Coordinating Services for Young Children and Their Families Experiencing Homelessness

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GoToWebinar Questions
Carla Garrett
Title I Preschool Consultant

Karen McKnight
Head Start State Collaboration Office Director

Lisa Phillips
State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
Agenda

- Purpose
- Definition
- Coordination Efforts
- Overview of Shared Requirements
- Strategies for Coordination
- Highlights from the field
- Next Steps
Why are we here?
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| Title I preschool programs are designed to improve cognitive, health and social-emotional outcomes for eligible children below the grade at which an LEA (Local Education Agency) provides a free public elementary education. Children enrolled are provided with opportunities to prepare them with the prerequisite skills and dispositions for learning that will enable them to benefit from later school experiences. | Helps young children from low-income families prepare to succeed in school through local programs. Head Start and Early Head Start programs promote children’s development through services that support early learning, health, and family well-being. | Ensures that all children and youth, including pre-k age children, experiencing homelessness have access to the public education to which they are entitled to under the Federal McKinney-Vento Act by:  
- Ensuring state policies are in compliance with federal law  
- Providing technical assistance, training and meetings  
- Monitoring all LEA and charter school homeless education programs  
- Handling disputes as they relate to the McKinney-Vento Act  
- Collaborating on activities at the local, state, and national level |
McKinney-Vento Act

Federal law designed to increase the school enrollment, attendance, and success of children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.
Definition of Homelessness

Individuals who lack a **fixed, regular, and adequate** nighttime residence:

- **Fixed residence:** A residence that is stationary, permanent and not subject to change.

- **Regular residence:** A residence that is used on a regular basis (i.e. nightly).

- **Adequate residence:** A residence that is sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.
Children under the age of six
732,927

Children under the age of six experiencing homelessness
27,989
NC Early Childhood Education Program Enrollment

788 LEA McKinney-Vento Programs

1,448 Head Start / Early Head Start

25,753 Unserved
Local Coordination and Collaboration

• **Built awareness** on the early learning requirements and opportunities in ESSA, how early learning supports district goals, and how to engage the early learning community in district plan development.

• **Convened regional meetings of community teams**. The meetings delved deeper into available early learning strategies, shared best practices, highlighted using early childhood data to make informed-decisions, and provided time and support for working together on plans.

• **Provided ongoing support** for working together, meeting early learning requirements in ESSA and developing aligned strategic plans.

• **Developed** materials to support collaboration.
  • Early learning language recommendations for districts to include in CCIP and local plans
  • Webinar and guidance document on developing agreements
  • Series of agendas for continued collaboration and aligning strategic plans
Coordination Requirements

- Data and Records Sharing
- Coordinating Services and Communication
- Transition
- Professional Development
- Curriculum and Instruction
- Family Engagement
- Facilities and Transportation
NC Early Learning Coordination Guidance

ISSA Title I-V Part A and Head Start Act
ISEA General Education Agency/Head Start Coordination Guidance

The ESEA, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), requires ISEA receiving Title I funds to develop agreements with Head Start and other, eligible early childhood development programs, such as Exceptional Children, MC Head Start, and private, non-profits, to increase coordination. The Head Start Act also requires Head Start programs to enter into agreements with ISAs and other early childhood programs. The goal of this coordination is to provide higher quality learning experiences and more seamless transitions to kindergarten.

Agreements should be tailored to suit the community’s unique needs and consider a comprehensive approach, rooted in best practices. The following activities must be addressed in a formal agreement between the ISA and Head Start.

Agreements:

- Conducting and implementing a systematic procedure for transferring records, with parental consent, from a Head Start program and/or other early childhood programs to the ISA.
- Coordinating Services/Communication
  - Designating a person for oversight and implementation of the agreement.
  - Establishing a mechanism of communication between school staff and their counterparts (including teachers, administrators, social workers, and health staff) in Head Start agencies or other early childhood education programs, as appropriate, to facilitate coordination of services.
- Sharing information on selection priorities for eligible children to be served by programs.
- Sharing information on program service areas.
- Coordinating public information dissemination and access to programs for families.
- Coordinating the provision of additional services to meet the needs of working parents (such as before and after school) (2011).
- Coordinating the provision of and use of facilities, transportation, or other services.

Transition

- Developing comprehensive transition policies and procedures that support children transferring to school, which would include sharing comprehensive assessment data and summer enrichment programs.
- Conducting screenings involving teachers, preschool/Kindergarten educators, school staff, and Head Start teachers, or, if appropriate, teachers from other early childhood education programs, to discuss the development and other needs of individual children.

Professional Development

- Coordinating, organizing and participating in joint training of staff, including transition-related training of school staff, Head Start program staff, and, where appropriate, other early childhood education programs staff. Other topics could include academic content standards, instructional methods, curricula and formative assessment, social and emotional development, and life skills and independent living skills.
- Coordinating program technical assistance (such as shared opportunities for preschool pyramid model coaching).

Funding and Administration

- Linking the educational services provided by the ISA and the local Head Start agencies.
- Coordinating educational activities, curriculum objectives, instruction, and formative assessment.

Services for Children with Disabilities

- Developing coordinated procedures for:
  - Referral and evaluation procedures.
  - Service coordination.
  - Least restrictive environment/habilitation of dual enrollment.
  - Transition services, including from early intervention and to kindergarten.
  - Participation in the development of the Individual Education Plan (IEP).
  - Implementation of the IEP.

Family Engagement

- Developing and implementing a family outreach and support program to enhance the connectivity of family engagement between Head Start and schools and ensure families understand the importance of involvement in their children’s academic success.

Facets Supporting Coordination:

- Activities to Support Effective Agreements
  - Conduct a lead team self-assessment on coordination practices (see Toolkit in Reference, below).
  - Engage a broad coalition of local stakeholders:
    - ISA, including principals and teachers.
    - Head Start.
    - Smart Start.
    - MC Head Start.
    - Private child care.
    - Pre-school.
    - McKinney-Vento (for homeless children and youth).
    - Foster Care.
    - Health-care providers.
    - Families.
    - Other community stakeholders (literacy programs, CRST, before and after school programs, etc.).
  - Discuss coordination at agency board meetings or local advisory councils.
  - Draft coordination agreements.
  - Review and update annually, or more often as needed.
  - Include evaluation or measures of success to inform needed changes.

References:

- Toolkit: New Early Childhood Coordination Requirements in ESEA Coordination Requirements in Head Start Act and ISA.

For more information contact:

- Visit the NCS Early Learning Foundation website.
- Carol Eades, Principal Counselor, Head Start
- Denise Evans, Principal Counselor, Head Start

*Not to be considered a legal opinion. Some content adapted for Early Childhood Coordination Requirements for specific language. Follow the procedures of the organization(s) for developing and approving policies. 14/19
POLL

Does your current Head Start agreement or program needs assessment address young children and families experiencing homelessness?
NC Early Learning Coordination Guidance: Homelessness

Early Learning Coordination Guidance: Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

(a companion to NC’s LEA/Head Start Coordination Guidance for Developing MOUs)

The ESSA, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), reauthorized the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EITC) program, which protects and serves homeless students. The amended McKinney-Vento Act adds protections for preschool children and equips local partners with an essential toolkit for implementing the new provisions in ESSA.

ESSA and Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPS) share the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless children and require LEAs and Head Start programs to coordinate and establish collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations. Children are automatically eligible for Head Start and Title I Preschool and Head Start programs are able to provide services for pregnant women and children experiencing homelessness when a vacancy occurs. Coordination to determine eligibility and to identify and enroll children consistently across programs, as well as coordinate referrals for services, is necessary to improve education and other outcomes for children and their families. Agreements should be tailored to suit the community’s unique needs and reflect a comprehensive approach, rooted in best practice. The following Head Start and EITC requirements relate specifically to the coordination of services for children experiencing homelessness and are aligned with the NC’s LEA/Head Start Coordination Guidance document.

Enrollment/Eligibility
• Maintain educational placement, regardless of whether the family or child moves, if it is in the child’s best interest.
• Provide for transition and immediate enrollment to a preschool or Head Start program with openings if remaining in the preschool of origin is not in the child’s best interest.
• Review and revise practices, or policies that may act as barriers to the identification, enrollment, attendance, and success of preschool children, such as retaining birth certificates and mailing addresses to complete enrollment.
• Develop a process for sharing student records and additional relevant information.

Coordinating Services/Communication
• Provide services and activities to improve the identification of homeless children, including preschool-aged homeless children.
• Ensure homeless children have access to early childhood services, including child care subsidy, home visiting, and parenting support programs, Head Start and Early Head Start, Title I, Preschool, NC Pre-K, as well as early intervention and special education services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act.
• Establish ongoing channels of communication to facilitate coordination between Head Start, McKinney-Vento, and other programs, including a point of contact among programs.
• Establish collaborative relationships and partnerships with community organizations to facilitate access for families to community services and referrals to health care, dental, housing, mental health and substance abuse, and other appropriate services.
• Provide information on the education rights of homeless children in all programs.
• Develop a program and community resource directory for assisting families in accessing services.

Transition
• Establish policies and procedures, such as developing forms and communication tools in a variety of languages and methods for direct family engagement, for transition and immediate enrollment to a preschool or Head Start program with openings in the preschool of origin is not in the child’s best interest.

Professional Development
• Conduct joint training in programs for the staff to understand the McKinney-Vento Act and strategies for understanding the needs and rights of children and families experiencing homelessness as well as supporting the educational needs of young children experiencing homelessness.
• Develop and implement a family outreach and support program.
• Conduct joint activities to provide meaningful opportunities for families to engage in their child’s learning and to be informed of available educational and related opportunities to support their child’s success in school.

Facilities and Transportation
• Ensure transportation is coordinated by the LEA and from the preschool of origin at a parent/guardian’s request comparable to those provided to other children.
• Ensure Head Start uses community resources, where possible, to provide transportation if a child experiencing homelessness is unable to attend regularly because the family does not have transportation.

Activities to Support Coordination and Collaboration
• Conduct a self-assessment.
• Include homelessness in current MOUs or create a coordination agreement to address services for children and families experiencing homelessness.
• Develop collaborative plans for supporting children and families experiencing homelessness, including enrollment in an early childhood program where space is available.
• Develop joint procedures to simplify and expedite referrals.
• Offer convening and child care activities in shelters and other community settings.
• Simplify enrollment practices such as developing a common application across programs or assisting families in obtaining documentation.
• Differentiate instruction to meet the unique needs of children experiencing homelessness.
• Transition into and out of programs and schools is supported by homeless liaisons.
• Include housing providers in coordination activities.
• Provide joint training, including trauma-informed approaches.
• Ensure homeless representatives participate in early education task forces.
• Address the needs of children and families experiencing homelessness in extended closure plans.

Resources
NC Homeless Education Program Local Liaisons
Engaging Community Partners to Strengthen Family Services
Caring for the Needs and Wishes of Children Experiencing Homelessness
Give Every Child a Home at Head Start/Pre-K
Building Partnerships to Support Homelessness
National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Early Childhood ECE Groups

For more Information contact:
Cara K. Dover
Title: President/Chief Executive Officer
NC Department of Public Instruction
ncdpi.headstart@ncdpi.nc.gov
(919) 715-4160

Anthony MMC
Title: Head Start/Early Head Start Statewide Community Outreach Director
NC Department of Public Instruction
ncdpi.headstart@ncdpi.nc.gov
(919) 715-4160

Linda Sherrill
Title: Principal
NC Department of Public Instruction
linda.sherrill@ncdpi.nc.gov
(919) 715-4160

For NC’s position document for additional coordination requirements related to serving all children, including children and families experiencing homelessness.

*Not to be considered legal advice. Some content edited for clarity and brevity. See Coordination Requirements for specific language. Follow the procedures of the NC Department of Public Instruction for developing and approving MOUs.
Shared Homelessness Requirements
Enrollment and Eligibility
Data and Records Sharing
Coordinating Services and Communication
Transition
Professional Development
Family Engagement
Highlights from the Field
Next Steps

• Know your partners
• Head Start and McKinney-Vento Liaisons meet
• Review program assessments and develop agreements
• Plan strategies for coordination
• Work with other early learning partners and homeless service providers
▪ NC Homeless Education Program
▪ National Center for Homeless Education: Early Childhood
▪ US Department of Education: Education for Homeless Children and Youths Grants for State and Local Activities
▪ SchoolHouse Connection
▪ OHS Serving Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness
▪ Give Every Child a Home at Head Start Flyer
▪ Reserving Slots in Head Start Programs for Children Experiencing Homelessness
▪ California DOE: Responsive Early Education for Young Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness
Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation Briefs:

- Leveraging Data to Support Children Experiencing Homelessness
- Facilitating Access to Early Care and Education for Children Experiencing Homelessness
Lisa Phillips  
State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth  
NC Homeless Education Program  
NC Department of Public Instruction  
lphillip@serve.org

Patricia Lentz  
Program Specialist  
NC Homeless Education Program  
NC Department of Public Instruction  
plentz@serve.org

Carla Garrett  
Title I Preschool Consultant  
Office of Early Learning  
NC Department of Public Instruction  
Carla.garrett@dpi.nc.gov

Karen McKnight  
Director  
Head Start State Collaboration Office  
Office of Early Learning  
NC Department of Public Instruction  
Karen.mcknight@dpi.nc.gov