

KEEPING IN TOUCH WITH STUDENTS AND FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS DURING SCHOOL CLOSURES

Given the challenges of mobility, deep poverty, and trauma, keeping in touch with students and families experiencing homelessness can be a challenge in the best of times. With schools and early childhood programs closed, and students and families moving even more frequently due to COVID-19, maintaining connections is even more difficult. This checklist offers some strategies that liaisons, schools, and early childhood programs can use to keep in touch.

- Augment the local educational agency homeless liaison's capacity to do outreach.
 - Increase liaisons' dedicated hours to homeless-related activities, such as through increasing the Title I, Part A homeless set-aside.
 - Enlist other school staff, such as counselors, principals, paraprofessionals, social workers, and teachers, to reach out to students experiencing homelessness.

- Use all available means of communication to reach families and students: Email, phone, texting, regular mail, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, GroupMe, home visits, etc.

- When families and students don't respond, don't give up. Reach out to emergency contacts and other students to ask if they have updated contact information, or if they can find students on social media and urge them to contact the school.

- Once you connect with a parent or youth, stay in touch on a regular schedule. Use "check-in" forms to guide weekly conversations with students and families. Begin by telling students they're missed, and then inquire about supports they might need to stay safe, healthy, and engaged in school.

- Post flyers, brochures, and posters in the community where students and parents might see them, even if those locations are different due to COVID-19. For example, while campgrounds, motels, libraries and laundromats may continue to be important places to post information, grocery stores and pharmacies might be even more essential locations for such information at this time.



WHAT FUNDS ARE AVAILABLE FOR THESE ACTIVITIES?

- Title I, Part A funds, including both the homeless set-aside and regular Title I funds
- McKinney-Vento funds
- Supplemental federal funds available through the CARES Act
- Other local educational agency and early childhood program funds
- Philanthropic and community support

- Ask community partners to use an online referral form, that can be completed and submitted via a googledoc or email, to connect families and youth to McKinney-Vento liaisons and early childhood programs for education-related needs.
- Make sure all school, district, and program communications, including websites and social media, regularly share information about services for students and families experiencing homelessness. Many new families and youth are likely to fall into homelessness due to current economic stressors. It is more important than ever to ensure that all parents and youth know about McKinney-Vento and related rights.
- Create user-friendly websites and Facebook pages with clear information about community resources, food distribution, and distance learning, including how to obtain devices and internet connectivity.
- Set up a phone hotline for assistance with any needs.
- When delivering food or learning packets, ask about other needs and encourage families and students to keep in touch. Let them know they are missed, and that schools and early childhood programs are ready and able to help them.
- Provide parents and youth with the technology they need to stay in touch, such as pre-paid cell phones.