

Serving Homeless Children and Youth

Tip Sheet 5

Head Start and McKinney Vento: Outreach, Identification and Enrollment

Children experiencing homelessness have particular vulnerabilities related to their health, mental health, and development.

That is why the comprehensive services Head Start provides are vitally important to these children. It is also why it is imperative that these children have access to Head Start and Early Head Start, whenever possible.

Eligibility

The Head Start Improving School Readiness Act of 2007 makes clear that **children who are experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for Head Start and should be prioritized for enrollment.**

In order to do this effectively, programs must **include homelessness data on their community assessments.**

Programs must **develop partnerships with homelessness service providers and other social service providers** in order to recruit homeless families.

And grantees must make sure that program **selection systems include homeless children as high priority.**

Identification

1. Be present in your community.
2. Spread the word about how Head Start benefits homeless families.
3. Go where homeless families are.
 - Community Resource Centers;
 - Food Pantries
 - Laundromats
 - Housing offices
 - Workforce Development offices
 - Child Care subsidy offices
 - Free Clinics
 - Emergency Rooms



Partnerships

Build and maintain relationships with community partners such as law enforcement, clergy, local businesses (laundromats, independent motels), libraries....

Enrollment

Selection and Prioritization

Assign points to ensure that families who are experiencing homelessness receive a priority rating.

Attendance

Develop a process for attendance that ensures that families experiencing homelessness receive the immediate support and services they need so their children can and will attend Head Start or Early Head Start on a regular basis and can be successfully integrated into the class.

Transition

Maintain a process for transitions to ensure that families experiencing homelessness receive the support and services they need for smooth transitions.