



Serving Homeless Children and Youth

Tip Sheet 3: Identification of Homeless Children



The Role of the Liaison

While it is true that local liaisons themselves will and should identify many of the homeless students in their district, the actual charge in the law is for local liaisons to ensure that homeless students are identified “by school personnel and through coordination activities with other entities and agencies”

Local liaisons are not expected to bear the sole responsibility for identifying students. Other school staff, community leaders and human service agencies can and should play a critical role in helping the liaisons find families who are homeless.



School staff who may be particularly helpful in meeting the requirement to identify homeless students include:

- school nurses
- front office and registration staff
- truancy and attendance officers
- cafeteria staff
- bus drivers
- school social workers and counselors
- administrators, such as principals or directors of special education and Title I

Collaboration



Formal

“...collaboration with other educational programs and community based agencies is not only encouraged, but it is expected. The collaborations involved in ensuring students in homeless situations are identified may be informal or structured around formal activities and relationships. “

- Establish relationships within the district
- Provide staff groups within the district information about the liaison’s role and the definition of homelessness.
- Make sure staff know how to inform you if they suspect that a student may be homeless.

McKinney Vento also establishes more formal requirements for collaborations .

Title I, Part A requires that programs operated under its authority coordinate at the state and local levels. All districts must also have an application approved by the SEA that addresses Title I, Part A coordination with McKinney-Vento.

Child Find requirements now include a specific requirement that states ensure homeless children with disabilities are identified, located, and evaluated.

Informal

Other entities and agencies that can assist in identifying students and families without fixed, regular, and adequate housing.

- **Shelters** and transitional housing services.
- **Head Start** and Early Head Start
- **Continuum of Care (CoC)**, representatives from all stakeholders invested in serving persons experiencing homelessness. The CoC may include shelter providers, food banks, faith-based organizations, and other agencies, making it easy for a liaison to connect with a large number of organizations through one CoC.



Strategies to Increase Identification



- Include a residency questionnaire in the general enrollment and registration packet.
- Share enrollment forms with programs like Title I; Free and reduced lunch; and other income eligibility based programs.
- Have cooperative agreements and shared enrollment events with other community based programs such as Head Start, Early Head Start, Birth to Three-Early Intervention, Kindergarten Round-up, Homeless Connect Events and Child Find/Child Development Day.
- Make sure that staff who handle enrollment have quick reference guides against which they can check to see if addresses match homeless shelters or local low cost hotels/motels.
- Provide brief updates and reminders at staff meetings and in newsletters.
- Build relationships with community members who are likely to encounter the homeless, such as law enforcement, social service agencies and managers at low cost hotels/motels.
- Provide information on the district website with a feature story in February during homeless awareness month.
- Utilize attendance records to look for erratic attendance that may be an indicator for unstable housing situations.
- Utilize transportation records to assist in identifying families who are residing in shelters, hotels or motels.
- Participate in behavior review committees.
- Train truancy and attendance officers.