

# Transcript of Youth Homelessness in Pennsylvania: Statistics and Solutions

Lynda Becker: Good morning. My name is Lynda Becker, Youth Development Coordinator with Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program at the Center for Schools and Communities. I will be your moderator for this session. We have four co-presenters with us today. Barbara Duffield is the Executive Director of SchoolHouse Connection and she will provide the national perspective as a staunch advocate for meeting the needs of young people experiencing homelessness. Barbara is a longtime friend of Pennsylvania's ECYEH program and formerly served as the Director of Policy and Programs for the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.

Andy Ball is the supervisor of Runaway and Homeless Youth Program with Catholic Social Services in Wilkes-Barre. Andy began his youth development career in 2004 as a case worker and street outreach worker for the agency. Allison Moore is the Vice President of Program for Valley Youth House in the southeast region and leads innovative and youth focused programming in rural, suburban, and urban settings in eastern Pennsylvania. She began her career with Valley Youth House 12 years ago with the development of a transitional housing program for former foster care youth who were experiencing homelessness.

Aimee Plowman is the, I'm sorry, the director of Auberle's, and I hope I'm saying that right, Aimee, 412 Youth Zone program in Pittsburgh. She has worked in the child welfare field for more than 15 years. We are pleased to provide you today with a description of youth homelessness and more importantly, some solutions to meeting the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth. Now, we can get started with the presentation. Just to let you know, we will be going back and forth a little bit. Barbara and I will be doing the introductory slides, the informational slides, and some of the closing slides and then, the presenters from the various agencies will be doing their piece and we will answer any questions that we can most likely at the end of the presentation.

Our presentation goals for today are to provide a description of youth experiencing homelessness in Pennsylvania. We want to outline the LEA responsibilities in determining the needs and also serving youth experiencing homelessness. We also want to provide strategies and solutions for meeting the needs of youth experiencing homelessness. We wanted to give you a few statistics to let you know the scope of homelessness within Pennsylvania. In Pennsylvania in the 2015-16 school year, we actually identified 27,724 children and youth who were experiencing homelessness and were served in some way by the program. A little over 23,000 of them were also enrolled, identified as enrolled with a school. Just to let you know, this is an increase from the '14, '15 school year when there were just a little over 26,000 students who were identified.

The served category actually includes children from birth through grade 12 and also out of school youth. This served category actually captures all of the children who may be known to the program. Also, in Pennsylvania in '15, '16, these are the numbers by grade categories. I'm not going to read all of these off to you but just see that for the bulk of the children that we have identified within Pennsylvania, they are in the elementary grades and we want to review in terms of eligibility, who is homeless per McKinney-Vento. Again, if you have any questions about these eligibility issues, you can certainly talk to your regional staff. There will be a link at the end of the presentation where you can go to the regional map and if you're not sure of who your regional or site coordinator is, you can get that information.

In terms of eligibility, per McKinney-Vento, the federal law, it is anyone who is sharing housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason. This would include the doubled up population, also, living in motels, hotels, trailers, camping grounds, tents, barns, cars, abandoned buildings, et cetera, due to the lack of adequate alternative accommodations, or if they are in a nighttime residence that is a public/private place that is not ordinarily used as sleeping accommodation, and also migratory children who qualify as homeless. There are many situations that qualify a student for McKinney-Vento services and we know that we need to assess each situation. Now, I'll turn it over to Barbara.

Barbara D.:

Good morning, everyone. I'm going to now go a little bit further than what Lynda did in terms of identifying what we mean when we say unaccompanied homeless youth. Lynda gave the broad definition of homelessness that's in the McKinney-Vento Act. This is the same definition that's used by early childhood and higher education and special education programs but because this presentation focuses on youth who are both experiencing homelessness unaccompanied, we also need to look at what unaccompanied means. In the McKinney-Vento Act, a child or youth who is defined as an unaccompanied homeless youth is a child who meets that definition of homelessness but is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. There is no age limit on unaccompanied homeless youth within the legislation. It could be a child or youth any age from birth through age 21 years old.

As you can see in Pennsylvania, for 2015, 2016, 20% of the children and youth who were served were identified as unaccompanied homeless youth. This is very likely an underestimate. The school data is only students who were identified as experiencing homelessness and were enrolled in school. Many unaccompanied youth fly under the radar despite the best efforts of schools and may not come to the attention or may face barriers to being in school. We know that as high as these numbers are, they're very likely an underestimate.

Some of the risk factors for youth who experience homelessness, most youth who are experiencing homelessness are leaving an environment that is not healthy. They are victims of physical, verbal or sexual abuse at home, severe family conflicts. There are definitely a higher proportion of youth who experience homelessness who are out of their homes because of their sexual identity or

sexual orientation. Many youth in foster care experience homelessness when they leave foster care. Their living situations fall apart and I should also say, too, that many youth who are unaccompanied homeless youth were in foster care at some time or don't want to be in that system because of previous experiences. They essentially have the same life experiences but they're not in the system. Other risk factors, leaving the juvenile justice system, if there are not adequate discharge planning, and youth who are pregnant or parenting are much more likely to experience homelessness on their own as well.

One of the most important things to keep in mind when we're talking about youth or young adult homelessness is that it's not the same as adult homelessness. Models and approaches that may work well for adults are not going to serve young people well. They are developmentally different. They are at a stage in their life that is not the same and so it's really important to make that point early out that the causes of youth homelessness are different from adult, the circumstances are different, and that means that the responses need to be different as well.

Some of the services that are available are listed on this next slide. Certainly, identification is very critical. Within the school district, as we'll talk about, every school is required to proactively identify youth who are experiencing homelessness. Identification also happens in communities through mobile street outreach, through drop-in centers, and family engagement programs. There is also, in many communities not enough perhaps, an emergency crisis response system, emergency shelters. There may be host homes. There may be transitional housing or living services and there may also be some longer term housing that is available, either rapid re-housing or forms of non-time-limited supportive housing.

I think though that tragically, most communities do not have any of this. They do not have outreach programs. They do not have youth shelters. They do not have rapid re-housing. When I do trainings across the country and I ask people in the audience to raise their hand if they have shelters or programs specifically for unaccompanied youth, almost no hands go up. These are critical programs and services that we need to learn from so that we can make sure that communities are doing their best to either create services or work with others who have services to make sure that young people have their basic needs met so they can focus on school.

Again, broad point here is that young people, just as adults, just as children, are individuals. There really is not one size fits all and the best responses to unaccompanied youth homelessness will be ones that look at each youth situation individually and determine the best approach to meeting their needs. A situation for two students or young people in how you might respond to them might be very different depending on all the factors going on in their lives. Some young people will be best served in host homes, for example. Some may need longer term housing. Just keep in mind that the broad principle of tailoring responses to the individual needs of youth and young adults.

Well, now, we're going to look at the McKinney-Vento Act and some of the provisions for the responsibilities for school districts for youth who are experiencing homelessness including youth who are unaccompanied and homeless. One of the most important pieces of McKinney-Vento is school stability. It's keeping school and education constant and stable when everything else in the youth's life is turned upside down. Youth who are homeless and on their own have the right to stay in their school of origin or enroll in the public school district where they're actually living. They can stay in that same school, even if it's in a different school district, or they can enroll in a new school district.

Within McKinney-Vento, when we say enroll and enrollment, there's a specific definition in the law and that means attending classes and participating fully in school activities. It's not just being a name on a roster. It means they're in classrooms. When we say participating fully in school activities, that also includes extra-curricular activities and sports. Here, too, just go a little bit further with respect to McKinney-Vento and enrollment, McKinney-Vento, when a decision has been made that it is not in a youth's best interest to stay in the school of origin and that it is in their best interest to change school districts, then they must be enrolled immediately even if they don't have school records, even if they don't have medical records, proof of residency or other documents.

The entire point of McKinney-Vento is to create educational stability, so either staying in that same school or having very seamless transitions if there does need to be a new school. You can think, for children and youth who are experiencing homelessness, enrollment requirements that make sense for a housed student will not make sense for a student who is homeless. It will actually get in the way of enrollment. McKinney-Vento requires that those enrollment barriers be removed and that youth who are experiencing homelessness on their own are immediately enrolled.

Lynda Becker:

A little bit more about Pennsylvania, and this is in terms of explaining what the enrolled population is for McKinney-Vento children and youth and that is pre-K children through grade 12 and that includes ungraded students, meaning any students that might be in a specific or special program and they might not actually be associated with a specific grade. There is a reminder for everyone, and most of you probably already know this but in terms of our data collection for Pennsylvania, which we started a statewide system, I think it's probably about five years ago, to actually count these children as enrolled, we need to have the district name, as well as the PA secure ID number to count the student as enrolled.

This is important because of the fact that the federal government is not at this point actually counting the served numbers. It could be any child that we might have some contact with in any regard, if we don't have the actual school information regarding that student, and an identifier, we can't actually count them as enrolled. They don't count in our actual numbers. In terms of our students experiencing homelessness and some of the information regarding them, I don't know how this compares to the national perspective but I think it's pretty good

and that is that most of these students that we identify remain in their original school of origin, their original LEA, which of course is always the goal.

The majority of our enrolled students are doubled-up and that's about 64% of them and in shelters and transitional housing, almost 30%, and about 6% are in motels and hotels. That is consistent in terms of the doubled-up numbers. That is the largest group of students nationally as well and they're also the hardest to identify, both in the cities as well as in the rural areas. More than half of these students attend LEAs that have high levels of poverty. We know that LEAs, school districts, charter schools, et cetera, that with the highest poverty may also have little or no Title I resources, especially in the rural areas. That's why it's so important to identify these students who are struggling and to provide needed resources and supports.

Twenty percent of the students who were served in '15, '16 were unaccompanied youth and the unofficial estimate for unaccompanied youth across the nation is 1.6 million. We know that these youth, without a parent or guardian, may need special help in finding and accessing appropriate medical care and services and other supports. In Pennsylvania in '14, '15, about 82% of the students received individual services, mostly tutoring and instructional support. Okay, Barbara, I believe you're next.

Barbara D.:

A little bit more about the definition of unaccompanied. This definitely will include children who are under the age of 18 who are living with someone other than a parent or legal guardian. Again, the legal definition is under physical custody of a parent or guardian. It also will include children and youth who are over the age of 18 who have been kicked out of their home or who have left due to safety reasons. One of the most important things to keep in mind with youth who are experiencing homelessness and who are unaccompanied, particularly for school districts, as you're looking at identification, is you're really looking at that definition of homelessness. You are not making judgements about why young person is no longer living in their home situation, particularly at the point of enrollment.

For example, we'll get questions like, "Well, I think that this young person just doesn't want to turn their music down or live by their parents' rules." That is not something that you're going to know right away and there's usually a lot more that's going on behind the situation. The job of schools is to enroll immediately and then try to figure things out afterwards and to really look at that definition of homeless due to lack of fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.

More on the enrollment requirements, schools cannot condition enrollment on guardianship. For example, schools can't require that a family who takes in an unaccompanied homeless youth has to give guardianship in order for the student to be enrolled in school. Guardianship is a legal procedure. It has nothing to do with McKinney-Vento. McKinney-Vento specifically says that guardianship requirements cannot be a barrier to enrollment and with McKinney-Vento's mandate, particularly around this, the McKinney-Vento Act sets out broad

mandate but then schools have a lot of flexibility in terms of how they actually meet those requirements.

The law says immediately enroll. Schools can, for example, allow students who are experiencing homelessness to sign the paperworks themselves. They can allow an adult who the young person is living with to complete a caregiver's form to sign the paperwork or the school district liaison can sign. There are really a number of different options that school districts have to meet this mandate of immediate enrollment for unaccompanied homeless youth.

When we look at post-secondary education, you can imagine for most students, actually for all students who are under age 24, you have to have access to parental income information because there's an assumption that your parents are supporting you. Youth who are homeless and on their own are not being supported by their parents and they would otherwise have no way to access financial aid if there weren't some accommodation in the law. Under the Higher Education Act, youth who are unaccompanied and homeless are considered independent students. That means that they can apply for federal student aid. They can submit a FAFSA without parent or guardian signature and without reporting their parent's income. This has been around for a long time, since 2009, but now with the new ECYEH requirements, liaisons are required to inform unaccompanied homeless youth of their status as independent for the FAFSA and help them get determination. You can see there's a link there to our National Center on Homeless Education. They have many helpful resources and tools to help with that transition to post-secondary education.

We have a slide here about McKinney-Vento and preschool children in this webinar on unaccompanied homeless youth because so many unaccompanied homeless youth are pregnant or parenting. You may well have a student who's McKinney-Vento and they may have a young child. There is a requirement in the McKinney-Vento Act for school district liaisons to ensure that families and children have access to Head Start, Even Start. Actually, it's no longer Even Start, now that I think about this. It's Head Start, Early Head Start, other public preschool programs administered by the school district and also early intervention services. School district liaisons should be working with those programs so that they can make referrals and ensure that children who are young have access to the early childhood programs that they'll need to be successful later in school.

As I mentioned before, McKinney-Vento really has this mantra making school the oasis of stability, making school the place where things are the same, same teachers, same friends, same routine, all of the stability that helps buffer against the trauma in the rest of their lives. That's important because the research on school mobility which shows that students will suffer tremendously psychologically, socially and academically from moving around a lot. Students who are moving around, going from school to school, are much less likely to participate in extracurricular activities. They're more likely to act out and get in trouble. Again, there's a tremendous amount of research correlating forced

school mobility, in other words, a non-voluntary move with poor academic, social and psychological outcomes.

With respect to academic outcomes, we do know that states who are just aggregating their high school graduation rates and their dropout rates for students who are homeless can show that there's an impact on graduation. For homelessness, that's over and above poverty. Homelessness has an impact on graduating that is over and above simply being poor and living in stable housing. Now, we know that students who change high schools even once are less than half as likely as stable students to graduate, even controlling for other factors. Again, there's a real imperative of focusing on stabilizing education given these outcomes that happen when education is not stabilized.

The supports for success, schools do offer stability. They offer caring adults, routines, but they also offer the education that young people need in order to be able to get a job that pays enough to allow them to afford housing and be economically independent. The supports for success beyond the regular classroom are very important too. Students who are experiencing homelessness must have access to the services for which they're eligible. That would include special education, programs for English learners, gifted and talented programs, career and technical education, school nutrition. If they're eligible for the program, the barriers to those programs need to be removed so that they can benefit from them. I think we're now turning it back over to Lynda.

Lynda Becker:

Thanks, Barbara. We are seeing your questions come through in the questions box so please keep them coming. We do hope to answer all of those at the end of the presentation but now, we want to move into the real meat of the presentation today. We are so pleased to have three agency representatives, folks that are doing some really great work for and with unaccompanied youth. What we want to look at in terms of these program models is what are we doing now to meet the needs of unaccompanied homeless youth and also, what more can we do? Hopefully in talking with these folks and hearing about what these three agencies are doing in their respective locations, we can also think about what partnerships can we develop to meet the many needs that these youth have with limited resources. Now, we will hear from Aimee Plowman from Auberle. Again, I hope I'm saying that name correctly, Aimee.

Aimee Plowman:

It's Auberle. You're close. Good morning, everyone. The 412 Youth Zone was a program that was created as a vision of the Allegheny County Department of Human Services and it's designed to serve up to 1,500 youth. Our goals with our program are to increase stability, build positive relationships, help young people learn life skills, meet their basic needs, foster creative expressions, and be guided on the right path towards a brighter future. Overall, we want to help young people become independent and self-sufficient.

The eligibility for our program is for young people ages 16 to 23 is the first criteria and then, they have to meet one of the second options. Being adjudicated dependent in a child welfare placement after their 14th birthday is the first criteria. It is a little confusing because they're not eligible to participate at The

Youth Zone until they're 16 but as long as they have that placement after their 14th birthday and were adjudicated dependent, or for young people experiencing homelessness. We do operate under the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness, not the HUD definition. We are open six days a week, Monday through Thursday, 11:00 a.m. through 7:00 p.m., Fridays, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., and Saturdays 11:00 to 3:00. Next, I wanted to just show you a video about The Youth Zone that really kind of gives you a better feel about what happens and what the youth experience who are participating. Hopefully, this works.

The 412 Youth Zone is a program designed to help youth ages 16 to 24 achieve their goals towards independence and success. Sometimes, they don't have the necessary support to help them achieve their goals, so we're really here to help them and support them and achieve their goals and what they're looking to do in life, not what we might think is best for them and to break that down into manageable steps.

Cierra B.: The first time I stepped foot in the Youth Zone, I instantly said, "Wow." I felt like a weight just pulled off of me. It felt like my worries from the outside were left outside and it just felt like I was in a safe, positive environment.

Aimee Plowman: We have several multipurpose rooms that can be used for various types of program, whether that be a physical activity like dancing or yoga or some type of musical activity and those spaces can also be used in a classroom setting for a workshop, for GED classes. We have a full sized kitchen where youth can learn how to cook and we also have meals here available to youth every day. We don't ever want anyone to be hungry. We have a fitness room so youth can understand the importance of a healthy lifestyle. We have opportunities for youth to engage in therapy. We have the opportunity for them student to get medical services here through physician's assistant and nurses. For our young adults who are also parents, we have volunteers that are willing to sit and watch their younger children so they're able to also participate in the activities we have. Everything that we have to offer at The Youth Zone is free of charge to all of the youth, so it's a really great opportunity and so many things can be done here.

Kayla D.: It's a nice place to come to for kids who don't really have the help that they need. They like to help you out, give you bus tickets to get to job interviews, help you out with job interviews and all that stuff.

Corial L.: The staff, they're helpful. They don't give up on you so easy as much as other people would. They support you with whatever you need help with.

Kaeleigh G.: We do life skills here at the Youth Zone which include cooking, we do budgeting. We have driving lessons and help them get their permit. We can help them with housing. We can help them with employment, filling out job applications, resumes.

Jennifer Lewis: The 412 Youth Zone brings different providers together to help service these young people in need. Whether it's non-profits, for profits, schools, the judicial system, we're all here for the same purpose, to help them be successful.

Kaeleigh G.: It is insanely satisfying when you hear a youth saying that, like, "Thank you and thank you for the work you do," or, "I didn't know how to go about this until we came and sought help from you."

Jennifer Lewis: To see their faces when I walk in and the excitement just to say hi, just really means a lot to me because I feel like that could be a hi that could change their life.

Cierra B.: They welcome you with open arms and I think that's ... There's no words for it. It's awesome.

Aimee Plowman: We have two main types of staff at the Youth Zone that help support young people in all of the things that you just saw in the video. Every young person gets assigned a youth coach which is similar to a case manager but we really like the term coach because [inaudible 00:27:21] not managing them in a typical case management capacity. We also have facility support staff who function much like a youth coach but do not have individual young people assigned to them. They are always at the Youth Zone as a part of their jobs, working with the young people that come in and are there to provide support and consistency.

What we do at the Youth Zone would not be possible without our partnerships with other people in the community. We have over 60 partners including corporate and non-profits. These partnerships help us provide resources and hands-on skill building experiences. There are many partners that come in and provide office hours at the Youth Zone. KidsVoice is our local office that provides advocacy for children in the court system. They provide office hours weekly to provide young people with advice and support, as well as housing resources come in and provide those same kind of opportunities where young people can come and check in with them. The idea is that at the Youth Zone, a young person can have access to all of the resources they need rather than having to go to multiple locations to have their needs met.

We also provide young people with incentives and we value their time as being important. We have stipends which are purchases that are made on behalf of the young person. That could be an outfit for work or an interview. It could be first month's rent, anything that they need that is going to help them to their goal of independence. We also provide monthly stipends that can be earned by participating in programming. For every young person that meets face to face with their youth coach and provides two of our activities a month is eligible for \$25. Then, there's some other opportunities that come up on different occasions for young people to earn money.

We provide opportunities to enhance a young person's skills across all of the independent living domains. We're going to go over those next. Life skills is a really broad category that encompasses a lot of things that people take for granted as learning as they become adults growing up. We touch on all of these here at the Youth Zone in various ways. We help young people build relationships, budgeting, hygiene, laundry, basically, those skills that get you through life.

One of the ways that we've done this in a big group activity is we play a game called The Game of Life where a young person gets assigned a set of life circumstances and a budget and has to figure out what options they're going to choose. Are they going to buy an expensive car or are they going to buy a bus pass? Are they going to shop for clothing at a very expensive brand name store or are they maybe going to go to a thrift store or Walmart? It kind of help them navigate through and see what it's really like to live on a budget.

Another experience we provided for young people was, this is three young men and a youth coach at the Youth Zone who participated in Project Prom which helps young men get ready for prom and how to have proper etiquette. At the Youth Zone, we also provide medical and behavioral health services. Adolescent Medicine and Children's Hospital staffs our medical clinic which is open five days a week at the Youth Zone and on different days, there's different levels of medical professionals. Some days are a registered nurse, a physician assistant or a nurse practitioner and of course, all of these options are free to the young people. We also have a full time therapist on staff who sees young people for regular, traditional therapy sessions but it's also available for crisis management or just for someone to be able to have an ear to talk to.

We also work on workforce training. A different program that Auberle has is called the Employment Institute which has a pretty wide eligibility range for the community but they work very closely with the Youth Zone on helping young people with workforce training. These certifications can all be obtained by participating in Auberle's Employment Institute. These are some other things that we do to help young people towards becoming successful in their employment. We help young people get driver's licenses, internships, and we coach them on these things. We provide mock interviews, professional attire, all of those kinds of things.

Education is also an important goal that we have for young people at the Youth Zone. We provide GED instruction, help young people prepare for the GED test and we'll also pay for that test. For young people who are in high school, college or trade school, we support them in whatever ways we can, whether that be tutoring, helping them fill out applications. This is just an example of an educational programming with the food bank about nutritional eating at the Youth Zone. This is a group that comes in called Lab Ratz that teaches young people about science as a way to kind of help a young person find what they might be interested with all the different opportunities that we provide.

Prevention is also important to us. We do a lot of work with our young people on how to have healthy, safe relationships and their coping skills and just generally how to be a good citizen and be responsible. Housing, of course, is a very important component. We work very closely in Allegheny County, the DHS has a portion of themselves that is the Allegheny link which helps young people experiencing homelessness make connections to housing options. We work very closely with them. We also have a program called PREP which is renter preparedness. It's a six-week session. For young people that complete that, they get a certificate and also a \$120 stipend for that one. Then, we also have legal

aid to help young people kind of navigate those systems that they may be involved in. This is a group of our PREP graduates on their last day of class.

Many of the young people that we serve at the Youth Zone are also parenting. We have a child watch room that allows young people to participate in our activities at the Youth Zone without also having to watch their child at the same time. It is not a day care and young people cannot leave their child at the Youth Zone and leave the building. It's only for while they're participating in our programming. It's also a safe space for the young people to interact with their children and enjoy that time in a safe space.

We provide two meals a day for all young people and we help them learn how to cook and do that in a nutritious way instead of just a fast and easy way. We also provide a sense of belonging and support in offering young people ways to socialize and interact. This is one of our cooking workshops that we had done. One of our board members had donated tickets to the Pirates home opener so we took a group of young people there.

We also think that arts are very important as a way to help young people enjoy themselves and also find maybe a path. Many young people don't realize that there are so many options out there in different careers. If you say who works at a hospital, people might say doctors and nurses but there's actually many different options and positions in a hospital. That's true in the arts as well. Many young people have a strong interest in music but it's not just being an artist. There's a lot of behind the scenes, things that go into that, so we try to teach young people about all of those options and hopefully finding something that really motivates them to move forward in their lives. We had a local theater come in and work with the kids on doing some improv. I think that that is all I have. Thank you.

Lynda Becker: Thank you so much, Aimee. As you can see, there's a lot of good work that's happening in Pittsburgh at the 412 Youth Zone and there is an opportunity, you'll be able to ask questions of all of our presenters today, so again, put those into the questions box if you have any questions but now, we'll move on to Andrew Ball from the Bridge Youth Services.

Andrew Ball: Hello. Good morning, everyone. I am Andrew Ball from The Bridge Youth Services at Catholic Social Services in Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania. We're up in the northeast corner of the state. The Runaway and Homeless Youth Program here is funded by the Federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Grant. We get matching funding right now from our local diocese, the Diocese of Scranton. In the past, we've also gotten funding from our county and we've partnered with a few other people in the past too.

The services we provide, we provide essentially two different forms of services, preventative services in the forms of counseling with individuals and families, and also emergency services. We have 24-hour on call, shelter services and transportation services for all youths that are homeless. I'll go more into detail about each of these later.

The criteria for our program, it's open referral. Most commonly, it comes from police who find the youth who are on the street or loitering places, things like that, school districts who report kids that are showing signs that they may be homeless in schools at the time. They're finding out through family and friends, kids that are going to friend's houses, things like that, asking to stay overnight and also, self-referrals, kids who come into our offices or report themselves to schools and families and things like that. Also, kids must be a resident of Luzerne County or in Luzerne County while they are on the run. We can shelter them while they are here. They have to be between the ages of 12 and 17 and then, all services are free through the grants. We don't take any form of payment from families for counseling or anything like that.

The preventative services, counseling is offered to the families, to youth that are demonstrating behaviors that we believe increase their risk of running away. Our main goal here is to get to kids before they ever hit the street or become a runaway. If they are having parent/child conflict, if schools are seeing issues with truancy, conflict with their peers, if they are dealing with bullying, even if you identify changes in their groups of friends, drops in grades, all that sort of thing, we work on anger management, conflict resolution, a whole gamut of issues can we work on with the kids.

We can even see kids, if they are having issues with their family and they request to speak to a counselor, we can see them up to five times before we notify a family member that they are being seen. If there is something that they want to speak to someone about in private, we can organize that for them, so that it's a little more private for them and they feel more comfortable. Counseling can be offered in the office, at home, or in schools. The office is usually the best location because it offers some privacy. We can offer a little more of a confidential setting when we are in the home with the family. It's good for family conflict settings when we're all in a group talking about issues but when you're trying to have a one-on-one conversation, it's hard sometimes.

Schools in our area have been great with working with us, making sure that we can get in to speak to kids when it's an emergency situation, just at any time. We do try to work with the schools to get in during study halls or other time periods where we're not interrupting important classes or tests, things like that, just to make sure that we're not impeding their education in any way but when it's an emergency situation and if the kids that may be homeless are on the street, we always take that into consideration first.

We also work with kids who are on the verge of turning 18, might be finding out that they aren't going to have housing options after they turn 18. Some kids find out that they are going to be asked to leave their home or their current living situation is going to be changing, so we work with them to find other options in the area, be it transitional living options or if they have jobs, work with them to get into the local housing authority. We work on life skills training. We help them set up bank accounts, fill out job applications, get any documentation that they may need like social security cards, birth certificates, things along those lines, forms of ID like a state ID or license if they need it.

Then, we also make any referrals out to other agencies. We have great partnerships with the agencies in our area. If there are any mental health needs or drug and alcohol needs or counseling, things along those lines, we can always get kids into a situation that will serve them best. Now, as far as our emergency services go, they are 24 hours a day, all year round. There are three of us who work on the Runaway staff full time. There are five of us who do on call after hours. If you call our office, you get put through to the help line in the area which actually services Wyoming and Luzerne Counties, contacting people to different emergency services in the area. If you are a runaway youth or someone trying to help a runaway youth, they will put you in contact with our on call worker and that person will help that youth get into shelter or help them get home, if that's what they are looking for through transportation.

We provide placement in host homes for emergency overnight stay. You can stay with us for up to 21 nights. Our goal is to reunite youth with families when it's the safe option as quickly as possible. Then, we work with kids in after care settings doing counseling, very similar to our preventative services. If a kid is from outside of Luzerne County, we contact the county that they're from, either the Children and Youth or a shelter agency within their county to make sure that someone can work with the family in that area to receive the kid on the other end and make sure that reunification with the family happens there.

We provide a bus ticket and money for meals for the kid for their travels home and then, we stay in contact with the kid and the family when we can until we can confirm that they've safely arrived on the other end. We have provided kids travel all over the country from Texas to Georgia to New York City to just locally around here into other counties like Lackawanna County and Wyoming County, and places like that.

If any kids that are with us in shelter, they are provided meals through their host home or here at the office while they're with us. While they're traveling, they're given money for meals. We can also provide them with clothing when needed, hygiene packets. If they decide to stay on the streets because that's a decision that they make, we can provide them with things that make their life out there a little safer, be it on ... I know some people, we take them home and they end up leaving again shortly after. We have backpacks that we provide youth that have fresh socks and ponchos and different things like sunscreen and toothbrushes and everything like that that they can use and it at least provides them with some survival gear while they are out there.

Other things that we provide here at the Bridge which allows us to make a lot of referrals in house and provide a lot of services right to the kids, we have a Truancy Intervention Program here. That with the schools, we can work with getting kids back into school when they're missing it, right away. We have Big Brothers and Big Sisters, so we can get kids into a mentoring program fairly easily when needed just so that they have good moral models in their life if it's needed. We have a parenting education class, a life skills program. We have a family education and support program that helps families that are struggling and then, also the Special Adolescent Assessment Unit which works with children

and youth to make sure that families that are high risk for these situations get the help that they need.

These are two resources that anywhere anyone can use to find out the shelters and runaway programs closest to them that can help them. You can text SAFE and your location to that 69866 number and they will text you back with address, info number and all the contact information you need to get to a shelter that is nearest you and also, the National Runaway Safeline will always help anyone that wants to make a referral, to get to the people that are closest to them for some help. That is it for me, I believe. Thank you all for listening to me.

Lynda Becker: Thank you so much, Andrew. It seems that up in your area, the youth truly have a haven that they can go to to find resources and services. Now, we'll move on to Allison Moore from Valley Youth House.

Allison Moore: Good morning, everyone. Valley Youth House operates currently in about 12 counties in eastern Pennsylvania and we provide a variety of services that include prevention, intervention. We do emergency housing and street outreach. We have independent living services, permanency services and we also operate therapeutic recreation at our camp, Camp Fowler. That's up in the LeHigh Valley.

I think the most important piece to think about regarding Valley Youth House is that it started over 40 years ago and it was really just a small group of really concerned people who wanted to do something about young people that did not have a place to live, so who were experiencing homelessness, housing instability and they created a shelter for young people in the LeHigh Valley. They only served less than 15 kids in those first few years. I think it speaks to the power of just a few who can make a difference for young people. Maybe if you're out there in counties where there aren't a lot of resources, have hope and think about how we can make connections and work with each other to find new ways to help kids.

There's a few areas where I'm going to talk about today. One is our Couches Don't Count campaign. This is really about how to create the advocacy projects and build the awareness to let folks know that there are kids who don't have a home to sleep in, that are out there on the streets making it happen every day and trying to go to school and continue their futures. The Synergy Project is our street outreach that goes and finds those young people and goes into schools and talks with youth, talks with teachers, talks with administrators, really tries to build connections with community members and get kids the help that they need. You've heard about some of the resources that are supplied through street outreach earlier in the presentation.

Emergency shelters, there are emergency shelter options for young people. We just need to make sure that youth are connected to those. Valley Youth House also provides small group and single scattered site apartments. Those are for youth who are in the foster care system, the dependent care system, also, young people who are on the delinquency side, and in some cases, young people that have no system involvement. We provide transitional and rapid re-housing

models for older youth, really the young adult population, and then also, independent living and life skill services.

Couches Don't Count. This became an awareness campaign when we really started to dig into the issues behind youth and their experience with homelessness. It's really targeted at the awareness that youth are couch surfing, they are going from place to place and this focuses primarily around LGBTQ youth because nearly 40% of them, young people who experience homelessness also identify as less than 100% heterosexual, so that's somewhere along that LGBT spectrum. These are opportunities where we were involved with the Pride street festival here in Philadelphia and really using the media to bring awareness to this issue, whoever you can talk to in your communities, whether it's newspaper services, social media, getting television out, and doing those stories to bring awareness to young people who have found success in that.

The other key piece to really think about is how young people blend in. This age group, really, they want to fit in, they're finding their way, they don't want to stand out. I think it is really on the professionals in schools who are in social service agencies, who are in communities, to think about and really hone in on what's happening with a young person, pay attention to if they come to school carrying a backpack full of stuff, if they're wearing the same clothes multiple days, maybe hiding out, being there early, maybe sticking around later, just those small subtle signs that might not be the acting out. It might not be showing any kinds of aggression. It's really just youth are trying to make it, they're trying to blend in. They don't necessarily want people to know what might be happening, that they're experiencing housing instability. It's really important that we all tune in and pay attention to every young person that's stepping into the schools and stepping into our social service agencies.

One of our key areas that we want to focus on is The Synergy Project. The Synergy Project is a street outreach program designed to help runaway, homeless, nomadic and street youth ages 21 and under. This program does offer survival supplies as well, food, clothing, hygiene products, sleeping bags, tents, tarps. We also connect with peer support. There's informal counseling. We will help with individual and family and group counseling as well and really providing information and linking young people to our housing referral services. Ashley is a young person who experienced our Synergy Project and I'm just going to share a quote from her. "The Synergy Project has become a big part of my life. In all honesty, I'd probably be dead. They helped me realize I wasn't alone and that there are people out there who will help you."

I think that really speaks to the trust building process that our street outreach workers can connect with youth when they're out on the streets and are able to build trust through the provision of just those basic supplies that's so key, food, the hygiene pieces, the clothing and they start to talk with youth and they start to build that trust and really encourage young people to find what's going to work best for them. What do they want to have as the resolution to their housing challenge that is happening right then and there? You can see the three numbers that are up here on the screen. Young people can use those, Schools can use

those. Anybody that's connected in the community, we can help to do presentations at churches and other religious, faith based groups. We can come out and speak with police in your community. I encourage each of you to think about who can do that. Who can bring awareness? Who can share the information with the folks who are key and might be able to see people in your community?

Another idea with our street outreach and trying to really find young people is think about who are those folks that go in and out of neighborhoods? Maybe there's Comcast or satellite dish network, people who go into communities that are driving around, that might notice young people, and making connections with them and supplying them with information to help kids really get connected and linked back to your agencies, your schools, and the services that are available.

Our emergency shelters, we currently operate an emergency shelter in the LeHigh Valley and also one in Bucks County here in eastern PA. We do operate that for runaway and homeless youth, juvenile justice and young people who are involved in the child welfare system. Generally, the youth who can access that service are between the ages of 10 to 20 years old. They're small group situations, so no more than 12 to 13 young people. We do accept individuals who are parenting with a child if needed, and it's 24/7 help. The hotline number earlier, the 188-HOUSE15, if individuals call that at any time, they would be connected either to a person who is part of the street outreach team or to the shelter in Bucks County.

Our housing programs for in care youth. We operate a supervised independent living plus. This is a small group housing, generally three to eight young people who have age appropriate freedom. Some people might think of a group home situation for youth who are in the child welfare system. This is pretty different than that because it really recognizes that if you are a 17-year-old, you can come and go from home. You don't always have a parent who might be staying there with you 24/7. It allows young people to experience that age appropriate freedom while we have resident advisors who are staffing the evening and the overnight hours and are available to support youth.

They're also matched up with a life skills counselor, who's really helping them to work through their goals. What do they want to do and accomplish with education? How are they staying in school? Do they need tutoring? Are there IEPs? Really making sure that those pieces are taken care of. They're also really helping them around their career planning. What comes after graduation? Are they going to go on for higher ed? Do they go into technical programs? Are they just going to work for a while? It's really helping them to do that with their peer support as well, the monitoring that they might need as a stepping stone coming out of more restrictive placement settings, but also coming out of really challenging living on their own situations.

Supervised independent living apartments are the next step out after supervised independent living plus. Young people move into an apartment on their own. These are scattered sites. We operate these type of living situations in

the Philadelphia, so very urban, and in the suburbs in Bucks, Montgomery, Chester, Delaware Counties in the LeHigh Valley, in Luzerne County. There's a number of locations where youth are experiencing different types of housing options but might be living on their own and then connected to case management and that life skills counselor who really helps to guide them.

Both of these programs, we are funded through County Children and Youth and County JPOs. There are some models that include some federal level funding for youth who are non-system involved as well. We also operate housing programs for youth who are non-system involved. So these fall into a few models. They're reflected here. There's transitional housing and also rapid re-housing. Transitional housing is really being phased out and rapid re-housing is the model that most folks are headed into at this point.

You can see here, they really do have the case management supports, those wrap around goal planning, connecting youth to resources, making sure that they are applying for any public benefits that they're eligible for, connecting with employment services, sticking with their educational planning, and connecting with the therapeutic and support services that might be needed. Many of the young people have experienced pretty extreme trauma, and really helping them to find the help that they need and are ready for to be able to work through those challenges as well.

Transitional housing can go up to 24 months, so nearly two years. The rapid re-housing model, it can go anywhere from three to 12 months and if necessary, young people can extend that to up to 24 months. This stability in housing really allows youth to be able to focus on their school, their academics and that creates the path to that long term career and hopefully cycling out of the systems and cycling out of their homelessness.

Pride is our housing program that's specifically for LGBTQ youth. It's specialized services in the case management and the goal planning. This program really was identified and became a part of what we did because of the gaps. There were very specific groups of young people that were eligible for services and LGBTQ youth often were not system involved with child welfare or JPO and we really wanted to meet that need, so we went after foundations and private grants and trying to raise awareness and get people to do contributions to provide this type of housing.

We were fortunate in this past year, we did a collaborative application to the City of Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services and were funded to be able to do Pride. That collaborative effort really partnered with Youth Service Incorporated who does similar work around shelter and emergency services. They're working with Covenant House which is specializing in the shelter services for the 18 to 21-year-old population. We had Pathways PA focused on workforce development and getting kids those tools they need to get jobs and keep jobs and the Attic Youth Center, who was doing counseling services for young people but also doing training for our agencies to really help us all improve our capacities around

supporting and making these safe great spaces for youth who identify as LGB or T and Q.

Our last area, the Achieving Independence Center and Adolescents Achieving Independence are our two components of life skills training and coaching. Auberle is a great example of sort of just the learning that can happen between the agencies. I met a while ago with the leadership of Auberle and they came out and they toured the Achieving Independence Center and we traded ideas and they were going back in the application process for the Youth Zone. I think that's a really good example of how agencies can learn from each other and build programs in different places and make them really meet the needs of the community. I'm not going to explain in depth about the Achieving Independence Center because there's a lot of overlap with the Youth Zone and how that one-stop shop really meets the needs of lots of youth who are experiencing housing instability or have been in the foster care system.

The difference is that the Achieving Independence Center is located here in Philadelphia and the Adolescence Achieving Independence Programs are operated in our suburban and rural communities where we really provide that same type of support but we more often go to youth. Our life skills counselors are mobile. They go out and meet with youths wherever they're living. They host workshops in other community locations. It's donated spaces where they will teach workshops around life skills, housing, employment and career planning, and we do a lot of partnering with the businesses that are in those areas to come in and do things like mock interviews with young people or to provide jobs for young people.

I think there's a lot of real strength that can be found when you start to talk with the business community and who might be in your neighborhoods and areas that can help to support youth who are experiencing homelessness. A lot of it is letting people know that it's happening and connecting with them because once you really tell people about it, they mostly want to help and do something. I think all of our services for Adolescents Achieving Independence and Achieving Independence Center are for youth ages 14 through the age of 20. The Achieving Independence Center has incorporated in those 14 and 15-year-olds to really make sure that they're getting life skills at an early stage and hoping to change the trajectory and help them find stability, place and with services, so that they can stay in schools, they can have those resources available to them before something happens.

Lynda Becker:

Thank you so much, Allison. I really know that the folks from Valley Youth House are doing some great things in a broad geographic area, but really an area in northeastern PA, from Philadelphia on up, not in Danny's area I guess too much, but in a very densely populated area where there are many transportation issues, where there's a lot of mobility in and out of Philadelphia County and out into the surrounding counties and the fact that the suburban counties have not only pockets of great poverty but it is in the midst of great wealth. It is an interesting place to be providing services to families and to students who are experiencing homelessness.

Now before we move on to the questions portion of our session, and we do have about, I'm reading about 16 minutes left until 11:30, we wanted to talk a little bit, both Barbara and I, I'll talk about Pennsylvania piece and then she can chime in with some of the national resources and that kind of thing, what are some of the assistance that you can expect from the ECYEH Program, from Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program.

We can assist with school enrollment and placement. We can provide referrals, even though we can't necessarily house someone or that kind of thing, we can get people connected to various resources, and in some cases, we can provide direct service but in a lot of cases, we just need to provide the referral. We can also provide technical assistance to districts. I know a lot of you that are on the webinar today are either the liaison or someone who's interested in how you can help your students who are experiencing homelessness and really it's our regional staff, both regional coordinators, as well as site coordinators. Many of our regions do have site coordinators that might be assigned to a certain county or a certain area within in the region.

We can help implement, or we can implement tutoring and enrichment services in shelters or other settings, or help you get connected to those kinds of services. We distribute literature related to homelessness. The regional staff have their specific information as well as national resources. We have state resources such as informational booklets and posters for parents and youth. If you are at an agency or a school and you have not seen the ECYEH posters for either parents and/or for older youth, high school students mainly in your area, you should definitely be in contact with your regional staff to get some of those posters and put those up.

We can also tailor training or in service specifically related to the McKinney-Vento Federal Act to say an orientation for the entire school, maybe at the beginning of the school year or if you want to target specific stakeholders such as counselors or school nurses or bus drivers or anyone who comes in contact with students and they may have some information about whether or not a student might be experiencing homelessness. We can certainly do that.

We can assist the students with obtaining clothing, school supplies, helping them to pay any fees for things that might be happening within the school and we know that students might need help with some of the basic tools that are needed for school success and if they're experiencing homelessness, then they really don't have access to those kinds of resources and that's why we can help them with that. Here's some idea of some of the things that we do on the statewide level to be sure that we are doing outreach to all areas of the state, and again, the regional offices are responsible for select portions of the state. There's also a state coordinator and that contact information, you will find at the end of the presentation today.

In terms of our outreach funding and special programs, there is Homeless Awareness Week that we do each fall and you should take a look at our Facebook page actually to see when those kinds of things are happening. The

regional offices also post things about what's happening within their region or locally. The regional offices have websites and there's some resources at some of them such as a Wiki page. There's some Moodle training in region five that is provided, and we also offer opportunities and connections in terms of community service opportunities. This is for students but often also conducted by students so that the awareness is generated and also so that any student can get involved in understanding what homelessness is and also do active things that they can help any student that might be experiencing homelessness.

There's also a lot of community support that funds special needs. There are things that we cannot use the federal monies for, the McKinney-Vento funding or the Title I funding at the schools, for these kids. The regions also try to find donations and in that way, they can meet all of the needs of the students. We're always trying to build program support within the school and the entire community. Now, I'll pass it over to Barbara and she can talk a little bit about the state and national resources.

Barbara D.: You have many resources at the state and national level online to help find more information, find more resources, get more ideas. The two top links on this slide are for Pennsylvania, for the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program, and the State Department of Ed. You have the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. There's an annual conference every year in the fall. National Center on Homeless Ed is the U.S. Department of Education's Technical Assistance Center. They have tons of great resources, National Law Center and SchoolHouse Connection is the organization that I work for. We have lots and lots of resources on our page about policy and practice and we work very closely with our youth partners at the National Network for Youth as well.

Lynda Becker: Thanks, Barbara.

Barbara D.: Thank you.

Lynda Becker: We'll move next into the question portion and we have had some questions that have come through in the questions box. Just feel free to put any additional questions that you might have for any of the presenters or generic questions into the questions box. If we don't get to all of them today during the webinar, we can certainly get back to you and get you connected with your regional coordinator if that's necessary.

I do want to start with a disclaimer though. Many of these I think I'm going to bump to Barbara because some of them are eligibility and legal questions but just know that because Barbara and I are not intimately involved in the case, what the best thing is to do is to chat with your regional or site coordinator if you have eligibility questions but that being said, we'll go ahead and move in and give an answer as we can for some of the questions that have come through. This is from Kimberly and she asks, "Can the school require an affidavit of guardianship from the caregiver if the youth is under 18 years of age?" Barbara?

- Barbara D.: Short answer and the long answer is no. Enrollment cannot be conditioned on any signed papers, certainly not an affidavit. What I would recommend you do is on our website, we have a section called Q and A from our inboxes. We put questions that we get all the time that I believe that a week or two ago, we had this exact question. We'd recommend that you look there and you can see the particular part of the law with the immediate enrollment and other pieces that would prohibit that practice.
- Lynda Becker: Thanks, Barbara. The next question from Barbara is, and not Barbara Duffield but Barbara Boyle, is that she asks, "Do we have stats?" The answer to that is there are statistics. We do do an annual report in Pennsylvania based on our statewide evaluation from which we get data from all of the various school districts and shelters, et cetera, across the state, and we do produce a report. That report is available at the Pennsylvania Department of Education website, the website on the previous slide, I guess it was. If you go there, you can actually find the reports from all of the various years that we've done that annual report. The next question is, "Does the Valley Youth House service children of Philadelphia?" That was from Maya and the answer to that is yes. I don't know if Allison wants to talk any more about that.
- Allison Moore: Yes. We serve lots of young people in Philadelphia through the Achieving Independence Center, our street outreach program, Pride housing and our scattered sites housing programs. If there are specific questions or somebody that wants to connect, I'd be happy to help do that.
- Lynda Becker: Terrific. We do have the e-mail addresses for each of the co-presenters on a later slide. Then, from Kristen, she was asking, "How are all of these programs funded?" Can each of the co-presenters ... Why don't we start with you, Allison, since you just spoke and let us know quickly how you're funded.
- Allison Moore: We have a mix of funding depending on each type of program, so anywhere from federal HUD dollars, Runaway Homeless Youth dollars, the JP legislation funding, down to state level funding, local funding. We do private fundraising, lots of grant writing. We have a fabulous grant writer who helps us with that and then private donations, so we really try to have a blend of funding to make all of the programs work and operate.
- Lynda Becker: Thank you and Andy, do you want to talk about how your program is funded?
- Andrew Ball: Yeah, a majority of our funding comes from an HHS Runaway and Homeless Youth grant that we get on a three-year basis that's annually reapplied to us. Then, each year we have to come up with matching funds, so we reapply for smaller grants to either come up with those matching funds. We've gotten it through the county previously or through the local diocese or we've also have used some donation money before to match the grant. Those are the two main sources of funding.
- Lynda Becker: Terrific, thanks. Aimee, do you want to talk about how the Youth Zone is funded?

Aimee Plowman: Sure. We're largely funded by Allegheny County Department of Human Services and our contract through them to meet the needs of these young people, but Auberle also, there's some fundraising as well of course and then, there are some foundations that also help support us.

Lynda Becker: Okay, thank you. Okay, the next question was from Kate. Kate, I think that we're not really going to be able to answer your question about enrollment in terms of a cyber school only because it would be best for you to talk to your regional folks. If you don't know who your regional office is, you can certainly be in contact with me and I'll get you connected only because with cyber charter schools, especially, it is very complicated and I'm not sure that everyone is really clear in terms of the responsibilities but just to be clear, in terms of the McKinney-Vento expectations is that any charter school, whether it's a brick and mortar or a cyber charter school, they do have the same responsibilities as any LEA, any school district in terms of their responsibilities for students who are experiencing homelessness. We'll get back to you with answer for you regarding your eligibility.

Barbara clarified that she wanted stats regarding the 412 Zone or on where they go at night. Barbara, I would say the best thing to do is to be in contact directly with Aimee and see if you can get anything there. This next question is from Jessica and she says, "One of the presenters mentioned host homes as a possible intervention in a crisis response system emergency or transitional housing. I know this model has been implemented in other places across the country. Are there any counties in Pennsylvania that have successfully implemented a host home model?" I don't know if anyone really knows the answer to that, Jessica, but if any of the co-presenters have any information about that, I know that some of you did talk about host homes.

Andrew Ball: I mean in Wilkes-Barre, we use it as an emergency situation for short term only. I am not sure about if anyone in the state uses it as a long term transition type program. I would have to check up on that.

Lynda Becker: Yeah, I know that some of the regions have been informally trying to get some things started with local churches and that kind of thing. I know in region six, there have been some instances of that. Jessica, I don't know that we know for sure where they might be looking at this but again, chat with your regional staff and find out if they're aware of any existing programs or maybe it is an opportunity to bring it up as a community need because we know for sure that some of these youth really have nowhere to go and sometimes a host home is really the best option for them, and probably more so even in rural areas because of the fact that there are limited shelters in the rural areas.

Okay, the next question is from Carol and she asks, "For special education students who are homeless, and if they're unaccompanied, must someone sign to allow review of the IEP and would the special ed department be responsible for obtaining an advocate?" Barbara, do you want to try that one?

Barbara D.: Sure. Again, because our time is limited, I want to refer you. We actually have a specific document that my colleague Patricia Julianelle did specifically on unaccompanied homeless youth. Unaccompanied homeless youth sometimes do have somebody who is acting in the place of a parent who would be authorized for special education purposes to sign. If they do not, then the district must assign a surrogate and the IDEA allows for a temporary surrogate for unaccompanied homeless youth to expedite that process. Again, my colleague Patricia actually coauthored with NAEHCY, the special education director, a document on that. If you have a hard time finding it online, just e-mail me. I'd be happy to send it to you.

Lynda Becker: Thank you. This next question, actually two questions, are from Maria and she asks, "Who vets the host homes and what are the requirements?" I don't think that we have time to really go into that today on the webinar but certainly be in contact with Andrew and see what they do up that way. Again, you could check with our region six coordinator as well and see what she's doing in that area. It's something that we probably should get some more information on about who is doing host home kind of programs across the state.

Okay, the next question is from Lindsey and she's asking what services are offered to Philadelphia County. I'm going to ask you to be in contact directly with Allison about that and Megan's question or statement is that we struggle with students who are border kids and if they are in our Pennsylvania school, ended up getting shelter in a border state, we work with them to stay in our school. That's certainly in line with McKinney-Vento. However, we have some students who are trying to enroll out of state into our public school. Do you have a suggestion on how to handle that when no actual residence is provided, even doubled-up? We are cyber so we can see where their computer is located. That's another very complicated one. Barbara, I don't know if you have any suggestions about that but I think that that's one that that specific instance, you should chat with your regional staff.

Barbara D.: Yeah, I would just say that. Without more information, obviously McKinney-Vento requires immediate enrollment and then you can do verification of living situation but in a cyber school situation, that might be challenging too. It may be that there are some best practices around there or some experience that the regional coordinator has that they can share.

Lynda Becker: Okay, thanks. Maya's asking, "What are the best ways to proactively seek out those students in a large school that may be experiencing homelessness?" Maya, I don't know where you're located or if you're with the school or with a community agency. Again, your regional folks are the best ones to help you find ways to help identify the students in your school or in your agency who might be experiencing homelessness. I'm really sorry that we-

Barbara D.: I'll just hop in.

Lynda Becker: Yeah, go ahead.

Barbara D.: I was just going to say that one of the best practices for increased identification is to get notice out. It's required actually for liaisons to distribute notice in places where young people actually are, so obviously the school but other places where young people might hang out, to have posters so they know that they do have educational rights and can get connected to services.

Lynda Becker: Thanks, Barbara. Okay, I'm going to go through some more of these questions. We know that we're past time in terms of the webinar but I want to at least address each one of these in some regard, whether it's even recommending that you contact someone else. Beverly asks, "What does the trauma informed care creative expression look like and what do they do?" I believe that was in Aimee's presentation regarding the Youth Zone. Beverly, I would ask that you be in contact with her about those details. Michael has a question about, "What if the homeless child has a condition like head lice? Would the LEA be liable if they accept a child without health records?" The answer to that I think would be a no generally but again, you should chat with your regional staff about that. Barbara, did you want to say anything about that health situation?

Barbara D.: No, I mean it's the immediate enrollment and then you'd take care of what needs to be taken care of. I don't think students experiencing homelessness are more likely than others to have lice situations but again, we have a lot of experience with this, so contacting the regional coordinator would be your best bet.

Lynda Becker: Okay, we're two minutes over time. I'm going to take just another minute or two to look through these. Some of these, I think we can probably address later and send out to everyone who is on the webinar today and anyone who had registered. There's questions regarding some of the programs and I can work with the co-presenters in terms of that. There's some general questions about what services are provided for birth through three children who are experiencing homelessness. "Can we get an example of a caregiver's authorization form?" We do have some examples of that and there are some at the national level as well. Here's one that we probably should address now and Barbara, I'm going to give it to you and that is, "Who decides it is in the child's best interest to stay in the district of origin or the district of residence?" The school of origin or the school of residence.

Barbara D.: Under the McKinney-Vento Act, the school districts are required to do a best interest determination process. They have to start with the presumption that school of origin is in the best interest. That's the starting presumption required by law. They then need to look at specific student factors about the impact on the child's education. That's also specifically in the law that that has to be reviewed. They have to give priority to the wishes of the parent or for unaccompanied youth, they have to give priority to the wishes of the young person.

If after doing all of that, the school district determines that it is not in the youth's best interest to stay in the school of origin, they're required to put in writing how they came to that decision and how the young person could dispute the decision or how the family could dispute the decision. Essentially, the school district makes a determination but they have to start with the presumption of stability,

they have to go through student centered factors, they have to prioritize the wishes of the youth and then if they decide against the school of origin, they have to provide an explanation in writing including the dispute process.

Lynda Becker:

Thanks, Barbara. For those of you that we did not get to your question, we are going to respond later, whether it's in some kind of group information that we send out or directly with you. We will do that. Next slide please, Michael. We just want to wrap up. Here's all of the contact information for our various presenters. Next. Also, here is the statewide information. Storm Camara from the Pennsylvania Department of Education is the state coordinator, so if you're not able to find an answer locally or within the region, you can certainly be in contact with Storm. Again, if you have any questions about who your region is or what the ECYEH program can provide, you can certainly be in contact with me. Most importantly, here at the bottom is the link so that you can go to the information regarding your regional and site coordinators.

We want to thank you all for joining us today and let you know that the archived recording will be available at the ECYEH website within a week and we will send an e-mail with the link to all webinar registrants, all the liaisons and shelter contacts that we have in our online directories. When you receive the electronic evaluation via e-mail, please take a couple of minutes to complete it as your feedback helps us to continue to offer professional development of the highest quality. We want to thank you again for joining us. This concludes today's webinar. Have a terrific day.