Sesame Street’s National Initiative on Family Homelessness

Webinar \ Tuesday, April 9, 1:00 – 2:15 PM EST
Webinar Logistics

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The Power of Media: Offering help, hope, and healing to families in transition

SesameStreetInCommunities.org
GUIDE TO USING SESAME STREET IN COMMUNITIES’ RESOURCES ON FAMILY HOMELESSNESS: SUGGESTIONS FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

*For the entire guide, visit:
http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/guide-to-using-seesame-street-in-communities-resources-on-family-homelessness

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1. Include information about the Sesame Street in Communities resources on family homelessness.

2. 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.

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

4. 1. Include information about the Sesame Street in Communities resources on family homelessness in emails, newsletters, website articles, mailings, and 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.

5. 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.

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

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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. Ten percent of 13-17 year-old girls experiencing homelessness are pregnant or parenting, and 44 percent of 18-25 year-old boys are women experiencing homelessness are pregnant or parenting.

1. Give a copy of the Home Is video to your students.

2. Review the In the Classroom article and recommend that students read the We Got This Storybook and the Home Is coloring book at home. Give parents a copy of the storybook and encourage parents to talk about it with their children. These activities also may help students identify children who are experiencing homelessness.

3. Young children understand the attachment to objects like a favorite pillow or a soft toy. Show children and families the Special Special Comfort video and the Comfy Cori Nest video. Provide them with a soft toy and a blanket and encourage parents to keep them. These activities may also help students identify children who are experiencing homelessness.
Close your eyes, think of your favorite Sesame Street character or memory, and reflect upon why.
it all started with a BIG IDEA and our iconic TV show.
Our mission is to help kids grow smarter, stronger, and kinder.
Early learning basics

Critical health lessons

U.S. Social Impact

Helping millions of at-risk families nurture resilient, healthy children, all with the support of our trusted partners.

Tools for vulnerable children
Sesame Street in Communities

A model that reaches vulnerable children and families through:

- An online content hub
- Professional development resources
- Implementation with national and community partners
Traumatic experiences are a BIG deal, but Big Bird’s a BIG Bird with a big spirit, a big heart, and big dreams for his future.
The pyramid of adversity
Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Mechanism by which Adverse Childhood Experiences influence health and well-being throughout the lifespan
• Trauma impacts children’s ability to learn, creating obstacles to becoming smarter.

• It affects their physical and mental health, so they are less likely to grow up stronger.

• It changes the way they interact with the world, making it difficult to be kinder.
“Homelessness is trauma... on top of trauma... on top of trauma.”

-Barbara Duffield, Schoolhouse Connection
But adverse experiences can be mitigated by bolstering nurturing relationships between children and the caring adults in their lives.
What is our approach?

Safety & Security
Helping grown-ups provide attention, love and comfort

Coping
building resiliency through self-expression, breathing exercises, comfort items, and safe spaces

Understanding
Assisting adults to recognize the impact of trauma on their kids.
Mitigating trauma’s effects through nurturing relationships

Circle of Care

Parents
Caregivers
Providers Educators
Community
1 in every 30 children in the U.S. goes to sleep without a home of their own.

About half of those are children under 6.
Homelessness makes kids vulnerable to a variety of problems.

Systems of care struggle to adequately address their needs.
• **1 out of every 3** homeless children has a mental health issue by age 8.

• **Over 1/5** of homeless preschoolers have serious emotional problems…but **less than 1/3** of them receive treatment.
Advisory Panel
Adviser Recommendations

• Raise awareness
• Target multiple systems of care
• Redefine “home”
• Create new stories with positive representation
• Promote a positive, hopeful, optimistic, strength-based approach
Goals
• Awareness
• Support

Messages (the 4 H’s)
• Have hope.
• Ask for help.
• You can heal.
• Home is where the love is.
What do children and adults experiencing homelessness need?
Family Homelessness

Losing one’s home brings enormous challenges, yet families can be incredibly strong and determined to create a better future. Every family can build a sense of hope and learn ways to cope...and remember that no one is alone.

Find an Activity
Discover printables, videos, and more on topics to help the families you work with.
Connect the Dots
“I demonstrated this for a group of kids on the playground, using chalk.”

–After-school care provider

How would YOU use this video? How might you enrich the experience, or extend the messages?
“We created our own rainbow mural after watching.”
   -Shelter worker

“After viewing, we discussed times when kids had big feelings, like Lily.”
   -Shelter worker

“I’m going to remember to be more aware that little things may be triggering kids, like the color purple did with Lily.”
   -Head Start teacher
Ribbons of Hope
“I keep a bag of ribbons in my desk and pull it out when the moment calls for it.”
  -Shelter worker

“My students make friendship bracelets on their own – this could be a good way to tie into that.”
  -Teacher
We Got This!
Lily and her mom’s friend Sofia were ooh-ing and aah-ing over new blossoms outside. Tweet, cheep, peep! They saw a small nest with a mama and baby bird.
“That’s a pretty song,” Lily said softly.
“Oh, good morning,” the mama bird said. “Hope I didn’t scare you. Our nest was destroyed a while ago. We stayed in a few other nests, but nothing worked out.”
“But I’m trying to make things better,” she continued.
“I’m building this nest, even though I’ve never built my own before. I always wake my baby by tweeting this three times: I’ll take care of you—this will change, it’s true. I GOT THIS!”
“But it’s taking too long!” Baby Bird peeped loudly. “Mama can’t find enough good twigs. We’re not sleeping well. And maybe our old nest broke because I did something wrong.”
Mama held him tightly in her wings. “It wasn’t your fault, my baby,” she said. “Sometimes things just happen, things birds can’t control. And this isn’t forever.”
“I understand,” Lily sighed. “For a while, my family and I didn’t have a permanent place of our own to stay, either. It could happen to anyone. Sometimes we stayed with Sofia.”
“It was hard for Lily’s parents to ask for help,” Sofia said. “But they kept trying until they found this place here.”

“What do you need to build your nest?” Lily asked. “Maybe we can help, or find someone who can.”
“Thanks,” Mama Bird said. “We really need some good twigs.” Her baby stretched his wings wide. “You remembered your stretching!” Mama said. “These days we have to try extra hard to take care of ourselves. Stretching and breathing deep can help... we can do it anywhere.”

“Yeah,” Baby Bird agreed. “But I miss our old nest. It was stronger, and bigger, and more snug.”

“I know,” Mama said. “But the sun still warms our feathers here. We can still twitter, tweet, and trill in the soft breeze.”
“Yeah,” Baby Bird agreed. “AND, I can still learn to fly soon!”

“AND,” said Mama, “we have each other.”

“Absolutely,” Sofia said. “Home is where the love is. Plus, you’re part of our community now. Hey, let’s visit Big Bird’s nest!”
When they got there, Baby Bird gazed. “What a big, strong nest,” he said softly. “It must have taken so long to build.”

“Well,” Big Bird said, “my friends helped.”
“Speaking of help,” Mama said, “can you help me find some good twigs?”

“Birds stick together,” Big Bird smiled. “Here, use some of mine. And Granny Bird knows where to find them, so I’ll ask her too.”
Back home, Lily and Sofia watched Mama Bird make the nest bigger and stronger. “YOU GOT THIS!” Lily called out.

Sofia smiled. “Remember, Lily? That’s what your mom would say when she made your ribbon bracelets.”
“Lily’s family could only bring one bag when they had to stay in the shelter,” Sofia explained. “But her mom kept some ribbons—colorful pieces of home. Touching the ribbon calmed Lily down even when they had to move around every night.”
“Eventually the ribbon would fall off, but she’d have more,” Lily added. “Every time she tied one on, she’d say, ‘We can get through anything if we’re together. WE GOT THIS!’ Then I’d get a kiss on my nose!”
The next day, the friends admired the nest.

“We’re strong, just like the twigs,” Baby Bird said softly to Mama, tucking himself under her wing.

Lily held a tangled rainbow of ribbon pieces.

“I don’t need these anymore,” Lily said. “I made it through that tough time. So maybe you’d like to weave them into your nest?”

Both birds gave Lily a gentle peck on her cheek.
The next morning, Lily heard loud, proud, strong tweeting. She rushed to her window. What a nest! Mama Bird had woven in each ribbon and used more twigs to make a tiny flight deck.
“I hope this is our forever nest,” she said. “But no matter what, it’s our home—made from love, help, and hope. Our love for each other is everything. Our community let us know we’re not alone. And Lily’s ribbons will remind us to have hope.”
“I’ll always take care of you,” she whispered to her baby. “Remember… I GOT THIS.”

“Yup,” Sofia said. “And in a community, we can look out for each other. Together… WE GOT THIS.”
Then suddenly, Baby Bird hopped onto the deck, flapped his wings, and flew for the first time, chirping excitedly. The others were amazed. Then, as loudly as they could, they shouted: “YOU GOT THIS!”
Printables
Benefits of Adult-Child Coloring Pages

- Stress reduction
- “Just being together” quietly
- Getting “unstuck” when brain is hijacked by fear, anxiety, anger
- Calming, focusing
- Minimal materials
- A necessary distraction!
- Sharing important ideas without saying a word
We Got This!
We Got This: A “Together Poem”

Read this aloud!
- Parents read the lines with the picture of the adult’s face.
- Then, together, parents and children read the lines with the adult’s and child’s faces.

I’ll take care of you. Things will change, it’s true.
It’s me and you; you and me. And...

We got this.

Me and you. You and me. Breathing deep and stretching tall.

We got this.

Me and you. You and me. Remembering it’s not your fault.

We got this.

Me and you. You and me. Finding help and having hope.

We got this!

Me and you. You and me. Hugging tight and holding close.

We got this!

Me and you. You and me. Remembering it’s not forever.

We got this!!

Me and you. You and me. Getting through this all together.

WE GOT THIS!!!!!
Resources

As someone who works with families or children, you are the anchor in their lives, providing them with guidance and help when times may be rough. But it can be a tough job, and you can’t do it alone. These resources are available to support you and to help you stay along the way. These resources can provide valuable information and advice for your work.

**National Child Traumatic Stress Network**
www.nctsn.org
A network of providers, researchers, and families partnering together to improve the care of children affected by traumatic stress.

**National Association of Social Workers**
www.socialworkers.org
Works to advance the professional growth and development of social workers.

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**
www.samhsa.gov
Has a mission to reduce the impact of substance abuse and mental illness on American’s communities.

**Interagency Council on Homelessness**
www.ich.gov
Coordinates the federal response to homelessness and creates a national partnership among federal, state, and local governments.

**National Clearinghouse on Homeless Youth and Families**
www.hyperiahouse.org
Provides information and resources to organizations that are developing and implementing prevention and intervention services for homeless youth and their families.

**National Network to End Family Homelessness**
www.nnfhenetwork.org
Offers evidence-based tools and best practices for providers, and brings new solutions to policymakers to end families’ poverty.

**School-Based Connection**
www.school-basedconnection.org
Provides strategic advocacy and technical assistance to communities in the development of early childhood programs in schools, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

**The Methinks for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness**
www.methinks.org
Conducts policy research focused on family homelessness in order to inform policy makers, advocates, academics, and service providers.

**Family Promise**
www.familypromise.org
Helps homeless and low-income families achieve sustainable independence by providing housing, support, and stabilization services through local affiliates, the support of volunteers.

**The Council of Large Public Housing Authorities**
www.clpha.org
Works to preserve and improve public and affordable housing through advocacy, research, policy analysis, and public education.

**Child Care Services Association**
www.childcare.org
Works to ensure affordable, accessible, high-quality child care for all families through advocacy, services, and training.

**National Network to End Domestic Violence**
www.nndv.org
Offers a range of programs and services to address the complex causes and consequences of domestic violence.
Articles

- Supporting Children and Families in Transition
- Talking About It: For Children Experiencing Homelessness
- Talking About It: For Children Not Experiencing Homelessness
- In the Classroom
- Creating a Sense of Home
In K–12 public schools, connect to the district’s McKinney-Vento liaison—the one-stop resource for services in and out of school, as well as the protector of the child’s educational rights. Tell parents what services they are entitled to.

Teachers not in the K–12 public school system (such as child care or Head Start programs)...let’s talk about it!
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Here, we provide some tips for how you as a school district homeless liaison can use both Sesame Street in Communities homeless resources and other materials to help children and families experiencing homelessness.

1. Include information about the Sesame Street in Communities homeless resources in emails, newsletters, websites, articles, mailings, and 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” and 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. For more information on Sesame Street in Communities homeless resources, contact the Sesame Workshop at homelesstouch@sesame.org. Our main number is 800-308-3658.

GUIDE TO USING SESAME STREET IN COMMUNITIES’ RESOURCES ON FAMILY HOMELESSNESS: SUGGESTIONS FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

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More than one million American children under the age of six experience the trauma of homelessness. Not surprisingly, homelessness in early childhood is associated with delays in language, literacy, and social-emotional development, putting children at risk for later academic problems. Early childhood education programs can change the trajectory of a child’s life, mitigating and even preventing many of the harmful life-long effects of homelessness on education, health, and well-being. Here, we provide some tips for how your early childhood program can use Sesame Street in Communities homeless resources and other materials to help children and families experiencing homelessness.

1. To help increase the identification of homeless children in early childhood programs, include information about the Sesame Street homeless resources in emails, newsletters, websites, articles, mailings, and 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. Give all families in your program an opportunity to reflect on their positive associations with the concept of “home.” Make photocopies of the “We Got This: Storybook” and the “Home Is Where the Hugs Are coloring book and create a space for families to read and color together. You can also make copies of the “We Got This: A Together Home” and encourage parents to take them. As these activities also may help staff identify children who are experiencing homelessness.

3. Young children understand the attachment to objects like a favorite pillow or a soft toy. Show children and families the Special Special Comfort Video or do the Comfy Cub Nest imagination activity with children who have experienced homelessness.
“Why don’t we have our own apartment anymore? Why do we keep moving around? Why can’t we stay in one place?”
“Is it my fault?”

“When will we have a home?”

“Why can’t I bring my toys and other things?”
“I want to help you and our family. I want to take care of you and fix everything.”

“Are we going to be okay?”

“What will other kids say/think?”
And...kids can’t hear these things too many times!

• You are safe. You’ll be taken care of.
• You’re not alone.
• You’re a learner, and no one can take that away from you. You’re important and valuable.
• This is a temporary situation. We’ll get through it.
• We’re going to go on to something better. This is one page in the book of our family (or your life). It's not the whole story.
SchoolHouse Connection Resources

• Guide to Using Sesame Street in Communities’ Resources on Family Homelessness

• Childproofing Checklist for Housing and Homeless Service Providers

• Early Care and Education Advocacy: A Tip Sheet for Housing and Homeless Assistance Providers

• Young Children Experiencing Homelessness: An Overview

• Preschool to Prevent Homelessness: Research, Rights, and Resources

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