If the child lacks immunizations or immunization records, the school must refer them to the homeless liaison who shall help obtain what is necessary (30 days)
- ✓State plans must include strategies to address problems resulting in enrollment delays
- ✓LEAs must have policies to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of homeless children

Enrollment (continued)

- ✓ Homeless families do not have to prove residency regarding school enrollment
- ✓ Enrollment must not be delayed because of fees owed for textbooks or any other debt the student owes
- ✓Absences caused by homelessness must not be counted against students
- ✓Enrollment deadlines are superseded by the McKinney-Vento Act which requires immediate enrollment
- ✓ District policies concerning enrolling children with a criminal past would take effect if the child is seeking enrollment
- ✓Never contact landlords or other family members to prove residency (federal law)
- ✓McKinney-Vento Act does not prohibit school for requiring parents to submit emergency contact information

Transportation

- ✓ LEAs are required to adopt policies and practices to ensure that transportation is provided to the school of origin
- ✓ If the homeless student moves to an area served by another LEA, the school of origin and LEA in which the student is living must agree upon a method to apportion responsibility and cost of transportation.
- ✓ If LEAs can't agree upon a method, cost must be shared equally.
- ✓ Distance, time of year, option available, effects of transfer, and any other transportation issues should be addressed.

Academic Standards/Services

- ✓ Homeless children must have access to the education and other services they need to ensure they have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state student academic achievement standards.
- ✓Homeless children are to be provided services comparable to those received by other students (including special education services, vocational programs, gifted and talented programs, school nutrition, GED, etc.)
- ✓Homeless alone is not sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment
- ✓Homeless, runaway or migratory children are automatically certified as eligible for free meal benefits upon proper documentation

Title IA Funds

- ✓ All children in homeless situations are automatically eligible for Title I services whether or not they live in the school attendance area
- ✓Every school district that receives Title IA funds is required to set aside a portion of its allotment to provide comparable services to homeless students attending schools that do not receive Title IA services
- ✓Amount based on total LEA allocation prior to expenditures and transfers
- ✓Amount may be determined based on a needs assessment and should involve the liaison
- ✓Title IA services should support the students to succeed in school and meet academic achievement standards
- ✓To help students effectively take advantage of educational opportunities, Title IA funds can be used for:

Title IA Funds (continued)

- Items of clothing (uniforms)
- Transportation
- Clothing for Physical Education
- Student fees to participate in general education programs
- School supplies
- Birth Certificates (enrollment)
- Immunizations
- Food
- Medical and dental services
- Eyeglasses and hearing aids
- Counseling services (anxiety)

Title IA Funds (continued)

- Outreach services to students living in shelters, motels, or other temporary residences
- Extended learning time before or after school (lack of quiet time)
- Tutoring services
- Parental involvement specifically oriented to reaching out to parents of homeless students
- Fees for AP and IB testing
- Fees for SAT/ACT testing

Title IA Funds (continued)

- ✓ Title IA funds can be used to fund McKinney-Vento liaisons
- ✓Title IA cannot be used to supplant other state or local funds
- ✓Title IA funds cannot be used for rent, utilities, or clothing for parents

Disputes

- ✓ Every state must develop a prompt resolution for disputes regarding the educational placement of homeless children
- ✓ States must ensure LEAs comply with requirements set forth by the McKinney-Vento Act including ensuring immediate enrollment
- ✓LEAs must provide written notice to families concerning school selection and enrollment decisions and provide enrollment in the school of choice while a dispute is being resolved
- ✓LEA liaisons should explain the dispute resolution process to the families and help them use it
- ✓LEA shall issue a written disposition of the dispute with 20 business days after the date on which the LEA liaison is notified of the dispute explaining basis for the decision (provide to parent/guardian)

Disputes (continued)

- ✓ Advise parents/guardians of their right to appeal
- ✓ If the parent/guardian is dissatisfied with the LEA's decision, they may file a complaint or appeal with a McKinney-Vento Site or Regional Coordinator or State Coordinator
- ✓Parent/guardian may elect to appeal the LEA decision directly to a court
- ✓Participation in the appeal procedure is not required prior to taking legal action.

Disputes (continued)

- ✓ The State Coordinator may assist in the mediation of disputes directly and may also invite those involved to have the dispute mediated at any time in the process:

Storm Camara

State Coordinator

PA Department of Education

333 Market Street, 5th Floor

Harrisburg, Pa 17126

717-772-2066

LEA Liaison Duties

- ✓ McKinney-Vento Act states, “Local education agencies will designate an appropriate staff person as a local education agency for homeless children and youth.” This person has the following responsibilities:
- Identify homeless children
- Inform parents of educational rights and opportunities
- Provide them with meaningful opportunities to participate in the education of their children
- Disseminate public notice of the educational rights of homeless students.

LEA Liaison Duties (Continued)

- Mediate enrollment disputes
- Inform parent/guardian of transportation options
- Identify and ensure unaccompanied youth are immediately enrolled pending any disputes that might arise and remove barriers that prevent them from receiving credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed at prior school
- Assist children and youth who do not have immunizations or records to obtain necessary documentation or immunizations
- Know best resources in your community to assist families and give referrals (food, shelter, counseling, substance abuse)

LEA Liaison Duties (continued)

- ✓ Distribute information on the subject of homeless students to staff.
- ✓Arrange staff development workshops and presentations for school personnel
- ✓Provide standard forms and information about enrollment procedures and key school programs to each shelter in your district
- ✓Ensure homeless children in need of special education are identified
- ✓Identify preschool-aged homeless children and ensure access to Head Start and Early Intervention
- ✓Participate in professional development and technical assistance

Identify Homeless Students (signs)

- ✓ Is the child sent to school in the same outfit for multiple days?
- ✓Does the child refrain from referencing his/her bedroom?
- ✓Does the child talk about domestic violence?
- ✓Is the child inappropriately afraid of police officers?
- ✓ Irregular school attendance
- ✓Does the child talk excessively about food?
- ✓ Frequently changing schools
- ✓Is the child behind in school academically?

Identify Homeless Students(signs) (continued)

- ✓ Is the child consistently unprepared for school?
- ✓Is the child familiar with age-appropriate subjects?
- ✓Marked change in behavior (withdrawal, shyness, nervousness, aggression)
- ✓Does the child talk about staying with grandparents, family, or in a motel or shelter?

Life Issues

The following gives a composite glimpse of how some homeless children may be viewing things we see or think of in a totally different way. The impact of these circumstances varies by age, severity, combination of factors and length of family troubles.

HOME	Temporary shelter, sharing a big room, sleeping on the floor, no privacy or space, no possessions or stability
FINANCES	Lack of spending money or doing anything fun; Welfare is main source of income
MARRIAGE	Family broken apart for many reasons, birth father rarely seen; often boyfriend involved, strained in-law relations

Life Issues (continued)

Family Experiences	Vacations, nights out to restaurants, etc. not a main part of their lives
Violence, abuse or addiction	Often see, if not in own family, in other families
Future Plans	“Will I ever have a home?” “Stay with parents?” “Normal?”
Sense of Worth	No place to entertain friends, clothes go unwashed, no money to join clubs or teams, behind in school, parents too stressed or not equipped to spend quality time
Health	Exposed to poor nutrition, crowded conditions, chronic illnesses, lack of medical care, mental health affected by circumstances and may become anxious, fearful and depressed
Adult Responsibilities	Often see adults depressed and withdrawn, may assume parental roles with younger siblings and become the babysitter and caregiver
Reliability/School Attendance	Parents may have left them unattended to get up in the morning, poor adult role models, not taught to finish projects
College	Parents have only finished high school or below, college is not often a topic of discussion, pressure to earn money
Job	Parents unemployed, frustrated about lack of work, or work in minimum wage/temporary jobs, not often seen as a career or positive experience.

What the Liaison Can Do:

- ✓ Know the BEC relating to homeless children and be in a position to explain it as needed to other staff
- ✓Look for possible warning signs of homelessness: absence patterns, clothing needs, hygiene, homework performances, behavioral changes, school changes
- ✓Distribute information to teachers and office staff on the subject of homeless students
- ✓Be ever mindful that the condition of homelessness is not a first choice for the families and children, but rather a last resort to secure shelter. Seize the opportunity to remove barriers when possible, and relieve some of the many burdens on families/children by providing as stable of a school environment and experience as possible

What the Liaison Can Do: (continued)

- ✓ If families are doubled up or tripled up, be aware also of the impact on the children who originally lived in the home before the other people moved in
- ✓ Work closely with the school counselor and school nurse when behavioral or medical needs are observed
- ✓Study and develop guidelines for the sensitive issue of abuse and domestic violence, and how to handle communications with the parents, both on the phone and in person at the school
- ✓Consider the possibility of how supportive counseling/listening sessions can be offered by counselors in the school

What the Liaison Can Do: (continued)

- ✓ Contact parent or shelter personnel if child is absent for 3 or more days
- ✓Don’t bring any special attention to children that are homeless in front of classmates
- ✓Alert staff members involved with the student of any serious conditions of the child
- ✓Be aware if child is ill, he/she may not have a place to go that is stable or quiet. Contact the shelter staff to make arrangements
- ✓Living in noisy, crowded conditions can result in tuning others out. Attentive behavior could prove difficult for the child

What the Liaison Can Do: (continued)

- ✓Try not to take away possessions as a disciplinary measure. They may be clinging to the last thing they call their own
- ✓Ensure that the child can participate in field trips, school wide activities and class projects even if they do not have transportation or necessary fees
- ✓Do not use physical education time or recess as a make-up or detention period. They may not have space in the shelter or motel to run, jump and play and let off pent up energy
- ✓Some assignments/projects may be embarrassing or difficult for homeless children (Things involving a house, family, getting papers signed, etc.)

What the Liaison Can Do: (continued)

- ✓ Discuss privately with the student what accommodations exist for doing homework and make necessary arrangements (tutoring)
- ✓Offer emotional support and reassurance that homelessness is a temporary condition. Reassure the child that this situation is not their fault
- ✓Utilize the services of the local Homeless McKinney-Vento Regional Site Coordinator
- ✓Set up the child to receive the Free Breakfast and Lunch Program

What the Teacher Can Do:

- ✓Be familiar with common characteristic of homeless children (Common signals are attendance at several schools, poor hygiene, gaps in learning, transportation, poor health and nutrition, and a lack of preparedness for class)
- ✓Assist other students in being sensitive to stereotypes of homeless people
- ✓Provide an environment rich in experience that is warm, stable and consistent
- ✓Provide an atmosphere that welcomes parents to participate in school activities

What the Teacher Can Do: (continued)

- ✓Adjust assignments so that students not living in permanent setting can complete them
- ✓Ensure the child has every opportunity to participate in after-school activities and in-school programs
- ✓Communicate with parents about school performance
- ✓If needed, connect the child with tutoring or remediation services
- ✓Help the student learn their way around school (buddy system)
- ✓Don’t bring special attention to the fact they are homeless in front of other children

What the Teacher Can Do: (continued)

- ✓Learn more about the conditions from where the family is coming
- ✓Ensure the child knows classroom routines and procedures
- ✓Look for warning signs of homelessness (absenteeism, hygiene, clothing, etc.)
- ✓Work closely with the school counselor when behavioral or medical needs are observed
- ✓Be sensitive to the needs of homeless children, but maintain consistent high expectations by challenging them with work in which they can experience success.
- ✓Try to give the student something that he or she can all their own (chore or responsibility)

What the Teacher Can Do: (continued)

- ✓Be aware students often live in noisy, crowded conditions (tuning out)
- ✓Discuss arrangements for homework
- ✓If you celebrate birthday's in your classroom, look for alternative ways to provide treats
- ✓Try not to take away possessions as a disciplinary measure
- ✓Don't use children's recess or PE time for make-up or detention
- ✓Be aware that some assignments or projects may be embarrassing or difficult for the child (Things involving family, house, etc.)
- ✓Review academic record and closely monitor the educational progress of the student

What the Counselor Can Do:

- ✓Help parents and student feel that we are a family at the school
- ✓Explain and answer questions that parents and students may have concerning school rules, policies, programs and services
- ✓Make sure parents and students know the counselor is there to help in any way needed
- ✓Track down records from previous schools to see if the child has been in special education or is in the process of being referred for a formal evaluation
- ✓Involve students in school activities
- ✓Make visits to the shelter site to keep shelter provider informed of activities that are going on within the school
- ✓Keep communications open between the counselor and shelter provider (share concerns)

What the Counselor Can Do: (continued)

- ✓Make sure special needs students are placed in age-appropriate classes
- ✓Assist with family problems
- ✓Provide informal help with adjustment/behavior problems, daily attendance, obtaining money, clothing, etc.
- ✓Follow-up with parents/guardians a few weeks after enrollment
- ✓Work with the principal to get help as fast as possible
- ✓Keep the confidentiality of the parents
- ✓Know the local community resources so you are in a position to make referrals for the family in areas like housing, transportation and psychological counseling

What the Principal Can Do:

- ✓Know the BEC relating to homeless children and explain it to school staff as needed
- ✓Establish a true welcome to the school. Introduce the family and child to teachers, counselor and other staff, and give a tour of the school
- ✓Set the tone for future parental involvement
- ✓Arrange for transportation as needed
- ✓ Set the child up to receive the Free Breakfast and Lunch Program
- ✓Prepare the total staff to become sensitive to the condition of homelessness

What the Principal Can Do: (continued)

- ✓Inform staff and key personnel of the guidelines for enrollment or transfer of homeless children. Resolve any problems which may occur during the process
- ✓Work with directors of the local shelters to update information on school happenings, problems, concerns or academic support
- ✓Be ever mindful that the condition of homelessness is not a first choice for the families and children, but rather a last resort to secure shelter
- ✓Seize the opportunity to remove barriers when you can
- ✓Provide as stable a school environment and experience as possible

What the School Nurse Can Do:

- ✓Be familiar with common characteristics of children and youth who are homeless (poor attendance, poor health and nutrition, poor hygiene, etc.)
- ✓Know the BEC relating to homeless children and be in a position to explain it to staff as needed
- ✓Verify immunization records and refer the student to the local health department for any needed immunizations
- ✓Follow up with students sent to obtain immunizations or physicals
- ✓Assist parents with the completion of medical records

What the School Nurse Can Do: (continued)

- ✓Ask about glasses (child may need them)
- ✓Develop reliable, accessible sources of medical, dental, and eye care for the homeless families. Share your discoveries with the liaison
- ✓Be available, accessible and compassionate to the concerns, needs and feelings of the homeless families
- ✓Try to boost self-esteem of parents and children by conveying concern, respect, kindliness and compassion. Be a good listener and empathetic
- ✓Contact the school district's local homeless education liaison so that additional services can be coordinated
- ✓Contact parent and shelter personnel if the child is absent for three or more days to find out if assistance is needed

What the Transportation Staff Can Do:

- ✓Keep the lines of communication open with the liaison in your district
- ✓Develop a relationship with transportation departments in other local districts
- ✓Become familiar with the BEC
- ✓Contact the Regional Coordinator with any questions or concerns
- ✓Don’t bring special attention to children that are homeless in front of other children

School Selection Factors to Consider

Length of stay (check one)	_____ Long Term _____ Short Term
Mileage to original school	_____ Under 10 miles _____ Over 10 miles How many miles? _____
What geographical area is the family planning to relocate to?	_____ Original school area _____ Near shelter ____ Near temporary area _____ Other
If the child has special needs . . .	Can those be met: _____ The new school? _____ Original school? _____ Both schools?
Is the student close to a school break or close to the end of the school year?	Would it be best to: _____ Finish out the Year? _____ Change to a new school during break?
Other school-aged siblings	Are there siblings that will be in: _____ The original school? _____ The new school?
Domestic violence issue	Will the student be in danger at the: _____ Original school? _____ New school?

School Selection Factors to Consider (continued)

School needs	Will the new school require a change in clothes/uniforms?
Notification to school about homeless situation	_____ Does the original school know that status of the student? _____ Does the original school agree that returning there is in the best interest of the student?
Teen with a child	Is child care available near the school? _____ Original school _____ New school
Parent/Guardian choice	_____ Original school _____ New school

Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program/Region 7

Luzerne Intermediate Unit 18
Project Profile

- On July 22, 1987, the Steward B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act became public law. This was the first comprehensive federal law dealing with the problems of homelessness. Included in the 2001 No Child Left Behind Act, it is now called the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act of 2001* (Public Law 104-110. Subtitle B)

The main objective of the Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program is to make sure homeless youth have access to appropriate education while removing barriers that homeless children face. Its goal is to have the educational process continue as uninterrupted as possible when the children are in homeless situations.

Some of the other objectives of our program are:

- Inform school districts of their responsibilities to homeless children and youth
- Increase awareness about the needs of homeless children
- Explain current legislation and policies
- Provide practical tips for working with homeless children

Pennsylvania's Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program is meeting its aim to minimize the impact of homelessness on education. By keeping children in their school of origin when possible and coordinating educational services, it is helping students experiencing homelessness access all of the benefits of an educational system other resident students often take for granted.

The Luzerne Intermediate Unit #18 Homeless Children's Program (Region #7) will collaborate to provide services to six intermediate units, and to school districts located in seventeen counties of northeastern Pennsylvania.

Resources

http://homeless.center-school.org
www.pde.state.pa.us/homeless
www.naehcy.org
www.serve.org/nche
www.nationalhomeless.org
www.nlchp.org
http://aspe.hhs.gov/hsp/homelessness/symposium07/index.htm
http://homeless.center-schoo.org/HomelessDirectory/
http://www.eduation.pa.gov/Pages/default.aspx#tab-1