



Tabletop Session Summary

May 27, 2021

Reaching the Hard-to-Reach: Engaging Homeless Children and Families in Summer Programs

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This tabletop discussion explored effective strategies to engage students experiencing homelessness in summer programming.

Session Highlights

- » The American Rescue Plan (ARP) appropriated \$800 million to address the impacts of COVID-19 on students experiencing homelessness.
- » It specifically designated the funds to identify homeless children and youth, to provide wraparound services that purposely target the impact of the pandemic, and to ensure that homeless children and youth can attend school and participate fully in school activities.
- » This unprecedented level of funding for homeless education programming provides eight times the amount of funding that was available for a legacy program last year.
- » The funds are being released in two separate disbursements. The first disbursement (25% of the designated funds) was released in April 2021. State education agencies could reserve up to a fourth of the funds for state-level activities. The remaining funds had to be allocated to local education agencies.
- » The second disbursement (the remaining 75% of funds) will be released as soon as June 2021. The United States Department of Education will undertake emergency rulemaking for this second round of funding.

Shared Resources

- » [American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief – Homeless Children and Youth \(ARP-HCY\) Website](#)
- » [Common Signs of Homelessness](#)
- » [Community Learning Hubs](#)
- » [Homeless Liaison Toolkit](#)
- » [Identifying Children and Youth in Homeless Situations](#)
- » [Local Homeless Education Liaisons: Understanding Their Role](#)
- » [McKinney-Vento Subgrant Authorized Activities](#)



- » [Missing in the Margins: Estimating the Scale of the COVID-19 Attendance Crisis](#)
- » [Resources to Support Special Populations of Students During COVID-19](#)
- » [The McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless](#)

Questions and Answers on Reaching the Hard-to-Reach: Engaging Homeless Children and Families in Summer Programs

What does it mean to be experiencing homelessness and what supports were in place for students and families experiencing homelessness before the pandemic?

There are about 1.4 million K-12 students and 1.4 million children under the age of six experiencing homelessness. Those numbers include children, students, and families living in shelters or in tent cities, as well as children living in hotels, motels, cars, or in other transient circumstances. The experience itself is a traumatic one during a time of development when children and young people need routine and consistency.

The McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act was in place prior to the pandemic and provides children and youth experiencing homelessness support for school enrollment (e.g., in their school of origin) and other supports like free school meals and transportation.

The performance period for American Rescue Plan Homeless Children and Youth funds ends September 30, 2024, but when does it begin? Are pre-award expenses back to March 13, 2020, eligible for reimbursement?

The relief funds can be used to address pre-award costs dating back to March 13, 2020.

What are the highest priority challenges you anticipate for summer learning and enrichment for students experiencing homelessness?

Identification, reengagement with learning, and continued engagement with other wraparound supports are the top priorities. School districts will need to be proactive about identification and can start working on identifying students now by including questions on their enrollment forms about housing and residency. The relief funds can be used to staff up to find students that have been primarily out of school during the pandemic.

Attention will need to be given to the academic needs of students who may have not attended school in a meaningful way over the last year. There were additional challenges with virtual learning for students experiencing homelessness. For example, they might have had access to a hotspot but may have not had reliable electricity. We want to quickly get them back on the road to academic success. High impact tutoring is one intervention that has been found to have promising effects for students experiencing homelessness.

It is often the case that families experiencing homelessness have other needs aside from homelessness. It is important to think strategically and to get them connected to all the services and programs that can help to support them. Having onsite peer advisors or navigators at summer program sites paired up with each student experiencing homelessness is one way to ensure students are on track academically and connected to needed services. Relationship building is key.

Transportation also continues to be a challenge. It is important for districts to think big with this influx in funding. In the past, districts may have tried to add an additional bus route or to share a route with another district nearby. They may now want to consider, for example, buying a fleet of cars that families



of students experiencing homelessness can access to literally put them in the driver's seat of their child's education.

Tactically, what does it look like to coordinate services with other public agencies?

It is important to note that this is complicated and time intensive work that requires commitment. There are commissions and offices in county commissions and mayors' offices that help to organize programs and services so that they feel coherent for families. However, it may be necessary to advocate and explain at times why school district employees need to be a part of these efforts and meetings with other public agencies.

Relief dollars can also be used to invest in data infrastructure that, with consent forms and memoranda of understanding, can allow for data sharing. A data solution would also be a necessary investment.

How do you find the McKinney–Vento liaison in your district?

SchoolHouse has a tool to look up your liaison and state coordinator:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1owoidQFPO5FS1P2Gk80SsXkyDNekXJlbw7F7Lc8YeeM/edit#gid=0>

