



## Homeless Education and Community Schools: A Crosswalk of Partnership Opportunities

### This California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC) tip sheet:

- provides key information about the Education for Homeless Children and Youths (EHCY) program and the Community Schools (CS) strategy;
- recommends best practices for partnering across the EHCY program and CS strategy to serve children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness;
- links to resources for more information throughout; and
- serves as a more comprehensive companion piece to the HETAC’s [Homeless Education and Community Schools: A Primer on Pillar Alignment](#) document.

### Context

Children and youth experiencing homelessness often face unstable and even traumatic circumstances in their everyday lives outside of school, which, in turn, creates unique barriers and challenges to their success in school. According to the 2024 [California School Dashboard](#), students in homeless situations in California



- are twice as likely to be chronically absent from school,
- have a school suspension rate of 5.7% as compared to 3.2% for all students, and
- have a high school graduation rate of 71.6% as compared to 86.7% for all students.

And yet, despite these issues, many students experiencing homelessness succeed in school, particularly when provided with right-sized school- and community-based supports. Given the harmony of goals and statutory guidelines across the [EHCY program](#) and the [CS strategy](#), these programs/strategies are natural partners for working together to address the unique vulnerabilities experienced by students in homeless situations and provide the supports these students need to succeed in school.

This HETAC tip sheet provides key information about the EHCY program and CS strategy; recommends strategies for partnering across the EHCY program and CS strategy to serve children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness; links to resources for more information throughout; and serves as a more comprehensive companion piece to the HETAC’s [Homeless Education and Community Schools: A Primer on Pillar Alignment](#) document.

### About the EHCY Program and CS Strategy

The table below provides key information about the EHCY program and CS strategy, including overview and goals, authorizing statutes, funding sources, and alignment with the four CS pillars.

EHCY Program	CS Strategy
Overview and Goals	
The EHCY program aims to	The CS strategy aims to

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth;</li> <li>• remove barriers in laws, regulations, practices, or policies to the school identification, enrollment, attendance, and success of children and youth experiencing homelessness; and</li> <li>• ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to the education and other services they need to have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state academic standards to which all students are held.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• equip schools to implement a “whole-child” school improvement strategy where the local educational agency (LEA) and school work closely with teachers, students, families, and partners;</li> <li>• support schools’ efforts to partner with community agencies and local government to align community resources to improve student outcomes; and</li> <li>• leverage school-community partnerships to provide an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement.</li> </ul> <p>The CS strategy is founded on the four pillars of:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Integrated student supports</li> <li>2. Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities</li> <li>3. Active family and community engagement</li> <li>4. Collaborative leadership and practices</li> </ol> <p>Community schools use a <a href="#">needs and assets assessment</a> to collect targeted information to better understand the needs of local students, families, and community partners.</p>
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**Authorizing Statutes**

<p><b>Federal Statute:</b> The <a href="#">federal EHCY Program</a> is authorized by Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (hereafter <i>McKinney-Vento Act</i>), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).</p> <p><b>Federal Citation:</b> <a href="#">42 U.S.C. §§ 11431-11435</a></p> <p><b>California Statute:</b> California Education Code Chapter 5.5: <i>Education of Pupils in Foster Care and Pupils Who Are Homeless</i> reinforces and, in some instances, expands upon the educational rights and protections provided to students experiencing homelessness in the federal McKinney-Vento Act. In addition, other sections of California Education Code include provisions related to the education of students experiencing homelessness.</p> <p><b>California Citation:</b> <a href="#">Cal. Educ. Code §§ 48850–48859</a> Visit the <a href="#">HETAC State Statutes and Guidance webpage</a> for more information on additional state statutory provisions related to students experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p><b>Federal Statute:</b> The <a href="#">federal Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) Program</a> is authorized by Sections 4621-4623 and 4625 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by ESSA.</p> <p><b>Federal Citation:</b> <a href="#">20 U.S.C. §§ 7271-7273, 7275</a></p> <p><b>California Statute:</b> The <a href="#">California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP)</a> is authorized by the California Community Schools Partnership Act.</p> <p><b>California Citation:</b> <a href="#">Cal. Educ. Code §§ 8900-8902</a></p>
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**Funding Sources**

<p><b>Federal to state:</b> The U.S. Department of Education (ED) allocates federal EHCY funding annually to state educational agencies (SEAs) based on the state’s proportion of the Title I, Part A federal allocation.</p> <p><b>State to local:</b> The California Department of Education (CDE) awards EHCY subgrants to California LEAs and county offices of education (COEs) through a competitive subgrant application process every three years.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>LEAs receive subgrants to oversee the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act in schools through the LEA by supporting the enrollment, attendance, and full school participation of children and youth experiencing homelessness.</li> <li>COEs receive subgrants to oversee the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act in LEAs throughout the county by supporting the enrollment, attendance, and full school participation of children and youth experiencing homelessness. COEs also facilitate coordination and collaboration among LEAs and community partners within the county.</li> </ul> <p>More specifically, the McKinney-Vento Act and ED guidance specify <a href="#">22 allowable uses of EHCY subgrant funds</a>.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Because EHCY grant funds are awarded competitively, not all California LEAs receive dedicated homeless education funding; in fact, <a href="#">only 6.5% of CA LEAs receive EHCY subgrants</a>, underscoring the key role partnerships with programs such as Community Schools and Title I, Part A can play in meeting the needs of students experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p><b>Federal to state/local:</b> ED awards federal FSCS grant funds annually to institutions of higher education (IHEs), LEAs, SEAs, and non-profit organizations through a competitive grant application process.</p> <p><b>State to local:</b> CDE has provided three CCSPP funding opportunities for LEAs and schools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Planning grants for LEAs with no existing community schools,</li> <li>Implementation grants for new community schools or for the expansion or continuation of existing community schools, and</li> <li>Extension grants for CCSPP implementation grantees to extend CCSPP funding for an additional two years.</li> </ul> <p>Additionally, CDE has granted funds to COEs with two or more CCSPP grantees in their county to coordinate school-community partnerships in support of the implementation of community schools in the county.</p> <p>For more information on allowable uses of CCSPP funds, please contact the CDE Community Schools Office at <a href="mailto:CCSPP@cde.ca.gov">CCSPP@cde.ca.gov</a>.</p> <p><b>Note:</b> Having higher than state average rates of child homelessness, foster youth, or justice-involved youth is one of four criteria that qualify an entity to apply for CCSPP grant funding [Cal. Educ. Code § 8901(j)(1)(D)].</p>
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<b>Personnel</b>	
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<p>Under the McKinney-Vento Act, LEAs must designate an appropriate staff person to serve as the LEA homeless education liaison (hereafter <i>LEA liaison</i>). The LEA liaison serves as the LEA’s key homeless education contact and oversees the Act’s implementation in schools throughout the LEA.</p> <p>For more information about the LEA liaison role, including statutorily required duties, please visit the <a href="#">HETAC’s Guide to the Homeless Liaison Role in California: Legal Guidelines and Implementation Strategies webpage</a>.</p>	<p>The community school coordinator (CSC) – sometimes called a community school manager, community school director, or resource coordinator – plays an essential role in a community school. The CSC oversees school and community resources and partnerships to help strengthen the systems, structures, and practices needed for students and their families to thrive.</p> <p>For more information about the CSC role, including common CSC duties, please visit the <a href="#">State</a></p>
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[Transformational Assistance Center for Community Schools' Job Descriptions and Staffing resource.](#)

Alignment with the CS Pillars

Pillar 1: Integrated Student Supports

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, schools provide integrated supports for students experiencing homelessness.

- **Removing barriers to school participation:** SEAs and LEAs must review and undertake steps to revise any laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the school identification, enrollment, attendance or success of children and youth experiencing homelessness. This includes ensuring that students experiencing homelessness who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic and extracurricular activities, including magnet school, summer school, career and technical education, advanced placement, online learning, and charter school programs, if such programs are available at the state and local levels [42 U.S.C. § 11431(2); 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(F)(iii)].
- **Referring to services:** LEA liaisons must ensure that children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness receive referrals to needed services, including health care, dental, mental health, substance abuse, housing, and other appropriate services [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(iv)].
- **Training:** To address the trauma experienced by students in homeless situations, it is critical that LEAs provide safe and supportive climates and employ fair discipline strategies. LEAs are encouraged to train school personnel regarding how trauma can impact student behavior and how to mitigate the effects of trauma in the school environment by providing trauma-informed support. LEAs also should ensure that, prior to taking disciplinary action, school personnel consider issues related to a student's homelessness ([EHCY Program Guidance](#), p. 35).

[About CS Pillar 1](#)

Community schools provide **integrated student supports** focused on students' educational and life success.

- They pay explicit attention to students' social and emotional development as well as their academic learning, recognizing that they are intertwined and mutually reinforcing.
- They provide and coordinate a range of on-site services and supports to overcome both academic and nonacademic barriers to students' educational and life success.
- Common services and supports include medical, dental, and mental health care services; tutoring and other academic supports; and resources for families, such as parent education classes, job training and placement services, housing assistance, and nutrition programs.
- Community schools' integrated student supports also may include conflict resolution training, trauma-informed care, and restorative practices to support mental health and lessen conflict, bullying, and punitive school disciplinary actions.

Pillar 2: Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities

Under the McKinney-Vento Act and California Education Code, schools provide expanded and

[About CS Pillar 2](#)

**Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities** are essential to schools' capacity to

<p>enriched learning time and opportunities for students experiencing homelessness.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Immediate enrollment and full school participation:</b> LEAs must ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness are enrolled immediately in school, even if they lack records normally required for enrollment. Enrollment is defined as “attending classes and participating fully in school activities.” To support full participation in school activities, LEAs must ensure that students experiencing homelessness who meet the relevant eligibility criteria do not face barriers to accessing academic, extracurricular, and summer school activities [42 U.S.C. §11432(g)(3)(C); 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(1); 42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(F)(iii)].         </li> <li> <b>Priority enrollment in state expanded learning programs:</b> Students experiencing homelessness must be prioritized for enrollment in California’s <a href="#">After School Education and Safety (ASES) Program</a> and <a href="#">Expanded Learning Opportunities Program (ELOP)</a>. ASES and ELOP sites that charge fees must waive them for students experiencing homelessness [Cal. Educ. Code § 8483(c)(1)(A); Cal. Educ. Code § 8482.6; <a href="#">CDE ELOP FAQs</a>].         </li> </ul>	<p>support students’ academic growth, as well as to help them develop socially, emotionally, and physically. In addition to supporting rich, student-focused instruction in classrooms, community schools provide students with as much as one-third more learning time during which they experience arts, physical activity, small group or individualized academic support, and hands-on learning activities across a range of subject areas.</p>
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### Pillar 3: Active Family and Community Engagement

<p>Under the McKinney-Vento Act, schools support family and community engagement.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li> <b>Parent involvement:</b> LEA liaisons must ensure that the parents or guardians of children and youth experiencing homelessness are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided with meaningful opportunities to participate in their children’s education. LEAs receiving EHCY subgrant funds may use these funds to provide education and training to the parents and guardians of children and youth experiencing homelessness about the rights of and resources available to these students, and other activities designed to increase the meaningful involvement of these parents and guardians in the education of their children [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(v); 42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(10)].         </li> <li> <b>Early care and education programming:</b> In addition to referring to services as noted under pillar 1, LEA liaisons must ensure that children         </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#">About CS Pillar 3</a></p> <p><b>Active family and community engagement</b> is essential to fostering relationships of trust and respect. This pillar builds stronger relationships between schools, families and community members so all stakeholders feel welcomed, supported, and valued as partners.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community schools build the capacity of all stakeholders and the school by creating empowered decision-making processes and leveraging local resources and expertise to address educational inequities.</li> <li>Community schools prioritize meaningful and ongoing engagement with families and community partners and establish the systems, structures, and supports to make this happen.</li> <li>Family and community engagement can take many forms, including             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>partnering with parents to develop and promote a vision for student success;</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
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<p>and families experiencing homelessness have access to and receive early care and educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, early intervention under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and other LEA-administered preschool programs [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(iii)].</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ offering courses, activities, and services for parents and community members; and</li> <li>○ creating structures and opportunities for shared leadership.</li> </ul>
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**Pillar 4: Collaborative Leadership and Practices**

<p>Under the McKinney-Vento Act and California Education Code, schools support collaborative leadership and practices.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● <b>Professional development and technical assistance:</b> State coordinators for homeless education<sup>1</sup> (hereafter <i>state coordinators</i>) must provide technical assistance to LEAs to ensure they are equipped to comply with LEA requirements under the McKinney-Vento Act [42 U.S.C. § 11432(f)(5)]. Similarly, LEA liaisons must ensure that school personnel providing services to children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness receive professional development at least annually on the LEA's homeless education program policies and recognizing signs that students are at-risk of or experiencing homelessness [42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(ix); Cal. Educ. Code § 48851.3].</li> <li>● <b>Shared responsibility:</b> Multiple federal education programs require partnership with state coordinators and LEA liaisons to ensure that the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness are addressed, including <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <a href="#">Title I, Part A</a> [20 U.S.C. § 6312(a)(1); 20 U.S.C. § 6312(b)(6)];</li> <li>○ <a href="#">Career and Technical Education</a> (20 U.S.C. § 2354(d)(6)); and</li> <li>○ <a href="#">Special education</a> [20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(21)(B)(v)].</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<p style="text-align: center;"><a href="#">About CS Pillar 4</a></p> <p><b>Collaborative leadership and practices</b> provide the relational “glue” that connects and reinforces the other CS pillars, making it foundational and critical for the success of a community school strategy. Under this pillar, parents, students, teachers, principals, and community partners build a culture of professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility. Examples of this pillar include professional development and technical assistance, site-based leadership teams, and teacher learning communities.</p>
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**More Information**

<p>Under federal and California state law, LEAs must provide a broad array of supports to children and youth experiencing homelessness to ensure their full school participation, including support for school</p>	<p>In addition to its four pillars, the CS strategy also embraces four key conditions for learning, four cornerstone commitments, and four proven practices. Download CDE’s <a href="#">California Community Schools</a></p>
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<sup>1</sup> Under the McKinney-Vento Act, SEAs must designate an appropriate staff person to serve as the state coordinator for homeless education. The state coordinator serves as the SEA’s key homeless education contact and oversees the Act’s implementation in LEAs throughout the state [42 U.S.C. § 11432(d)(3)].

stability, credit accrual, and high school graduation. Visit the HETAC's [Educational Rights of Students Experiencing Homelessness webpage](#) for more information.

[Framework](#) for more information. (Note: This file will download as a Microsoft Word document to your computer's Downloads folder.)

## Partnering Across the EHCY Program and the CS Strategy

### Leveraging Targeted Universalism

[Targeted Universalism](#) is a framework developed by John A. Powell, Director of the Other and Belonging Institute and Professor at the University of California, Berkeley. The framework aims to address the limitations of the two primary approaches to policy and programming: the targeted approach, which focuses on particular population subgroups, but may be seen as unfair or divisive; and the universal approach, which applies to everyone equally, but may not address the unique needs of population subgroups. Targeted Universalism aims to bridge the gap between the targeted and universal approaches by designing programs that are both inclusive and effective in achieving common goals across populations experiencing differing circumstances and needs. Leveraging the Targeted Universalism framework, community school coordinators can partner with LEA liaisons to design and deliver programming that addresses the unique needs of students and families experiencing homelessness within overall CS goals.



### Recommended Strategies

LEAs may consider the following strategies for leveraging partnership across EHCY programs and the CS strategy to serve students experiencing homelessness:

- Organize LEA programs to locate EHCY programs within the broader LEA CS strategy or department and/or co-locate EHCY and CS offices to facilitate communication and partnership.
- Convene EHCY and CS leadership to plan partnership in support of students experiencing homelessness, including provision of professional development, information and resource sharing, and blending and braiding funding.
- Offer intersectional training for EHCY and CS staff, focusing on the overlap between EHCY and CS work and opportunities for coordination in service planning and delivery.
- Leverage CS staff to provide targeted supports to children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness as part of the LEA's overall CS strategy.
- Inventory community partner relationships across the EHCY program and CS strategy to build out a comprehensive school-community partner network in support of students and families experiencing homelessness, including special populations like [families with young children](#) and youth experiencing homelessness on their own ([unaccompanied homeless youth](#)).



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