Improving School Attendance for Homeless Children:

A data-informed intervention pilot in NYC

Gateway Housing
Our Presenters

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New York City, NY

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*Coordinator, ISAHC, Gateway Housing*
New York City, NY
About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and technical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- Website: [http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org](http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org)
- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships
Education Leads Home: A National Campaign Building Stronger Futures for Homeless Students

- Young children will participate in quality early childhood programs at the same rate as their housed peers by 2026.
- High school students will reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2030.
- Postsecondary students will reach a 60 percent postsecondary attainment rate by 2034.

www.educationleadshome.org
Today’s Agenda

- Welcome and Housekeeping
- Background Information on Student Homelessness in NYC
- About Chronic Absenteeism
- The ISAHC Model and Pilot
- What We Do and Don’t Know
- Success Stories
- Q&A
- Resources
POLL

What best describes your position? I work…

a. In a school/school district
b. At a social services/homeless nonprofit
c. For a government agency
d. Other
K-12 school attendance rates in NYC

- The USDOE reports that, “Frequent absences from school can shape adulthood. High school drop out, which chronically absent students are more likely to experience, has been linked to poor outcomes later in life, from poverty and diminished health to involvement in the criminal justice system.”

- Good attendance is having a less than 10% absence rate; chronic absenteeism is having more than a 10% absence rate; if the rate is more than 20%, it is considered severe chronic absenteeism.

In NYC, for the 2013-14 school year:

- Only 34.3% of students in temporary housing shelters had good attendance rates, while 73.4% of students not living in temporary housing had good attendance.

- Of the remaining students in shelter, 31.9% had chronically absent attendance rates, and 33.9% had severely chronically absent attendance.
Homeless families in NYC

• On April 29, 2019, the shelter system housed 20,941 children (11,946 families).

• Many characteristics of homelessness negatively affect a student’s ability to attend K-12 school regularly and reduce opportunities to attain educational success. Housing instability creates a chaotic home learning environment, makes it difficult to commute to school, and is detrimental to a child’s emotional and psychological well-being.

• However, new evidence suggests that, on average, children in shelter in NYC may be continuing their school attendance pattern while in shelter – those with poor attendance in shelter likely had poor attendance prior to shelter entry.

• Our philosophy dictates that regardless of the effect of shelter on a child’s attendance rate, poor attendance needs to be addressed. Average shelter stays in NYC are about 460 days, or more than one calendar year – for many children this is 2 or more school years. Our intervention strives to make the resources already available at shelters and schools more effective by bringing them to bear on the issue in a coordinated way.
Racial inequities reflected in housing

The vast majority of students residing in shelters were:

- Either black (53 percent) or Hispanic (42 percent)
- In doubled-up housing, Hispanics accounted for the largest share (57 percent)
- Of students in permanent housing, 39 percent were Hispanic, 28 percent were black, 16 percent were Asian, and 15 percent were white

Selected Characteristics of Students by Housing Type, 2013-2014

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Race/Ethnicity</th>
<th>Doubled Up</th>
<th>Shelter</th>
<th>Permanent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian/Pacific Islander</td>
<td>13.9%</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>15.9%</td>
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<td>Black</td>
<td>23.4%</td>
<td>52.8%</td>
<td>27.9%</td>
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<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>56.7%</td>
<td>42.4%</td>
<td>39.4%</td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
<td>15.2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Receiving ELL Services</td>
<td>32.8%</td>
<td>10.3%</td>
<td>13.5%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Students with IEP</td>
<td>14.0%</td>
<td>28.3%</td>
<td>18.4%</td>
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SOURCE: IBO analysis of Department of Education data
NOTE: Excludes students in temporary housing attending charter schools.
POLL

Most students experiencing homelessness miss school because of:

a. Transportation issues
b. Health/mental health issues
c. Family challenges
d. IEP issues
e. Other
Reasons for high absentee rates

In addition to social and familial challenges, NYC families face logistical issues and system-related policies and procedures that create additional barriers to good school attendance. Some examples of these barriers are:

• Required presence of children at PATH (intake)
• Conditional shelter placement
• Distance to school: students may choose to stay at their school of origin which can be a long trip
• Transportation
• Health: mental health and substance abuse in the family, prevalent illnesses such as asthma, mother’s health
• Special needs challenges: transferring a student with an IEP
• Complex families
• Child care
### ISAHC Logic Model

The model uses a data informed approach, with weekly DOE/DHS matches for all kids in shelter to identify those with chronic and severely chronic absence.

The main focus is on K-5 students (to shape their future habits), but really on families.

Uses the team approach to collaborate at shelters; members of the team include: the ISAHC coordinator, shelter staff, client care coordinators, DOE family assistants/school social workers.

Coordinator runs weekly meetings, follows up on assignments.

The teams work with a small budget.

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<tr>
<th>Inputs</th>
<th>ISAHC Program Elements</th>
<th>Proposed Outcomes – Year 1*</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td><strong>Activities</strong></td>
<td><strong>Primary</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Families residing at 3 Tier II homeless shelters in NYC</td>
<td>Training: Inter-agency teams formed at shelters. Team trainings include: Motivational Interviewing, Trauma Informed Care, DOE/Navigating NYC School System. CE credits available.</td>
<td>For children:</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Children in K-12</td>
<td>Team meetings: Weekly to address issues related to chronic absenteeism. ISAHC coordinator will provide attendance progress tracking tools, support to team by engaging other professionals as needed.</td>
<td>• Increase school achievement: grade advancement, school performance at grade level (MT)*</td>
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<td><strong>Shelter Staff:</strong></td>
<td>• Ensure school enrollment attendance immediately upon shelter move-in.</td>
<td>• Decrease ACS involvement (education neglect) (MT)*</td>
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<td>Case managers, supervisors, social service staff, Thrive social workers</td>
<td>• Provide ongoing support as needed to improve attendance rates while at shelter (cash funds can be used).</td>
<td>• Continued school achievement post shelter (LT)*</td>
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<td><strong>DOE Staff:</strong></td>
<td>• Celebrate students/families with excellent attendance (cash funds can be used).</td>
<td>For families establishing school attendance routines:</td>
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<td>Family assistants, STH Content experts, school attendance teachers</td>
<td>ISAHC Coordinator to track attendance rates during 3 time periods: transition into shelter, shelter residence, transition to permanent housing.</td>
<td>• Reduce family chaos (ST)*</td>
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<td><strong>Local Schools:</strong></td>
<td>ISAHC Coordinator will track attendance related issues, team solutions, challenges outside team’s control.</td>
<td>• Increase parents’ ability to meet Individualized Learning Plan goals (MT)*</td>
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<td>Community Schools near shelters</td>
<td>ISAHC Coordinator to engage local schools; principals, attendance teachers, other staff as appropriate.</td>
<td>• Reduce LOS (LT)*</td>
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<td><strong>ISAHCO Coordinator</strong></td>
<td>Inter-agency work group meetings: ISAHC coordinator to provide progress reports, success and challenges.</td>
<td>• Improve housing stability (LT)*</td>
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<td><strong>Secondary</strong></td>
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<td>HRA/DHS, DOE, CIDI, ACS</td>
<td><strong>MT:</strong> Medium Term</td>
<td>For children:</td>
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<td><strong>Data:</strong></td>
<td><strong>LT:</strong> Long Term</td>
<td>• Increase likelihood for high school graduation (LT)*</td>
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<td><strong>Additional resources:</strong> ISAHC teams will have small monthly cash allowance</td>
<td>For families:</td>
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<td>• Increased income security (LT)*</td>
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<td>• Reduced likelihood of return to shelter (LT)*</td>
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### Mediating Factors

- Children with IEPs, or in process of getting and IEP
- School transfers
- Parent challenges such as ACE score, mental health, health challenges
- Family characteristics: size, length of stay in shelter, homelessness
- Housing placement type
- Child stay status at baseline
- Benefits at baseline

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* ST: Short Term  
MT: Medium Term  
LT: Long Term  

| Outcomes | ST: Short Term  
MT: Medium Term  
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MT: Medium Term  
LT: Long Term
ISAHC model components

- Coordinator – leads weekly team meetings, brings additional resources to the group
- Data informed – weekly electronic data match between shelter system and Dept. of Education
- Shelter staff – social workers, Director of Social Services, Shelter Director
- Department of Education staff – Family Assistants, school social workers, Regional Managers (liaisons)
- Team intervention
- Weekly meetings
- Joint training sessions
  - Trauma-informed care
  - Navigating the NYC DOE
- Shelter-wide initiative
I have access to attendance data on homeless children.

a. Yes
b. No
c. N/A
# SAMPLE: Shelter Weekly School Attendance Report

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<th>Student Age</th>
<th>DBN - School Name</th>
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<th>Year to Date Days</th>
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**SAMPLE:** Shelter Weekly School Attendance Tracking Tool
Last 4 Weeks
% of
Students With
Good
Attendance

Last Year
vs
Current Year

Shelter A

Shelter B
The ISAHC pilot has a small amount of funding, mostly for the Coordinator.

Began in September at 3 homeless family shelters, each run by a different nonprofit:
- Two medium size (75-90 families) in the Bronx
- One large shelter (213 families) in Brooklyn

The pilot also has a generously funded evaluation:
- Implementation/fidelity evaluation
- Outcomes evaluation
What we have learned

For Grades K-8:

• When looking into these families, the underlying reasons for high absenteeism rates are often child illness and/or mental health issues or very complex families.

• Chronic absenteeism patterns (not including severe chronic absenteeism) are often due to chronic illnesses such as asthma and other environmental-related problems.

• When placed in a shelter, many students have poor attendance for the week or two following placement.
  • This may be somewhat due to “conditional placements”.

• Families are often being placed at shelters that are far from their community of origin – thus families can be far from their social supports.
What we still don't know

• Can this small change show meaningful results? Early evidence points to success.

• We can see progress on a personal, individual child basis—but the data may not reflect this progress because children are continuously entering and leaving the shelter.

• The environmental/systemic factors often prohibit positive results. Can the teams at individual shelters solve their issues?

The ISAHC Model Development and Pilot have been generously funded by:
The Robin Hood Foundation, The JP Morgan Chase Foundation, and the Oak Foundation
Success stories
Audience Q&A
Resources

- SchoolHouse Connection – https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/
- Education Leads Home – http://www.educationleadshome.org/
- National Center for Homeless Education – https://nche.ed.gov/
- Gateway Housing – https://gatewayhousing.nyc/
- The Samuels Group – www.TheSamuelsGrp.com
- Improving School Attendance for Homeless Children: A Model Program Pilot
Contact Us!

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