



COVID-19 Tool

Identification Tool for School Staff

Homeless students are significantly more at risk of losing services during the COVID-19 pandemic. LEAs should consider the following when developing identification tools for school staff (e.g. teachers, counselors, social workers, etc.) that will provide increased awareness of indicators and risk factors of students experiencing homelessness.

Possible Indicators of Student and Families Experiencing Homelessness

Below are examples of possible indicators to listen for when working with students and families during COVID-19:

- “We are staying with friends right now.”
- “I don’t know where I will be staying tonight.”
- “We have been moving around a lot.”
- “We are staying with a family member.” (e.g. aunt, uncle, grandmother, etc.)
- “It’s a new address, we are far away from school.”
- “We were locked out of the house or apartment.”
- “It’s hard to focus with so many people living here.”
- “It’s hard to get sleep with so many people living here.”
- “I don’t feel good, I am really hungry.”
- “We had to leave or move quickly.”
- “We are living in a shelter.”
- “We are living in our car.”
- Statements that indicating they are living in unsheltered situations (e.g. cars, parks, abandoned buildings, etc.)

Possible Indicators of an Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Below are examples of possible indicators to listen for when working with unaccompanied youth during COVID-19:

- “I don’t have time for school, I need to work.”
- “I cannot live at home anymore.”
- “I was locked out of my house or apartment.”
- “I am staying with friends right now.”
- “We are staying with a family member.” (e.g. aunt, uncle, grandmother, etc.)
- “I don’t know where I will be staying tonight.”
- “It’s hard to focus with so many people living here.”
- “It’s hard to get sleep with so many people living here.”
- “I am living in a car.”
- “I am living in a shelter.”
- Statements indicating, they are living in unsheltered situations (e.g. cars, parks, abandoned buildings, etc.)
- Statements indicating, they are moving from place to place (couch surfing)

Follow-up Questions

Below are examples of possible follow-up questions to ask to help determine if the student or family should be referred to your homeless liaison:

- Have you recently moved?
- Was your move due to a loss of housing?
- Did you lose your housing due to unemployment or reduced hours at work?
- Did you lose your housing due to high medical bills?
- Did you lose your housing due to domestic abuse? Are you in a safe place?
- Did you lose your housing due to an eviction or foreclosure?
- Are you unable to get to our food sites? Are you far away from the school?
- Are family members or friends staying with you due to COVID-19? If so, how many? Did they lose their housing?
- What type of resources and services do you need assistance with? (e.g. academic, basic, safety)

Strategies to Support Identification

When working with students and families, try not to use the word “homeless.” Here are some suggestions to use other than “homeless”:

- Family in transition
- Temporary housing
- Loss of housing
- Unstable housing
- Moving from place to place

Have your local homeless liaisons information readily available. The family may want to contact them directly.

- Discuss the student’s or family’s living situation discreetly if utilizing a virtual meeting platform.
- Utilize an LEA approved method of communication to ensure confidentiality when sharing any personal information.
- Do not disclose information about a student’s living situation to anyone other than the homeless liaison, other school administrators, and/or school staff only as needed.
- Ensure you provide the students and families with LEA and homeless education program information and resources.

Sample Script for School Staff:

“There is someone here at our school that might be able to help you with additional support services and resources. Can I provide them your contact information? Her/his name is ____, and they will be calling/emailing you to share more information about this program and determine if you may be eligible for these additional support services and resources.”

Next Steps

Utilize your LEAs information-sharing systems to communicate:

- Student contact information and change in housing status to your homeless liaison. This will help to facilitate prompt identification and services for newly identified students.
- That the student or family has moved outside of their attendance zone.
- Student safety concerns
- Number of people in the home, hotel, or motel.
- If the student or the family is now living in a shelter.
- Academic and social services needed.

LEAs should ensure policies regarding privacy and sharing of personal information of students and families experiencing homelessness are in place and have been provided to all LEA staff. For more information, please visit: [FERPA FAQ](#)