



“Deeper Dives” for Schools

Practical Strategies to Serve Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

1. Collaborating for Success

Where to start: It’s all about relationships.

- Reach out! McKinney-Vento liaisons can make email or phone contact with early care and education programs in their communities. (Use our [Pathways to Partnership tool](#) to get started.) Early care and education providers can contact McKinney-Vento liaisons in local school districts. ([Your McKinney-Vento State Coordinator](#) can provide contact information.)
- Realize relationships are about people, not programs. It will take time (maybe years) to build relationships and develop rapport. Be persistent.
- Be available and positive. Say “How might we do it?” vs. “It can’t be done.”
- Designate a person who is passionate about young children and homelessness to do the work. I do this work because it is the thing that gets me up in the morning and brings me to work.

Ask to join existing meetings or set up your own meetings.

- Make sure the right people are at the table. Do they have the ability to change policy and procedures that might be getting in the way?
 - Example: If you want to ensure children experiencing homelessness receive screenings and referrals for early intervention or early childhood special education: Are the team members who manage screenings and referrals present? Do they understand homelessness and associated trauma? Are they compassionate and understanding about what they might hear and see? Can they understand screenings may need to be done at a shelter, motel, public location or coffee shop? Can they make accommodations to work outside the “normal” work day (evenings, weekends, etc.) when families experiencing homelessness can be available?
- Set up regular meetings (monthly may be a good frequency to start) and attend every time. Show through your actions that this topic is important. The whole range of providers of early care and education should be at the table every time, not just twice a year, or when invited.
- Early care and education providers, as well as McKinney-Vento liaisons, should be asked to bring information and share resources as equal partners at the regular meetings. Everyone is a participant, not just an attendee.
- Get out of the office. Meet at shelters, schools and early childhood programs. Share information with those running the programs.

Keep the lines of communication open.

- Share resources and information often and openly.
- Share data on the number of families and children experiencing homelessness across programs and providers. Help each other gather data.