



Visions of a Brighter Future

**A Study of Homeless Education
Programs in Washington State**



Visions of a Brighter Future

A Study of Homeless Education Programs in Washington State

Prepared by
Dr. Jennifer N. Wu, Research Associate

University of Washington
Center for the Study and Teaching of At-Risk Students

Dr. Terry Bergeson
Superintendent of Public Instruction

Mary Alice Heuschel
Deputy Superintendent, Learning and Teaching

Melinda Dyer
Program Supervisor, Education for Homeless Children and Youth

November 2004

Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction
Old Capitol Building
P.O. Box 47200
Olympia, WA 98504-7200

For more information about the contents
of this document, please contact:
Melinda Dyer, OSPI
E-mail: MDyer@OSPI.wednet.edu
Phone: 360.725.6050

To order more copies of this document,
please call 1-888-59-LEARN (1-888-595-3276)
or visit our Web site at <http://www.k12.wa.us/publications>

Please refer to the document number below for quicker service:
03-0000

This document is available online at:
<http://www.k12.wa.us/>

This material is available in alternative format upon request.
Contact the Resource Center at (888) 595-3276, TTY (360) 664-3631.

“Let us think of education as the means of developing our greatest abilities, because in each of us there is a private hope and dream which, fulfilled, can be translated into benefit for everyone and greater strength for our nation.”

-John F. Kennedy

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Over 1.35 million children are estimated to experience homelessness.¹ Children who have no place to call home are amongst the most vulnerable in our country. They dream of a better life, but when will their hopes and dreams be realized? The day when every homeless child receives a quality education is the day our nation advances toward ending this plight of homelessness.

Federal legislation has been enacted to protect the rights of homeless children in accessing the same free and appropriate public education afforded to those in housed situations. Yet, with minimal federal funding allocated to support the education of homeless children and youth, are states succeeding in their endeavors? We examine the status of homeless education in Washington State and illuminate successes worthy of emulation as well as weaknesses calling for attention. In short, this statewide study captures a baseline snapshot of Washington homeless education and proposes recommendations to improve programs to better serve *all* children experiencing homelessness.

Data

Since each school district must designate a homeless liaison to address homeless education responsibilities, we designed and directed our district survey to liaisons with the following goals in consideration:

- (1) Determine the numbers of identified homeless students in school districts
- (2) Characterize the homeless student population in Washington
- (3) Evaluate the presence of barriers to the education of homeless children and youth
- (4) Ascertain the needs and challenges hindering district liaisons

We also surveyed a sample of Washington shelter providers to evaluate the presence of enrollment barriers and to determine if a discrepancy exists between the numbers of district-identified homeless students and the numbers of community-identified homeless children. The following results from the two surveys are highlighted below:

- ❖ Washington school districts reported 330 homeless preschoolers and 7,357 homeless K-12 students enrolled in schools.
- ❖ Washington shelters in eight district-correlated communities reported sheltering 337 homeless preschool-age children and 843 homeless school-age children.
- ❖ Among sheltered children, 23% of preschool-age children were enrolled in early childhood education, and 77% of school-age children (K-12) and 48% of unaccompanied youth were enrolled in public schools.

¹ Burt, M. & Aron, L. (2000). *America's homeless II: Populations and services*. Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press.

- ❖ Generally, ethnic minorities and migratory children are represented at higher rates in the homeless student population compared to the general student population in Washington State.
- ❖ Homeless students access academic programs—such as gifted, Limited English Proficient, special education, and vocational—at lower rates than the general student population in Washington State.
- ❖ Shelters, in general, perceived enrollment barriers at twice the rate of school districts.
- ❖ 80% of liaisons (for districts reporting at least one homeless student) are spending 0-10 hours per week on homeless education.
- ❖ Approximately 50% of homeless liaisons noted insufficient time and resources to effectively perform their duties.
- ❖ 25% of district liaisons reported appointing building liaisons; of those, 97% found these appointments to be effective.
- ❖ Approximately 50% of large districts reported the grades, ages, and ethnicities of their students as unspecified.

Conclusions

Although many Washington school districts are working tirelessly to identify, educate, and serve homeless children and youth, the overall state of homeless education in Washington requires vast improvement to successfully meet the needs of all children. Major study findings are summarized below:

- ❖ Compared to other state and national data, identification and program enrollment for homeless preschoolers and school-age children are woefully inadequate.
- ❖ Barriers—such as transportation, immunization requirements, lack of school records, and many others—continue to impede the education of homeless children and youth.
- ❖ Based on the dramatic differences in perceived enrollment barriers, collaboration between school districts and community-based agencies require substantial strengthening.
- ❖ Liaisons lack sufficient amounts of time and resources to fully address homeless education responsibilities.
- ❖ Designating school-level liaisons is a highly effective strategy for homeless education programs; however, only a small percentage of districts are utilizing this approach.
- ❖ Large districts are struggling to collect data regarding their homeless students.

Recommendations

Based on our survey results, data analysis, and study conclusions, we identify four homeless education areas in need of improvement—identification, enrollment, services, and data collection. We highly recommend that districts employ the following best practice strategies to address these four areas. Please note that training, collaboration, and standard procedures are principal themes throughout these best practice approaches.

1. INCREASE IDENTIFICATION

- Raise homeless awareness by educating school personnel, community providers, and homeless families about the definition and rights of homeless children and youth.
- Train office staff regarding signs of homelessness and implement district-wide procedures/forms to screen housing situations of all children, including the inquiry of preschool-age siblings of homeless students.
- Collaborate with homeless providers (shelters, local housing authorities, food banks, soup kitchens, DSHS, etc.).

2. INCREASE ENROLLMENT

- Train school personnel and implement district-wide procedures to immediately enroll homeless children and refer students and preschool-aged siblings to liaisons for additional services.
- Collaborate with homeless providers to mutually refer clients, facilitate enrollment, and identify and remove enrollment barriers.
- Coordinate enrollment of homeless preschoolers.

3. IMPROVE SERVICES

- Conduct a local needs assessment.
- Collaborate with community-based agencies and federal and state programs (Title I, migrant program, special education, ECEAP, Head Start, etc.) to maximize resources, combine funding streams, and prevent gaps or overlaps in services.
- Appoint school liaisons in every building to assist in providing services.

4. IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION

- Establish a central database at the district homeless education office to collect information regarding numbers and characteristics of homeless students, programs accessed or awaiting access, services provided, academic achievement, attendance, nighttime residence, etc.
- Appoint school liaisons in every building, and regularly collect data through these building liaisons.
- Design data collection to evaluate and improve homeless education programs.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to acknowledge the assistance of many who have made this report possible. First of all, thanks to Dr. Albert Smith, Director of UW C-STARS, for his generous support of this project. Thanks also to every district liaison and shelter provider who gave of their valuable time to participate in our surveys: you are very much appreciated. I am also grateful to the districts that welcomed our site visits and openly shared their programs with us. Many thanks to our Advisory Board and Melinda Dyer for volunteering their time to review survey drafts and manuscripts.

WASHINGTON HOMELESS EDUCATION STUDY ADVISORY BOARD

Laura Collins

Transportation Specialist, Longview School District

Barbara Duffield

Policy Director, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

Patricia Julianelle

Former Staff Attorney, National Law Center for Homelessness and Poverty

Edith Sims

Homeless Liaison, Homeless Education And Resource Team, Spokane Public Schools

John Thibault

Homeless Liaison, Bellingham School District

Tamara Williams

Homeless Liaison, Tacoma School District

Special Thanks To:

Melinda Dyer

*Washington State Program Supervisor
Education for Homeless Children and Youth*

CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION

Background.....	1
Homeless definition.....	2
Study purpose.....	2
Methodology.....	2

DATA

Figure 1: Homeless children and youth by grade level.....	4
Figure 2: Homeless youth.....	5
Figure 3: Homeless students with unspecified grades, ages, and ethnicities.....	6
Figure 4: Ethnicities of homeless children.....	7
Figure 5: Migratory homeless children.....	9
Figure 6: Academic program enrollment.....	10
Figure 7: Identification challenges.....	12
Figure 8: Enrollment barriers.....	13
Figure 9: Transportation challenges.....	14
Figure 10: Academic and support services.....	16
Figure 11: Title IA set aside methods.....	17
Figure 12: Homeless liaison work hours.....	19
Figure 13: Time, resources, and training for homeless liaisons.....	20
Figure 14: Appointing school liaisons.....	21
Figure 15: Challenges in assisting homeless families with services.....	22
Figure 16: School improvement plans.....	23

DISCUSSION

Homeless preschool-age children.....	24
Homeless children and youth.....	25
Characterizing homeless students.....	26
Migratory.....	26
Unaccompanied youth.....	26
Academic programs.....	27
Ethnicity.....	27

Barriers to homeless education.....	27
Identification.....	27
Enrollment.....	28
Transportation.....	28
Academic and support services.....	29
Title IA.....	29
Needs and challenges of homeless liaisons.....	30
School improvement plans.....	31

BEST PRACTICES

Homeless awareness/staff development training.....	33
Identifying homeless children.....	33
Family involvement.....	34
Collaboration.....	34
Early childhood education.....	37
Youth outreach and services.....	38
Transportation.....	39

RECOMMENDATIONS..... 42

APPENDIX

Appendix A: District Survey.....	43
Appendix B: Community Survey.....	51
Appendix C: Survey Glossary.....	52

INTRODUCTION

Background

Over 1.35 million children are estimated to experience homelessness in a given year. Homeless children are by most accounts among the fastest growing segments of the homeless population.² Families with children comprise 40% of those in homeless situations, and the harmful impact of homelessness has been widely documented.³ Compared to their peers, homeless children are more likely to have health problems, developmental delays, learning disabilities, emotional difficulties, and mental disorders—all which are factors negatively affecting school performance.⁴

A quality education remains the primary vehicle of hope for children experiencing homelessness. As Reed-Victor & Pelco state, “Because level of school attainment is the best predictor of subsequent employment and economic stability, fostering successful school participation is fundamental to improving adult outcomes for homeless children and youth.”⁵ Yet, children in homeless situations experience a myriad of challenges in accessing, enrolling, and succeeding in school. During the mid-1980’s, it was estimated that more than half of homeless children were not attending schools; this educational inequality paved the way for federal intervention.

In 1987, Congress enacted the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act in response to the growing crisis of homelessness in America. One of the Act’s provisions established the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program in order to address the educational barriers homeless children encounter. The McKinney Act has been amended three times since its inception; its latest reauthorization in the No Child Left Behind Act stipulates the following:

- ✓ Homeless children and youth should have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education.
- ✓ States must review residency requirement laws and other laws, regulations, practices, or policies that may act as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance, or school success of homeless children and youth.
- ✓ Students may not be separated from the mainstream school environment because of their homeless status.
- ✓ All homeless children and youth should have access to the education and other services, including public preschool education, needed to ensure that they have an opportunity to meet the same challenging academic achievement standards to which all students are held.

² National Coalition for the Homeless. (2001). *Education of homeless children and youth. Fact sheet #10*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

³ U.S. Conference of Mayors. (2003). *Hunger and homelessness survey: A status report on hunger and homelessness in America’s cities*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

⁴ Hart-Shegos, E. (1999). *Homelessness and its effects on children*. Minneapolis, MN: Family Housing Fund.

⁵ Reed-Victor, E. & Pelco, L. (1999). Helping homeless students build resilience: What the school community can do. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education*, 5, 51-71.

Homeless definition

As defined in the McKinney Act, homeless children and youth are individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes children and youth living in:

- Emergency or transitional shelters
- Motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds
- Shared housing due to loss of housing or economic hardship
- Hospitals secondary to abandonment or awaiting foster care placement
- Cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or similar situations
- Public or private places not ordinarily used as sleeping accommodations for human beings

Migratory status, in itself, does not qualify children as homeless; migratory children must be living in the circumstances described above to meet the federal educational definition of homeless.⁶

Study purpose

In recognizing the vital importance of educating homeless children and youth, the Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) commissioned this study—the first of its kind in Washington—to capture a baseline snapshot of homeless education in the state. This study, conducted under contract with the University of Washington, Center for the Study and Teaching of At-Risk Students, describes and analyzes the following three areas in the education of homeless children and youth:

- (1) Numbers and characteristics of children experiencing homelessness
- (2) Barriers to the identification, enrollment, and school success of homeless students
- (3) Needs and challenges of homeless liaisons

Methodology

District survey

The district survey was an online survey administered to every district homeless liaison in Washington State except for those in districts lacking Internet technology. 294 homeless liaisons were sent an email explaining the purpose of the study and an invitation to respond to the survey. The email also included the weblink to the survey website and directions for the survey. District liaisons who did not initially respond to the survey were emailed twice to remind them of the survey.

Two districts lacked Internet technology and hard copies of the survey were mailed to these district liaisons. For a small number of liaisons who experienced technical difficulties with the online version, surveys were either faxed or mailed. A response rate of 55% was obtained; copies of the district survey and its glossary are included in the Appendix.

⁶ McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B, Section 725(2).

Community survey

The community survey was a paper survey mailed to shelter providers in eight communities corresponding with the following school district areas: Everett, Kent, Longview, Olympia, Spokane, Sumner, Walla Walla, and Yakima. The selection criteria for the sample pool included the following:

- (1) The school district for the community responded to the district survey, i.e. the community sample was selected from the pool of district survey respondents.
- (2) The community must have had a minimum of three shelters in order to minimize the effects of non-responders and maximize the representation within a community.

Once these first two criteria were met, the final communities were selected to achieve a balance of McKinney-Vento subgrantees and non-subgrantees as well as geographic distribution representative of Washington State. District size was also considered; however, the final balance achieved was a reflection of large and medium districts as the second criteria excluded small districts from the selection pool.

55 surveys were mailed out and 39 surveys were returned. Shelters who did not respond to the initial request were followed up by telephone or email to remind them of the survey. A response rate of 71% was obtained for the community survey, and copies of the community survey and its glossary are attached in the Appendix.

Site visits

In May 2004, site visits to eight homeless education programs were conducted. Six of these district programs were McKinney-Vento subgrantees. Site selection was determined by recommendations from the Homeless Education State Coordinator and the need to achieve a mix of district sizes, geographical regions, and urban/rural populations. Visits typically included interviews with district liaisons, Title I coordinators, transportation coordinators, community-based providers, school principals, and teachers.

Study limitations

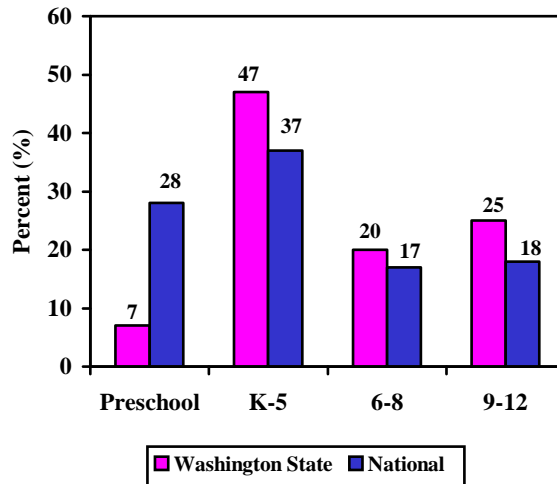
One study limitation that must be recognized is the methodology used to count homeless children. We utilized point-in-time counts for both surveys, but recognize that homelessness is not a static phenomenon. It is estimated that during a year's time, four or five times as many people experience homelessness as are homeless on any particular day.⁷ For this reason, we also requested enrollment numbers of formerly homeless children from school districts. ("Formerly homeless" is defined as those who were homeless at some point during the school year, but not currently homeless.) As the U.S. Department of Education was also gathering homeless education data from states this year, OSPI independently collected data from Washington school districts and reported a period prevalence count of 8,141 homeless students enrolled during 2003-2004.⁸

⁷ Burt, M., Aron, L., Lee, E. (2001). *Helping America's homeless: Emergency shelter or affordable housing?* Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press.

⁸ Figure provided courtesy of Melinda Dyer, Washington State Program Supervisor, Education of Homeless Children and Youth.

DATA

Figure 1: Homeless Children and Youth by Grade Level, Washington State versus United States



Survey respondents reported 7,687 homeless children were enrolled in preschool programs or public school (K-12), and 4,896 of these children were reported with specified grade levels.⁹ Grouped according to grade levels, Washington’s percentages are generally consistent with those reported in the 2000 Report to Congress, with the notable exception of preschool.¹⁰ (See Figure 1.)

330 homeless preschoolers were reported in Washington State, representing 7% of all homeless students and markedly less than the national figure of 28%. Moreover, this difference in preschool percentages further widens if one takes into account the definitions used to characterize the preschool population. The Washington District Survey utilized a broader definition and included *birth* to pre-kindergarten. On the other hand, the Report to Congress used a narrower definition and included only pre-kindergarten children.

Other national and state estimates support that the districts’ reported percentage of homeless preschoolers is low. A national study by the Urban Institute determined that 42% of sheltered children accompanied by a parent are between the ages of zero and five.¹¹ On the state level, our survey of Washington shelters also determined that preschool-age children represented 28% of sheltered homeless children and youth, and a study of

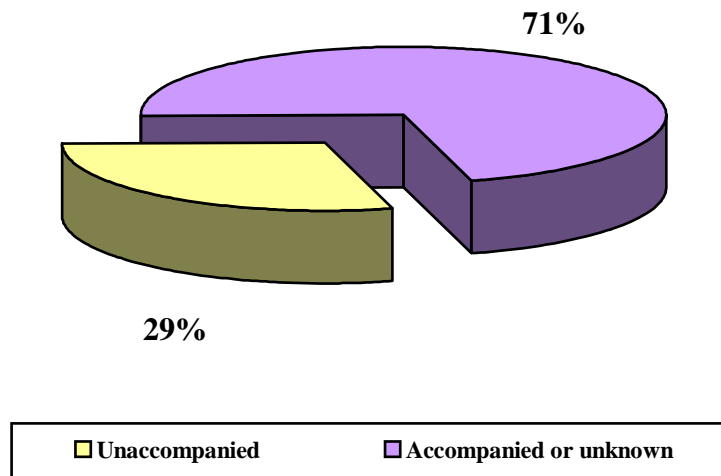
⁹ An additional 1,546 were reported as formerly homeless. Except for transportation, specific information was not collected regarding this population; thus, the formerly homeless were only included in the transportation data analyses.

¹⁰ U.S. Department of Education. (2000). *Education for homeless children and youth program: Report to Congress fiscal year 2000*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 13-14.

¹¹ Burt, M., Aron, L., et al. (1999). *Homelessness: Programs and the people they serve*. Washington, D.C: Urban Institute Press.

Washington homeless families revealed that 37% of sheltered children were under the age of five.¹²

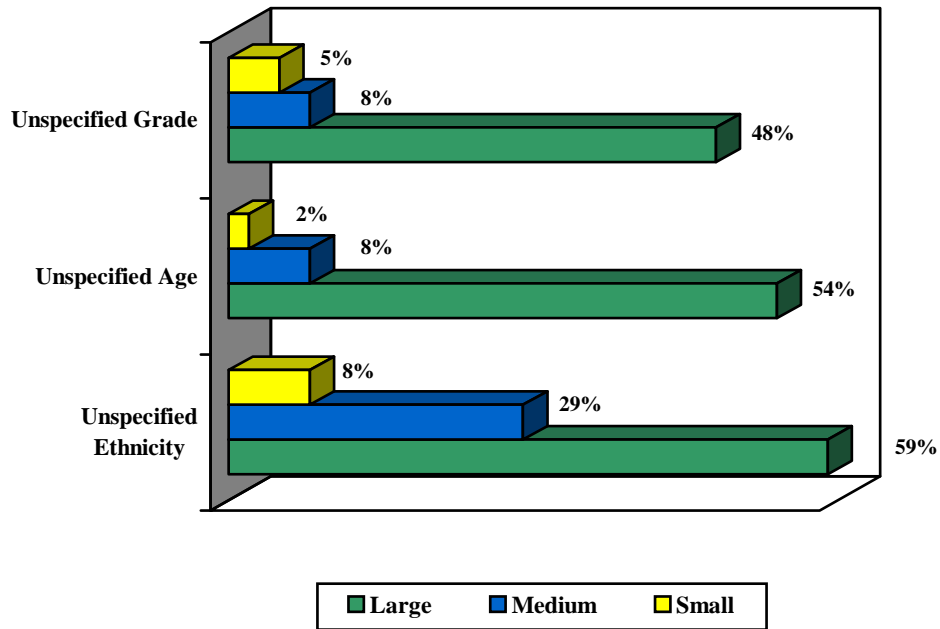
Figure 2: Homeless Youth in Washington



Washington school districts also identified 2,244 homeless youth in grades 6-12. 29% of these students (n=659) were described as unaccompanied. By default, the remaining 71% of homeless youth are presumed accompanied or of unknown guardian status. Medium-sized districts reported the highest percentage of homeless unaccompanied youth at 47%. In addition, Washington shelters reported that unaccompanied youth represented 28% of the K-12 homeless population in their areas. If disaggregate community data for grades 6-12 had been available, the percentage of homeless unaccompanied youth likely would have been considerably greater than 28%.

¹² Choe, M. & Braddock, D. (2003). *2003-2005 Washington State Homeless Families Plan*. Olympia, WA: Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, 6.

Figure 3: Homeless Students with Unspecified Grade, Age, and Ethnicity By District Size¹³



Liaisons were asked to specify grade, age, and ethnicity for the homeless students in their districts. Figure 3 depicts the percentage of homeless students unspecified by the three aforementioned descriptors and grouped by district size. Small districts and medium-sized districts generally reported single-digit percentages of unspecified characteristics; in striking contrast, large districts described approximately 50% of the grades, ages, and ethnicities of homeless children as unspecified.

¹³ District sizes were defined according to the following student headcount categories: small - 1000 or less; medium - greater than 1000, but less than 10,000; large - greater than 10,000.

Figure 4a: Homeless Children and Youth in Washington, By Ethnicity

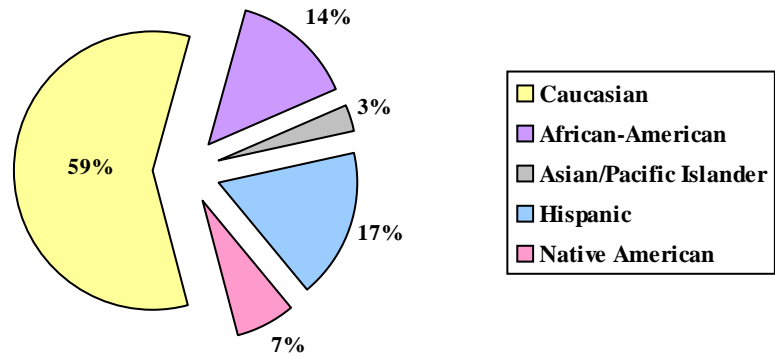
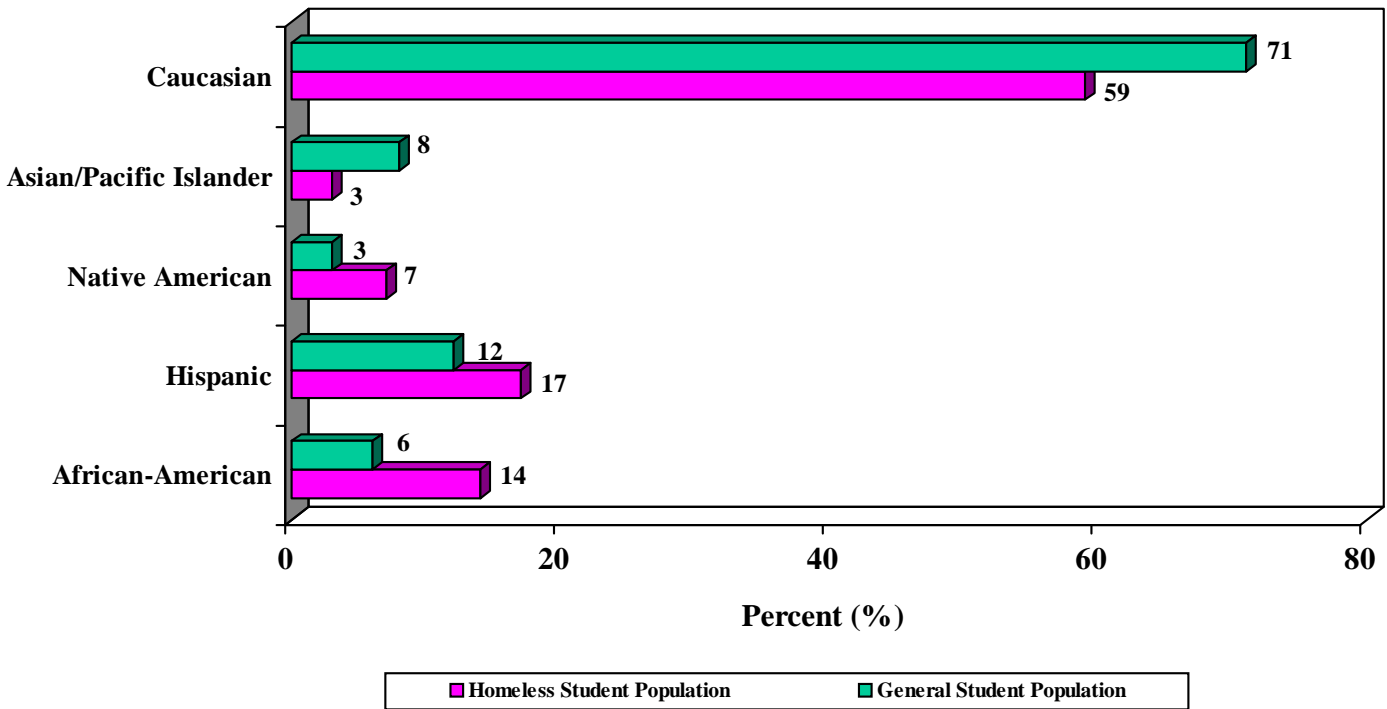


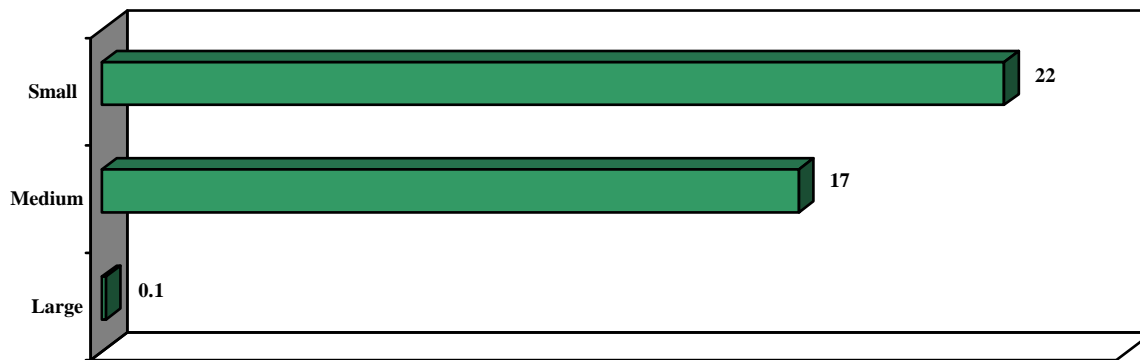
Figure 4b: Ethnic Composition in Washington State, Homeless Students versus General Students



School districts reported ethnicities for 3,586 homeless children. Figure 4a depicts the ethnic breakdown for homeless students in Washington, while Figure 4b compares these percentages to those found in the state's overall student population.¹⁴ At 41%, the minority population for Washington homeless students is higher than the general student population's of 29%. With the exception of Asians/Pacific Islanders, all ethnic minorities are represented at higher percentages in the homeless student population.

¹⁴ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (October 2003). *Enrollment by ethnicity*. Olympia, WA: Author. <http://www.k12.wa.us>

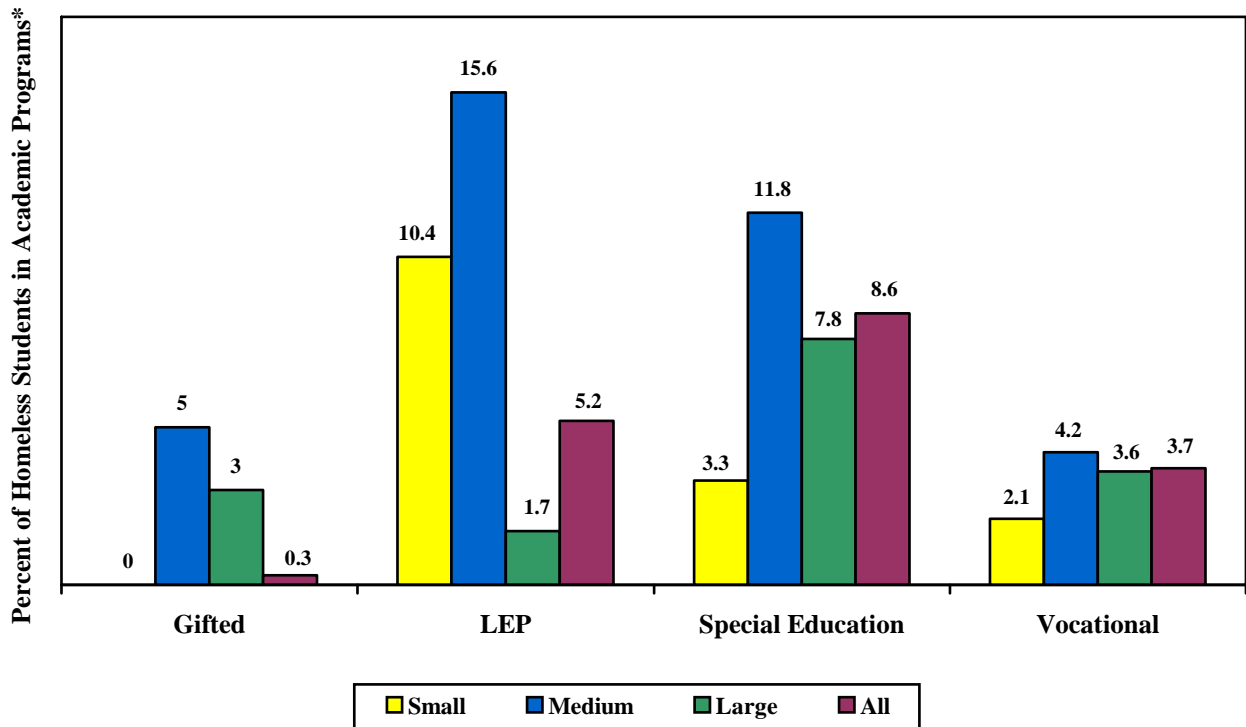
Figure 5: Homeless Children and Youth Identified as Migratory,
By District Size



Respondents reported a cumulative total of 320 homeless migratory children. Figure 5 depicts the percentage of migratory children found in the homeless student population for each district size. Small and medium districts reported significantly higher numbers, 22% and 17% respectively, compared to large districts at 0.1%. As a comparison, migratory students comprised 3% of the general student population.¹⁵ Thus, most school districts are reporting that migratory children represent a significantly greater percentage of the homeless population than that found in the general population.

¹⁵ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (October 2003). *Washington State Report Card*. Olympia, WA: Author. <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us>

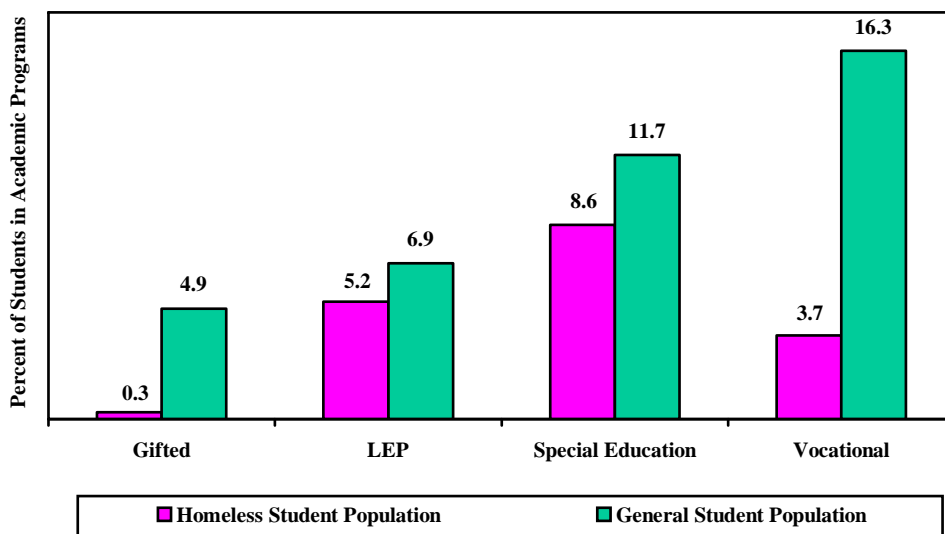
**Figure 6a: Homeless Students in Washington,
By Academic Programs and District Size**



* Percent is calculated by: $(\# \text{ homeless students in programs} / \# \text{ homeless students in district}) \times 100$

Districts were asked to identify the number of homeless students enrolled in the following academic programs: gifted, Limited English Proficient (LEP), special education, and vocational. Figure 6a illustrates the percentage of homeless students enrolled in these four programs and sorted by district size. Medium-sized districts reported the highest percentages of homeless students in all academic programs. Overall student numbers were greatest for special education (631), followed by Limited English Proficient (386), vocational (272), and then gifted (25). Particularly striking is the seemingly low LEP percentage noted by large districts.

Figure 6b: Academic Program Enrollment in Washington, Homeless Students versus General Students



In all four academic programs surveyed, the enrollment percentages of homeless students were less than that found in Washington’s general student population¹⁶. The difference in vocational program participation was especially notable. On a national level, the U.S. Department of Education surveyed state coordinators for homeless education programs regarding access difficulties for various educational services.¹⁷ At least 50% of state coordinators reported homeless children were experiencing significant difficulties in accessing special education, gifted and talented programs, and programs for students with limited English proficiency. (Vocational programs were not surveyed.)

Although precise numbers are lacking, evidence indicates that homeless children and youth have a disproportionately high incidence of disabilities. Children experiencing homelessness are twice as likely to have learning disabilities and three times as likely to have an emotional disturbance as their housed peers.¹⁸ Despite the higher prevalence of disabilities, homeless children may not be receiving the special education services for which they are eligible. A study of sheltered children in Los Angeles found that 45% of the children met criteria for a special education evaluation; however, only 23% had ever received special education testing or placement.¹⁹ In light of this national data, Washington homeless students requiring special education services are likely under-identified and under-served.

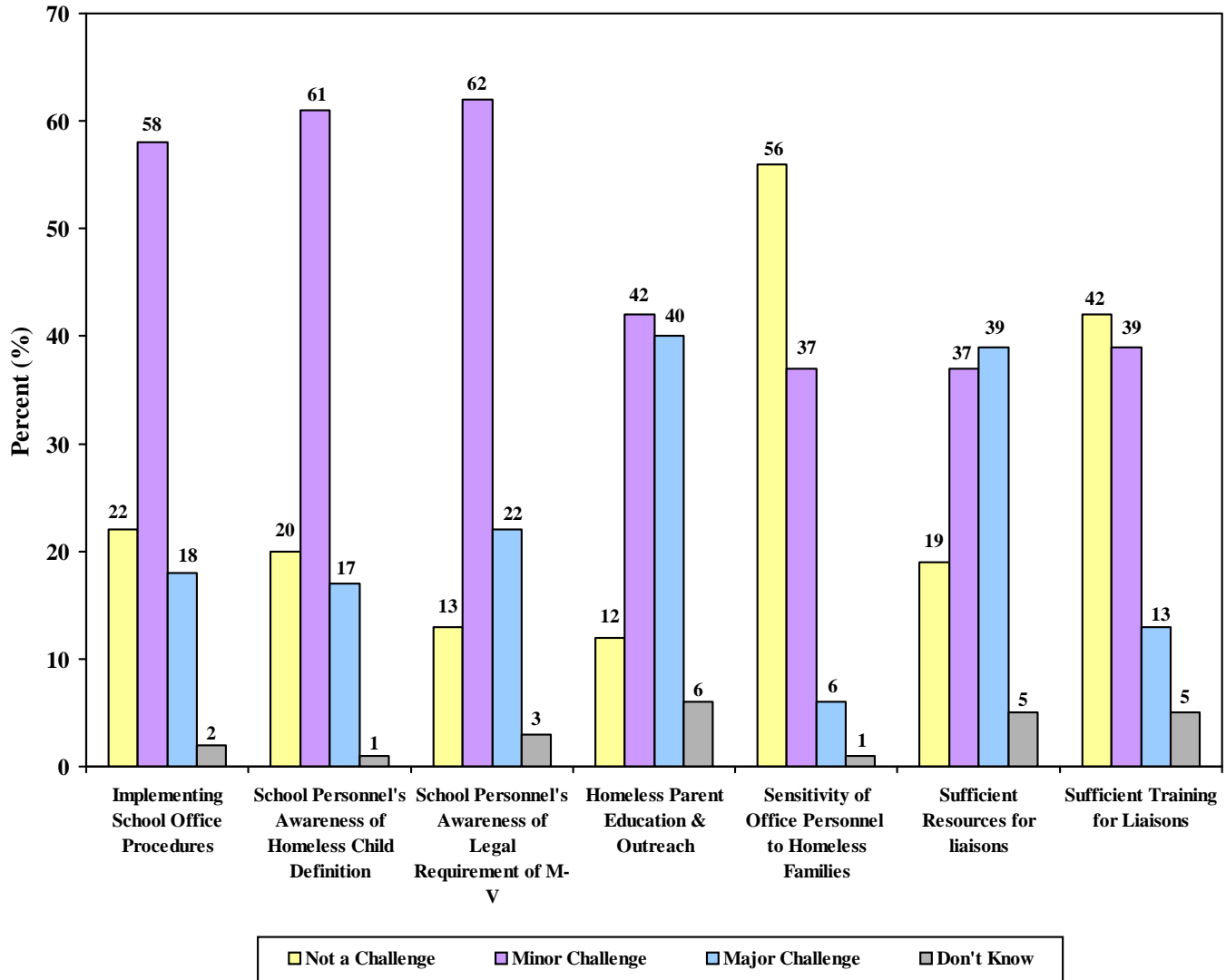
¹⁶ Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (October 2003). *Washington State Report Card*. <http://reportcard.ospi.k12.wa.us>; Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction. (August 2004). *Educating highly capable students in Washington State, school year 2002-2003*; vocational figure (2002-2003) provided courtesy of Rod Duckworth, State Director of Career and Technical Education.

¹⁷ U.S Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, Elementary and Secondary Education Division, (2002). *The education for homeless children and youth program: Learning to succeed, volume I*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 27-28.

¹⁸ Better Home Funds. (1999). *Homeless children: America’s new outcasts*. Newton Center, MA: Author.

¹⁹ Zima, B., Bussing, R., Forness S., & Benjamin, B. (1997). Sheltered homeless children: Their eligibility and unmet need for special education evaluations. *American Journal of Public Health*, 87(2), 236-240.

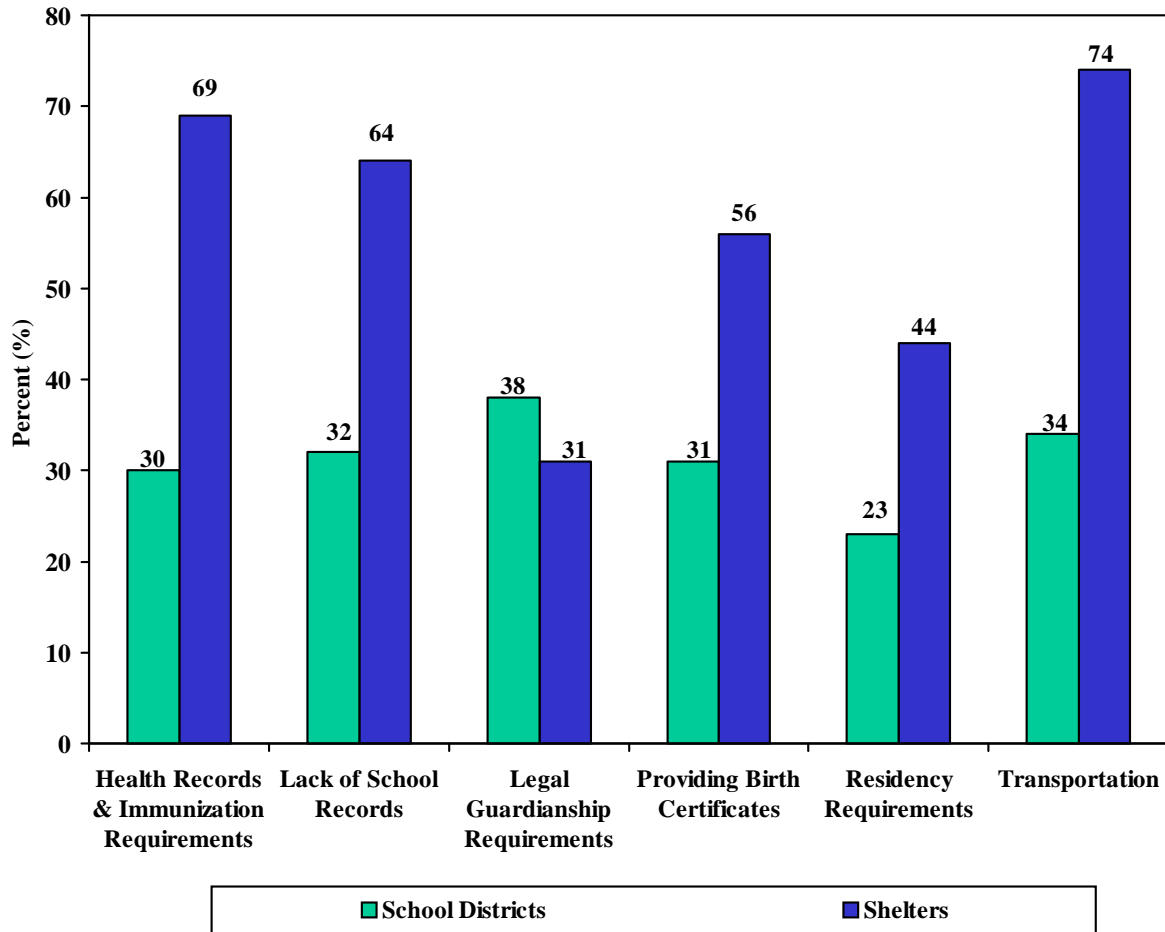
Figure 7: Challenges in Identifying Homeless Children and Youth Greater than Zero Respondents²⁰



Approximately 40% of respondents reported that homeless parent education/outreach and sufficient resources for liaisons were major challenges in identifying homeless children and youth. The following areas were viewed primarily as minor problems: implementing school office procedures to identify homeless students, school personnel’s awareness of the legal definition of a homeless student, and school personnel’s awareness of the legal requirements of McKinney-Vento; however, one-fifth of district liaisons still perceived these areas as major challenges. Approximately half of survey respondents reported that liaison training and the sensitivity of office personnel to homeless families were not problems.

²⁰ Approximately one third of survey respondents reported 0 homeless students. Thus, for certain questions in which having identified homeless students would be pertinent, we included answers only from those districts reporting at least one homeless student. Henceforth, these districts will be referred to as “Greater than Zero Respondents.”

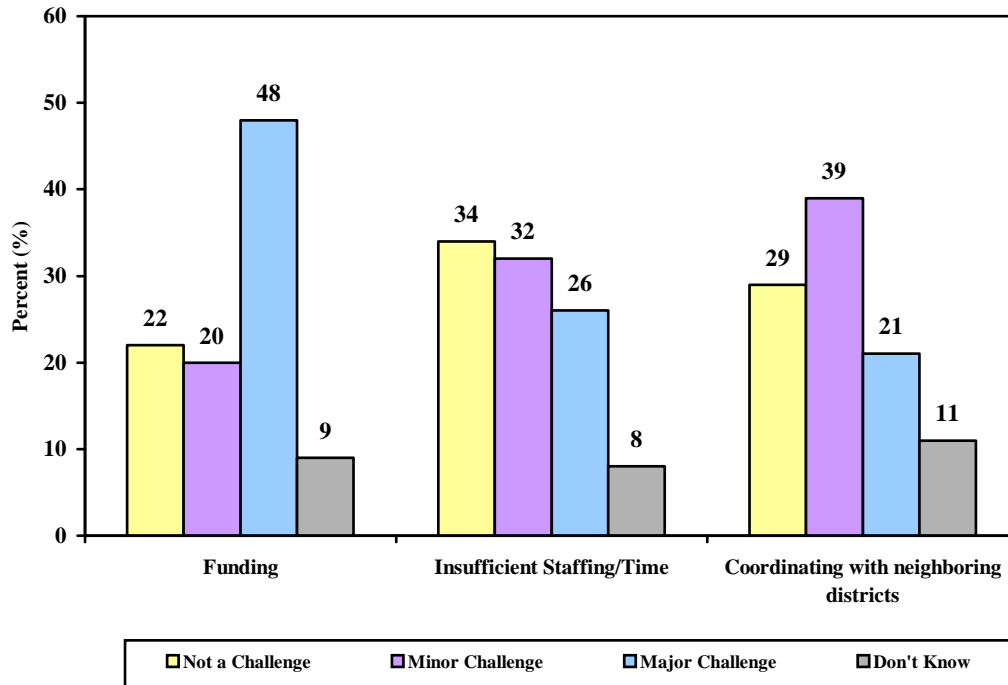
Figure 8: Enrollment Barriers²¹: Comparison between School Districts (Greater than Zero Respondents) and Shelters in Washington



As shown in Figure 8, school districts and shelters clearly differ in opinion regarding barriers to the enrollment of homeless children and youth. With the exception of legal guardianship requirements, shelters perceived barriers at approximately *twice* the rate of school districts. Transportation was cited as the largest barrier by shelters (74%), whereas legal guardianship requirements were perceived to be the greatest barrier by districts (38%).

²¹ Districts and shelters were asked to rate the listed barriers on the following scale: not a barrier, a minor barrier, a major barrier, don't know. For the purposes of comparison, responses for minor and major barriers were combined to generate a cumulative barrier total.

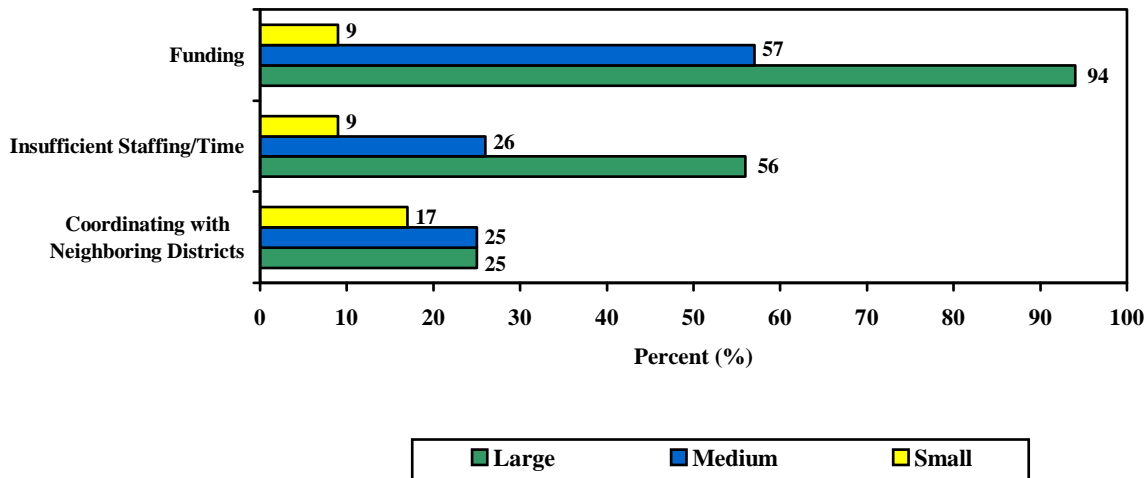
Figure 9a: Challenges to the Transportation of Homeless Children and Youth Greater than Zero Respondents



District liaisons reported funding as the greatest challenge in transporting homeless children and youth to their school of origin.²² As illustrated in Figure 9a, half of all districts serving at least one homeless student experienced funding as a *major* challenge. Time and coordination with neighboring districts were also significant, but lesser, problems. One in every four districts reported insufficient time as a major challenge, and one in every five districts reported coordinating with other districts to be a major obstacle.

²² ‘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. McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B, Section 722 (g)(3)(G).

Figure 9b: Major Challenges to Transporting Homeless Children and Youth,



By District Size

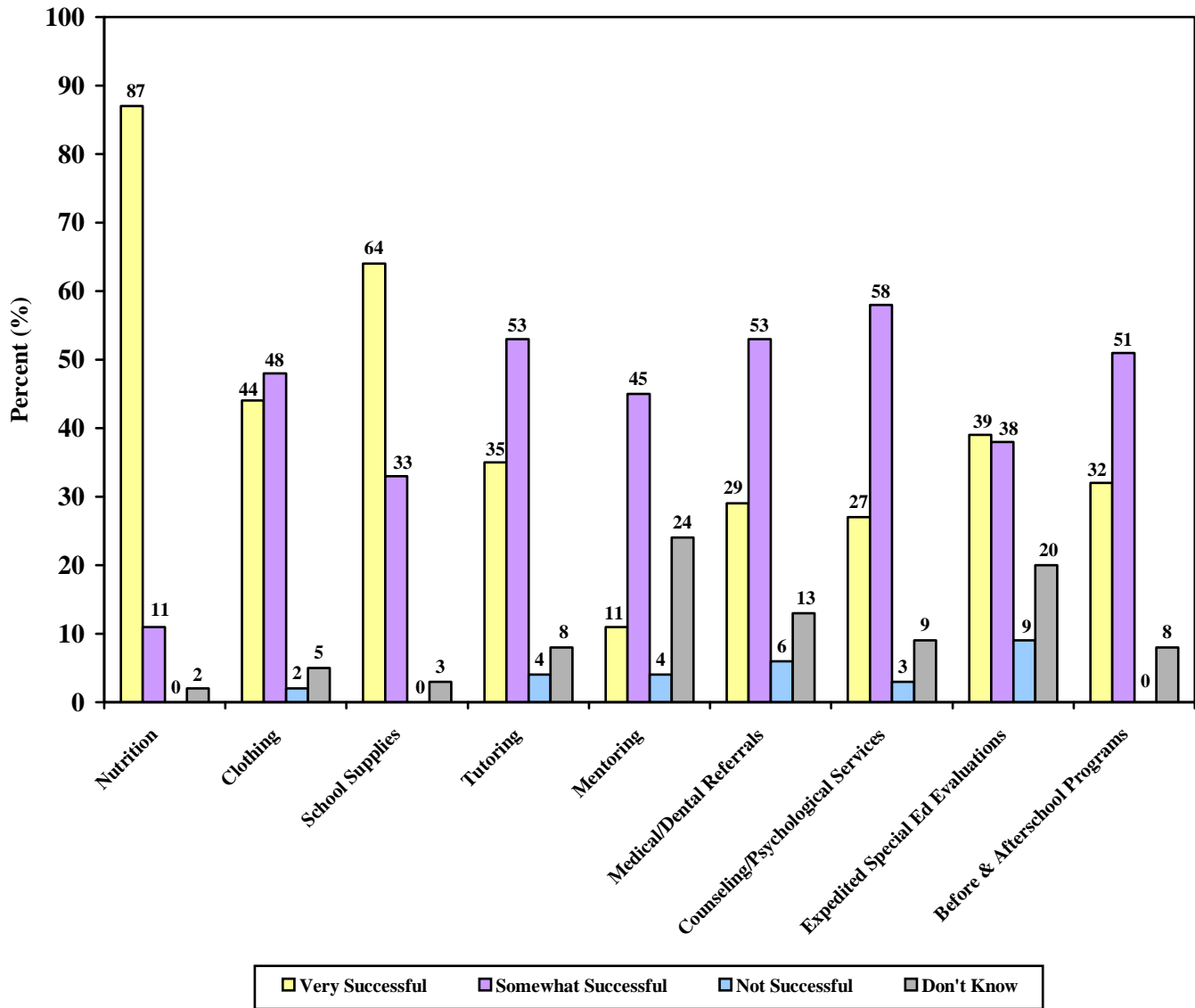
Figure 9b depicts the relationship between district size and transportation challenges. As district size increases, the challenges of funding and insufficient time also increase. In contrast, the challenge of coordinating with neighboring districts appears to be independent of district size.

Figure 9c: Average Transportation Cost by District Size

District Size	Transportation Cost/Homeless Student
Small	\$209
Medium	\$398
Large	\$957

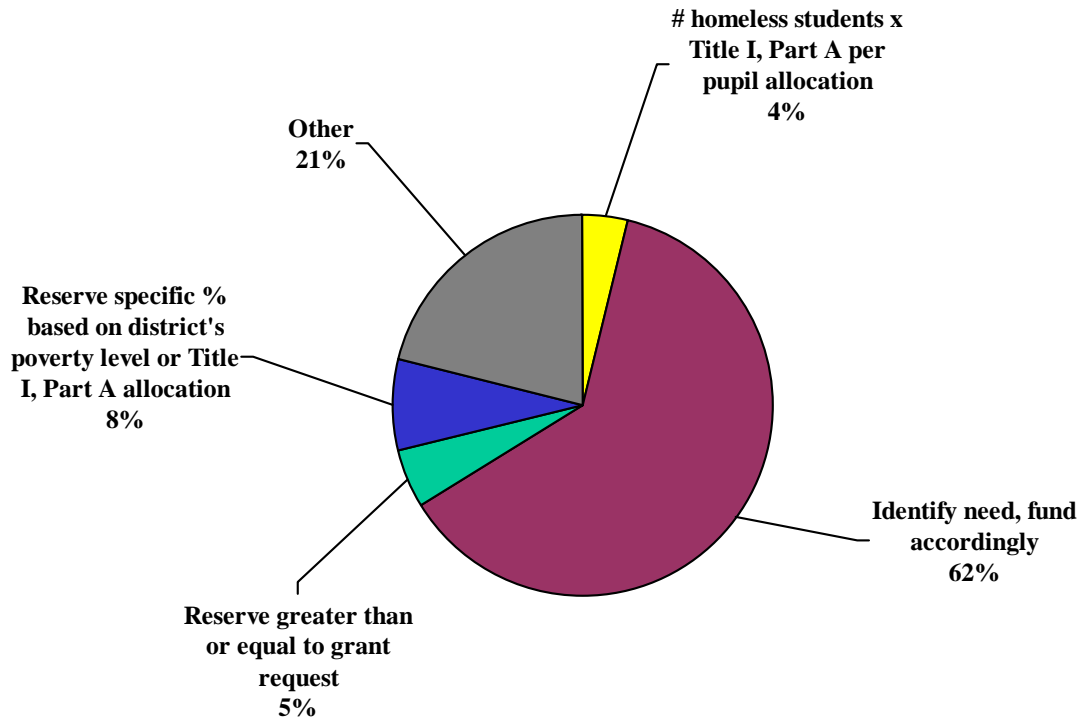
For the 2003-2004 academic year, 64 districts with at least one homeless student estimated spending \$1,572,460 transporting 2,049 students (homeless and formerly homeless) to their school of origin. Dividing the transportation cost by the number of students transported yields a rough estimate of the transportation cost per student for small, medium, and large districts. These estimates reveal a direct correlation between district size and transportation expense: the greater the district size, the greater the cost. Of note, although 3904 children (homeless and formerly homeless) were reported as remaining in their school of origin, only 52% of these received transportation services.

Figure 10: Academic and Support Services to Homeless Children and Youth Greater than Zero Respondents



Respondents were asked to describe how successful their district had been in providing certain academic and support services. As Figure 10 illustrates, nutrition (free and reduced school meals) was, by far, the most successful service reported. School supplies and clothing were the next most successful with 64% and 44% of liaisons describing the services as very successful. The most unsuccessful areas were mentoring and expedited special education evaluations; 24% and 20%, respectively, reported these services as not successful.

**Figure 11: Title IA Set-Aside Methods
Greater than Zero Respondents**



By law, local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to set aside Title I, Part A funds to provide services for homeless children attending non-Title I schools.²³ The No Child Left Behind Act does not specify how districts should determine set-asides, thereby allowing districts to decide for themselves. Surveyed liaisons were asked to identify the method or formula for calculating Title I, Part A set-asides and were given the following answer choices²⁴:

- (1) Identify homeless students' needs and fund accordingly.
- (2) Obtain count of homeless students, and multiply by Title I, Part A per-pupil allocation.
- (3) Reserve an amount of funds greater than or equal to the amount of your McKinney-Vento subgrant request.
- (4) Reserve a specific percentage based on your district's poverty level or total Title I, Part A allocation.
- (5) Other
- (6) Our district does not receive Title IA funds.

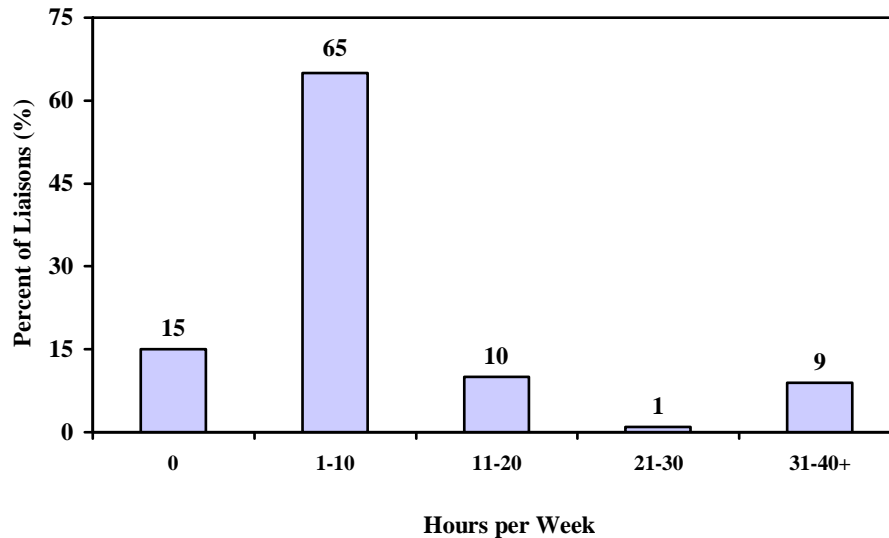
²³ U.S. Department of Education, Title I, Part A, 1113(c)(3)(a), 2002.

²⁴ Four methods to determining new mandatory Title I, part A set-aside for homeless children. *No Child Left Behind Financial Compliance Insider*. New York: Brownstone Publishers, 1-2, November 2003.

The majority of districts reported using the first method of identifying needs. One-fifth of liaisons answered “other”, which included responses such as reserving a flat or arbitrary amount, using Title IA for liaison salaries, or not having a formula or process established. Lastly, a minority of the LEAs utilized the three remaining methods. The cumulative set-aside amount that these 73 school districts reported was equal to \$667,192.

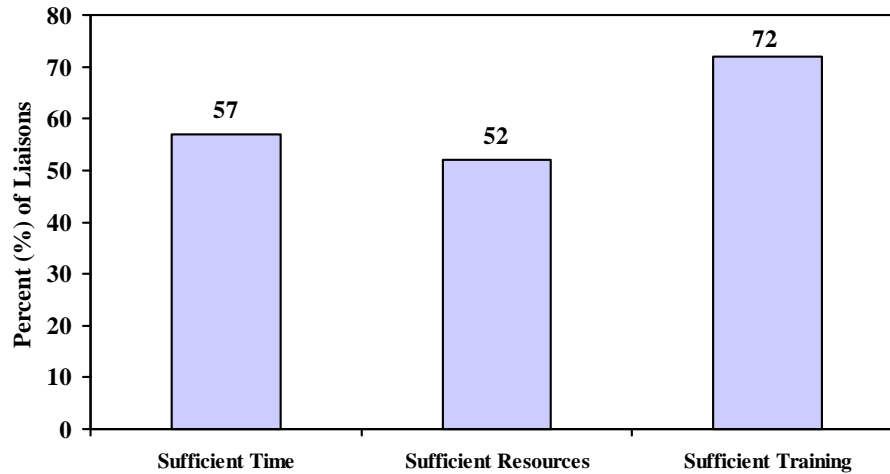
Although not mandatory, districts also have the option to reserve additional Title I funds to serve homeless children in all schools, not just non-Title I schools. Despite only 15% of respondents confirming the voluntary set-aside, these 19 districts reserved a total of \$394,234, more than half the required amount reported by all respondents.

Figure 12: Homeless Liaison Work Hours Greater than Zero Respondents



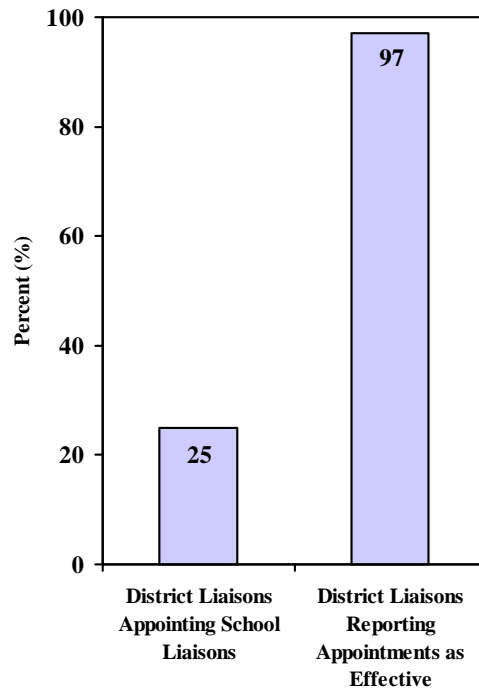
Respondents were asked to specify how many hours per week they dedicated to homeless liaison duties. As Figure 12 illustrates, 80% of liaisons (for districts reporting at least one homeless student) are spending 0-10 hours per week on homeless education. This data indicates that even though districts are complying with the legal statute to appoint a homeless liaison, most liaisons are spending small amounts of time addressing homeless liaison duties. In medium and large districts, where the need for full-time liaisons is greatest, 81% spent 20 hours per week or less on homeless education.

**Figure 13: Time, Resources, and Training for Homeless Liaisons
Greater than Zero Respondents**



Respondents were asked if they had received sufficient amounts of time, resources, and training to fully address the responsibilities of their position as district liaison. Figure 13 shows that only 57% of liaisons (serving districts reporting at least one homeless student) perceived they had enough time to effectively perform their duties; only 52% felt they had sufficient resources which included funding. A higher proportion of respondents reported their training as adequate; of note, large districts were the most satisfied at 94%, while small and medium districts expressed less satisfaction at 61% and 70% respectively.

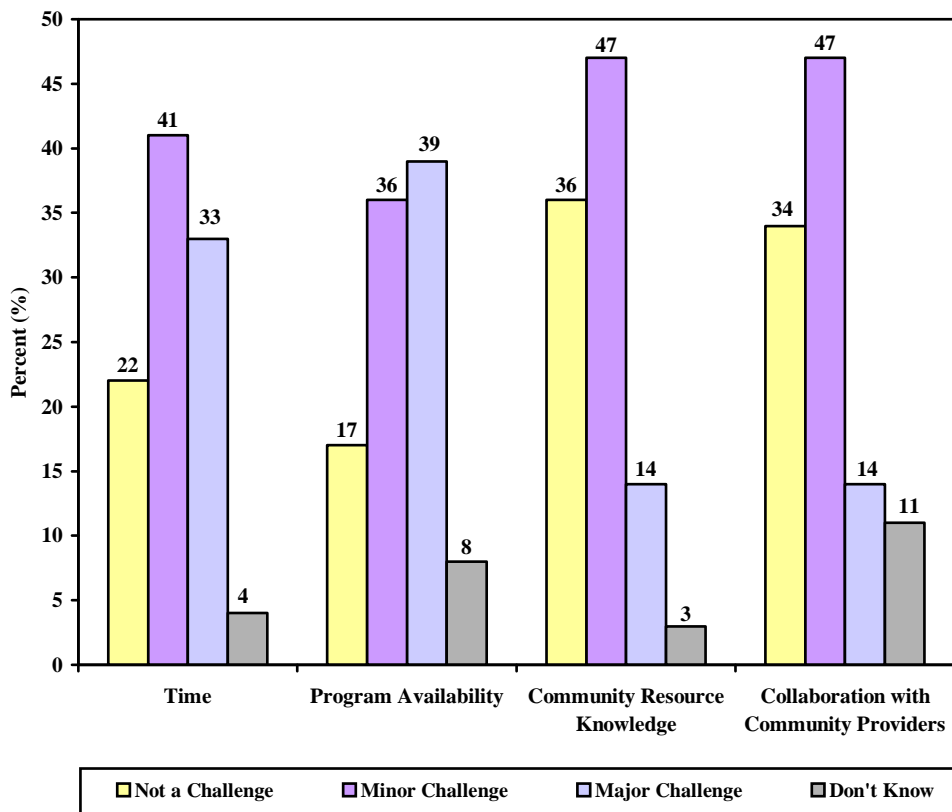
Figure 14: The Appointment of School Liaisons and Its Effectiveness



With the latest reauthorization of the McKinney-Vento Act in 2002, every school district is now required to designate a local liaison to coordinate services for homeless children and youth.²⁵ (Previously only McKinney-Vento subgrantees were required to do so.) The appointment of *school* liaisons, however, is voluntary and not mandated by state or federal laws. As Figure 14 shows, only a quarter of district liaisons have utilized this voluntary method. Yet, 97% of those that designated building contacts reported this method as effective.

²⁵ McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B, Section 722 (g)(1)(J)(ii), amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

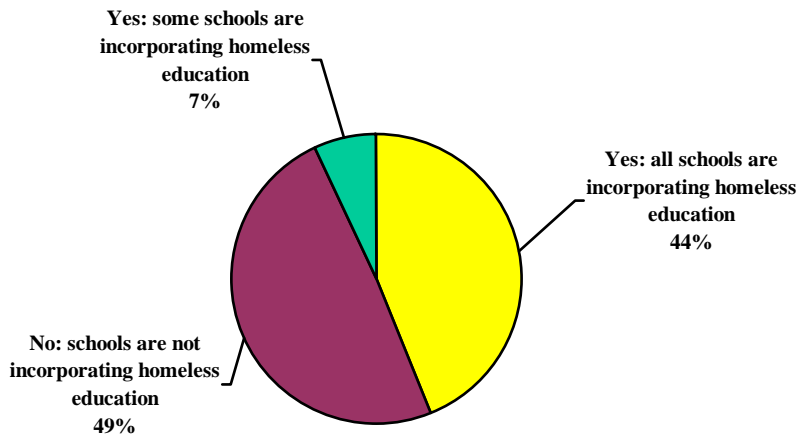
Figure 15: Challenges in Assisting Homeless Families with Services Greater than Zero Respondents



Respondents were queried regarding the challenges they experienced in assisting homeless families (parents and siblings of homeless students) with access to services for which they are eligible (e.g. Head Start, Even Start, public preschools, referrals to health, dental, and other appropriate services). Figure 15 illustrates that time and program availability were cited as greater problems than community resource knowledge and collaboration with community providers. Approximately 75% of survey respondents reported that time and program availability were challenges, whereas 61% of liaisons reported the remaining two areas as problems.²⁶

²⁶ For the purposes of comparison, responses for minor and major challenges were combined to generate a cumulative challenge total.

Figure 16: Incorporating Homeless Education in School Improvement Plans



The No Child Left Behind Act requires every state to define adequate yearly progress for school districts and schools within the parameters set by Title I. A Title I school that fails to meet the minimum levels of improvement for two consecutive years is identified as “needing improvement” and must develop and implement a school improvement plan.

Our survey asked districts the following question: *“If any schools in your district are mandated to have school improvement plans by the No Child Left Behind Act, are they incorporating the education of homeless students in their planning process?”*.

57 districts reported being mandated to implement school improvement plans and their responses are depicted in Figure 16. Approximately half reported not incorporating homeless education in their plans.

DISCUSSION

Homeless preschool-age children

Under-identification

Our data and other national data indicate that the percentage of homeless preschoolers in Washington State is unusually low. What are the reasons for this low percentage? Two likely factors are under-identification and under-enrollment. Comparing district numbers with Head Start numbers provides evidence of under-identification. In our survey, school districts reported 195 Head Start preschoolers; Head Start, on the other hand, confirmed 648, more than triple the districts' figure.²⁷

Under-enrollment

In order to consider under-enrollment as a contributing factor, we must first discuss the basic elements of enrollment, namely, preschool coordination and program availability. Liaisons are legally required by the McKinney-Vento Act to ensure that homeless children receive services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, and public preschools.²⁸ How should liaisons ensure access to preschool education? The most palpable way is to coordinate the enrollment of homeless preschoolers. By being directly involved in the enrollment process, liaisons or other homeless education staff would be positioned to identify and remove existing barriers, and ensure access to the preschool classroom. Yet, only 39% of survey respondents reported that they or other homeless education staff members in their district coordinated enrollment.

The second component necessary for enrollment is program availability. Evidence for insufficient early learning opportunities exists on state and national levels. In Washington, Head Start and ECEAP combined only reach an estimated 60% of eligible children.²⁹ 75% of survey respondents reported program availability as a challenge in assisting homeless families with access to preschool services and medical referrals.³⁰ On a national level, Head Start implemented demonstration projects for homeless children and their families, and at the project finale, concluded that “a shortage of classroom slots in many Head Start Centers, particularly those operating on a full-day, full-year basis,” was a challenge to enrolling families.³¹ The National Law Center also surveyed Homeless Education State Coordinators, Early Education State Coordinators, and family shelter providers regarding preschool education for homeless children. In their report, they stated “nearly 80% of all respondents noted that public preschool programs have waiting lists with waiting

²⁷ Figure provided courtesy of Julianne Crevatin, Head Start Regional Office X, Seattle, Washington.

²⁸ McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B, Section 722 (g)(6)(A)(iii), amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001.

²⁹ Choe, M. & Braddock, D. (2003). *2003-2005 Washington State Homeless Families Plan*. Olympia, WA: Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development, 16.

³⁰ For purposes of discussion, respondents who described the challenge as minor or major were combined.

³¹ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children Youth and Families, Head Start Bureau. (1999). *Serving homeless families: Descriptions, effective practices, and lessons learned*. Arlington, VA: National Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center.

times varying from less than 30 days to more than 12 months.”³² Their conclusion? Demand for public preschool enrollment far exceeds current availability.

The community survey offers further evidence for both under-enrollment and under-identification. A sample of eight district-correlated communities reported 337 homeless preschool children; only 23% of these children were enrolled in preschool programs. National estimates also confirm this disturbing trend of low enrollment for young children in homeless situations. In 2000, only 15% of homeless preschool children nationwide were enrolled in school programs.³³ It is gravely concerning that only a small minority of young homeless children are receiving an early education, and it is equally concerning that the cumulative preschool number reported by eight communities (337) is *greater* than the district figure collected for the entire state (330).

These detrimental areas of under-identification and under-enrollment must be addressed. Districts can increase identification by continuing to educate school personnel and homeless families, actively inquiring about preschool-aged siblings, and effectively collaborating with homeless providers so that all young children in homeless situations are identified. With regards to under-enrollment, local educational agencies can do their part by coordinating the enrollment of homeless preschoolers and advocating for immediate enrollment. Capacity for early learning programs must be expanded, and liaisons can tangibly demonstrate this need by tracking all homeless preschool-age children—both enrolled and awaiting enrollment.

Homeless children and youth

Under-identification

From July 2002 to June 2003, Washington’s Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development reported sheltering 1,226 unaccompanied youth and 14,337 children (accompanied by parents or guardians) under the age of 18.³⁴ This total of 15,563 sheltered children, however, only represents a subset of children in homeless situations. The 2000 Report to Congress compiled data submitted by the states regarding the primary nighttime residence of homeless children and youth; in this report, sheltered children represented 35% of all homeless children.³⁵ Using this national percentage and the Washington shelter count, an estimated total of 44,466 Washington children and youth are likely to experience homelessness in a given year.

Our district survey reported a total of 7,687 children (birth – 12th grade). Comparing this number to the shelter count alone discloses a significant discrepancy, but evaluating it against the estimated total reveals severe under-identification by school districts. Our community survey also provides evidence of low identification rates. The providers in eight district-correlated communities reported sheltering 843 children (K-12). Applying the 2000 Report to Congress determinant to

³² National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. (1997). *Blocks to their future: A report on the barriers to preschool education for homeless children*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 17.

³³ U.S. Department of Education. (2000). *Education for homeless children and youth program: Report to Congress fiscal year 2000*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 9.

³⁴ Washington State Department of Community, Trade, and Economic Development. (2003). *Emergency shelter assistance program Report, July 2002 – June 2003*. <http://housing-information.net/report/index.php>

³⁵ U.S. Department of Education. (2000). *Education for homeless children and youth program: Report to Congress fiscal year 2000*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 16.

estimate children in all homeless situations would yield 2,409 children for our sample. School districts for the surveyed area reported 922, approximately 38% of the community estimate.

Under-enrollment

In addition to under-identification, data from our community survey indicates that under-enrollment is also a factor in the low numbers of reported homeless students. Shelter providers noted that 23% of homeless children (K-12) and 52% of unaccompanied youth were *not* enrolled in schools. On a national level, the 2000 Report to Congress reported 13% of homeless children (K-12) as unenrolled.³⁶ In short, if Washington State is to assist all children in succeeding, school districts must improve the identification and enrollment of children experiencing homelessness.

Characterizing homeless students

Large district respondents categorized a surprisingly high percentage (50%) of homeless children and youth as “unspecified” in grade, age, and ethnicity. It is possible that some liaisons had access to the requested data but chose not to respond to these particular questions; however, it would be difficult to attribute the high percentage to this factor alone, as the majority of small and medium-sized districts specified these characteristics. Instead, our data would suggest that large districts, in particular, are struggling to maintain quality data on their large numbers of homeless children.

One potential source of assistance is the school-level liaison. Our survey results strongly indicate that appointing liaisons at the building level is highly effective. Approximately half of the district liaisons for large districts reported appointing school liaisons, and we would recommend that all liaisons—but especially those representing larger districts—adopt this approach in order to improve data collection.

Migratory

Migratory children represent a 17-22% of the homeless student population in small and medium districts. Given this significant percentage, we would recommend that liaisons continue to track this subset and coordinate closely with Migrant Programs. One example of collaborating with the Migrant Program is helping to support migrant recruiters with Title I, Part A funds. The Homeless Education Coordinator in Oregon reports “district people realize that it makes good economic sense to get the most out of a person who is going to be in the field already...looking for families in trailer parks, motels, and campsites....” Thus, when a recruiter locates children who are homeless but not migrant, they can receive needed services promptly and efficiently.³⁷

Unaccompanied youth

Approximately one third of homeless students in grades 6-12 are unaccompanied youth. Medium-sized districts report 47%, suggesting that the overall percentage could be even higher. With significantly high rates of homeless unaccompanied youth, it is imperative that schools

³⁶ Ibid, 5.

³⁷ U.S Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, Elementary and Secondary Education Division. (2002). *The education for homeless children and youth program: Learning to succeed, volume II*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 17.

specifically address barriers to education and services unique to unaccompanied youth. Outreach is a fundamental tool for all homeless children, but is especially needed to assist alienated youth.

Academic programs

Medium-sized school districts appear to be the most successful in tracking the academic programs in which their students are participating. They posted the highest enrollment percentages for all surveyed programs, which included gifted, LEP, special education, and vocational programs. At minimum, medium districts are aware of—and at best, they are actively involved in—the educational needs of their homeless students. Smaller districts could be struggling more in this area secondary to program unavailability; larger districts could be faltering due to the increased number of schools and students within their jurisdiction.

In Washington, the percentage of homeless students enrolled in these academic programs is consistently lower than that of the general student population. The question that must be addressed is whether these differences are attributed to insufficient data collection or unequal program access. The likely answer? Both. The need to improve data collection has been evident throughout our study, and the need to improve program access has been demonstrated on a national level.³⁸

Ethnicity

Although ethnicity was the least-tracked descriptor in the study, our limited data would suggest that minorities are at higher risk of homelessness. It will be important to follow this characteristic over time to generate a longitudinal understanding of the ethnicity of homeless students. This information can then be used to heighten the sensitivity and awareness of higher-risk groups, to provide guidance on designing culturally relevant materials, and to evaluate outcomes of homeless education programs. In summary, it is imperative that we improve data collection for students experiencing homelessness. Without accurate information, all aspects of homeless education—services, programs, and policies—will inevitably stagnate.

Barriers to homeless education

Identification

District liaisons reported homeless parent education/outreach and resources as the two greatest challenges in identifying homeless children. One highly recommended strategy to address these problem areas is collaboration. Given the nature of limited resources in education and social programs, collaboration effectively stretches resources and improves services by evading duplicated and/or neglected services. For example, community providers and education liaisons could jointly coordinate the gathering of their target audience, assemble educational materials to distribute, and prepare parent workshops addressing this and related issues.

Approximately 20% of respondents noted major challenges regarding school personnel's awareness of: (1) the legal definition of a homeless child and (2) the legal requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act. Front-line office personnel, those intimately involved in school enrollment,

³⁸ U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, Elementary and Secondary Education Division. (2002). *The education for homeless children and youth program: Learning to succeed, volume I*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 27-28.

need to be well-versed in the above two points of information in order to accurately identify—and immediately enroll—children in homeless situations. In addition to teaching basic definitions and rights, district liaisons should train office staff to detect signs of homelessness and refer all homeless children to the liaison for needed services. Careful design and implementation of district-wide office procedures will also serve to ensure that all schools follow standard procedures designed to identify, enroll, and serve children experiencing homelessness.

Again, collaboration with community providers cannot be over-emphasized. Although training office personnel and establishing standard office procedures will significantly increase the number of students identified, many children in homeless situations will not arrive at the schoolhouse door. The support of community providers must be enlisted if Washington State is to succeed in its mission of identifying and educating all children in need.

Enrollment

Given the legal right of students to enroll immediately without documentation, it is disconcerting that one third of survey respondents still perceived the existence of barriers such as health records and immunization requirements, lack of school records, legal guardianship requirements, lack of birth certificates, and residency requirements. Although district liaisons are required to assist homeless students in procuring necessary documents, enrollment may not be delayed during this process. It is unclear whether liaisons need additional training in this area or require additional assistance in training office staff; nonetheless, homeless students *must* be enrolled immediately and receive the much-needed stability schools can offer.

It is also concerning to discover a large discrepancy between shelters and districts regarding perceived enrollment barriers. Given that shelter providers typically have more daily contact with homeless families and that 90% of surveyed shelters reported verifying K-12 school enrollment, this disparity suggests that some district liaisons are not fully aware of the barriers that homeless children are encountering. Closer collaboration between liaisons and shelters would improve barrier identification and herald the subsequent removal of these obstacles.

Transportation

Later amendments to the McKinney-Vento Act have required school districts to transport homeless children to their school of origin and provide transportation services comparable to those offered to other students.³⁹ Despite the difficulties in arranging transportation for a highly mobile population and the increase in expenditures related to greater distances and greater coordination, additional federal funding has not been allocated to meet these legal mandates. Not surprisingly, Washington school districts reported funding as the greatest challenge in providing transportation for homeless students.

In order to accurately illustrate funding needs, districts will need to systematically collect data regarding their transportation services for homeless students. It will also be imperative to identify innovative and effective methods of providing transportation specific to children experiencing homelessness. Through the Washington State Department of Transportation, one million dollars in federal funding has been made available on a one-time competitive basis to local grantees. Ideally,

³⁹ McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B, Section 722 (g)(1)(J)(iii) and (g)(4)(A).

these demonstration projects will yield best practices that will improve cost efficiency and service quality while ensuring the safety of the children transported.

Transportation has historically been reported as the most prominent barrier to the enrollment of homeless children and youth.⁴⁰ Interestingly, only 34% of survey respondents noted transportation as a problem and ranked it second to legal guardianship requirements (38%). 74% of shelters, however, presented a bleaker perspective and cited transportation as the leading enrollment barrier for children in transition. This incongruity arouses concern regarding both the overall level of collaboration between districts and communities and the quality of transportation services provided to homeless students.

Academic and support services

Respondents perceived that the most successful academic and support services were nutrition, school supplies, and clothing—all basic and tangible aspects of homeless care delivered within the realm of schools. It is encouraging to see most districts addressing these fundamental needs. However, it is concerning that the more intangible aspects—mentoring, counseling services, and expedited special education evaluations—were reported as less successful. Certainly these latter services require even greater coordination and time; and the lack of time and resources, as cited earlier, undoubtedly hinders liaisons from providing more services. However, if we are to provide homeless students with the tools to succeed, we must address the needs of the whole child—physical, social, and emotional—and include these vital services.

Also striking is that a majority of liaisons perceived surveyed services as somewhat successful or better. Since a large discrepancy was previously detected between community providers and school districts, future studies would be helpful in determining if a disparity exists in the area of academic and support services.

The homeless education program in Cleveland serves as a successful example for addressing academic and support services. The district hires a part-time social worker to ensure that homeless families are receiving needed social services. The district also funds a part-time psychologist to test homeless students who may need special education, and those requiring special education are placed in programs within 14 days of identification, a process typically spanning months.⁴¹

Title IA

Regarding Title IA set-asides, NCLB Financial Compliance Insider quotes two state coordinators asserting that the best method for determining set-asides is to identify the need of

⁴⁰ U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, Elementary and Secondary Education Division. (2002). *The education for homeless children and youth program: Learning to succeed, volume I*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 18; U.S. Department of Education. (2000). *Education for homeless children and youth program: Report to Congress fiscal year 2000*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 6; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. (2000). *Separate and unequal: A report on educational barriers for homeless children and youth*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 15; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. (1995). *A foot in the schoolhouse door: Progress and barriers to the education of homeless children*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 36.

⁴¹ U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service. (2002). *The education for homeless children and youth program: Learning to succeed, Volume I*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, 41.

homeless students and fund accordingly.⁴² It is heartening to see the majority of Washington districts utilizing this recommended method. The voluntary reservation of additional Title I funds is also encouraging, and the amount reported imparts additional insight regarding districts that are going above and beyond the call of duty to meet the needs of their children. Naturally, the widespread identification of homeless students is essential to the appropriate allocation of funds.

Given the limited resources and the common ground of goals and target population served, it is important that homeless education and Title I programs collaborate closely and effectively. Our survey results show that 92% of liaisons described the current level of collaboration as adequate or better (data not shown). However, room for improvement clearly exists as less than half of district liaisons considered the partnership as excellent.

Needs and challenges of homeless liaisons

Time

An overwhelming 86% of homeless liaisons spend only 10 hours per week or less on homeless education. An important point not to overlook is that liaisons are often asked to fulfill the responsibilities for several district positions and frequently lack the time to address all their duties. Certainly, insufficient time is evidenced by only half of survey respondents reporting enough time to address their responsibilities as homeless liaisons.

Given that 93% of liaisons noted working 20 hours or less per week, are full-time liaisons really necessary? We visited several medium-sized school districts and asked this same question. Indeed, even in medium-sized districts with *below-average* district poverty⁴³, liaisons working 40 hours a week reported that they still did not have enough time. If medium-sized districts with below-average poverty are expressing this need, then the majority of—if not all—medium and large districts should also hire homeless liaisons full-time. The time afforded to these liaisons is necessary not only to meet the legal requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act, but also to fulfill our ethical obligations to the homeless children in Washington State.

One often-heard explanation for not hiring full-time liaisons is insufficient funds. Although it was beyond the scope of our study to conduct a cost benefit analysis, anecdotal evidence suggests hiring full-time liaisons can be cost-effective. Some districts that have utilized this approach believe full-time liaisons are better able to support homeless students, and this increased level of support leads to higher attendance rates, greater basic education dollars, and more cost-effective transportation choices.

Another potential solution to the shortage of time is designating a school liaison or a building contact in every school. Again, our data shows that virtually all district liaisons who used this approach found it effective; yet, only 25% of respondents reported employing this method.

⁴² Four methods to determining new mandatory Title I, part A set-aside for homeless children. *No Child Left Behind Financial Compliance Insider*. New York: Brownstone Publishers, 1-2, November 2003.

⁴³ District poverty is defined as the percentage of students receiving free and reduced meals. Average district poverty in Washington State is 36%. Districts described in example include the following districts and their district poverty rates: Olympia (19%), South Whidbey (19%), and Sumner (23%).

Appointing liaisons in every building could very easily improve the efficiency and quality of homeless education programs.

Resources

Time is not the only need to emerge for Washington homeless liaisons. Approximately half of survey respondents also cited insufficient resources to fulfill their duties. As ‘resources’ was not specifically defined except to include funding, the only conclusion that can be drawn is that inadequate financial support continues to plague homeless education programs. Follow-up studies would be helpful in elucidating and subsequently providing these needed resources to liaisons.

Training

Overall, liaisons were more satisfied with their training. However, with 28% of liaisons reporting their training as insufficient, reasons shaping this perception need to be identified. A response difference among district sizes provides some additional insight. Small and medium-sized districts reported significantly lower percentages of training satisfaction (61% and 70%) compared to 94% of large districts. The likely explanation for this difference is a combination of two factors: training access and student exposure. Larger districts may be located closer to annual training sites and also have greater flexibility in releasing their liaisons. Smaller districts are more likely to assign multiple district positions to liaisons and could experience more difficulties in authorizing a training release. On the other hand, survey data indicate that small and medium district liaisons follow their students more closely; therefore, these liaisons could be struggling with advanced issues of serving homeless students currently unaddressed in annual trainings.

Challenges

Although one of the liaisons’ responsibilities is assisting homeless families with access to services for which they are eligible, the majority of liaisons were struggling to fulfill this duty. Time continues to be a pervasive problem; 74% of respondents reported time as a challenge in meeting this responsibility. Program availability for preschools, health referrals, and other appropriate services was also cited by 75% of liaisons as an obstacle. Lastly, 61% of respondents noted knowledge of community resources and collaboration with community providers as lesser but still significant challenges.

In our data analysis for this particular question, only districts with at least one homeless student were included; yet, a small minority of respondents did not know whether these four areas were problematic. At best, this lack of knowledge can be attributed to a communication gap between the survey respondent and the staff member addressing this responsibility. At worst, a small number of liaisons are unfamiliar and subsequently non-compliant regarding this legal requirement.

School improvement plans

Of the districts mandated to have improvement plans, less than 50% reported that all their schools had incorporated homeless education in the planning process. Given the crucial role that they fulfill in the lives of homeless children, schools must not ignore this population when developing their vision for the future. Furthermore, even though NCLB only requires improvement

plans from Title I schools who have failed to make adequate yearly progress, Washington State requires a school improvement plan from every school district receiving basic education funds. Schools and districts should seize this opportunity to improve the identification, enrollment, and access to services, all of which are critically needed for homeless children to succeed.

BEST PRACTICES

Through site visits within Washington State and a national literature review, we have compiled best practice examples in homeless education. The following list is by no means exhaustive but serves to highlight selected literature-identified characteristics of effective school programs⁴⁴ and essential but universally challenging components of homeless programs.

Homeless awareness/staff development training

Raising homeless awareness is one of the most fundamental characteristics of an effective homeless education program. Without the knowledge of which children qualify as homeless, schools and communities will readily fall short of their mission to identify and provide services to children in need. Liaisons must educate key personnel regarding the McKinney-Vento definition of a homeless child, raise awareness and sensitivity concerning this population, and define specific roles in the context of legal requirements and social responsibilities. Districts we interviewed found it most helpful to design training sessions with different target audiences in mind; the following list combines the annual training focuses of several Washington districts (Sumner, Aberdeen, Spokane, and South Whidbey):

- ✓ Early education providers - Head Start, ECEAP, and district-funded preschools
- ✓ Building secretaries and principals
- ✓ School liaisons or building contacts
- ✓ Bus drivers and transportation coordinators
- ✓ Teachers, counselors, social workers, and nurses
- ✓ Homeless service providers
- ✓ Homeless families

In Chicago Public Schools, each principal must select a Homeless Education Liaison and Clerk “who are sensitive to the needs of homeless children and youth and who will assure that services are provided to eligible homeless students.”⁴⁵ The principal, liaison, and clerk from each school attend the annual and mandatory Homeless Education Program training. Following each annual training, principals and liaisons are required to conduct an all-staff training within their schools regarding the rights and needs of homeless students.

Identifying homeless children

Establishing district-wide office procedures to identify, enroll, and refer homeless students is also critical to effectual homeless education programs. Standard enrollment forms that inquire about housing situations in non-stigmatizing language are valuable in screening *all* children entering public schools. For instance, the Texas Homeless Education Office has developed a student residency questionnaire for individual districts to adapt and include in student enrollment packets.

⁴⁴ Stronge, J. & Reed-Victor, E. (2000). *Educating homeless students: Promising practices*. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

⁴⁵ Chicago Public Schools. *Homeless education program: Policy and other important documents*. Chicago, IL: Author.

Once identified as homeless, standard procedures should be followed to grant immediate enrollment and refer students to the liaison for identifying needs and providing services. Chicago Public Schools requires any identified homeless student to be immediately enrolled, regardless of missing documentation or records. For every homeless student, Chicago clerks complete a Homeless Education Program Information Form, enter the data in the Student Information HMLS data system, and fax the completed form to the Homeless Education Program office.

Family involvement

Family involvement is another feature of effective school programs. Research has documented the importance of involving and supporting parents if education is to be a priority for homeless children.⁴⁶ By supporting the family, a stable home environment is more quickly achieved which subsequently leads to greater academic success. Family centers that house education and social services have been highly successful models, and two such examples are in the districts of South Whidbey and Sumner.

Both resource centers are strategically located at elementary school campuses with the resultant effect of increased visibility and access. Homeless education liaisons are based in these centers along with family support workers, public health nurses, Readiness to Learn, parenting classes, and mentoring/tutoring programs. Many other services—food, clothing, and community referrals—are also provided, and early education programs (Head Start and ECEAP) are located nearby in adjacent portables. The co-habitation of related services not only increases collaboration at the program level, but also increases the convenience, accessibility, and overall support for families in need.

South Whidbey's program also organizes a care team for every identified homeless student. A care team is composed of individuals who are involved in the student's life (e.g. teacher, counselor, parent, social worker, etc.) and meets regularly to monitor progress and problem solve issues. Homeless parents reported in interviews that care teams were effective in meaningfully involving and connecting them to their child's education.

Collaboration

Although the traditional model for schools has focused primarily on the delivery of educational services, schools are uniquely positioned to impact children—particularly homeless children—far beyond the academic domain. Schools are often the only source of stability and security for children in transition; yet, a dramatic shift in paradigm is necessary if all schools are to embrace this comprehensive approach to education. In the midst of shrinking budgets and growing demands, how are schools to accomplish such a daunting feat? Schools cannot and should not toil in isolation. Partnerships should be forged and “communities of learning” should be established for the benefit of all children.⁴⁷ We highlight the following state and national examples of communities collaborating to provide comprehensive services.

⁴⁶ Stronge, J. & Hudson, K. (1999). Educating homeless children and youth with dignity and care. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education*, 5, 7-18.

⁴⁷ Nunez, R. & Collignon, K. (1997). Creating a community of learning for homeless children. *Educational Leadership*, 55(2), 56-60.

Food

A local church in Sumner granted five wishes to the elementary school most impacted by poverty. After careful consideration, one wish was used for Weekend Backpacks. Although homeless children automatically qualify for free breakfast and lunch during school days, weekend meals are filled with uncertainty. Sumner quickly recognized that school responsibility must extend beyond the school doors and partnered with a local church to address the weekend hunger of homeless students. Each Friday, children bring home backpacks filled with food for the weekend; each Monday, students return empty backpacks to be refilled for the following weekend.

Clothing

The homeless education program for Spokane School District maintains a new shoe bank through the partnership of a local church. Every year, the local church raises funds and a “shoe angel” volunteer purchases new shoes at Payless ShoeSource. Every homeless student is able to receive 2 new pairs of shoes each year. Windermere also provides boot vouchers for Big 5 Sporting Goods, allowing children to pick out their own boots and receive free gloves and socks. In Olympia, a local church donates money to the homeless education program so that children can buy brand new clothes, and in Aberdeen, clothing is obtained from community donations as well as local grants from Factory 2 U and Windermere.

School supplies

Bellingham partners with Opportunity Council, a local community action agency, to sponsor an annual school supply drive for homeless students. School busses are stationed in parking lots throughout the community (Office Depot, Fred Meyer, Walmart, and Opportunity Council), and individual and corporate donors generously fill these busses with school supplies. The fund-raising event has been so successful in past years that surplus supplies are distributed to a partner agency serving low-income households. In Olympia, a local church raises money each year to provide school supplies for children experiencing homelessness. Church volunteers purchase hundreds of backpacks and fill them according to specific and general classroom supply lists.

Back to school nights

Sumner partners with multiple agencies to coordinate an elaborate and comprehensive Back to School Night. Costco donates backpacks filled with school supplies, a community health clinic provides free immunizations, a local hairdresser gives free haircuts, school volunteers assist families in filling out free/reduced meal applications, and community agencies provide additional resources and referrals.

South Whidbey also coordinates a Back to School Project. Every year, two volunteers from the community coordinate the project by writing letters to local newspapers and community-based agencies to raise funds for children in poverty. A buyer volunteers her time and stretches the donated dollars further by obtaining discounted prices at Walmart. Every homeless child receives backpacks, school supplies, and Walmart gift cards to begin the school year.

Transportation

Many districts have established partnerships with community agencies to assist in the costly expenditure of transporting homeless children to school. In Sumner, neighborhood churches donate gas vouchers for families in transition, and in Olympia, private donations are used to purchase bus passes for homeless youth.

Before- and after-school programs

Bellingham School District in Washington partners with a transitional shelter to provide tutoring for children residing at the shelter. Using Title IA set asides, Bellingham hires trained Title I tutors to work with children individually or in groups after school. Tutors meet with students at the shelter and regularly communicate with classroom teachers to discuss progress and identify focus areas.

In Victoria, Texas, tutoring for homeless students is offered at eight neighborhood-based homework centers. These programs are a funding collaboration of multiple agencies, including the Victoria homeless education program (KIDZ Connection), the Victoria Youth Home, the Victoria Housing Authority, Mid-Coast Family Services, the YMCA, the University of Houston-Victoria, the Boys and Girls Club, and district federal programs. Qualified teachers and assistants staff the centers, and free snacks and access to computer labs are also provided.⁴⁸

In Oregon, the Salem-Keizer School District provides services to homeless students living at the Oregon Capitol Inn. The district rents two hotel rooms which function as a community center and includes a computer lab and a lending library. During the week, the center is staffed and various clubs are hosted for children and youth. School attendance among children living at the hotel was 63% prior to the partnership; since opening the center and collaborating with the hotel owner, school attendance has risen to 98%.⁴⁹

Project ACT, the homeless education program in Cleveland, offers academic assistance and support services through eight homeless shelters. District teachers staff the centers and each location has a computer that is used for educational learning and student assessment. Copies of the reading and math assessments are shared with parents and teachers to assist in obtaining customized support for homeless students.

Interagency collaborations

Effective liaisons are also homeless advocates and communicate regularly with shelters or other homeless service providers. Often liaisons represent their districts on Continuum of Care Committees (Aberdeen, South Whidbey, Sumner), Readiness to Learn Consortiums (Bellingham), and homeless coalitions (Spokane, Sumner). Liaisons also work to educate the community and speak at local charities, faith-based organizations, and high schools.

⁴⁸ U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service. (2002). *The education for homeless children and youth program: Learning to succeed, volume II.* Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of Education, 46.

⁴⁹ U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service. (2002). *The education for homeless children and youth program: Learning to succeed, volume I.* Washington, D.C: U.S. Department of Education, 41.

Early childhood education

Early childhood education is an essential but often neglected component of homeless education programs. Research has clearly demonstrated that not all children arrive at school ready to learn. The Kauffman Early Exchange Education reports “young children who do not have opportunities to engage in stimulating cognitive activities and nurturing social-emotional relationships are already behind their peers when they enter kindergarten”.⁵⁰ This readiness gap then precipitates the widely documented achievement gap that persists throughout elementary and secondary schooling.⁵¹ School readiness is a particularly pressing issue for homeless children who are more likely to experience health problems, developmental delays, and emotional difficulties. High quality learning programs can address the readiness gap by positively influencing the academic, emotional, and social development of children in poverty.⁵²

The benefits of early childhood education not only include school readiness and improved academic achievement, but also extend to broader levels of society. Research has shown that every dollar invested in a high-quality early childhood program returns seven dollars that would have otherwise been expended on remediation, welfare, unemployment, and other compensatory services. Specifically regarding school systems, a \$1 investment in preschool led to \$0.73 in reduced costs for special education and remediation.⁵³

Despite strong evidence documenting the success of early education efforts, national and state data estimate that only 15-23% of preschool-age homeless children are enrolled in early learning programs. Some school districts, in the midst of insufficient program funding, are still working in diligent and innovative ways to prioritize early education. After establishing a preschool program at a transitional housing center in Lancaster, Pennsylvania, local advocates quickly recognized that children from other area shelters did not have equal access to the program. A task force was formed to locate another classroom and YWCA readily provided space. All five shelters and the residential treatment program now regularly refer children to the two preschools. The district funds the preschool teacher’s salary and some supplies, while shelters and other service providers (The Community Hospital Auxiliary, Junior League of Lancaster County) contribute the remainder of the supplies. The homeless liaison also recruits and screens many volunteers from local colleges and the Junior League to assist in the preschool classrooms.⁵⁴

In Olympia, Washington, the liaison has been successful in coordinating preschool education and immediately enrolling all homeless young children. She communicates frequently with Head Start and public preschools, which hold two slots each for homeless students. She also works closely with the providers to coordinate needed transportation and childcare. In Aberdeen, the homeless liaison also collaborates with various early education providers (Migrant program, Even

⁵⁰ Kauffman Early Education Exchange. (2002). *Set for success: Building a strong foundation for school readiness based on the social-emotional development of young children*. Kansas City, MO: Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation.

⁵¹ Brown, J. (2002). *The link between early learning and care and school readiness*. Seattle, WA: Economic Opportunity Institute

⁵² Schweinhart, L. J., Barnes, H. V., & Weikart, D. P. (1993). *Significant benefits: The High/Scope Perry Preschool study through age 27* (Monographs of the High/Scope Educational Research Foundation, 10). Ypsilanti: High/Scope Press; National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. (1997). *Blocks to their futures: A report on the barriers to preschool education for homeless children*. Washington, D.C.: Author.

⁵³ Barnett, S.W. (1996). *Lives in the balance: Age-27 benefit-cost analysis of the High/Scope Perry Preschool Program*. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Press.

⁵⁴ U.S Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service, Elementary and Secondary Education Division. (2002). *The education for homeless children and youth program: Learning to succeed, volume II*. Washington, D.C.: Author, 45.

Start, birth to 3 program, special services, teen parents program) to ensure that all homeless preschoolers are immediately identified and enrolled. In addition, she screens every preschool-aged sibling of identified homeless students and completes the enrollment paperwork for any eligible child.

Youth outreach and services

Reaching and serving homeless youth is another element of homeless education programs that is vitally needed but quite often challenging. Three Washington school districts that have been successful in outreaching to homeless youth include Yakima, Olympia, and Aberdeen. In 2003, Yakima School District created a new position entitled Student Retrieval Officer. At the beginning of the school year, the officer received a list of 417 students who had dropped out of school during the last few years and was asked to reconnect these youth to the educational system. He met individually with each child and his or her family to discuss and arrange for any assistance that was needed for the youth to return to school. The officer also informed them about the different educational opportunities available, including traditional or alternative high schools and GED programs. In only its first year, 220 youth returned to continue their education.

Recognizing the large numbers of families depending on working youth, Juvenile Rehabilitation Assistance, Yakima Mental Health, and Yakima School Districts collaborated to provide alternative educational opportunities through a new learning center. Juvenile Rehabilitation Assistance donated classroom space and Yakima School District provided teachers, supplies, and computers. An individualized learning program offers flexible hours and credits to obtain a high school diploma; each week, students are required to complete 24 hours of academic work and meet individually with a certified teacher. 30 work hours earn 0.17 credits. (In Yakima School District, a typical high school student receives 6 credits per year.) A GED program is also available for youth. Students complete GED work packets independently and attend 2.5-hour classes twice a week. For increased schedule flexibility, the learning center offers three different classes every weekday, including night classes, and also provides free GED tests.

In Olympia, the education liaison arranges to be at each high school on different days of the week. This schedule is directly coordinated with school principals and counselors to prevent any interruption in academic learning. Homeless youth meet privately with the liaison to discuss and address various needs. At the end of each month, bus passes are provided for the following month. The Olympia liaison also collaborates closely with a local youth agency, Community Youth Services, and assists in enrolling and serving homeless youth identified in the community. She familiarizes herself with areas where homeless youth frequent and outreaches to these youth who have not sought educational or social services.

In Aberdeen, the homeless liaison is based at an alternative high school and is actively involved in school events and activities. For example, the high school has a professional culinary kitchen and the liaison helps to coordinate a dinner with homeless youth every three weeks. She works with the youth to plan and prepare the meals and also connects with them during this extracurricular time. Although the need is greatest at the alternative high school, the liaison also schedules bimonthly time to be available at the other middle and high schools.

Mentoring has also been demonstrated to positively impact at-risk youth. Well-designed mentoring programs such as Big Brothers/Big Sisters have been found to reduce the likelihood of drug and alcohol use, increase school attendance, and improve students' sense of competence and grades.⁵⁵ Providing youth with supportive adult relationships is an important strategy in mitigating the harmful effects of homelessness.

Transportation

Transporting students to their school of origin minimizes social and academic disruptions to the already chaotic lives of homeless children. High mobility has been shown to negatively impact academic achievement, and children may take four to six months to recover academically from a school transfer.⁵⁶ Compared to their peers, mobile students are half as likely to graduate from high school and twice as likely to repeat a grade.⁵⁷ Children who move frequently have higher absenteeism rates which correlate with lower academic achievement.⁵⁸ Moreover, the negative impact of mobility is not just limited to moving students; it also adversely affects the academic achievement of non-mobile students remaining in the classroom.⁵⁹

Lawmakers have been responsive to these and other research findings that document the importance of school stability for children. To the extent feasible, school districts are to retain homeless students in their school of origin unless it is against the wishes of the parent or guardian. Students are allowed to remain in their school of origin for the duration of their homelessness or until the end of any academic year in which permanent housing is obtained.⁶⁰ Furthermore, districts are legally required to provide transportation to and from the school of origin as well as transportation services comparable to those offered to other students (e.g. before- and after-school programs). Although the research is compelling and the legislation is binding, how can districts effectively and efficiently transport homeless children to their school of origin? The following are examples of successful transportation programs in Washington and in the nation.

In Texas, the Victoria Independent School District adopted a "One Child, One School, One Year" policy in 1995. This program was originally intended to serve homeless children and youth but was later expanded to all students. All homeless students were provided transportation to remain in their school of origin; after school, children were also transported to homework centers prior to being returned to their residence. As a result of these efforts, school attendance increased by 63,430 days and 604 fewer students had 10-19 absences. Greater attendance led to an additional \$1,800,000 in state education funds to the district, and improvement on the Texas Assessment of

⁵⁵ Tierney, J., Grossman, J., Resch, N. (2000). *Making a difference: an impact study of Big brothers/ Big sisters*. (Re-issue of 1995 Study). Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures.

⁵⁶ Homes for the Homeless. (1999). *Homeless in America: A children's story, part one*. New York: Institute for Children and poverty, 11.

⁵⁷ Rumberger, R.W., Larson, K.A., Ream, R.K., Palardy, G.J. (1999). *The education consequences of mobility for California students and schools*. PACE Policy Brief, 1(1), 3; Jacobson, L. (2001). Moving targets. *Education Week*, 20(29), 32-34.

⁵⁸ Family Housing Fund. (1998). *Kids Mobility Project*. Minneapolis, MN: Author, 1.

⁵⁹ Rumberger, R.W., Larson, K.A., Ream, R.K., Palardy, G.J. (1999). *The education consequences of mobility for California students and schools*. PACE Policy Brief, 1(1), 4.

⁶⁰ McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title VII, Subtitle B, Section 722 (g)(3).

Academic Skills scores in one elementary school with high numbers of homeless children. In 1999, VISD reported spending \$26,000 transporting 820 children and youth.⁶¹

HEART, the homeless education program in Spokane School District, collaborates closely with the transportation director to arrange services. The liaison has a weekly deadline to email all transportation requests to the transportation coordinator. On the day of the deadline, the coordinator arranges the routes and emails the information back to the liaison for a next day start. (Bus tokens are temporarily used during the week layover; however, the liaison and the transportation director are working to further improve the turnaround time.) The homeless liaison then contacts the family and sends carbon copies to the school principal, office manager, and counselor. Spokane utilizes school busses, special education busses, public bus passes, and cabs to provide transportation for homeless students. If children are in elementary school, then parents also receive public bus passes to accompany the student to and from school. Only one cab company is used in Spokane School District, and the district requires that the company employ non-smoking vans and uniformed drivers when transporting students. Spokane further protects the safety of their students by necessitating that cab drivers be fingerprinted for background checks.

In Sumner School District, the homeless liaison is the key contact person for coordinating transportation for children in homeless situations. According to the liaison, mileage reimbursement is the district's first-line transportation method for two reasons: 1) it provides additional financial and social assistance to families and 2) it costs less than school busses. Sign-in sheets at schools are used to track attendance and compensation, and privileges are removed if signs of negligence are detected. If mileage reimbursement or public bus passes are not an option, then the liaison sends a request to the transportation coordinator, who utilizes either regular or special education busses. Often, arranging transportation for homeless students involves rerouting busses, creating new routes, crossing district lines, and using creativity when all else fails.

The examples of Spokane and Sumner highlight an important component in homeless education programs—centralizing the coordination of transportation services through one person. By restricting the flow of transportation requests to the liaison, it allows the district liaison to be informed of *all* homeless students and imparts the opportunity to connect these children to needed services. Two, it streamlines the referral process so that all requests come from homeless education programs to the districts' transportation office and decreases the likelihood of requests falling through the cracks. Centralizing coordination also enhances the ability to collect accurate and comprehensive data regarding transportation programs for homeless students.

Furthermore, successful districts throughout the nation recommend developing a systematic process to meet transportation needs.⁶² The following components are suggested for process inclusion:

- (1) Identifying one individual as the key contact regarding transportation
- (2) Including a process to determine students' best interests regarding travel to a specific school
- (3) Standardizing transportation-related data collection and processing

⁶¹ National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE. (2002). *National Symposium on Transportation for Homeless Children and Youth Proceedings, February 20-21, 2000*. Greensboro, NC: Author, 27-28.

⁶² U.S. Department of Education, Planning and Evaluation Service. (2002). *The education for homeless children and youth program: Learning to succeed, volume II*. Washington, D.C: Author, 38.

(4) Planning for emergencies

Chicago Public Schools provides every school in the district with a Homeless Education Program Emergency Packet to offer families in the event that transportation services cannot be arranged immediately. Packets for elementary schools include 1 pack of 20 student fare cards, 1 adult 7-day transit pass, and \$10 cash for purchasing transfers or adult transit cards. Packets for secondary schools include 1 pack of 20 student fare cards and \$11 cash for purchasing transfer fares.⁶³

As more students are exercising their right to remain in their school of origin, inter-district bussing is increasingly common. Several Washington liaisons have taken the initiative to invite transportation coordinators from neighboring districts to meet and discuss methods of collaborating efficiently and effectively. From these meetings, one frequent suggestion has been to ask transportation directors to coordinate directly with one another in determining inter-district solutions. Liaisons frequently cite that these meetings produce a spirit of collaboration that unifies efforts to address the needs of all homeless children.

⁶³ Chicago Public Schools. *Homeless education program: Policy and other important documents*. Chicago, IL: Author, 10.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Finally, we summarize the areas identified in our survey as needing improvement and recommend best practice strategies for districts to implement in each of these areas.

1. INCREASE IDENTIFICATION

- Raise homeless awareness by educating school personnel, community providers, and homeless families about the definition and rights of homeless children and youth.
- Train office staff regarding signs of homelessness and implement district-wide procedures/forms to screen housing situations of all children, including the inquiry of preschool-age siblings of homeless students.
- Collaborate with homeless providers (shelters, local housing authorities, food banks, soup kitchens, DSHS, etc.).

2. INCREASE ENROLLMENT

- Train school personnel and implement district-wide procedures to immediately enroll homeless children and refer students and preschool-aged siblings to liaisons for additional services.
- Collaborate with homeless providers to mutually refer clients, facilitate enrollment, and identify and remove enrollment barriers.
- Coordinate enrollment of homeless preschoolers.

3. IMPROVE SERVICES

- Conduct a local needs assessment.
- Collaborate with community-based agencies and federal and state programs (Title I, migrant program, special education, ECEAP, Head Start, etc.) to maximize resources, combine funding streams, and prevent gaps or overlaps in services.
- Appoint school liaisons in every building to assist in providing services.

4. IMPROVE DATA COLLECTION

- Establish a central database at the district homeless education office to collect information regarding numbers and characteristics of homeless students, programs accessed or awaiting access, services provided, academic achievement, attendance, nighttime residence, etc.
- Appoint school liaisons in every building and regularly collect data through these building liaisons.
- Design data collection to evaluate and improve homeless education programs.

APPENDIX A: DISTRICT SURVEY

I. COUNTING HOMELESS STUDENTS

1A. What is the estimated number of [homeless children and youth](#) in your district currently [enrolled](#) in public school (K-12)?

1B. Please provide estimated numbers of homeless children and youth in your district according to the grade level groups below.

- K-5
- 6-8
- 9-12

1C. Please fill in the estimated number of homeless children and youth obtained from each source. Total from sources should equal total given in Question 1A. Sources should be directly from schools, school/district-related agencies, or districts. Please do not provide information from community agencies as we will be surveying community agencies separately.

- Documentation from school sites
- School district survey results
- Other (please explain)

2A. Of those reported in Question #1A, how many are [homeless unaccompanied youth](#)?

2B. Please fill in the estimated number of homeless unaccompanied youth obtained from each source. Total from sources should equal total given in Question 2A. Sources should be directly from schools, school/district-related agencies, or districts. Please do not provide information from community agencies as we will be surveying community agencies separately.

- Documentation from school sites
- School district survey results
- Other (please describe)

3A. Of those reported in Question #1A, how many are [homeless migratory children/youth](#)?

3B. Please fill in the estimated number of homeless migratory children/youth obtained from each source. Total from sources should equal total given in Question 3A. Sources should be directly from schools, school/district-related agencies, or districts. Please do not provide information from community agencies as we will be surveying community agencies separately.

- Documentation from school sites
- School district survey results
- Other (please explain)

4A. What is the estimated number of children and youth currently enrolled in your district who were homeless at some point in the 2003-2004 school year, but are no longer homeless? Please do not include this estimate in Question #1.

4B. Please fill in the estimated number of formerly homeless children/youth obtained from each source. Total from sources should equal total given in Question 4A. Sources should be directly from schools, school/district-related agencies, or districts. Please do not provide information from community agencies as we will be surveying community agencies separately.

- Documentation from school sites
- School district survey results
- Other (please explain)

5A. What is the estimated number of [homeless preschool-age children](#) in your district currently [enrolled](#) in preschool programs (birth through pre-K)?

5B. Please provide the estimated number of homeless preschoolers in your district according to the program types listed below:

- Public preschool
- Head Start
- Special education preschool (IDEA, Part C, and Section 619)
- Private preschool
- Other (please explain)

5C. Please fill in the estimated number of homeless preschoolers obtained from each source. Total from sources should equal total given in Question 5A. Sources should be directly from schools, school/district-related agencies, or districts. Please do not provide information from community agencies as we will be surveying community agencies separately.

- Documentation from public preschool programs
- Documentation from Head Start programs
- School district survey results
- Other (please explain)

6. Please describe the methods that your district is currently utilizing to identify, count, and demographically describe homeless students.

II. DESCRIBING HOMELESS STUDENTS

1A. Please provide the estimated number of homeless students enrolled in your school district for the following age groups:

- 5 - 11
- 12 - 14
- 15 - 21

1B. Please provide the estimated number of homeless students enrolled in your school district for the following ethnic groups:

- Caucasian
- African-American
- Hispanic
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Native American
- Other

1C. Please provide the estimated number of homeless students enrolled in your school district for the following categories:

- Gifted
- Limited English Proficient
- Special Education
- Vocational

III. BARRIERS TO THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

1. How successful has your district been in eliminating the following barriers to [enrollment](#)?

	Very Successful, No longer a barrier	Somewhat Successful, Remains a minor barrier	Not Successful, A major barrier	Don't Know
Health records and immunization requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of school records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal guardianship requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing birth certificates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residency requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

2A. Please provide the number of homeless children/youth currently remaining in their [school of origin](#).

2B. Please provide the number of formerly homeless children/youth (homeless at some point in the 2003-2004 school year, but are no longer homeless) currently remaining in their [school of origin](#).

3A. Please provide the number of homeless children/youth currently receiving transportation to their [school of origin](#).

3B. Please provide the number of formerly homeless children/youth (homeless at some point in the 2003-2004 school year, but are no longer homeless) currently receiving transportation to their school of origin.

4. What are the major challenges your district faces in providing transportation to the school of origin?

	Not a challenge	A minor challenge	A major challenge	Don't Know
Funding to pay for transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Insufficient staffing and/or time to coordinate transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Coordinating transportation services with neighboring districts	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

5. Please estimate the cost of transportation to the school of origin for homeless children/youth in your district for the entire 2003-2004 school year. *(Do not enter the dollar sign or commas)*

6. What are the major challenges your district faces in identifying homeless children and youth?

	Not a challenge	A minor challenge	A major challenge	Don't Know
Implementing office procedures in schools to identify homeless students	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School personnel's awareness of the legal definition of a homeless student	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School personnel's awareness of the legal requirements of McKinney-Vento	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient homeless parent education and outreach	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sensitivity to homeless families by office personnel	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient resources for homeless district liaisons to assist schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient training for homeless district liaisons to assist schools	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

IV. TITLE I

1. How many Title I, Part A schools are in your district?

2. What is the amount of Title I, Part A funding your district received for the 2003-2004 school year? *(Do not enter the dollar sign or commas)*

3. What is your formula or method for calculating Title I, Part A set-asides for homeless children not enrolled in a Title I, Part A funded school?

[Under Title I, Part A, 1113(c)(3)(A), Local Educational Agencies must reserve (or set aside) funds as are necessary to provide services comparable to those provided to children in Title I, Part A-funded schools to serve homeless children who do not attend participating schools, including providing educationally related support services to children in shelters and other locations where children may live]

- Identify homeless students' needs and fund accordingly
- Obtain count of homeless students and multiply by Title I, Part A per-pupil allocation
- Reserve an amount of funds greater than or equal to the amount of your McKinney-Vento subgrant request
- Reserve a specific percentage based on your district's poverty level or total Title I, Part A allocation
- Our district does not receive Title IA funds
- Other (please explain)

4. What is the total amount of Title I, Part A set aside that your district has reserved for the 2003-2004 school year to serve homeless children and youth? *(Do not enter the dollar sign or commas)*

5. Did your district voluntarily set aside additional Title I funds to serve homeless children in all schools (not just non-Title I schools) across your district?

- Yes
- No

6. If yes, what is the additional amount of Title I funds your district reserved for serving homeless children in all schools in your district? *(Do not enter the dollar sign or commas)*

7. How would you describe the level of collaboration between the homeless education program and the Title I program in your district?

- Inadequate
- Adequate
- Excellent
- Our district does not receive Title IA Funds

V. Miscellaneous

1. How many hours per week do you dedicate to homeless liaison duties?

- None
- 1-10 hours
- 11-20 hours
- 21-30 hours
- 31-40+ hours

2A. Do you have other staff members working (paid or volunteer) in the homeless education program in your district?

- Yes
- No

2B. If yes, how many of your staff members work part-time?

2C. If yes, how many of your staff members work full-time?

3. What is the size of your school district according to the student headcount categories below?

- Small (1000 or less)
- Medium (greater than 1000 but less than 10,000)
- Large (10,000 or more)

4A. How many schools (K-12) are in your district?

4B. How many public preschools are in your district?

5A. In order to fully address the responsibilities of your position as district homeless liaison, have you been given *sufficient time*?

- Yes
- No

5B. In order to fully address the responsibilities of your position as district homeless liaison, have you been given *sufficient resources (including funding)*?

- Yes
- No

5C. In order to fully address the responsibilities of your position as district homeless liaison, have you received *sufficient training*?

- Yes
- No

6A. Do you currently appoint homeless liaisons at individual schools?

- Yes
- No

6B. If yes, has this approach has been effective in your district?

- Yes
- No

7. Do you or another homeless education staff member (paid or volunteer) coordinate the enrollment of homeless preschoolers in your district?

- Yes
- No

8. What are the challenges in assisting homeless families (parents and siblings of homeless students) with access to services for which they are eligible (e.g. Head Start, Even Start, public preschools, referrals to health, dental, and other appropriate services)?

	Not a challenge	A minor challenge	A major challenge	Don't Know
Sufficient time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient program availability for parents and siblings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient knowledge of resources in community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sufficient collaboration with community providers	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

9. How successful has your district been in providing the following services to homeless children?

	Very successful	Somewhat successful	Not Successful	Don't Know
Basic nutrition (free or reduced breakfast/lunch program)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Clothing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
School supplies	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Tutoring/academic assistance	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Mentoring	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Medical and dental referrals	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Counseling and psychological services	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Expedited evaluations for special education	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Before- and after-school programs	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. If any schools in your district are mandated to have school improvement plans by the No Child Left Behind Act, are they incorporating the education of homeless students in their planning process? If yes, please describe how.

- Yes, all schools
- Yes, some schools
- No
- No schools in our district are currently mandated to have school improvement plans

11. We will soon survey community-based organizations that serve homeless children and families in Washington State. We would very much appreciate your help in identifying at least two to three of these organizations in your district area that we should include for our survey. Please provide as much contact information (name, organization, phone, email, and address) as you can below:

12. Please use the following space to clarify or comment on any of the previous survey questions. Feel free to share any other comments, suggestions, or concerns regarding the education of homeless children.

APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY SURVEY

Organization Name: _____ Contact Person: _____
 Telephone Number: _____ Email _____

Please provide the following information for children and youth who are either enrolled in _____ School District or would be enrolled in _____ S.D. if they were attending school. Please provide this information for Tuesday, June 8, 2004. Definitions for terms in bold font may be found on the enclosed glossary page.

I. COUNTING HOMELESS CHILDREN

1. How many of your residents/clients are **homeless school-age children and youth** (K-12)? _____
2. Of those reported in Question #1, how many are currently **enrolled** in public school? _____
3. How many of your residents/clients are **homeless preschool-age children** (birth-5)? _____
4. Of those reported in Question #3, how many are currently enrolled in **preschool programs**? _____
5. How many of your residents/clients are **homeless unaccompanied youth**? _____
6. Of those reported in Question #5, how many are currently enrolled in public school? _____

II. COORDINATING WITH SCHOOLS & DISTRICTS

7. Does your organization work closely with the **homeless liaison** in your district? Yes No
8. Does your organization verify if school-age children (K-12) are enrolled in school? Yes No
9. Does your organization verify if preschool-age children (birth-5) are enrolled in **preschool programs**? Yes No

III. BARRIERS TO THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN & YOUTH

10. How much of a barrier is each of the following to the enrollment of homeless children and youth during the 2003-2004 school year?

	Not a barrier	A minor barrier	A major barrier	Don't Know
Health records and immunization requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lack of school records	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Legal guardianship requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Providing birth certificates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Residency requirements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other (please describe below)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

APPENDIX C: SURVEY GLOSSARY

enroll/enrollment: attending classes and participating fully in school activities

homeless liaison: a district staff person who coordinates services to ensure that homeless children and youth enroll and succeed in school. All school districts are required to designate a local liaison.

homeless migratory child and youth: child who qualifies as homeless because they are living in the circumstances described under "homeless child and youth" AND who is, or whose parent or spouse is, a migratory agricultural worker, including a migratory dairy worker, or a migratory fisher, and who, in the preceding 36 months, in order to obtain, or accompany such parent or spouse, in order to obtain, temporary or seasonal employment in agricultural or fishing work:

- has moved from one school district to another;
- in a State that is comprised of a single school district, has moved from one administrative area to another within such district; or
- resides in a school district of more than 15,000 square miles, and migrates a distance of 20 miles or more to a temporary residence to engage in a fishing activity.

homeless school-age child and youth:

- children and youth, ages 5-21, who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, and includes those sharing 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 lack of alternative adequate accommodations; living in emergency or transitional shelters; abandoned in hospitals; awaiting foster care placement
- children and youth who have a primary nighttime residence that is a private or public place not designed or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
- children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above

homeless preschool-age children: preschool-age children (birth to five years old) who qualify as homeless because they are living in the circumstances described under "homeless child and youth"

homeless unaccompanied youth: youth who qualify as homeless because they are living in the circumstances described under "homeless child and youth" AND not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian

preschool program: a formally structured early education program. Examples include public preschool programs, Head Start, early Head Start, Even Start, ECEAP, etc.

school of origin: the school the child or youth attended when permanently housed or the school in which the child or youth was last enrolled