National Center for Homeless Education
Supporting the Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness
www.serve.org/nche

McKinney-Vento Law Into Practice Brief Series

Early Care and Education for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

Introduction

Over half of children living in federally funded homeless shelters are five years old or younger[1]. Many more young children live in other homeless situations, such as in motels or cars; or, living temporarily with others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason. These children live in conditions of poverty that contribute directly to physical, mental, and emotional difficulties (Burt et al., 1999). Consider the following statistics from the National Center on Family Homelessness (1999, p. 2):

- Infants who are born into homelessness need special care right after birth at four times the rate of other children.
- Homeless babies show significantly slower development than other children do.
- Homeless children have very high rates of acute illness.
- More than one-fifth of homeless children

1. Specifically, 51% of children in shelters funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development are under the age of six. See U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (2010) for more information.

Who is homeless?

As defined in:

» **Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act**
» **The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)**
» **The Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act**

The term "homeless children and youth"—

A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence…; and

B. includes —

1. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
2. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings…
3. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
4. migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

between three and six years of age have emotional problems serious enough to require professional care.

In sum, the poverty and unsafe living conditions that accompany homelessness subject young homeless children to a steady barrage of stressful circumstances and traumatic events during what are believed to be the most critical years for their emotional and intellectual development (Shore, as cited in National Center for Children in Poverty, 1999).

Given the number of young children experiencing homelessness and its devastating impacts on development, preschool programs play a critical role in meeting these children's need for quality early care and education; yet, most young homeless children do not receive early childhood services. Many barriers limit access to early childhood programs for these children (National Head Start Training and Technical Assistance Resource Center, 1999), including:

- the high mobility accompanying homelessness,
- lack of documents needed to enroll in early care programs,
- lack of transportation,
- an overall scarcity of early childhood programs and/or shortage of classroom slots, and
- lack of awareness of homelessness among early childhood providers.

Through strategic and collaborative action, State Coordinators for homeless education (hereafter referred to as *State Coordinators*) and local homeless education liaisons (hereafter referred to as *local liaisons*) can help overcome these barriers and increase young homeless children's participation in quality early care and education programs. This brief provides information and suggests best practices to facilitate collaboration between schools, service provider agencies, and early childhood programs, and to increase the enrollment of and provision of services to families with young children experiencing homelessness. Briefs on additional homeless education topics are available at http://center.serve.org/nche/briefs.php.

Identification Strategies

Making special efforts to identify young children experiencing homelessness is critical to understanding the scope of the problem of homelessness among families with young children and targeting resources efficiently at the local, state, and national levels. Identification strategies may include:

- collaborating with IDEA Child Find efforts and Part B and C programs, family shelters, and shelters for pregnant and parenting teenagers;
- posting information about the McKinney-Vento Act in immunization clinics; pediatricians' offices; low-cost health clinics; libraries; and application offices for Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), and the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); and
- incorporating space on K-12 school registration forms where preschool-aged younger siblings can be listed; the local liaison should follow up with the family and provide service referrals if homelessness is indicated.

The McKinney-Vento Act and Early Childhood Programs

The McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program, reauthorized in 2001 by Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act, entitles homeless children and youth to a free, appropriate public education, including a preschool education. The Act applies to state educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs); as such, early care and education programs administered by other public or private agencies are not governed by the Act. The Act states the following regarding SEA responsibilities:

- State McKinney-Vento Plans must describe procedures to ensure that preschoolers experiencing homelessness have equal access to public preschool programs administered by the SEA as provided to other children in the state (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(1)(F)(i), 2011).
- States shall use McKinney-Vento funding, in part, to provide activities for and services to preschool-aged homeless children to enable them to enroll in, attend, and succeed in preschool programs (42 U.S.C. § 11432(d)(2), 2011).

Providing Preschool Programming with Title I Funds

Children experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for Title I preschools. LEAs and/or schools receiving Title I funds may use these funds to operate a preschool program, although it is at the discretion of the LEA or school to decide to use the funding in this manner. LEAs also may wish to consider using Title I, Part A set-aside funds, designated specifically for serving homeless children, to provide educationally-related preschool programming, if such programming is not otherwise provided through federal, state, or local funding.

Examples of activities that may be appropriate to provide with Title I funds include regular screenings of young homeless children to identify developmental delays and risk factors for school failure, and developmentally appropriate educational activities for preschool-aged children while their school-aged siblings receive supplemental educational services.

Additional information is available in the U.S. Department of Education's Non-Regulatory Guidance, entitled *Serving Preschool Children Through Title I, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as Amended*, available at http://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/guid/preschoolguidance2012.pdf.

- State Coordinators must coordinate with state social service agencies; providers of health, mental health, and child development services; preschool programs; community organizations; and other agencies to improve the provision of comprehensive education and related services to homeless preschool-aged children and their families (42 U.S.C. § 11432(f), 2011).

The Act and U.S. Department of Education (ED) Non-Regulatory Guidance state the following regarding LEA responsibilities:

- Local liaisons must identify preschool-aged children experiencing homelessness (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(i), 2011).
- LEAs that offer a public preschool education must ensure that homeless children have the same access to that education as is provided to non-homeless children (U.S. Department of Education [ED], 2004, H-8).
- Local liaisons must ensure that homeless children and their families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, and other preschool programs administered by the LEA; and referrals to health care, dental, mental health, and other appropriate services (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)(iii), 2011).
- LEAs that provide transportation for non-homeless preschool children must provide comparable transportation services for homeless preschool children (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4)(A), 2011).
- LEAs may use McKinney-Vento subgrant funds to provide preschool-aged children with developmentally appropriate early childhood education programs not otherwise provided through federal, state, or local funding (42 U.S.C. § 11433(d)(6), 2011).

Immediate Enrollment in Preschool Programs

The McKinney-Vento Act requires early care and education programs administered by SEAs and LEAs to enroll children immediately, even if they lack documents typically required for enrollment, including birth certificates, health records, and

proof of residency. The Act, however, does not require these programs to exceed legal capacity limits and enroll children once classes are full. Unlike elementary and secondary education, preschool programs are not available for all children; as such, there is no guarantee for young homeless children of availability of or participation in quality early care and education programs. If a classroom is at capacity, the LEA may refer the homeless child to the closest public preschool program with an available slot. If the LEA makes this type of referral for other children, under the McKinney-Vento Act's comparable services provision (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(4), 2011), it also must provide the same type of referral for children experiencing homelessness; likewise, if the LEA provides other children with transportation to the public preschool program to which it referred them, it also must provide this same transportation to children experiencing homelessness. If either referrals or transportation is not provided to other children, the LEA may choose to provide either service for children experiencing homelessness, although there is no statutory obligation to do so.

Preschool Students and the Concept of *School of Origin*

The McKinney-Vento Act provides students who are homeless the right to continue attending their school of origin, if feasible[2], unless this is against the wishes of the child's or youth's parent or guardian. ED does not require school of origin enrollment and transportation rights for preschool students who become homeless. However, some SEAs and LEAs may recognize the right of young homeless children to continue attending the same SEA- or LEA-administered preschool program despite a residential move that normally would affect enrollment. This practice often makes the difference between a child attending or being excluded from preschool, as preschool programs often are full, resulting in children who leave one program being placed on the wait list for the next program.

State Supports for Preschool Access for Children Experiencing Homelessness

In addition, some states and school districts grant automatic program eligibility or prioritized enrollment to children experiencing homelessness. Maryland, for example, prioritizes homeless children for public prekindergarten enrollment (Md. Code Ann. § 13A.06.02.03, 2011). In Texas, homeless 3- and 4-year-olds are automatically eligible for enrollment in school district prekindergarten programs (Tex. Ed. Code Ann. § 29.153, 2007).

State Coordinators for Homeless Education

According to the McKinney-Vento Act, each state must designate a State Coordinator for Homeless Education to oversee the implementation of the Act within the state (42 U.S.C. § 11432(d)(3), 2011). The specific duties of the State Coordinator include (42 U.S.C. § 11432(f), 2011):

- collecting data regarding the education of homeless children and youth within the state, as required by ED;
- developing and carrying out a state McKinney-Vento plan; and
- facilitating coordination between the SEA and various educational and service provider agencies, including child development and preschool program personnel, to improve the provision of education and related services to homeless children, youth, and families.

Visit http://center.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php to access State Coordinator contact information.

2 Visit http:// center.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_feasibility.php for more information about the concept of feasibility as it relates to school selection under the McKinney-Vento Act.

Transportation to Early Childhood Programs

LEAs that provide preschool transportation for non-homeless children also must provide comparable transportation services for homeless preschool children (ED, 2004, H-8). ED does not require that transportation be provided to early childhood programs beyond this comparability requirement; however, some school districts use Title I set-aside funds[3] to assist with the cost of providing transportation to Title I-funded LEA preschool programs. Other districts collaborate with Head Start, Even Start, or other early childhood providers to provide transportation necessary to enable young children experiencing homelessness to attend SEA- and LEA-administered public preschool programs.

Laying a Foundation for Collaboration

Ensuring that young children experiencing homelessness have access to quality early care and education is a goal that is most likely to be reached when undertaken by a group of committed partner agencies. NCHE recommends the following steps to begin laying the foundation for collaboration:

1. **Find out what's out there.**

Use the Early Care and Education Landscape chart on page 10 to become familiar with your state or local landscape. Chart the programs that exist, program eligibility criteria, administering agencies, and services offered in your area.

2. **Identify who's out there.**

Venture out into the landscape. Gather contact information for the directors of all early care and education programs in your community and send an email to introduce yourself. You may wish to share data about the number of preschool- and school-aged children in your community or state and information about local shelters[4]. Request a meeting where you can become acquainted with one another and each other's programs.

Many early care and education programs convene advisory councils in which State Coordinators and local liaisons participate and share information. For example:

- **Early intervention (**IDEA Part C**)** Part C of IDEA authorizes early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities (birth through three years old). As part of the IDEA component

Federal Resources to Help Homeless Children Access Early Care and Education

In January 2013, the federal Administration for Children and Families (ACF) published a package of resources to assist early care and education providers in ensuring that young children experiencing homelessness are prioritized for services and have access to valuable early childhood services that support their learning and development. The following resources are available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/occ/news/policies-resources-for-expanding-ece-services-for-homeless-children:

- a letter from the Administration for Children and Families, the Office of Head Start, and the Office of Child Care;
- a brief entitled *Policies and Procedures to Increase Access to ECE Services for Homeless Children and Families*;
- a brief entitled *Strategies for Increasing ECE Services for Homeless Children*; and
- an early childhood and family homelessness resource list.

3 According to Title I, Part A of the No Child Left Behind Act, LEAs must reserve such funds as are necessary to provide services to homeless students who attend non-Title I schools that are comparable to those provided to students in Title I schools.(20 U.S.C. 6313(c)(3)(A), 2011). This reservation of funds commonly is referred to as Title I set-aside funds.

4 Nothing in the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) prohibits LEAs from disclosing data in aggregate, or in another form that is not personally identifiable (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

known as *Child Find*, states are required to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities, including children with disabilities who are homeless, who are in need of early intervention or special education services. Visit http://www.childfindidea.org/ for more information.

Under IDEA Part C, every state must establish an Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) (20 U.S.C. § 1441(a)(1), 2011). The ICC advises and assists the SEA in the coordination and development of a comprehensive statewide system of early intervention services for infants and toddlers with disabilities, or at risk for developing disabilities, and their families. Primary responsibilities of the ICC include:

» identifying sources of fiscal and other support for services for the early intervention program,

» assigning financial responsibility to the appropriate agency, and

» promoting interagency coordination.

The ICC must include a representative of the office of the State Coordinator (20 U.S.C. § 1441(b)(1)(K), 2011). Contact information for state ICC chairs is available at http://ectacenter.org/contact/iccchair.asp. Local interagency coordinating councils also exist at the county or other local level; the state ICC chair can provide additional information about local efforts.

- **Early childhood special education (**IDEA Part B**)**
  Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) authorizes special education and related services for children with disabilities ages 3-21. Under IDEA Part B, every state must establish and maintain a State Advisory Panel (SAP) (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(21), 2011). The SAP advises the SEA on the implementation of IDEA, including:

  » advising the state regarding:

    - unmet needs in the education of children with disabilities,
    - developing evaluations and reporting data to the U.S. Secretary of Education,
    - developing corrective action plans to address findings identified in federal monitoring, and
    - developing and implementing policies relating to the coordination of services for children with disabilities; and

  » commenting publicly on special education rules or regulations proposed by the state.

  In addition, Federal Regulations require that due process officer findings, decisions, appeals, and reviews be transmitted to the SAP (Assistance to States for the Education of Children with Disabilities, 2011).

SEA- and LEA-Level Data on Preschool-Aged Children Experiencing Homelessness

Since the 2006-2007 school year, ED has required SEAs and LEAs to collect data on preschool-aged children (ages 3-5, not kindergarten) that are enrolled in public preschool programs and those that are served with McKinney-Vento subgrant funds in LEAs receiving a subgrant. In addition, as of the 2011-2012 school year, ED requires LEAs receiving McKinney-Vento subgrant funds to collect data on children birth through 2 years of age who are served through the LEA subgrant. These data are collected at the LEA-level through the EDEN Submission System (ESS) for the ED*Facts* data repository. Parties interested in accessing these data should contact their State Coordinator for Homeless Education or SEA ED*Facts* Coordinator; contact information is for the latter is available at http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/eden/contacts.html.

The SAP must include state and local McKinney-Vento personnel (20 U.S.C. § 1412(a)(21)(B)(v), 2011). More information about SAPs, including a list of state contacts and recommended activities for strengthening SAP effectiveness, is available at http://www.stateadvisorypanel.org/.

- **Office of Early Learning**
  ED's Office of Early Learning, in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, and Office of Planning, Evaluation, and Policy Development work together to coordinate early learning policy and initiatives of the administration, such as expanding access to high-quality preschool for low-income children, including young children experiencing homelessness. Visit http://www.ed.gov/early-learning for more information.

- **Early Learning Interagency Policy Board**
  In 2009, ED announced the formation of a new Early Learning Interagency Policy Board (IPB), composed of senior staff from ED, the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), the Domestic Policy Council, and the Office of Management and Budget. The IPB works to improve the quality of early learning programs and outcomes for young children, particularly for children with high needs. ED and HHS report to the IPB regarding the progress of the jointly administered Race To The Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTT-ELC) grants to states, whose goals include increasing the number and percentage of low-income and disadvantaged children enrolled in high-quality early learning programs, and designing and implementing an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services.

- **Office for Early Childhood Development**
  The Office for Early Childhood Development (OECD), under the Administration on Children and Families at the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, provides a focused approach for improving early childhood education and development. It coordinates across federal programs and initiatives, such as the Office of Head Start; the Office of Child Care; the Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting Program; Early Childhood Health; and Race to the Top-Early Learning Challenge. Visit http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd for more information.

- **Head Start**
  Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Head Start is a federal program that promotes the school readiness of children ages birth to five from low-income families by enhancing their cognitive, social, and emotional development. Head Start programs offer a variety of service models, depending on the needs of the local community. As part of the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007, the federal Head Start Program adopted the McKinney-Vento EHCY definition of *homeless* (42 U.S.C. §9832(11), 2011), and was charged with implementing policies and procedures to ensure that homeless children are identified and prioritized for enrollment (42 U.S.C. § 9835(m)(1), 2011). Visit http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/directories to find a Head Start or Early Head Start program near you.

  Each state has a Head Start State Collaboration office, whose purpose is to facilitate collaboration among Head Start agencies. Visit http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration to locate contact information for your Head Start State Collaboration office.

  Further, as authorized by the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. §9837b(b)(1)(A)(i), 2011) 44 states and the District of Columbia have established State Advisory Councils on Early Childhood Education and Care to lead the development of a high quality, comprehensive system of early childhood education and care, and ensure statewide coordination and collaboration among the wide array of early childhood programs

and services in the state. State and local McKinney-Vento personnel may be invited to participate and/or may request to present before the Council. Visit http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/ecd-map-0 to locate contact information for your State Advisory Council.

- **Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program**
  The CCDF Program, administered by the Office of Child Care (OCC), provides low-income working families with access to affordable, high-quality early care and after-school programs. Each state houses a division or office that oversees the administration of CCDF grant funds within the state. Every two years, in the summer of odd-numbered years, states receiving CCDF funds must submit to the OCC a plan detailing how these funds will be spent. All states must hold at least one public meeting to allow interested groups, organizations, and all segments of the public an opportunity to comment on the state CCDF plan; many states accept written testimony as a part of the public feedback process. To learn more about CCDF programming in your state, or to find out how to provide feedback on your state's biennial CCDF plan, contact the CCDF Administrator in your state; contact information is available at http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/ecd-map-0.

- **Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program**
  The MIECHV Program, administered by the Health Resources and Services Administration and the Administration for Children and Families, facilitates collaboration and partnership at the federal, state, and community levels to improve health and development outcomes for at-risk children through evidence-based home visiting programs. The overarching focus of the MIECHV Program is to identify and provide comprehensive services to improve outcomes for families who reside in at-risk communities. MIECHV includes grants to states and six jurisdictions; and grants to Indian Tribes, Tribal Organizations, and Urban Indian Organizations. While the MIECHV Program does not target young homeless children specifically, many of them will fall under one of the at-risk categories designated as priority populations. Visit http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting/statecontacts.pdf to access state-level MIECHV contact information to learn more about MIECHV grants in your area.

3. Demonstrate the value of collaboration for all involved agencies.

Early care and education colleagues are likely to be busy and focused on their programmatic requirements, as are State Coordinators and local liaisons. To encourage and inform collaboration, it is important to collect and share data on:

- the number of preschool-aged children experiencing homelessness in your state or school district (see sidebar),
- how many preschool-aged children receive early childhood education services in your state or school district, and
- what barriers prevent preschool-aged children from accessing services.

This information will support collaboration by helping to identify programmatic needs, establish the goals and priorities of collaborative efforts, and convince potential partners of the need to work together.

To frame collaboration as a win-win endeavor, consider the following:

- Describe the services your program can offer to children and families who are homeless.
- Reference requirements included in the McKinney-Vento Act and early childhood legislation to collaborate, conduct outreach, and provide services to homeless children and families.
- Explain how collaboration can help meet

the goals of the early childhood program, such as assisting with IDEA Child Find requirements and Head Start data collection.

- Offer to assist with community needs assessments by providing data on homeless families identified by the school district.

4. Get to know your collaborators.

Meet with early care and education colleagues. Explain the preschool-related provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act. Share information about the McKinney-Vento definition of *homeless* (see sidebar on page 1) and the students served by your program. Visit early childhood programs and learn about their services, eligibility criteria, enrollment process, priorities, and challenges. Once the relationship is established, get together on a monthly or quarterly basis to maintain communication and grow the collaboration.

5. Begin working towards goals.

Jump-start the collaboration by focusing efforts on a few tangible goals. Over time, as collaborators meet goals together, more ambitious projects will seem possible. The starting point will vary by program and community, but initial conversations between collaborators may address the following questions:

- Can we provide professional development across our programs, so that all staff members understand each program's mandates and priorities?
- Can we refer families and children for services between programs?
- Can we streamline enrollment processes for families who are homeless by obtaining releases to share information, enabling us to share enrollment paperwork with one another?
- Can we share participant data across programs?
- Can we coordinate transportation?
- Can early childhood collaborators reserve slots for homeless children if local liaisons commit to keeping them full?
- Can we develop a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between our agencies to address collaborative issues?

Examples of Collaboration from the Field

McKinney-Vento programs across the country have developed strong collaborations with early care and education programs, resulting in greater program access for young children experiencing homelessness. The following examples may serve as models for collaboration in your area:

State Prekindergarten and Preschool Programs

Maryland does not offer universal prekindergarten, but prioritizes children who are economically disadvantaged or homeless for enrollment in public prekindergarten programs. If the closest school with a prekindergarten program is at capacity, a homeless child is transported to the next closest school with a prekindergarten program opening.

In Columbus, OH, the McKinney-Vento program supplements its early childhood efforts by using Title I funding to support an early childhood advocate and a parent consultant at local emergency shelters. The early childhood advocate ensures that young children experiencing homelessness are screened for developmental disabilities and connected with early childhood programs. The parent consultant works to encourage parents to become more involved in their children's early education and care.

Local Head Start Collaboration

The Anchorage School District (AK) takes a comprehensive approach to ensuring that young homeless children receive early childhood services through Head Start and the school district's prekindergarten program. The school district and local Head Start program developed an MOU to help ensure public preschool access,

establish a systematic referral system, and provide transportation for homeless children.

State Head Start Collaboration

In Connecticut, the Head Start State Collaboration Director provided mini-grants to local Head Start programs to help improve their outreach and services to homeless families with young children. Teams of Head Start and family shelter personnel partnered to identify young children experiencing homelessness and enroll them in Head Start, Early Head Start, and other early care and education programs; and helped shelters "child proof" their environments for young children. The program ran for approximately two years, spanned three Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) fiscal years, and also utilized American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) and CCDF funds. Many of the teams established through these mini-grants continue to work together to enroll young homeless children and bring early childhood resources into family shelters.

IDEA Early Intervention and Early Childhood Special Education

In Washington state, the McKinney-Vento program collaborates with the state early intervention and early childhood special education programs to conduct joint trainings about the needs and rights of young homeless children across the state and to encourage local-level program coordination. As a result of the collaboration, the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) published a joint technical assistance document entitled *Young Children with Disabilities and Homelessness*, available for downloading at http://www.k12.wa.us/HomelessEd/Trainings.aspx.

Early Education and Care

The Massachusetts Department of Early Education and Care (EEC) authorizes child care slots for eligible children of homeless families. Homeless and at-risk families who qualify for homeless child care services are offered slots with contracted providers. Shelter provider staff, F.O.R. Families (Follow up, Outreach, and Referrals; a home visiting program for homeless families) staff, and child care provider staff may send homeless child care referral forms to the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD), which oversees the administration of the program. The number of homeless child care slots, however, is limited, often resulting in a wait list. Visit http://www.massresources.org/homeless-child-care.html for more information.

State Coordinators in other states may wish to contact their state CCDF administrator to make him or her more aware of the extent of child and family homelessness within the state; the needs of young homeless children and their families; and the federal support for priority eligibility for homeless children and families, co-pay waivers, and grace periods for immunizations.

Conclusion

Although it can take time to understand the early care and education landscape fully, it is a challenge worth the effort of State Coordinators and local liaisons. Through collaboration with early care and education colleagues, McKinney-Vento personnel can help overcome the barriers that separate young homeless children and families from the support they need. The result will be an increase in homeless children's participation in quality early care and education programs and an improvement in their readiness for school.

Program	Eligibility	Services Provided	Homeless-specific Provisions	Contact and General Information
State prekindergarten and preschool programs	40 states and the District of Columbia now provide prekindergarten programs for 4-year-olds; some states also accept 3-year-olds.	Education-focused half-day and full-day programs in schools or through community partnerships. Some programs provide referrals for health and developmental screening, provide supportive services to families, and offer opportunities for parent involvement.	In addition to the McKinney-Vento Act provisions explained in this brief, some states prioritize homeless children for enrollment in early care and education programs. Examples: Homeless 3- and 4-year-olds are automatically eligible for prekindergarten in Texas. Maryland's prekindergarten program focuses specifically on enrolling 4-year-old children from economically disadvantaged or homeless families.	State prekindergarten programs usually are administered by school districts. Check with your local school district administration. General information: National Institute for Early Education Research *State Preschool Yearbook*, http://nieer.org/publications/annual-state-pre-k-reports-state-preschool-yearbooks
Head Start, a federally funded comprehensive child development program	Children ages 3-5 and their families. Federal regulations require that at least 90% of children enrolled in each program be from families with an income at or below the poverty line and at least 10% of children enrolled have a disability.	Promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services. Provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services, usually in a center-based setting. Limited transportation. Some programs are full-day. Specialized programs include Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (birth to age 5) and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start.	Children and families experiencing homelessness and children in foster care are categorically eligible for services. They do not need to provide proof of income to qualify. Programs are required to identify homeless children, prioritize their enrollment, and allow their enrollment while enrollment documentation is obtained. Programs also must collaborate with McKinney-Vento programs and other programs in the community that serve homeless infants and toddlers.	Head Start programs may be administered by school districts, local government agencies, or community organizations. General information: The Office of Head Start http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc Head Start Program Locator: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices Head Start State Collaboration Offices: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration/HSSCO/state_collaboration.html
Early Head Start, a federally funded comprehensive child development program	Pregnant women and children age birth to 3 and their families. Federal regulations require that at least 90% of children enrolled in each program be from families with an income at or below the poverty line and at least 10% of children enrolled have a disability.	Promotes school readiness by enhancing the social and cognitive development of children through the provision of educational, health, nutritional, social, and other services. Provides early, continuous, intensive, and comprehensive child development and family support services in a home-based or center-based setting. Limited transportation. Some programs are full-day. Specialized programs include Migrant and Seasonal Head Start (birth to age 5) and American Indian/Alaska Native Head Start.	Children and families experiencing homelessness and children in foster care are categorically eligible for services. They do not need to provide proof of income to qualify. Programs are required to identify homeless children, prioritize their enrollment, and allow their enrollment while enrollment documentation is obtained. Programs also must collaborate with McKinney-Vento programs and other programs in the community that serve homeless infants and toddlers.	Early Head Start programs may be administered by school districts, local government agencies, or community organizations. General information: Early Head Start National Resource Center http://www.ehsnrc.org/ Head Start Program Locator: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/HeadStartOffices Head Start State Collaboration Offices: http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/states/collaboration/HSSCO/state_collaboration.html

Program	Eligibility	Services Provided	Homeless-specific Provisions	Contact and General Information
Early childhood special education (IDEA Part B), a federally funded program authorizing special education and related services for children with disabilities	Children ages 3-5 who need special education and related services due to a disability	Specially designed preschool instruction and related services, such as speech-language, audiology, psychological, school health, and social work services; physical or occupational therapy; and transportation. Parents and the school district agree to an Individualized Education Program (IEP), a written document that is developed for each eligible child with a disability that outlines the services the child will receive.	IDEA requires states to identify, locate, and evaluate all children with disabilities aged birth to 21, including those experiencing homelessness, who are in need of special education services. This process is called *Child Find*. Timely assessments and continuity of services are required for highly mobile children.	Early childhood special education is administered by school districts. Check with your local school district administration. General information: U.S. Department of Education http://idea.ed.gov/explore/home National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities: http://www.nichcy.org/ State Organization Contact Information: http://nichcy.org/state-organization-search-by-state IDEA Part B State Advisory Panel Contact Information: http://www.stateadvisorypanel.org/ Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center State Coordinator Contact Information: http://ectacenter.org/contact/619coord.asp Information about special education and homelessness: http://center.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_spec_ed.php
Early intervention (IDEA Part C), a federally funded early intervention program for infants and toddlers with disabilities	Children birth to 3 with a developmental delay or physical or mental condition likely to result in a developmental delay	Specially designed services for the child and family, provided in their natural environment. Services may include speech-language, audiology, psychological, health or social work services; home visits; physical or occupational therapy; and transportation. Parents and the early intervention lead agency agree to an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP), a written document that is developed for each eligible infant or toddler with a disability that outlines the services the child and family will receive.	IDEA requires states to identify, locate, and evaluate all infants and toddlers with disabilities, including those experiencing homelessness, who are in need of special education services. This process is called *Child Find*. Services must be provided to infants and toddlers with disabilities, including those experiencing homelessness, and their families, and may be provided where the child spends most of the time, such as a homeless shelter or child care center. States must ensure the meaningful involvement of homeless families in the planning and implementation of the Part C program.	Early intervention programs are administered by local lead agencies, which may include school districts, mental health agencies, or community organizations. General information: U.S. Department of Education http://idea.ed.gov/part-c/search/new The Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center: http://ectacenter.org/partc/partc.asp State Part C Coordinator Contact Information: http://ectacenter.org/contact/Ptccoord.asp National Dissemination Center for Children with Disabilities: http://www.nichcy.org/

Program	Eligibility	Services Provided	Homeless-specific Provisions	Contact and General Information
Subsidized child care	Prekindergarten services for infants, toddlers, and preschool-aged children; and before- and after-school care. Eligibility requirements vary by state and include a maximum income level.	Subsidized child care centers: Publicly subsidized child care centers and family childcare homes provide early education and child care, often on a sliding-fee scale. Child care vouchers: Parents may use subsidy vouchers with the provider of their choice. Typically, there is a waiting list.	Some states may grant preferences to families with children experiencing homelessness, although this is not required. The federal Administration for Children and Families encourages child care programs to offer priority eligibility to homeless children and families, waive their co-pays, and provide grace periods for immunizations.	Child care subsidies are administered by a variety of state agencies; child care providers are located across communities. General information: Office of Child Care Technical Assistance Network http://www.childcare.gov/ Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State and Regional Contacts: http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/ecd-map-0 Child Care Aware® of America: (including locator for the nearest child care resource and referral agency, which can provide the contact information for local child care providers and may process child care vouchers) http://www.childcareaware.org
Maternal, Infant, and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) Program, a federally-funded program providing evidence-based maternal and early childhood home visiting services to children and families in at-risk communities	Expectant mothers and fathers and parents, and primary caregivers of children birth to kindergarten entry living in at-risk communities identified by a needs assessment	Home visiting services to expectant parents and families with young children. At least 75 percent of grant funds must be spent on programs to implement evidence-based home visiting models.	Priority populations for MIECHV include families in at-risk communities identified through a needs assessment, low-income families, pregnant women under age 21, families with a history of child abuse or neglect, families with a history of substance abuse, families that have users of tobacco in the home, families with children with low student achievement, families with children with developmental delays or disabilities, and military families.	MIECHV is administered by state lead agencies. General information on MIECHV and Tribal MIECHV: http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting/ http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/programs/home-visiting MIECHV State Lead Agency Contact Information: http://mchb.hrsa.gov/programs/homevisiting/statecontacts.pdf
Race To The Top-Early Learning Challenge (RTTT-ELC)	Discretionary/competitive grant program to states to assist in providing greater access to early learning programs for low-income and disadvantaged young children	Funding supports states' efforts to increase the number and percentage of low-income and disadvantaged children enrolled in high-quality early learning programs, design and implement an integrated system of high-quality early learning programs and services, and ensure that any use of assessments conforms with the recommendations of the National Research Council's reports on early childhood.	Grants fund activities to increase enrollment of homeless children. For example, Massachusetts' 2012 RTTT-ELC Annual Performance Report documents a collaboration between housing and education agencies resulting in three regional, joint trainings for early education programs and shelters; and a demonstration project to secure employment, stabilize housing, and address the developmental needs of children for a least 150 adults from recently-homeless families.	General information: U.S. Department of Education http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/index.html U.S. Department of Health and Human Services http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/programs/race-to-the-top U.S. Department of Education Program Contacts: http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop-earlylearningchallenge/contacts.html

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This brief was developed collaboratively by:

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Every state is required to have a State Coordinator for Homeless Education, and every school district is required to have a local homeless education liaison. These individuals will assist you with the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. To find out who your State Coordinator is, visit the NCHE website at http://www.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php.

For more information on the McKinney-Vento Act and resources for implementation, call the NCHE Helpline at 800-308-2145 or e-mail homeless@serve.org.

Local Contact Information: