

January 2006

We need your help to make *The Beam* the most helpful resource it can be!

- Share successful practices you have developed or helpful resources you have used;
- Submit an interest story about the success of a student or family in your program; or
- Write a feature about an issue that needs our attention!

Send submissions to:
tstahlke@mail.utexas.edu

Deadline for the Spring issue is March 15, 2006.

Deadline for the Summer issue is June 15, 2006.

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Got Gratitude?

By Tom Norlen, Site Coordinator; Bucks County, Pennsylvania

We can go through periods of time when we may receive very little positive feedback on things we have done for homeless families. While the reason for helping others should never be tied to the hope of gratitude, it is nice to know when something works out for good, a strategy is successful, a requested supply item has been received, or some material object has encouraged someone in need.

In the Bible there is an account of ten lepers who were all healed, but only one came back to give thanks. This was only a 10% return of thankfulness for a significant act of kindness. So in the course of our work of assisting homeless children and youth, if we receive even a small return rate of gratitude on our efforts, perhaps this is pretty good and acceptable. And it can be just enough of a show of thanks from others to keep us going. Expecting more may be both unrealistic and prideful.

Someone wrote that even though we might never or rarely receive any gratitude from those we help, we should never stop showing our appreciation to others, whether they are the homeless, fellow colleagues, monetary contributors, school district and agency staff, or any others in the helping system. While challenging (and more or less so, depending on our personalities) this concept of continually demonstrating our appreciation, in my opinion, is at the very foundation of what we need to do to encourage those who are part of the extensive network of people required to help homeless children and youth—many people doing extraordinary things each day for homeless children may be starved for a word of appreciation or encouragement.

Whether homeless or not, we all have basic inner needs. In these days of competing funds and budgetary cuts, one of the things that we can do for free is to show our appreciation every day. If we start to take every-day support for granted, it could end or dry up, and we may wish we had taken more time to

appreciate those acts which help homeless students.

Think about all the people who work, as a rule, without glory or recognition: a bus driver, transportation staff who set up the routes, a coach who donates the sports gear, a cafeteria worker who makes free lunch less embarrassing, a secretary who takes a family aside to discuss their homelessness, a nurse who gives kids free coats, a counselor who takes extra time to listen about domestic violence, a teacher who buys supplies with her own money for a student, the school which holds a fund raiser for the local shelter, the Homeless Liaison who is flexible and caring for the best interest of the youth. The list is endless.

And so should be our appreciation. Many times we never hear about all the wonderful things that are done, but when we do, how long does it take for us to send a short email? Or write a note, or make a quick phone call? And for bigger things like a school fundraiser, to create a flier that tells the students and staff how their money was spent? I have been told on several occasions that schools and groups rarely hear how their contribution was used. Being specific with what we do to help homeless students can often result in a particular funder wanting to support our project again.

To whom can you show gratitude this week? Who needs some encouragement? Who recently helped you assist a homeless student or a homeless family? We may only get positive feedback sporadically, but there are opportunities for us to show appreciation 100% of the time.

Thanks for what each of you has done, is doing and will do to help homeless students. Keep up the great work! You may never know how significant your involvement has been in the life of a homeless student. ■

Standards and Indicators of Quality McKinney-Vento Programs—Revised 2005

By Diana Bowman, Director, National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)

In 2000, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) convened a task force to develop Standards and Indicators of Quality McKinney-Vento Programs. Each year following, the NCHE pilot tested the Standards and Indicators with local sites, which provided input on the development of a guide for collecting data on homeless education programs. The Standards and Indicators are available in the *McKinney-Vento Data Standards and Indicators Guidebook* and *Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Non-Regulatory Guidance* (both on the NCHE website at www.serve.org/NCHE). They have been widely used to assist homeless education programs improve their services.

In October 2005, NCHE convened a group of State Coordinators, local liaisons, data specialists, and national partners to revise the Standards and Indicators. The group reviewed the Standards and Indicators in light of lessons learned about the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act and suggestions provided by the pilot sites. The group also considered U.S. Department of Education priorities and data collection requirements. The changes were incorporated in ten broad standards with measurable indicators.

A draft of the revised Standards is included below. The revised Standards along with suggested Indicators, data collection strategies, and questions to ask based on the data are posted on the NCHE website at www.serve.org/NCHE.

NCHE is collecting feedback and will revise the Standards and Indicators further and produce a finalized version by May 2006. Also, NCHE is convening a networking group of local sites to collect data using the revised Standards and Indicators and will use recommendations from the group to develop a new guide to assist with data collection. Participants in prior networking groups (pilot sites) have found the opportunity to discuss issues and share strategies in periodic conference calls valuable in their data collection efforts.

If you would like to offer feedback on the draft of the revised Standards and Indicators or join the networking group to receive support and guidance in using them to collect data and improve your program, contact Kathleen Mooney at NCHE (kmooney@serve.org) or call the HelpLine at 800-308-2145.

Draft of Proposed Revisions to Standards and Indicators of Quality McKinney-Vento Programs October 2005

- Standard 1: All homeless students, identified and enrolled at the time of the state assessment, take the state assessment required for their grade levels.
- Standard 2: All homeless students demonstrate academic progress.
- Standard 3: All children in homeless situations are identified.
- Standard 4: All homeless students experience only minimal or non-existent gaps in education.
- Standard 5: All homeless students experience stability in school.
- Standard 6: All homeless students receive specialized and comparable services when eligible.
- Standard 7: All preschool-aged homeless children enroll in and attend preschool programs.
- Standard 8: All accompanied youth enroll and attend school.
- Standard 9: All parents (or persons acting as parents of children and youth experiencing homelessness) are informed of the educational and related opportunities available to their children and are provided meaningful opportunities to participate in their children's education.
- Standard 10: LEAs help with the needs of all homeless children and youth through collaborative efforts both within and beyond the LEA. ■

The State of American Poverty

By Jodi Mincemoyer and Sarah Bratton, Project HOPE-Virginia

Each year, in November and December, as Americans prepare for a festive holiday season of shopping, traveling and partying, a handful of reports are released that provide a glimpse into an America often overlooked. In this America, life around the holidays is not so abundant or cheerful, as its residents are struggling each day to keep themselves and their children warm and fed. The poverty rate in 2004 was 12.7 percent, up from 12.5 percent in 2003.¹ This equates to 37.0 million² people living in poverty, an addition of 1.1 million people over the previous year. For each of the past four years, these numbers have risen; in 2000, 11.3 percent of the population, or 31.6 million people, lived in poverty. A million more families, for a total of 7.9 million in 2004, now live in poverty.

The *2005 Kids Count Data Book* reports that between 2000 and 2003, child poverty increased in 25 states and the District of Columbia and decreased in 12 states. For 13 states, child poverty did not change in this time period. During 2004, 17.8 percent of the people under 18 lived in poverty, or 13.0 million children, representing no change from 2003. This poverty rate of 17.8 percent is higher than the rates of people 18 to 64 years old and 65 and older, respectively. While composing only 25.2 percent of the total US population, children represented 35.2 percent of the people in poverty.

Below are more findings from three reports:

Household Characteristics

- Children in single parent households were more likely to be poor than those in married couple households. Female headed single households with children had a poverty rate of 42 percent, compared with 9 percent in married couple households. Additionally, only approximately one third of those female headed households received child support.
- Between 2003 and 2004, the real median household income remained unchanged at \$44,389.¹ Because of stagnant incomes, many families and individuals are more vulnerable to rising prices for gasoline, child care and healthcare, as well as disruptions to their incomes, such as illness, job loss, and transportation problems.
- Thirty-three percent of children in the US, or 24 million, had parents who lacked full time year round employment.³ The Annie E. Casey Foundation identified four major barriers to employment – substance abuse, domestic violence, prior incarceration, and depression. Without steady employment, parents are less able to provide healthcare and basic necessities for their children.

Child Poverty⁴

Children between the ages of 0 and 5 are more likely to live in families with incomes below the poverty line than children aged 6-17. In 2003, 20 percent of the children aged 0-5 lived in poverty as opposed to 16 percent of those over 6. In 2003, 30 percent of all children living in poverty had a parent working full time year round.

Hunger⁴

Approximately 13 million children live in households classified as food insecure, meaning that there is difficulty in obtaining enough food, reduced diet quality, and anxiety about food supply.

Healthcare⁴

- In 2004, there were 45.8 million people without health insurance, an increase of 5.8 million people from 2003. However, the percentage of the population that was uninsured stayed constant at 15.7 percent.
- Of children under 18 years, 11.2 percent did not have health insurance, translating into 8.4 million.

Reports from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, US Census Bureau, and Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, as well as others that appear throughout the year, point to the risks faced by families earning at or below the median income level, \$44,389.¹ These include minimum wage earners and others whose employers often do not provide healthcare, retirement plans, or flexible leave policies for taking care of sick children or looking after their own health needs. These families may be unable to afford quality daycare or preschool, which studies show is crucial to preparing children for school.⁵ Children in low income families are at greater risk for hunger and poor nutrition, affecting development and the ability to learn, and illness, resulting in missed school days. These are the children who form the ranks of school drop outs and those who become pregnant when they are teenagers. Without a high school diploma, the poverty cycle is likely to continue for them and their children. Education is one crucial way to break the cycle of poverty and build futures for children in low income families.

Thank you for all that you do to support, challenge, and engage all our nation's children!

(Please see page 8 for the endnotes for this article.)

Legislative Update

By Barbara Duffield, NAEHCY Policy Director

If you would like to receive timely legislative updates via email, please contact Barbara Duffield at bduffield@naehcy.org to be added to the NAEHCY legislative email list.

Additional information may also be found at www.naehcy.org/legislative_update.html.

President Bush Signs Violence Against Women Act Reauthorization

On January 5, 2006, President Bush signed into the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) reauthorization. In addition to enhancing criminal and civil justice and community-based responses to violence against women, VAWA includes important housing provisions, including:

- A definition of homelessness that is consistent with the definition of homelessness in the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act;
- Protections for individuals from unfair eviction due to their status as victims of domestic violence or stalking;
- Improved ability of major federal housing programs to meet the housing and safety needs of survivors;
- Authorization for a grant program to help public and Indian housing authorities and subsidized housing providers respond appropriately to domestic and sexual violence;
- Funds for collaborative efforts to create long-term housing options for survivors;
- Expansion of transitional housing options for survivors; and
- Protection of the safety and confidentiality of survivors within the homeless services system.

VAWA 2005 also creates new focus areas such as developing prevention strategies, creating the first federal funding stream to support rape crisis centers, developing culturally- and linguistically-specific services for communities, enhancing programs and services for victims with disabilities, and broadening VAWA service provisions to include children

and teens. The new law is effective immediately.

For more information, please visit the National Network to End Domestic Violence at <http://www.nnedv.org>.

A Look Ahead to the 109th Congress, Second Session

Congress reconvened this month for the second session of the 109th Congress. Here's a brief look ahead at legislative issues relating to the education of children and youth in homeless situations:

FY2007 Appropriations – Last year, Congress provided the same amount of funding for the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program as the previous year (\$62.5 million). However, to help offset the costs of the war in Iraq, tax cuts, and hurricane relief spending, Congress enacted a one-percent across-the-board cut for all federal programs. Thus, funding for the EHCY program was cut by \$624,960, bringing the FY2006 funding level to approximately \$61.9 million. Looking ahead to the FY2007 appropriations process, it is expected that once again, there will be strong pressures to reduce the federal budget in the area of domestic programs. The homeless education community – liaisons, community partners, state coordinators, and others – should urge their Members of Congress to protect EHCY funding from further cuts and work to increase funding at least to the authorized level of \$70 million.

Higher Education Act Reauthorization – Both House and Senate made progress last year on the reauthorization of the Higher Education Act (HEA). Both bills,

but in particular the Senate bill, contained provisions to increase the access of youth who are homeless to secondary and post-secondary programs. Most notable was the inclusion in the Senate bill of a provision that would allow homeless unaccompanied youth to be considered independent students for federal financial aid (the FAFSA) upon verification of a liaison, shelter director, or financial aid administrator. It is unclear at this time when the HEA will be taken up next.

Head Start Reauthorization – Both House and Senate passed bills to reauthorize the Head Start Act last year, and both bills contained numerous provisions increasing access of pre-school children experiencing homelessness and their families to Head Start program. As with HEA, it is unclear at this time when the Head Start reauthorization will be taken up next.

HUD McKinney-Vento Act Reauthorization – Last year, Senator Jack Reed (D-RI) introduced legislation to reauthorize the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act programs administered by HUD ("The Community Partnerships to End Homelessness Act of 2005," S. 1801). While this legislation included new provisions to improve coordination and collaboration with the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act, it also codifies many of the existing "chronic homelessness" policies that have led to a pitting of vulnerable populations against each other for service dollars, and a decrease in resources for and attention to homeless families with children and youth on their own. This legislation is not expected to move quickly, if at all, in 2006. ■

NAEHCY Update... *from the President*

Dear Fellow NAEHCY Member:

Greetings for 2006! This New Year calls for big steps forward to renew, rebuild, defend and strengthen lives and the law. Bold causes call for daily steps towards the goal. As Kahlil Gibran says, "For in the dew of little things the heart finds its morning and is refreshed." We need the passion of the heart to summon up the courage to go forward. The need for vigilance in seeking a definition of homeless is clear as we work with families and children who find themselves at risk of becoming homeless or currently doubled up with others.

The reauthorization of the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act* as part of the *No Child Left Behind Act* is looming on the horizon. More children than ever before have benefited by the protections of the law and the work of homeless liaisons across the country. We must articulate the successes and the continued need for protection of the fundamental rights of homeless individuals so that we can move beyond compliance to accomplish an even greater good. NAEHCY will work in 2006 to truly fulfill "*Building futures through education.*"

In 2006 we want to continue to work with our existing partners in the homeless circle and reach out to other groups to help our unaccompanied youth, young children, special education students, and those youth in the child welfare and foster care systems. Our concluding conference speaker in 2005, Barbara Taft, founder and executive director of People of the Heart, reminded us that if we want to address homeless youth issues we must address child abuse issues.

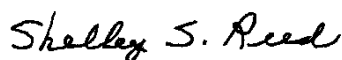
NAEHCY is "the voice and social conscience for the educating of children and youth in homeless situations." We want to be recognized and heard as the voice, the organization that others seek out for expertise. Our past conference, "Everyone Believing-Everyone Achieving" in Kansas City provided a place to think, reflect, make connections, and create solutions. Our 2006 conference in Little Rock, Arkansas at the Peabody Hotel is beginning to take shape and promises to be another great experience.

In 2006 we will be making even greater efforts to build, maintain, and strengthen our membership. We will be using our newsletter, *The Beam*, and our website to inform members of the daily implementation of the strategic plan, soliciting member's ideas that are working well in the field to share with others, and to keep you posted on legislative events affecting the work of homeless liaisons.

I am excited about the possibilities of 2006! Welcome Tim Stahlke as Vice-President, Mattie McVey as Secretary, Danny Jones as Treasurer, and Lynda Thistle-Elliott as new Member-at-Large, and Jodi Mincemoyer as Communications chair. We wish to thank publicly Barbara James, outgoing Past-President; Louis Tallerita, outgoing Treasurer; and Pittre Walker, outgoing Member-at-Large. Please contact any member of the Governing Board with questions, concerns, and items you want to see placed on the Governing Board monthly agenda. NAEHCY exists to advocate and support you and homeless children and youth.

In closing I will leave with you the words of Mary Baker Eddy: "Home is not a place. It is a power." People are drawn home to peace, security, and to love. The work of homeless liaisons, state coordinators, shelter workers, and outreach staff empowers others. Let us continue to raise our voice, get to the decision making table, and to know that we are being effective in "building futures through education." It is the hope that children and youth need.

Sincerely,



Shelley Reed
NAEHCY President

NAEHCY Governing Board, 2006-07

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UPCOMING BOARD MEETINGS:

Tuesday, February 14, 2006
Executive Committee

Tuesday, March 14, 2006
Full Governing Board

NAEHCY ANNUAL CONFERENCE
PEABODY HOTEL/LITTLE ROCK, AK
NOVEMBER 11-14, 2006

Creating a School District - Social Service Collaboration

By Jan Moore, Program Specialist, NCHE

Children and youth in homeless situations encounter challenges at school, within the family, and in the community. Overwhelmed school personnel lack adequate resources and skills to successfully address the myriad of challenges – especially those outside the scope of academics – faced by homeless children. Issues like hunger, inadequate housing, poor health care, emotional difficulties, domestic violence, and family substance abuse among others highlight the fact that serving children and youth in homeless situations is a community issue. Therefore, school districts and social service agencies are looking increasingly toward collaboration as a possible solution.

While collaborating is becoming more widespread, it still requires hard work. Local homeless liaisons agree that some basic requirements for beginning a successful collaboration include:

- Don't shortcut the planning process
- Conduct a needs assessment to identify gaps in services provision
- Base relationships on common goals, trust, and respect
- Learn all you can about the other agencies involved
- Establish a clear, concise mission, vision, and goals
- Encourage passionate leaders
- Develop procedures to share information, resources, and authority

- Have frequent, unambiguous communications
- Have clear expectations of agency representatives and volunteers
- Encourage creativity and allow risk-taking

In a recently released document based on interviews with district liaisons for homeless education, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) reported that an important first step for collaborators is identifying the common thread that can weave participants together. The group needs a strong unifying goal and a clear, solid plan to achieve it. These, along with every member's commitment to do whatever it takes to meet families' needs, equip the group to survive the inevitable obstacles. In addition, key players must learn to work together and trust each other enough to be able to share information, resources, and decision-making authority. Successful collaborators should plan to spend as much time nurturing relationships as developing and implementing projects.

If you are interested in further information about establishing and maintaining a successful collaborative project, NCHE has posted the entire report called *Collaborations of Schools and Social Service Agencies* on their website at <http://www.serve.org/nche>. You can obtain additional information about issues concerning the education of homeless children and youth on the NCHE website or by calling their Helpline at 800-308-2145.

Disasters: Is Your District Ready?

By Christina Dukes, Program Specialist, NCHE

The 2005 hurricane season was an abrupt wake-up call for many school districts. Tens of thousands of displaced students and families needing schooling and housing poured into neighboring states and even spread to the outer corners of the country. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act suddenly took center stage in many local and even national news broadcasts and print media. Local homeless education liaisons and state coordinators for homeless education were suddenly receiving anxious voicemail messages and phone calls asking for help. For heavily-impacted districts, the task at hand was daunting. And what was one of the most important lessons learned? ***Prepare yourself before the disaster arrives.***

One of the most effective ways for a district to prepare for a disaster is through the development of a disaster preparedness plan. And while this season's hurricanes thrust the issue to the forefront, no district is immune. Earthquakes, hurricanes, tornadoes, avalanches, floods, chemical spills, and fires, mean that every state in the union is susceptible. Thinking through the challenges that may arise in the event of one of these disasters will enable communities to respond quickly with a well thought out plan rather than shooting from the hip in the often chaotic aftermath.

Suggested Elements for a Solid Disaster Preparedness Plan*

School districts with heavy impact from the 2005 hurricanes suggest the following elements for a disaster preparedness plan:

- Strategies for the prompt identification of affected students
- A plan for the prompt enrollment of affected students
- Strategies for obtaining health, academic, and other student records
- A plan for coordination with other relief agencies
- A plan to address mental health needs (both short-term and long-term)

(see page 8 for the conclusion of this article)



**NATIONAL
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We're on the web!
www.naehcy.org

NAEH CY, a national grassroots membership association, serves as the voice and the social conscience for the education of children and youth in homeless situations.

NAEH CY connects educators, parents, advocates, researchers and service providers to ensure school academic achievement and overall success for children and youth whose lives have been disrupted by the lack of safe, permanent and adequate housing.

NAEH CY accomplishes these goals through advocacy, partnerships and education.

Everyone with an interest in supporting children and youth in homeless situations is encouraged to become a member of the Association.

American Poverty (continued from page 3)

Endnotes:

- ¹ Walt, C.D., Proctor, B.D., & Lee, C.H. (2005, August). *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2004*. U.S. Census Bureau, Current Populations Reports, P60-229, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- ² Thirty-seven million is the total population of Nevada, Pennsylvania and Texas combined. It is more than the population of the state of California, the most populous state in the union. U.S. Census Bureau. Retrieved January 10, 2006, from <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd>.
- ³ Annie E. Casey Foundation (2005). *2005 Kids Count Data Book*. Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation. The data are also available online in various formats and can be studied at the state level: www.kidscount.org/2005.
- ⁴ Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics (2005). *America's children: Key national indicators of well-being, 2005*. Federal Interagency Forum on Child and Family Statistics, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- ⁵ Sawhill, I.V. (1999, Fall) Kids need an early start: Universal preschool education may be the best investment Americans can make in our children's education- and our nation's future. *Blueprint*, Fall 1999. Retrieved January 10, 2006, from <http://www.brookings.edu/views/articles/sawhill/19990825.htm>. ■

Disasters (continued from page 7)

- A plan for getting special needs students the services they need
- A plan to respond to anticipated transportation barriers and needs
- Strategies for the prompt placement of students in the free/reduced lunch program
- A media and marketing plan (What role will the media play?)
- A plan for handling donations
- Requesting gift cards to stores such as Wal-Mart, Target, or grocery stores, is recommended. The logistics of distributing these cards are much simpler and the cards can be used to purchase exactly what is needed (e.g. specific clothing for school uniforms)
- A plan for getting resources to target groups
- A data management plan
- Having reliable numbers of affected persons can assist in many ways after a disaster, including generating donations and other assistance
- A plan for working with FEMA
- A plan for identifying and meeting the long-term needs mentioned by families
- A list of potential funding resources (public and private)
- A plan for addressing caretaker and staff fatigue

One common theme among the suggested elements is that of collaboration. School districts will have a hard time responding in isolation to the challenges that arise, and should work with other local, state, and even federal agencies, such as FEMA.

NCHE is in the process of developing a disaster preparedness monograph that will assist school districts in developing a disaster preparedness plan. The monograph will be a practical, step-by-step guide to disaster planning for LEAs, highlighting best practices from around the country. If your district has an established plan that could provide useful input, please e-mail Patricia Julianelle at pjulianelle@naehcy.org. NCHE expects to release the monograph in Spring 2006. ■