Addressing the Challenges of Homelessness Using a Two-Generational Lens: Meeting the Needs of Young Children and Parenting Youth

[Webinar]
Wednesday, September 11, 2019
1:00 - 2:15 PM ET
Webinar Logistics

- Enter your questions in the questions pane and send to All.

- If you can’t see the control panel, click on the orange arrow.

- An archive of this webinar and all materials will be posted at https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/learn/webinars/archived-webinars
To get CEUs for this webinar, you must:

1. Complete a post-test upon completion of the webinar
2. Score at least 80%.

*If you do not complete the post-test, or if you skip any questions, you will not be eligible for CEUs.
Overview

- Welcome, introductions, polls
- Unique developmental and learning needs of infants, toddlers and preschool-aged children experiencing homelessness
  - Critical resources
- Unique developmental and educational/employment needs of parenting teens and youth experiencing homelessness
  - Critical resources
- Connecting child and young parent supports – Head Start as a 2-generation model
- Questions, discussion, wrap-up, post test, evaluation
Today’s Learning Objectives

- To enhance understanding of the unique development and learning needs of infants, toddlers and preschool-aged children experiencing homelessness and how to assess needs and connect them to critical resources.

- To enhance understanding of the unique development and education/employment needs of parenting teens and youth experiencing homelessness and how to assess needs and connect young parents to critical resources.

- To learn about model practices that offer strategies that strengthen 2-generational family approach and capacity directly or through community partnerships.
Poll #1

Which best describes your role?
- McKinney-Vento coordinator/liaison
- School social worker/counselor/nurse
- Housing/homeless service provider
- Early care and education, Head Start or pre-K
- Other role not included above
Poll #2

Which age group does your work typically focuses on? (check all that apply)

- Infants, toddlers and preschoolers (0-5 years)
- School-aged children (6-13 years)
- High school-aged/teen parents (14-18 years)
- Parenting youth (19-24 years)
- Adults (25 years and older)
About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and practical 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

1. Young children will participate in quality early childhood programs at the same rate as their housed peers by 2026.

2. A 90 percent high school graduation rate among homeless students by 2030

3. A 60 percent post-secondary attainment rate by 2034

www.educationleadshome.org
Infants, Toddlers & Preschoolers Experiencing Homelessness

Recognizing and addressing their unique needs

Grace Whitney, SchoolHouse Connection
Causes of Homelessness

- Lack of affordable housing
- Evictions, gentrification, foreclosures
- Poverty, economic recession
- Limited education
- Layoff, unemployment and underemployment
- Health problems, including mental health and recovery
- Domestic violence
- Natural and other disasters
- Abuse, neglect, family dysfunction,
- Runaway and homeless youth
The Face of Homelessness
Annual Percentage Rates of Shelter Use By Age (National)

Source: 2012 AHAR (HUD, 2012) and Census Data
Ages of Children in Homeless Shelters

- Birth-2 Years Old: 30.0%
- 2-5 Years Old: 24.0%
- 6-9 Years Old: 22.0%
- 10-12 Years Old: 12.0%
- 13-17 Years Old: 12.0%

(Family Options Study - additional analysis from: Gubits, et al., 2018)
Crowding & “Staying with others”

- Crowding is high in doubled-up situations, motels, shelters
- ‘Safe Sleep’ – couches/chairs, floors, adult bedding
- Outcomes of crowding:
  - Distress, withdrawal
  - Aggression
  - Cognitive challenges
  - Public, punitive parenting
Homelessness and high mobility are associated with higher risks than poverty alone. Findings strongly suggest that the goal of closing the achievement gaps observed for children in the United States is going to require explicit attention to homelessness and high mobility and that strategies that work for stable children may prove inappropriate or insufficient for mobile children as mobility itself poses challenges for interventions or policies aimed at addressing the issues of these children and families.

Why The First Five Years Matter
“Early Years as Foundation”

• The early years are foundational for later health and overall well-being
• ACE study suggests lifelong consequences of adversity
• Advances in brain science provide evidence of impact of trauma, toxic stress
Homelessness Harms Children

- Lower birth weights
- Acute/chronic health problems
- Hunger, sleep deprivation
- Developmental delays
- Attachment issues, social/emotional/behavioral issues

Long term educational outcomes: grade repetition, expulsion, suspension, or drop out of high school

Mothers who are homelessness have higher rates of depression, severe traumatized history and post-traumatic stress disorder which can influence parenting responsiveness
Homelessness the Biggest Risk in Early Childhood - Represents Multiple Risks

Homelessness impacts child development beyond poverty:

- Lack of security, basic needs (eating, sleeping)
- Exposure to dangers, stress, trauma
- Mobility, loss of routine, chronic inconsistency
- Stressed attachment – children and parents unavailable to one another, to caregivers, providers
- Compromised, often crowded, living conditions in motels, shelters, and the risks of staying with others
BUT advances in brain science provide evidence of the impact of security, stability and supportive relationships

Resilience/strength-based approaches

Significant protective role of buffers, like safe and responsive relationships, high quality early care and education, availability of support systems – resilient communities
Supporting Young Parents Experiencing Homelessness

Recognizing and addressing their unique needs

Melissa Kull, Chapin Hall at University of Chicago
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago

Chapin Hall is an independent policy research center at the University of Chicago that provides public and private decision-makers with rigorous research and achievable solutions to support them in improving the lives of children, families, and communities.

Chapin Hall partners with policymakers, practitioners, and philanthropists at the forefront of research and policy development by applying a unique blend of scientific research, real-world experience, and policy expertise to construct actionable information, practical tools, and, ultimately, positive change for children, youth, and families.
Considering Adolescence & Early Adulthood

- Adolescence and young adulthood are crucial developmental stages that support the transition to adulthood
  - Continuing brain development affects weighing of risks & rewards
  - Opportunities to explore careers and avenues for self-sufficiency
  - Need for positive social connections and concrete supports during times of need

- Sources of instability, barriers to educational/employment pathways, and stressors on support systems are threats to optimal development
  - Early pregnancy
  - Unaccompanied homelessness
Homelessness During Youth and Young Adulthood

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Adolescence &amp; early adulthood involves physical, emotional, cognitive maturation in preparation for adulthood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Youth and young adults who are homeless experience...

- Threats to physical health and well-being
- Trauma and heightened mental health symptoms
- Greater exposure to violence and substance abuse
- Disrupted educational and employment pathways
- Severed personal ties and relationships

How might these factors impact the pregnancy and parenting experiences?
Challenges Facing Young-Parent Families

Young parents, ages 18-24, make up 5% of the approximately 66 million parents in the U.S.

Challenges facing pregnant and parenting young people include:

- Balancing family responsibilities with youth risk-taking
- Reflecting on individual growth
- Maintaining personal connections
- Balancing work and school
- Financially supporting a family
- Meeting basic family needs
- Obtaining child care

What are the cultural considerations for understanding this population?
Youth and Young Adulthood Homelessness While Pregnant/Parenting

- Pregnancy and parenthood are common among the nearly 4+ million young people who are homeless each year.
- Many young parents who are homeless are homeless with their children:
  - Over 1 million children had a young parent between 18 and 25 years old who was homeless in the past year.
- Homelessness and young parenthood are linked:
  - Experiencing homelessness puts young women at heightened risk for pregnancy → e.g., engagement in survival sex.
- Becoming pregnant or giving birth increases the likelihood of young women experiencing homelessness → e.g., kicked out of family home.
# Homelessness During Pregnancy for Youth and Young Adults

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Developmental Implications</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pregnancy is a critical developmental period for mothers and their developing babies.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Pregnant young women who are homeless experience:
- More physical and mental health problems
- Greater exposure to violence and substance abuse
- Less access to housing or homelessness services
- Less access to prenatal care or health services
- More social isolation and rejection from family and social networks
Parenting Young Children While Homelessness as a Youth/Young Adult

**Developmental Implications**

| Young children have substantial physical and emotional needs, which can be difficult to address during stressful unstable periods. | Homelessness interferes with parents being able to meet their children’s basic needs. |

Parenting challenges when families are homeless may include:
- Reduced access to food and medical care
- Increased risk of child maltreatment
- Possible parent/child separations
- Disrupted attachment relationships
- Obtaining needed supports

How does parenthood complicate sustainable exits from homelessness for youth and young adults?
Recommendations for Practice

- Connect young parents who are homeless with their children to “two-generation” programs and the critical resources for young parents and their young children
  - Develop partnerships between homeless service providers and two-generation programs
  - Address the individual needs and collective needs of the family
  - Integrate parent-focused and child-focused service provision

- Two-generation programs involve:
  - Engaging young parents in education, career training, and employment opportunities
  - Promoting parent–child bonding
  - Improving parent and child health and well-being
  - Linking families with economic, social, and other supports
Recommendations for Practice

#1
Prioritize children experiencing homelessness for enrollment in early childhood programs young parents

#2
Screen pregnant youth and young parents for homelessness and housing instability

#3
Develop the capacity of homeless service providers to serve young parents who are homeless, regardless of their age, gender, or marital status

#4
Increase partnerships between homeless service providers and other systems that can address the child and parent developmental needs
Defining a 2-Generational Response to Homelessness for Young Families

- Recognizes the different impact that homelessness has on the child, the youth, and on parenting and the parent-child relationship
- Assesses the unique developmental, educational, and learning needs of each child and young parent
- Ensures that the needs of the young child, the young parent, and the parent-child relationship are each addressed
  - Despite narrow focus of programs that serve each age group separately
- Connects and coordinates a range of resources to support young children, young parents, and young families
Poll #3

Which best describes the focus of your work with persons experiencing homelessness?

- Focus on children experiencing homelessness
- Focus on needs of teens, others focus on young children
- Focus on young adults, others focus on young children
- Focus on parenting but not on child/youth development
- Focus on children, young person and parenting through formal interagency partnerships
Connecting Supports for Young Children and Young Parents

Head Start: A 2-Generational Model

Sarah Neil, National Head Start Association
NHSA’s Vision for Head Start

To Lead
To be the untiring voice that will not be quiet until every vulnerable child is served with the Head Start model of support for the whole child, the family, and the community

To Advocate
To work diligently for policy changes that ensure all vulnerable children and families have what they need to succeed
What is Head Start?

- Head Start promotes the school readiness of young children from low income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development.

  - Administration for Children and Families

- Head Start programs prepare America’s most vulnerable young children to succeed in school and in life beyond school. To achieve this, Head Start programs deliver services to children age birth to 5 and their families in core areas of early learning, health, and family well-being.

  - The Office of Head Start
Who does Head Start serve?

- Pregnant Women, Children 0-5 & Families
- Income Eligible:
  - Families Earn Below 100% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)
  - Public Assistance: (TANF, SSI)
  - Over-Income Exceptions (10% for IDEA)
  - 35% between 100-130% of FPL (under certain conditions)
- Situationally Eligible:
  - Homeless
  - Foster Care

Early Head Start
serves ages birth to 3

Head Start
serves ages 3-5
Head Start Model

- Head Start was established as a 2-generational program based on an ecological perspective of child, family and community and responsive to the holistic needs of each individual.

- Head Start’s tradition of community engagement promotes teamwork and partnerships to mobilize whatever resources and supports are relevant and needed.
The Whole Child and Whole Family Approach

- High quality and comprehensive social, emotional, physical, and mental health services for children birth to age 5
- Comprehensive, evidence based, and rigorous learning curricula
- Services and supports dedicated specifically to parents and family members
- Engagement with community partners to expand access to comprehensive services for children and families
Partnerships with Head Start

Comprehensive Services
- Health, mental health, dental, nutrition, developmental screening, education, connection to early intervention

Two Generational Focus
- Family support through Family Service/Support Staff, Family Partnership Agreements, parent involvement, parent governance, fatherhood initiatives, etc.
- Parenting, infant mental health, relationship support

Structural Community Partnerships
- Head Start engages a wide variety of community provider agency partners, including housing and homeless services providers
Head Start & Homelessness

- Prioritized community assessment to identify and address greatest need
- Homelessness a designated priority for over 20 years
- Children and families experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible
- Families are supported to address their housing needs
- Data collected on children and families experiencing homelessness
Head Start’s Commitment to 2Gen

- Parents are partners in supporting healthy child development
- Parents are partners in program operation and community advocacy
  - At least 51% of Policy Council members are parents
  - About 20% of staff are current or former Head Start parents
- Federal standards dedicated to supporting the needs of parents
Current Initiatives Promoting Deeper Dig with 2-Gen Efforts

Reflecting on the complexity of meaningful 2-gen efforts and connecting multiple supports for youth, parents, families:

- young parents
- homelessness
- incarceration
- substance use
- education and training
- health
“One of the most important aspects of revitalizing the shelter has been the collaborations formed around the sole purposes of meeting families’ needs. Meeting each family’s needs has become a community effort.”
Resources

- SchoolHouse Connection: www.schoolhouseconnection.org
- National Head Start Association: www.nhsa.org
- National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty: www.nlchp.org
- National Center on Homeless Education: www.serve.org/nche
- National Network for Youth: www.nn4y.org
- Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness: http://www.icphusa.org/
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth: www.naehcy.org
- National Center for Children in Poverty: http://nccp.org/
- Zero to Three: http://www.zerotothree.org
- Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago: www.chapinhall.org
- Voices of Youth Count: www.voicesofyouthcount.org
- Sesame Street in Communities: https://sesamestreetincommunities.org/topics/family-homelessness/
To get CEUs for this webinar, you must:

1. Complete a post-test upon completion of the webinar
2. Score at least 80%.

*If you do not complete the post-test, or if you skip any questions, you will not be eligible for CEUs.

Link to post-test: https://forms.gle/gJdWLRnmx253umgR7
Contact Information

Grace Whitney, PhD, MPA, IMHE®
Director of Early Childhood Initiatives
SchoolHouse Connection
grace@schoolhouseconnection.org

Melissa A. Kull, PhD
Researcher
Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
mkull@chapinhall.org

Sarah Neil, MPH
Manager of Effective Practice
National Head Start Association.
sneil@nhsa.org