Helping Young Children (Birth to Five) Who Are Homeless

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Welcome!

- **37 locations**, from Selkirk to Ocean Beach, Orcas Island to Clarkston
- Head Start, Early Head Start, ECEAP, ITEIP, ECSE, McKinney-Vento, universities, child care providers, Even Start…
- Power Point is on the web at www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/default.aspx
- Thanks to ESD 113, this P20 will also be available on the web.
• Can each location please circulate a sign-in sheet, with the location name on top:
  • Participant’s name
  • Agency and role
  • Email address
  • Phone number

• Can each location please choose a facilitator to fax the sign-in sheet to Patricia Julianelle at (360) 664-3575 (or scan and email, if you prefer)
Goals for Today

- Gain an understanding of family homelessness and the McKinney-Vento Act.
- Understand services offered and basic referral procedures of different agency programs.
- Identify strategies to improve outreach to families experiencing homelessness.
- Create local partnerships in order to increase coordination between agencies.
• 40% of children living in homeless shelters are under the age of five.

• 15% of young homeless children are enrolled in preschool programs (compared with 60% of low-income children).

• 54% of children in homeless situations experience some form of developmental delay.
Challenges for young children who are homeless

- **Poverty**
  - Inconsistent and inadequate health care
  - Inadequate nutrition
  - Crowded, often unsanitary living conditions
  - Lack of transportation

- **Mobility**
  - Limited early childhood programming and waiting lists
  - Attendance problems
  - Inability to retain/provide records
Challenges for young children who are homeless

- Emotional stress and trauma
  - Unfamiliar and unpredictable surroundings
  - Family separation
  - High levels of domestic violence
  - Heightened concern with safety and privacy
Challenges for educators and service providers

- Awareness / Identification of homeless families and young children
- Coordination among programs
- Limited resources
- Policies/structures
  - Enrollment
  - Attendance
  - Transportation
- Family transience
- Communication with families
  - Building trust
What does “homeless” mean?

Head Start and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Parts B (3-21) and C (infants and toddlers) now define homeless children to include any children considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act. Both laws also have special provisions related to serving homeless children and families.
Definition of “homeless” under the McKinney-Vento Act

Individuals who lack a **fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence:**

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Abandoned in hospitals
- Awaiting foster care placement
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing
Who Implements the McKinney-Vento Act?

- Every state has a McKinney-Vento State Coordinator
  - Melinda Dyer / Patricia Julianelle
- Every school district has a McKinney-Vento Liaison
  - Identifies homeless children and youth
  - Assists with enrollment and services, including preschool
  - Provides training to school and district staff
  - Creates community awareness and outreach
  - [www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/pubdocs/HomelessLiaisonContactList.pdf](http://www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/pubdocs/HomelessLiaisonContactList.pdf)
Basic Referral Procedures

• When there is a concern about a child’s development, refer the family to a local Lead Family Resources Coordinator (FRC).

• To find a local Lead FRC, contact the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588 or the ITEIP website at www1.dshs.wa.gov/iteip.
Eligibility for Services

- The Lead FRC has 45 days from the date of referral *with parent permission* –
  - coordinate assessments;
  - facilitate the eligibility determination process;
  and,
  - when the child is eligible, convenes an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) meeting.
Eligibility for Services

• A child is eligible if she demonstrates a 25% delay in at least one domain (fine or gross motor, cognitive, communication, social/emotional, and/or adaptive; or

• Has a physical or mental condition that has a high probability of resulting in developmental delay.
Infant Toddler Early Intervention Program

Provision of Timely Services

- Assistive technology/services
- Audiology
- Family training, counseling, and home visits
- Health services (to enable the child to benefit from other early intervention services)
- Medical services (only for diagnostic or evaluation purposes - does not cover services that are surgical in nature)
- Nursing services (to enable the child to benefit from other early intervention services)
- Nutrition Services
- Occupational therapy
- Physical therapy
- Psychological services
- Social work services
- Special instruction
- Speech language pathology
- Transportation
- Vision services
Services in Natural Environments—focus on:

- Family priorities that result from challenging daily routines and activities.

- Child participation in community and family life.

- Building on and strengthening a child’s motivation to learn and do within naturally occurring routines and learning opportunities.
• Prior to a child’s third birthday, he/she is evaluated to establish eligibility for the preschool special education program.

• Children who are eligible receive an Individualized Education Plan (IEP).
  -outlines educational goals and services

• In addition, districts are required to conduct Child Find activities designed to identify children with disabilities who are homeless WAC 392-172A-02040(2).
Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Variety of Service Delivery Models

• Preschool special education classroom within a school district
• Special education services at community preschool/childcare
• ECEAP or Head Start within the community or located at a school district
• Interlocal Agreement: when two school districts contract to provide services
• Special education personnel (Teacher, OT, PT, Speech) conduct a home visit

Remember, service delivery is unique to each district and the individual needs of each child. Every district has policies, procedures and resources that will determine which service delivery model is used.
Basic Referral Procedures

• Anyone can refer a child to their local school district for an evaluation for special education.
• Parent consent is required for an evaluation.
• School district has a 35 school day timeline to complete the special education evaluation.

This timeline continues, even if a child moves to a new district before the special education evaluation is completed.
• Basic Referral Procedures

• The 35 school day evaluation timeline applies unless the new school district is “making sufficient progress to ensure a prompt completion of the evaluation, and the parent and the subsequent school district agree to a specific time when the evaluation will be completed” WAC 392-172A-03005(3)(e).

• The parent must give their written consent to extend the special education evaluation timeline.
Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

- Preschoolers with an IEP
  - When a child moves to a new community within the state, their IEP can be implemented immediately WAC 392-172A-03105(4).
  - Parents should take the IEP document when registering their child for school.
  - If parents don’t have a copy of the IEP, they can tell the school district that their child was receiving special education services, so records can be requested from the previous school district.

- [http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/EC.aspx](http://www.k12.wa.us/SpecialEd/EC.aspx) for more information
Head Start is a federally-funded comprehensive service delivery program for low-income/at-risk families and children with disabilities.

Head Start provides services to children and families in the following areas:

- Health and Nutrition (including Mental Health and Dental Services)
- Education
- Family Support
- Disabilities
In 2007, approximately **19,300** children were served in Head Start programs in WA, representing:

- Head Start (3-5 year-olds)
- Early Head Start (0-3 year-olds)
- Migrant/Seasonal Head Start (0-5 year-olds)
- American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start (0-5 year-olds)
Who is eligible for Head Start?

Children are eligible for Head Start services if:

- Family Income is at or below 130% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines
- They are receiving Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- They are being served in the Foster Care System
- They have special needs/disabilities
- They meet eligibility requirements related to status as a Migrant/Seasonal Farmworker or American Indian status
- They are determined to be Homeless
In Head Start, “homeless children” has the meaning given the term ‘homeless children and youths’ in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
To remove barriers to the enrollment and participation of homeless children in Head Start programs, the Head Start Act of 2007 requires Head Start agencies—

(1) to implement policies and procedures to ensure that homeless children are identified and prioritized for enrollment; 
(2) to allow families of homeless children to apply to, enroll in, and attend Head Start programs while required documents, such as proof of residency, immunization and other medical records, birth certificates, and other documents, are obtained within a reasonable time frame; and 
(3) to coordinate individual Head Start programs with efforts to implement provisions outlined in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
(4) Establish **ongoing** channels of communication between Head Start staff and their counterparts in the schools (including teachers, social workers, and **local educational agency liaisons designated in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**) to facilitate coordination of programs.
To locate a Head Start program in your area, visit the following website:

http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices
• ECEAP is a free program for three and four year olds from families that have low incomes or environmental risks.

• ECEAP fosters the development of the whole child and enhances opportunities for success in school and life.

• ECEAP supports each parent as their child’s first and most important teacher and provider of safety, loving care, and stability.

• ECEAP honors each family’s culture and language.

• Learn more at: http://www.del.wa.gov/care/find-hs-eceap
ECEAP Comprehensive Services

- Preschool Education
- Family Partnerships
- Health Coordination
• 5% of ECEAP children are homeless at the time of enrollment
• Children experiencing homelessness are prioritized for enrollment in ECEAP, along with children in foster care, families with the lowest incomes, or families with multiple needs.
Defining Homelessness in ECEAP

• ECEAP defines homelessness as lacking a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence. This can include children from families who:

  • Share housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.
  • Live in motels, hotels, temporary trailers, or campgrounds.
  • Live in emergency or transitional shelters.
  • Are abandoned in hospitals.
  • Are awaiting foster care placement.
Related ECEAP Policies

- ECEAP allows contractors in areas with high incidence of homelessness to reserve slots for homeless children, after obtaining approval from the State ECEAP Office.

- Children may begin attending ECEAP when homeless, then we will assist families in documenting child immunization records and proof of family income within 90 days. For homeless families temporarily sharing housing with relatives, do not include the hosts in family size.

- At least every three years, each ECEAP agency conducts a community assessment. As part of this they estimate the number of three and four year old children who are homeless and plan to meet the need for future services.
Helping Young Children Who Are Homeless

• Strategies and ideas from colleagues
  • ESD 105: Child Find (KidScreen)
    Ann Allen, Director of Learning Support
  • ESD 123: McKinney-Vento/ECSE teamwork
    Toni Neidhold and Kellie Horn
  • ESD 121: Head Start and homeless families
    Linda Carr, Head Start Family Support Manager
  • Central Valley School District: ECEAP and homelessness
Tips for Collaboration

• Get to know one another.
• Use each program’s mailing lists, websites, newsletters, fact sheets, community contacts, service coordinators and training opportunities to share information.
• Develop a comprehensive County plan for identifying and serving infants, toddlers and preschoolers who are homeless/highly mobile.
Tips for Outreach

• Coordinate recruitment, child find, and McKinney-Vento identification efforts.

• Refer children and families to each others’ programs, as appropriate.

• Place program posters and flyers in different languages in schools and places where families experiencing homelessness may see them (family and domestic violence shelters, low-cost motels, food banks, health clinics, social services offices, laundromats...).
Tips to Address Mobility

- Prioritize children experiencing homelessness on waitlists and evaluation schedules.
- Have open communication with parents about the family’s living situation and impending moves. Obtain consent to request information from other agencies and providers.
- Try to keep children with the same program/provider/school despite their mobility.
- In anticipation of mobility, develop joint procedures to expedite services and provide continuous services for highly mobile children.
Tips to Help Parents Participate

• Help teachers and providers understand that parents experiencing homelessness may be overwhelmed by feelings of stress or guilt and their ongoing efforts to meet their family’s basic needs. Working with them requires greater patience and flexibility along with a strengths-based approach.

• Provide parents with bus passes or other transportation assistance to attend appointments.
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