



## BELL Summary Report on Year 1:

January 1, 2018 to November 30, 2018

People's Emergency Center - *Building Early Links for Learning* - "BELL"

---

**Executive Summary:** To support the healthy development of children ages 0-5 experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia, the emergency / transitional housing homeless system (EH) has partnered with the early childhood education (ECE) community to improve how it serves young children and to promote resilience by easing access to high quality early learning programs. This project is called Building Early Links for Learning (BELL)



Children in emergency or transitional housing are among the most difficult and challenging to support. They are highly mobile, often times before coming into the homeless system. Systems designed to serve their housed peers often cannot adjust to this challenge. In addition, the homeless housing system is generally focused on the adult and not on children.

BELL has two goals: (1) to promote healthy development for young children, and (2) to build relationships between the education liaisons and early childhood programs near each housing program. BELL created a team of early childhood education specialists with expertise in early child development to work closely with EH "education liaisons." Key **measurable outcomes** include the establishment of **new procedures**, an **improved environment** within the homeless system fostering child development, and **increased enrollment** of the children into quality early learning programs.

### Highlights:

- **60 percent** of all parents in 18 programs engaged in discussion of child development and accessing high quality early education, matching the project's goal.
- 12 housing programs completed an annual **self-assessment** measuring how well the agency was supporting child development.
- Formed **partnerships** or **linkages** between the homeless housing and early learning systems by creating lines of communications, providing trainings, organizing networking opportunities, and advocating for expanding resources.

BELL is currently planning its activities for 2019. To inform that process, BELL is examining its work in 2018, of which a summary is presented here. This report includes:

- *BELL Facts*
- *A data snapshot*
- *Building Relationships and Networks*
- *Trainings*
- *Lessons Learned*
- *Advocacy*
- *Challenges*

### **BELL Facts:**

- BELL became fully staffed in April, and provides **ongoing support** to EH staff and parents.
- **18 emergency or transitional housing programs** (referred collectively as ‘EH’) are involved with BELL. Most are embracing a focus on child development.
- **12 EH programs completed an annual self-assessment** using the “Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool of Family Shelters,” a tool to increase developmental-friendliness in EH programs. Those providers are ACTS, Darlene Morris Residence, Drueding Center, Families Forward Philadelphia, HELP Philadelphia, PEC’s Gloria’s Place, Potter’s House, Red Shield Family Residence (Salvation Army), St. Barnabas/ECS, Stenton Family Manor, Visitation Homes, Women Against Abuse’s Carol’s Place, and Woodstock Family Residence.
- BELL helps ensure supports are available to all families through a **data license agreement** with the City of Philadelphia.
- BELL documented conversations about Early Childhood Education (ECE) with caregivers of 60% of all young children in EH programs. In addition,
  - Few children attend high-quality ECE.
  - When they do attend a program, about half are high-quality.
  - Birth-to-three year old children are least likely to attend a high-quality program.
  - No families reported using home-visiting programs except for Early Head Start.



- The School District of Philadelphia reported an increase in the number of families in EH enrolled in their Head Start programs.

**Data Snapshot:**

Below are **some** data that provides a window into the results of this increased effort. Please know that this is **not meant to be an evaluation of BELL or any system** and that this is **not a comprehensive data effort**. There is **no single source** that collects data on all homeless children accessing all early learning programs. BELL hopes to build it’s a capacity in the future to have a more complete set of data of all homeless children accessing ECE.

**BELL data:**

- Examining a short amount of time from August 30 to October 26, BELL documented conversations with parents about their ECE preferences for 245 children age birth to five years.
  - This represents 60% of children aged 0-5 in 18 city-contracted EH programs during that time frame.
  - Few children attend high-quality ECE programs:
    - **Birth-to-three year olds are more likely to attend programs that are not high quality.** The youngest children who attended a program were significantly more likely to attend a program that is not high quality. Fewer opportunities exist for infants and toddlers, and programs for these youngest children tend to be not high quality.
- **Families are not using many home-visiting programs.** No family reported participating in any home-visiting program besides Early Head Start.

<b>BELL data sample, August 30 to October 26, 2018</b>	
<b>N = 410 children ages 0-5 residing in 18 housing programs</b>	
N and % documented discussions with parents of <b>children birth to 5 years of age</b> about their ECE preferences	245 children - 60%
N and % documented discussions with parents of <b>children ages birth to 3 years</b> about their ECE preferences	146 of 252, or 58%
N and % documented discussions with parents of <b>children ages 3 to 5 years</b> about their ECE preferences	99 of 158, or 63%
% attending some form of ECE	60% (146/245)
Program quality data available on only 129 of 146 children attending ECE. Data were missing for 8 parents, and 9 ECE programs were could not be located.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 51% (74/146) attended high quality ECE</li> <li>- 30% of 245 attended high quality ECE</li> <li>- 37% attended low quality ECE</li> </ul>

**School District of Philadelphia Head Start data:**

- The School District enrolled 33 more homeless families in Head Start programs this year from last year from August to December. Please know that there are non-School District Head Start providers and that the data below is not the sum total of children in the program.

<b># Enrolled homeless families August to December, School District of Philadelphia Head Start program, SY 2017 - SY 2018</b>				
	<b>Families in shelters</b>	<b>Families living with friends/family</b>	<b>Families renting or owning*</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>2017 Homeless Families</b>	235	212	34	481
<b>2018 Homeless Families</b>	268	137	38	443

\* These families (1) experienced some type of homelessness within the last year before enrollment (These families still belong to the education system's 'homeless' category); (2) live in inadequate housing; (3) live in transitional housing (they mark it as 'rent' in the system); (4) live with family/friends but pay them money (unofficially/no lease but they mark it as rent).

**Building Relationships and Networks**

- **Engagement:**
  - BELL co-facilitated **ten Children’s Work Group Early Childhood Committee** meetings. CWGEC is a public-private collective impact network that examines many aspects of experiencing homelessness for young children from birth to 5 years of age. Each meeting averaged between 15 to 50 leaders in attendance.
  - Formed **partnerships** or **linkages** with the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning and its Early Learning Council, Child Care Information Service’s regional offices, the School District of Philadelphia’s Head Start program, PHLpreK, Health Federation, PHMC Early Childhood program, Early Head Start, Action For Early Learning, and Read by 4<sup>th</sup>, to cite a few.
  - With the **Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services**, organized four **‘Meet and Greets’** bringing together staff of ECE and EH. A range of 12 to 35 staff attend.
  - Created a **leadership recognition** program with the awarding of the **Yay Babies** award for tremendous support from EH staffers who do heroic work. This is the only known award system in Philadelphia EH system.



- **Communications:**

- Published **ten newsletters** providing information relevant to staff who serve young children experiencing homelessness, with an email list of 530 addresses.
- Distributed **six publications** to local, state, and federal policy makers over a two month period in a campaign.

## Trainings

- On-going **weekly consultation** and training for 18+ EH staff.
- Provided child development information and offers of enrollment assistance at **37 house / community meetings** attended by an estimated 350 parents.
- Provided **six trainings** for 130 staff of the EH and ECE systems.
- Co-organized a **statewide webinar** for 61 EH and ECE staff.
- BELL created and disseminated **resource binders to each EH program**, listing the high quality ECE programs within a 1.5 mile radius, contact information, and Pennsylvania Keystone STAR rating.



## Advocacy

- BELL co-chairs with the **PA Head Start Collaborative** director the 'PA Homeless Stakeholders' group to explore statewide needs.
- **Mayor Jim Kenney** leads the BELL press conference in April announcing BELL.
- **BELL staff co-chairs** the Children's Work Group Early Childhood Committee.
- **Advocated** with PreK / home visiting leadership during PA Fiscal Year 2018-19 budget negotiations.
- Presented testimony on the **Pennsylvania Child Care Development Fund**.



- Led advocacy for passage of the “**Homeless Children and Youth Act,**” a federal legislative proposal to unify the homelessness definition intended to avoid discriminating against families and children who are doubled up and not living in a shelter or on the street.

## **Challenges**

- “**Secondary trauma**” and the need for “self-care” among staff who work with families experiencing homelessness must be acknowledged. We recognize that staff are overwhelmed by the multiple and, sometimes, competing demands of their jobs.
- A **meaningful and collaborative working relationships** in EH programs requires recognition of the daily pressure to manage families experiencing crises. Duties that housing staff have sometimes compete with other requests.

---

BELL is supported by grants from the Vanguard Strong Start for Kids Program and the United Way of Greater Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey. The Vanguard Strong Start for Kids Program™ is dedicated to helping provide young children the opportunity to grow, thrive and learn in communities near each of Vanguard's major U.S. sites. The initiative is funded through a combination of Vanguard corporate gifts and Vanguard employee gifts from the company's annual giving campaign.