

GUIDE TO USING SESAME STREET IN COMMUNITIES’ RESOURCES ON FAMILY HOMELESSNESS: SUGGESTIONS FOR SCHOOL DISTRICT HOMELESS LIAISONS

*For the entire guide, visit:

<http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/guide-to-using-sesame-street-in-communities-resources-on-family-homelessness>

More than one million American children under the age of six experience the trauma of homelessness. Public schools have identified 1.3 million children experiencing homelessness in grades K-12. Homelessness is associated with delays in language, literacy, and social-emotional development, putting children at risk for later academic problems. Children and youth who experience homelessness are at higher risk of dropping out of high school than other low-income students.

Here, we provide some tips for how you as a school district [homeless liaison](#) can use both [Sesame Street in Communities homelessness resources](#) and other materials to help children and families experiencing homelessness.

1. Include information about the [Sesame Street in Communities homelessness resources](#) in emails, newsletters, website articles, mailings, or other methods of communicating with all parents. Include your contact information and an invitation for parents who are experiencing homelessness to come forward so that you may provide assistance. Avoid using the word “homeless” in student and family outreach whenever possible. Use descriptive language (such as “in transition” or “in a temporary housing situation”) and ask any follow up questions with discretion.
2. Present the Sesame Street resources at an upcoming professional development meeting. Consider sharing the [“Home Is” video](#), the [“We Got This: Storybook,”](#) or the [In the Classroom](#) article. Review the entire set of materials with appropriate district-level staff, including registrars, front desk personnel, nurses, and preschool program personnel, who can help identify and enroll children experiencing homelessness. Use this as an opportunity to discuss recent trends in family homelessness in your community, the services you provide, and unmet needs.
3. Brainstorm with teachers and district staff ways to use the Sesame Street content to increase the identification and support of families experiencing homelessness in your school district. For example, consider making the content available to all students both to teach them about and destigmatize homelessness and to support the self-identification of older students experiencing homelessness who may be caretakers for their younger siblings. Another example might be to show [Rainbow Kind of Day video](#), noting that in this video, Lily says her family “has been staying in all different kinds of places;” use this as a prompt to help students and staff understand the definition of homelessness used by public schools.
4. Distribute the articles [Supporting Children and Families in Transition](#) and [In the Classroom](#) to building administrators and classroom teachers to help them better understand the signs and significance of childhood trauma and to share ideas for helping children in the classroom.
5. Contact your [local Child Care Resource & Referral](#) agency and [local Head Start provider\(s\)](#) to make sure they know about the Sesame Street homelessness resources. Set up a meeting to brainstorm ways to

use the Sesame Street materials locally to increase the identification and enrollment of young children experiencing homelessness.

6. Share the printables, storybook, and other Sesame Street content with homeless assistance and housing partners. Take the opportunity to offer to help them [child-proof their programs](#), conduct [an early childhood self-assessment](#), and advocate for the early care and education of the children they serve.
7. If parents need child care to make employment or education possible, share [this tip sheet](#) with them so that they can find high-quality, free (or reduced fee) care in their community.
8. One important responsibility of school district homeless liaisons is to identify families experiencing homelessness and connect them to early childhood programs. Review [this guide](#) to better understand and learn how to build partnerships with five key early childhood programs, and review [this document](#) to better understand preschool responsibilities.
9. Read this document series, [Deeper Dives for Schools](#), to learn practical strategies serving young children experiencing homelessness. Each one-page tip sheet shares strategies on a different aspect of access, including such content areas as enrollment and inter-agency collaboration.