

Integrating Service Learning and the Pennsylvania Homeless Children's Initiative

Thursday, March 12, 2009
10:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.

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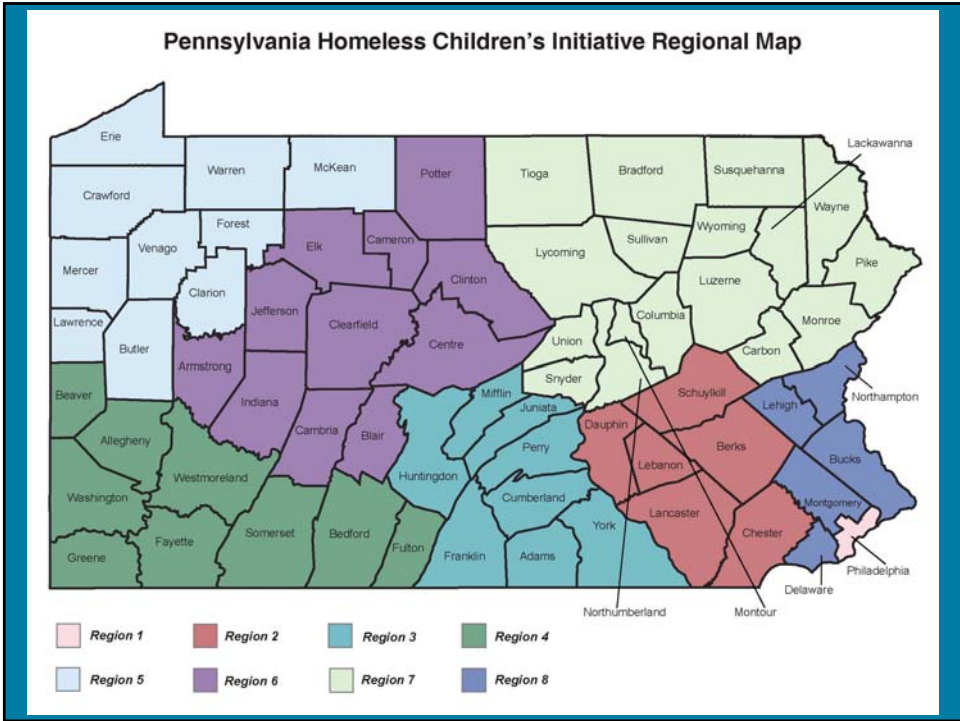
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Integrating Service Learning and the Pennsylvania Homeless Children's Initiative





The Pennsylvania Homeless Children's Initiative Program

Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness
Have the Right to a Free, Appropriate Public Education



The Scale of Homelessness

- Up to two million people will experience homelessness this year.
- Approximately half of these people will be children and youth.
- Families are the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population.



Source: National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty. (1990). *Out of sight—Out of mind? A report on anti-homeless laws, litigations, and alternatives in 50 United States*. Washington, DC: Author.

How vulnerable are you to becoming homeless?

- Fire
- Flood
- Loss of a job
- Accident
- Illness
- Eviction
- Domestic Abuse



Who is homeless?

- An individual who lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth who are:
 - Sharing housing – doubled-up
 - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds
 - Living in emergency or transitional housing
 - Awaiting foster care
 - Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings
 - Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in the circumstances described above
 - Unaccompanied youth and/or runaways



Possible Signs of Homelessness

Homeless student characteristics:

- Attendance at several schools
- More than one family at the same address
- Attention-seeking behavior
- Hunger and hoarding of food
- Poor hygiene and grooming
- Sleeping in class
- Inappropriate dress for the weather
- Some common statements used by homeless students include:
 - "We've moved a lot."
 - "We're staying with relatives/ friends while looking for a place."
 - "We're going through a bad time now."



POLL QUESTION

How many of you are aware of homeless student/s in your school or program?

Please click on the Green Check to represent YES or the Red X to represent NO. These buttons are located at the top of the screen just below the Help menu item.



McKinney-Vento Act

- Reauthorizes the McKinney Act originally enacted in 1987.
- Requires educational access, attendance, and success for children and youth experiencing homelessness.
- Provides states with funding to support local grants and statewide initiatives.
- Requires all school districts to assign a homeless student liaison in their respective district to advise and assist homeless students and their families.



McKinney-Vento Act: Enrollment

- Requires public schools to immediately enroll students experiencing homelessness even when lacking:
 - Proof of residency
 - Guardianship
 - Birth certificates, school records, or other documents
 - Medical records, including immunization records
 - Required dress code items, including uniforms



McKinney-Vento Act: Enrollment

- School placement in:
 - School of origin, if the parent wishes and it is feasible
 - School in area of current residency
- Educational rights posted in:
 - All public schools
 - The community
- Access for unaccompanied youth
- A dispute resolution process



McKinney-Vento Act: Attendance

- Transportation
- Attendance Officers
- Truancy Laws



McKinney-Vento Act: Success

- Comparable services
- Parental involvement
- Liaison collaboration between social service agencies and school districts
- Restriction of the segregation of homeless students
- PA Department of Education Student Achievement
- Pennsylvania System For School Assessment



State and Local Policies

Pennsylvania Department of Education

BASIC EDUCATION CIRCULAR

Education For Homeless Youth

42 U.S.C. §11431 et seq.

For a copy of the STATE PLAN – please contact:

Beth Rothermel at betrot@berksiu.org or

Sonia Pitzi at slpitz@iu12.org



Addressing Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness

School District

- Refer family and student to the district homeless student liaison
- Utilize mandatory Title I set-aside funds.
- Reserve slots in Head Start and Even Start.
- Ensure prompt enrollment.

Schools/Liaisons

- Enroll students in free breakfast and lunch programs.
- Ensure access to appropriate instructional supports/resources, including those available through Title I set asides, gifted programs, and special education.
- Conduct an educational assessment.
- Provide homeless awareness training.
- Alert teachers of a student's living situation (respecting privacy).



Addressing Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness, cont'd.

Teachers

- Make the student feel welcome.
- Assign a peer buddy to help the student get acquainted with the school and classroom.
- Make contact with the parents.
- Give the child ownership of school space (locker, etc.).



Working With Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

- Reduce school entry stress.
- Promote academic success through encouraging words and actions that recognize the gains made.
- Use tutoring and after-school programs to provide academic support.
- Increase access to services and activities.



Working With Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness, cont'd.

- Encourage supportive relationships.
- Establish consistent boundaries.
- Have high expectations.
- Recognize stressful environments outside of school, and provide accommodations for homework. (For example, the child may not have the means to be able to make a collage or do a science project outside of school.)
 - Provide needed supplies.
 - Provide time and space in the school.
 - Modify homework.



What can you do to support homeless youth?

- Set up after- or before-school learning centers with tutors and computers available to students that may be in need of some “quiet” study space.
- Organize a school supply/bookbag drive to keep in your enrollment offices for entering homeless students and families.



What can you do...

- Organize a school buddy system to introduce and familiarize new students to your school.
- Establish a “drop-in” center in your school or community center for unaccompanied youth to shower and provide locker space for them to store their belongings. Allow access to computers for homework time.



What can you do...

- Partner with community organizations that offer services to homeless families and ask “what can we do in our school?”
- Set up trainings in school buildings on McKinney-Vento and student rights.
- Hold trainings for school staff on sensitivity to homeless students
- Be in contact with your district liaison.



POLL QUESTION

Have you integrated service learning into your school or program?

Please click on the Green Check to represent YES or the Red X to represent NO. These buttons are located at the top of the screen just below the Help menu item.



What can you do...

Share other ideas with your colleagues regarding ways to engage homeless students in service learning, or to better serve existing homeless students or families in your school or community...



Education is the key to breaking the cycle
of homelessness.



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**For additional information and resources
about the PA Homeless Children's Initiative,
visit:**

www.pde.state.pa.us/homeless

or

<http://homeless.center-school.org>

