



The Beam

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Deadline for the Spring issue is April 10, 2009.

Deadline for the Summer issue is June 15, 2009

NAEHCY Board meetings are open to members. Meetings are held 12:30 - 2 p.m. EST on the 2nd Tuesday of each month throughout the year by conference call. To participate, send an email to Tim Stahlke at least 5 days before the meeting: tstahlke@austin.utexas.edu

FAFSA and Access to Higher Education*

Youth experiencing homelessness or in foster care face numerous barriers to higher education. Inadequate college readiness, the complexity of the financial aid process, and lack of housing and support services once enrolled in college make obtaining a college degree an often insurmountable challenge. Yet a college education offers these youth the best opportunity to escape poverty and realize their dreams.

Due to their severe poverty, homeless unaccompanied youth are extremely unlikely to be able to access postsecondary education without federal student aid. The Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) is the federal application form that students must complete in order to apply for virtually all types of financial aid: Pell Grants, State Grants, Institutional Grants, Tuition Waivers, Work Study, and Loans. The FAFSA requires all students not considered "independent" to provide financial information from their parents or guardians in order to determine student eligibility for aid; the application also requires a parental/guardian signature. While these requirements are logical for most applicants, they create an insurmountable barrier for unaccompanied homeless youth, who do not receive financial support from their parents and do not have access to parental information. Thankfully, a solution went into effect on January 1 expanding access to this aid for unaccompanied youth.

A federal law eliminated this barrier for unaccompanied youth applying for aid in the current application process for the 2009-2010 school year and future years. The College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007 (P.L. 110-84) expanded the definition of "independent student" to include:

- (1) unaccompanied homeless youth;
- (2) youth who are in foster care at any time after the age of 13 or older, and;
- (3) youth who are emancipated minors or are in legal guardianships as determined by an appropriate court in the individual's state of residence.

Therefore, those youth can apply for federal aid without parental information or signature. The changes are in Questions 58-60 on the FAFSA form.

The legislation requires youth to be verified as unaccompanied and homeless during the school year in which they apply for aid, or as unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting. Verification must be made by one of the following:

- (1) McKinney-Vento Act school district liaison;
- (2) US Department of Housing and Urban Development homeless assistance program director or their designee;
- (3) Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program director or their designee, or;

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*The content of this article is taken from two NAEHCY publications: *Helping Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Access College Financial Aid* and *FAFSA Tips For Unaccompanied Youth Without Stable Housing*. These publications and additional resources for supporting unaccompanied homeless youth in their educational pursuits are available at www.naehcy.org.

FAFSA...

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(4) financial aid administrator.

The law thus helps to remove barriers to accessing financial aid for unaccompanied youth in the year in which they experienced homelessness, and in subsequent years, provided they are still unaccompanied, self-supporting, and at risk of homelessness.

McKinney-Vento school district liaisons, service providers, and unaccompanied homeless youth should work with financial aid administrators to streamline access to financial aid. In addition, unaccompanied youth may need assistance overcoming common barriers that students face in trying to fill out the FAFSA, such as not having all the documents they need, not knowing how to fill out the form, and being overwhelmed by the amount of information the application requests. Strategies and resources are provided below.

- Inform unaccompanied homeless youth that they can go to college, even without parental financial support. Too often, unaccompanied youth assume that college is not an option for them because they are unaware of processes to access financial aid.
- Support unaccompanied homeless youth throughout the financial aid process, including by connecting them to College Access organizations and events (see Resources, below). Navigating the financial aid system can be difficult, at best, for students with parents. Young people who are homeless and trying to survive on their own will need caring adults to help guide them and encourage their persistence.
- Help youth go to college, and stay in college, by assisting them to find scholarships for which they are eligible. www.FinAid.org and Student Aid on the Web are two excellent places to begin a search for scholarships (see Resources below).
- Share information about the needs of unaccompanied youth, and the current and pending higher education law provisions, with high school counselors, social workers, and community service providers, so that they are informed and able to assist unaccompanied youth.
- Develop relationships with local financial aid administrators to inform them about unaccompa-

nied homeless youth, the role of school district liaisons in identifying and assisting these young people, and the provisions of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act of 2007. Such relationships may ease the process for future unaccompanied homeless youth who wish to go to these colleges.

- Locate and develop a relationship with a state or local college access organization in your community. College access organizations provide counseling, advice, and financial assistance (see Resources below for a national directory).

The Higher Education Opportunity Act, H.R. 4137, reauthorizes the Higher Education Act and increases homeless and foster students' access to postsecondary education. The Federal TRIO programs consist of programs that support at-risk junior high and high school students to graduate from high school, enter college, and complete their degrees. These programs include Talent Search, Upward Bound, Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers, Staff Development Activities, and Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP). Students experiencing homelessness or in foster care are at great risk of academic failure due to their extreme poverty and residential instability, yet, prior to this reauthorization, they were not specifically mentioned or targeted by any of the TRIO programs.

The Higher Education Act now:

- Requires each applicant for TRIO programs to identify and make available services, including mentoring, tutoring, and other services, to homeless children and youth, or youth in foster care*.
- Makes homeless children and youth, or youth in foster care*, automatically eligible for TRIO programs.
- Includes as permissible services under the federal TRIO programs and GEAR UP program activities specially designed for homeless children and youth and for students who are in foster care or aging out of the foster care system.

* The definition includes youth who have left foster care after reaching age 13.

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Personality Traits Suited to Work with Students in Poverty

By Vicky Dill, PhD., Senior Program Coordinator at The Texas Homeless Education Office, UT Dana Center (TX)

Principals and those in Human Resources know they are making vital personnel decisions every day when they decide who will support and empower students, particularly students in homeless and high poverty situations. Staff who work with students living in poverty have a unique and high-stakes opportunity because, for these students, succeeding academically, becoming a well-adjusted human being with a strong moral center, and possessing living-wage employment skills are not just nice things to accomplish: they are a matter of life and death.

Accordingly, hiring or designating a liaison or anyone who works with children in poverty is a critical act. Is there any way to predict who will be a successful liaison? Title I worker? Who will stay on the job to ensure the homeless students graduate? Motivation to be a great liaison, teacher, or worker is important, but not enough. Countless unsuccessful workers in urban or low wealth schools, dealing with highly mobile and homeless students are deeply motivated and caring. Further, it does not necessarily help to look at an individual's grade point average, certifications, degrees, or written essays because, research shows and experience confirms, these caches do not necessarily predict success or retention as a liaison or school worker with students in poverty.

Turnover in liaisons and the school workforce in general is much to be avoided, as any principal knows. It takes a long time to learn the technical aspects of the McKinney-Vento Act, make decisions and provide guidance that adheres to the letter of the law as well as the nuances of it. Accountability demands, data collection, and the requirements of audits must be learned and juggled along with training responsibilities and outreach into the community. Successful homeless education support programs depend on the relationships that liaisons develop in the community through a comprehensive network of providers. It may also take liaisons, because of their many other duties, several years to ascertain how to collaborate with and make the best use of community providers such as shelters, emergency aid organizations, and volunteer resources. Moreover, turnover in any job is expensive, both to an organization and to the students who may not always be well served by those who have less experience. Actual job losses, due to burnout, inadequate compensation, mobility, or poor performance have

many hidden costs and occur more frequently in schools where there are already scarce resources. In small rural districts, the cost of one teacher leaving (a "leaver"), may be as low as \$10,000 while in a large district, each leaver costs \$17,872. The Chicago Public Schools pay out \$86 million yearly in staff turnover, further suggesting the need to choose well in the identification process.¹

A sense of continuity will support a high-functioning program, and that means choosing liaisons and school personnel who are less likely to leave. Reasons why workers in high-poverty schools quit or fail are many: perhaps this person did not expect the seemingly thorny and chronic problems the job presents. Others say the bureaucracy takes too much of their time or they complain that parents or guardians don't show up for meetings. Some who turn over may even blame the victim, believing that poverty can be overcome if one just tries hard enough. Some get "burnt out" early on in the school year. Others just don't like the clients.²

Meanwhile, human lives are at stake. When a liaison knows how to organize the job efficiently and passionately, children can be identified and nourished. Great liaisons enable students to maintain a stable school environment, play on a level academic and enrichment field, and have a shot equal to their peers at the hope of the American dream. Each year, NAEHCY awards great liaisons, advocates, and homeless education programs.³

Recent literature, specifically *Meeting the Needs of Students and Families in Poverty*⁴ suggests that scenario-based interviews offer insight into the individual's character, belief system, sense of persistence, understanding of the role of school in the lives of children in poverty, and expectations for dealing with the bureaucracy, fighting burnout, and admitting fallibility. Research shows that these types of interviews yield reliable clues about who to choose for important roles such as liaison, teacher, counselor, or even principal. A wide range of pertinent character components, items not found on an individual's resume or in a human resources file, are revealed; and hiring or placement mistakes can be avoided. Turnover or "de-selection" of poorly performing employees can be circumvented, leading to overall benefits for students.

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Effective Teachers of Homeless, Highly Mobile, and At-Risk Students

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

“Whether they have a day, a week, a month, or a year with a child, teachers play a key role in the lives of their students. Effective teachers are able to blend the academic, affective, and technical needs of their highly mobile students across their planning, instruction, and assessment to make the most of the time they have with students. These teachers are aware of school and community resources that link families to stabilizing supports and lessen mobility. Effective teachers also recognize that some mobility is beyond their control. So, they arrange classrooms that can integrate new students quickly, involve ongoing assessment and feedback loops in instruction to capture even small gains, and prepare for the possible exit of the student to ease the transition for both the student who moves and the peers that remain.”

The above quote is from two new briefs developed by the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) that focus attention on classroom strategies for homeless, highly mobile, and at-risk students. *Classrooms with Revolving Doors: Recommended Practices for Elementary Teachers of At-Risk and Highly Mobile Students* and *Classrooms with Revolving Doors: Recommended Practices for Middle Level and High School Teachers of At-Risk and Highly Mobile Students* are based on a recent study sponsored by NCHE and conducted by researchers at The College of William and Mary.

Drs. Leslie Grant, James Stronge, and Patricia Popp designed a study that explored the beliefs and practices of six teachers who (1) received state or national awards for teaching excellence and (2) taught in schools whose student population was characterized as highly mobile, homeless, and/or high poverty. The researchers conducted a series of structured interviews and classroom observations.

The full study *Effective Teaching and At-Risk/Highly Mobile Students: What Do Award-Winning Teachers Do?* may be downloaded at: http://www.serve.org/nche/products_list.php#eff_teach.

Several themes related to effective teaching and working with at-risk/highly mobile or homeless students emerged in the study:

- The teachers cared about their students in terms of their unique challenges and in terms of making sure that they acquired essential knowledge and skills while they were in their classroom. One teacher said, “I do not teach English; I teach students.”
- The teachers ensured that all students felt valued and felt safe to explore and express ideas. One teacher said, “If you moved ten times in your five years, you know more about places than anybody in here ... If you're homeless, you know more ways to use scissors than anyone ever thought. [These students] have a lot of knowledge.”
- The teachers believed they could make a difference in the lives of their students.
- The teachers held high expectations for their students through meaningful and engaging instruction. One teacher said, “While I know it's sometimes out of their control, I don't let students get out of homework – ... they may start it in class or participate in afternoon programs to get it finished ... I just do not believe in ‘can't’ and ‘won't’.”

The two briefs summarize the study and provide recommended practices to meet students' affective, academic, and basic needs before and when the students arrive at school, while they are enrolled, and when they leave. Local liaisons and homeless program coordinators are encouraged to share these briefs so that teachers can use research-based practices to support the academic achievement of their homeless, highly-mobile, and at-risk students.

Download *Classrooms with Revolving Doors: Recommended Practices for Elementary Teachers of At-Risk and Highly Mobile Students* at: http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/educ_mobile.php#eff_teach_elem and *Classrooms with Revolving Doors: Recommended Practices for Middle Level and High School Teachers of At-Risk and Highly Mobile Students* at: http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/eff_teach_mh.pdf.

FAFSA...

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- Amends the purpose of the Student Support Services Program to foster an institutional climate of success in postsecondary education for homeless children and youth and students who are in foster care or aging out of foster care.
- Includes as a permissible service under the Student Support Services Program assistance in securing temporary housing during breaks in the academic year for eligible students.
- Includes as content in training programs under Staff Development Activities strategies for recruiting and serving homeless children and youth and

students who are in foster care or aging out of the foster care system.

- Requires entities not using a cohort approach for GEAR UP to include homeless children and youth and youth in foster care as priority students.

For more information about implementing these changes and accessing resources for students, see the Higher Education section of the NAEHCY web site (http://www.naehcy.org/higher_ed.html). NCHE has compiled additional resources on their web site: http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php.

FAFSA TIPS

The 2009-2010 FAFSA includes specific provisions intended to enable unaccompanied homeless youth to access federal financial aid more easily and without considering the youth's parents' income. NAEHCY has compiled a resource guide for use in completing the 2009-2010 FAFSA. The Tip Sheet is available for download at http://www.naehcy.org/higher_ed.html.

Sample Q&A Items:

Q: I don't have a permanent mailing address because I don't have a stable home. What address should I use?

A: Use an address where you will be able to receive mail reliably. The address of your school or a trusted mentor or family member might be appropriate.

Q: I have been living with a family member/friend who provides for some of my financial needs, but that person has not been appointed my legal guardian by a court. How should I complete the FAFSA?"

A: A caregiver or other person with whom you are living is only considered a legal guardian if a court in your state of legal residence has established guardianship. You should check "Yes" if you have a copy of a court order indicating that legal guardianship was established. If you are living with a caregiver, but that caregiver is not your legal guardian as determined by a court in your state of legal residence, you should check "No" for this question. However, you should review Questions 58-60 carefully, to determine if you qualify as an unaccompanied youth who is homeless.

Q: I stayed in a shelter last year. How do I complete the FAFSA?

A: Check "Yes" if you received a determination any time on or after July 1, 2008, that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless, or an unaccompanied youth providing your own living expenses who is at risk of being homeless. The financial aid administrator at your college may require you to provide a copy of the determination or other documentation.

Q: I am staying with a friend's family. Are they part of my "household"?

A: No. If you are considered independent (for example, because you are an unaccompanied youth who is homeless), and you have no dependent children of your own, you are a family of one (yourself). For this question you should not count people with whom you share housing as part of your household.

Unexpected Outcomes: Profile of a Scholar

By Alexander P. Miller, NAEHCY Intern 2007-2008 (VA)
Jodi Mincemoyer, NAEHCY Communications Director (VA)

Ethiopia Belay

“Refreshing awakening” is not a phrase often heard to describe the experience of homelessness, but that is just one of many surprises in the mind of Ethiopia Belay, 2003 LeTendre scholar and 2007 graduate of the University of Alaska. Born in Buffalo, NY, Ethiopia was named after the East African country that was her parents’ homeland. Economic hardship hit the family, and the Belayes were on the move quite frequently. They continued migrating west and Ethiopia acclimated to new schools in cities like Fresno, Seattle, and Anchorage. In Anchorage, Ethiopia and her family were living in

my number one goal.” She stated further that she was actively seeking funding for college in her limited spare time between work and school.

That fall, Ethiopia began attending the University of Alaska—Anchorage and building new goals for the future. Barb Dexter remained part of Ethiopia’s life, as a mentor and helper. After Ethiopia’s freshman year in college, Barb helped secure a job for Ethiopia with the Anchorage Office of Public Advocacy, where she worked full-time during the summer and part-time during the

I know it will be very difficult to pay for my college years, but I am willing to find a way, hard as it may be, to finance my education. Some people think that being without a home is a horrendous misfortune. But to me, being homeless was a refreshing awakening. Instead of it becoming an obstacle in the way of my goals, it was a path that has allowed me to see my life in a clearer perspective. In the words of Frederick Douglass, “If there is no struggle, there is no progress.” I have realized that the most important thing in my life is getting an education and making something of myself. Without struggling, I may not have realized this.

Ethiopia Belay, 2003 LeTendre Scholar, 2007 College Graduate

the city’s only shelter. Barb Dexter, Secondary Support Teacher with the school district’s Child in Transition/Homeless Program, and other school personnel enrolled Ethiopia in their downtown classroom to complete the classes she had begun in Seattle that semester. City bus passes and taxi vouchers Barb provided helped Ethiopia get to class through the summer.

At Stellar Secondary School, Ethiopia proved to be a motivated learner and an outstanding tenth-grader. She graduated just three years later and received the coveted LeTendre Scholarship, NAEHCY’s honor to those youth who, despite being weighed down with the burden of homelessness, have achieved significant success while displaying an intense motivation. In her essay for that award, Ethiopia wrote that she had “always loved learning about anything and everything. Attending college is

following school year. Ethiopia became a college graduate in December 2007, and Barb was there to congratulate her and help her move into the next apartment, the next milestone.

Today Ethiopia is living in Portland, Oregon, where she has worked as a residential youth counselor for an organization that houses and provides education and job training for youth 17-21 years of age. She’s excited about her future, too, planning to pursue graduate work in history. She dreams of one day earning a Ph.D. and plans to continue working with homeless youth.

Further information about the LeTendre scholarship and application procedures can be found at www.naehcy.org. The deadline for submission is September 18, 2009. ■

Congress Considers Revised Definitions Bill

By Barbara Duffield, NAEHCY Policy Director (DC)

The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2009 (H.R. 29) was introduced on the first day of the 111th Congressional session by Judy Biggert (R-13th/IL). Congresswoman Biggert was joined by colleagues Carolyn McCarthy (D-4th/NY), Geoff Davis (R-4th/KY), Andre Carson (D-7th/IN), and Rubén Hinojosa (D-15th/TX).

H.R. 29 amends the US Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs (including school district liaisons, Head Start programs, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs, and early intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C).

The current HUD definition of homelessness is limited to people who are on the streets or who are staying in shelters. It excludes people who are forced to live in other homeless situations, including people staying with others temporarily because they have nowhere else to go (“doubled-up”) and people staying in motels due to lack of adequate alternatives.

The failure of the HUD definition of homelessness and other HUD policy to meet the needs of children, youth, and families has serious and far-reaching effects, including exclusion of these populations from critical services, continued invisibility in community planning on homelessness, and weak or non-existent collaboration/coordination with key systems of care for children, youth, and families.

H.R. 29 creates a streamlined, efficient referral process enabling public schools, Head Start programs, Runaway and Homeless Youth programs, and Early Intervention programs to refer those children, youth, and families who have lost their housing and are living in unstable, precarious situations to HUD Homeless Assistance programs.

You can call your US Representative and ask him or her to join as a co-sponsor of H.R. 29, the Homeless Children and Youth Act. Contact information for Members of Congress may be found at www.house.gov and www.senate.gov. Comprehensive, regular legislative updates are available through an email action list. Contact Barbara Duffield directly at bduffield@naehcy.org to be added to this list.



Homeless Education Funds in Stimulus Bill

By Barbara Duffield, NAEHCY Policy Director (DC)

The final Economic Stimulus Bill legislation includes \$70 million for the McKinney-Vento Act’s Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program that will be provided the EHCY funding to State Educational Agencies within 60 days of the legislation’s enactment. The EHCY funding must be allocated to States based upon on the state’s share of the total number of students reported in the 2007-2008 school year. States must distribute the money to local school districts within 120 days of receipt of funds. States may award the money to school districts using a formula based on the number of homeless students, or on a competitive basis.

In addition to the EHCY funding, the final legislation includes increased funding for many educational programs. For instance, \$53.6 billion for a State Fiscal Stabilization Fund intended to prevent cutbacks in

critical education and other services. Governors must use 81.8 percent of the State’s allocation for the support of elementary, secondary, and postsecondary education and, as applicable, early childhood education programs and services. Also, the funding includes significant additions to Title I, IDEA Part B, IDEA Part C, Early Head Start, and Head Start. First Focus has created a chart of child-related provisions in the stimulus. To download this chart, visit <http://www.firstfocus.net/Download/StimulusSide-by-Side.pdf>. Watch the NAEHCY legislative update for additional resources regarding stimulus funding.

An additional \$1.5 billion has been added to the Emergency Shelter Grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development for homelessness prevention activities, and \$100 million for the Emergency Food and Shelter Program administered by Federal Emergency Management Agency.

Just Neighbors

By Frank McCann, Director, Just Neighbors (TX)

Each school district in the country employs one homeless education liaison; in some cases, there are several people involved in the homeless education program. However, many people come in contact with children and youth in homeless situations on a daily basis — namely teachers and administrators — and their understanding of homelessness is essential for meeting the needs of these students. Tim Stahlke, Senior Program Coordinator for the Texas Homeless Education Office, uses the Family Promise Just Neighbors Tool Kit to educate school personnel on the reality and root causes of homelessness and poverty.

Just Neighbors was developed by Family Promise, a nonprofit organization that coordinates interfaith communities to help low-income homeless families reclaim and maintain their independence. The Just Neighbors program features nine interactive modules that can be offered in a variety of ways, as a series or as stand-alone workshops, depending on the group. A secular version, suitable for use in schools, was released in November, 2008, and the Texas Homeless Education Office will have copies available for check-out by its 1300 liaisons who work in schools across the state.

Sara Williams, a Homeless Education Coordinator for Bryan Independent School District in Bryan, TX, is one of those liaisons, and she has used Just Neighbors material for a workshop with school administrators. She says, “I see the needs of these families—a woman living with her children in a shed, children living under a bridge, some who need to come to our office before

school to take a shower. But teachers and school administrators are not always so aware.”

Stahlke uses Just Neighbors to offer half-day workshops in school districts and at regional education service centers. “It sets the tone for us to address the needs of homeless children,” he says. “Teachers may not know about the federal poverty guidelines, for example, so it adds to their understanding.”

Barbara Wand James, who directs the Texas Homeless Education Office, will showcase the secular version of Just Neighbors at her organization’s spring conference. According to her, the Just Neighbors Tool Kit doesn’t “criminalize or stigmatize homelessness,” rather it explores the systemic nature of the problem. She says, “I just think it’s a great thing and we need to get it in the hands of many people. We believe in it.”

More than 1000 Just Neighbors Tool Kits are in service at faith communities, schools, and non-profits across the country. Educators use Just Neighbors for sociology classes and service learning. Habitat for Humanity is among the non-profits that use Just Neighbors for volunteer training. For more than 20 years Family Promise has been organizing interfaith communities to provide shelter, meals, and support services to homeless families. Currently over 120,000 volunteers work through 132 Family Promise affiliates in 39 states helping over 30,000 guests annually. For more information, visit <http://www.justneighbors.net/> or call Family Promise at (908) 273-1100, ext. 14.



Registration Open for all YEF Institute Audio conferences through July 2009

Michael Karpman, Outreach Program Associate, National League of Cities (DC)

The Institute for Youth, Education, and Families (YEF) has announced its new audio conference schedule for the first half of 2009. These interactive, talk show-style discussions among city leaders, national policy experts, and YEF Institute staff on promising city strategies continue to grow in popularity among municipal officials and their community partners. Nearly 300 local leaders from cities across the nation participated in the most recent call!

The 2009 series will offer a monthly forum to give municipal leaders and advocates new ideas for coping with the current economic crisis and continue the Institute’s focus on local innovations to help children, youth and families. Topics will focus on economic strife, youth violence, and child and family well-being. Further details about all of the audio conferences, speakers, and registration information can be found at <http://www.nlc.org/iyef>.

Translating Funding Into Programs

By Jodi Mincemoyer, NAEHCY Communications Director* (VA)

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program removes barriers to the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth in school. At the state level, monies provided through Title X of NCLB fund a coordinator to oversee the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MV), conduct training and offer technical assistance. Local school districts receiving EHCY subgrants from state educational agencies use their funds for outreach and identification, enrollment assistance, transportation assistance, school records transfer, immunization referrals, tutoring, counseling, school supplies, assessment, case management, professional development for educators, and referrals for community services targeted to homeless students.

A March 2006 US Department of Education report on the EHCY program concluded that “states and local educational agencies (LEAs) have generally made significant progress in reducing the barriers that homeless children and youth face in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in school. The legislation has prompted States and LEAs to focus more on the needs of homeless students and has helped facilitate the expansion of local support networks to meet those needs... Although the appropriation levels for this program are relatively small, the impact of the program has been very widespread.”

Despite these successes, the extremely limited resources available to the EHCY program have created challenges for schools in fully implementing the provisions of MV and in reaching all children and youth experiencing homelessness. The EHCY program was funded at \$61.9 million in FY2006 and FY2007, and at \$64 million in FY2008. In FY 2006-2007 (the most recent ED data available), states were able to provide subgrant funds to only six percent of school districts nationwide. The majority of students identified by LEAs as homeless (61 percent) are in school districts that do not receive subgrants. Increased funding for the EHCY program would allow significantly more homeless children and youth to receive the services they need to succeed. It would also enable more schools to provide a greater level of support to children experiencing homelessness, particularly the outreach, enrollment assistance, referral, counseling, and transportation services that are essential in ensuring school access and stability.

In the spring of 2008, NAEHCY surveyed* a sample of McKinney-Vento (MV) homeless education liaisons who run model EHCY programs in various parts of the country to understand how these programs prioritize needs, develop projects to meet those needs, and use funding resources to ensure that students in homeless situations have opportunities to succeed and thrive in educational settings. MV grant proposals from rural, suburban, and urban school districts were reviewed and the liaisons running those programs interviewed in order to determine similarities and differences among jurisdictions of varying sizes. This article highlights some of the overall findings from that survey. Over the next year, NAEHCY will use the information gathered to establish a framework of unmet needs in urban, suburban, and rural school districts.

The liaisons surveyed have the following several features and focuses in common in their EHCY programs and specified through their grants.

- Identification
- Immediate Enrollment
- Community Outreach/Collaboration
- Provision of Services and Supplies
- Needs Assessment
- Tutoring Programs
- Building Community Awareness
- Preschool Programming and Support
- Development of Program and Office Personnel
- Parent/Guardian Involvement
- Special Programs/Community Partnerships
- Transportation
- Identifying and Supporting Unaccompanied Youth
- Staff Development/Communication
- Case Management

How do liaisons, who often fulfill other responsibilities in addition to their homeless education role, manage

*The following NAEHCY interns reviewed grant proposals and conducted interviews with liaisons to complete this study. Their work made this article possible.
Erin Ramsey, M.Ed., School Psychology Intern, Fairfax County Public Schools, and
Stefanie Whorton, Graduate Student in Public Policy, College of William & Mary

Traits, continued...

Several options for research-based interviews are available. Here are two:

- The Haberman Educational Foundation has a “staff selection” interview that is based on research and is known to be 95 percent effective in selecting staff that are excellent with youth in poverty.⁵ A November 2008 study of this interview by the prestigious National Bureau of Economic Research suggests use of this instrument might have a significant positive economic impact (see www.nber.org/papers/w14485).⁶
- Other administrators rely on commercially available interview protocols such as Gallup’s (TPI) to structure an interview. The TPI is a scripted interview protocol that measures “social intelligence” or social skills (See <http://www.gallup.com/consulting/education/22267/Selection.aspx>).

In sum, successful administrators choose liaisons with thoughtfulness and research-based strategies, for those who support and empower society’s most vulnerable students should surely be as well equipped in temperament, ideology, and attitude as they are in knowledge and motivation. After carefully choosing, wise administrators will do everything they can to retain and nurture a good liaison!

References:

- ¹ Barnes, G., Crowe, E., & Schaefer, B. (2007, June). *The cost of teacher turnover in five school districts: Executive summary*. Retrieved January 8, 2009 from http://www.nctaf.org/resources/demonstration_projects/turnover/index.htm [See also www.pwc.com/us/peopleandchange.]
- ² Guarino, C., Santibañez, L., Daley, G., & Brewer, D. (2004). *A review of the research literature on teacher recruitment and retention*. Retrieved January 8, 2009 from http://www.rand.org/pubs/technical_reports/2005/RAND_TR164.pdf
- ³ See Fall 2008 BEAM at <http://www.naehcy.org/beam.html>
- ⁴ Dill, V. & Stafford, D. (2007). Empowering children through effective education. In R. Sider, & H. Unruh, (Eds.) *Hope for children in poverty*. Valley Forge, PA: Judson Press.
- ⁵ Haberman, M. (2005). *Star teachers: The ideology and best practice of effective teachers of diverse children in poverty*. Chester, N.S., Canada: Northeast Magic Consulting. [For further specific research on the interview see also www.habermanfoundation.org.]
- ⁶ Rockoff, J., Jacob, B., Kane, T., & Staiger, D. (2008) *Can you recognize an effective teacher when you recruit one?* (National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper No. 14485). Retrieved January 8, 2009 from <http://www.nber.org>

Submit a Proposal to Present at the 21st Annual NAEHCY conference. The deadline is June 1, 2009.

The committee for the 21st Annual Conference in Denver, CO, (see page 12) is searching for education and community-based presenters who represent diverse backgrounds, roles, responsibilities, and experiences in serving homeless children and youth.

Topic areas include: accelerating student achievement, program planning and development, early childhood education, services for unaccompanied and homeless youth, child welfare, coordination among federal education programs, evaluation and research, legislative and policy issues. We anticipate providing approximately 70 concurrent

sessions over the three-day conference. In addition, we will offer roundtable and poster sessions that are 30 minutes in length for those who wish to introduce a local project or program.

Each lead presenter will receive a \$100 courtesy discount from the registration rate. Download the form through the annual conference section of our web site: www.naehcy.org. Contact Jodi Mincemoyer at jodim@naehcy.org or 804-447-3490 with questions regarding session content. Contact Darlyne Erickson at info@naehcy.org or 1-866-862-2562 with questions about conference travel and logistics.

McKinney-Vento Funding...

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all those tasks? Each jurisdiction, with its particular agency dynamics and funding allocations implements MV programs differently. The challenge in discussing a “model” district of any size is in looking at these commonalities to determine what school districts need in order to help students experiencing homelessness be successful.

The table below offers a glimpse of some of the common themes of program needs and challenges shared among school districts of varying sizes. Future articles will highlight these districts and their programs in more detail, along with funding updates as we follow the congressional appropriation process.

Common Program Activities and Themes	Urban <i>Austin Independent School District (TX)</i> <i>Broward County Public Schools (FL)</i> <i>Fresno Unified School District (CA)</i> <i>Minneapolis Public Schools (MN)</i>	Suburban <i>Fairfax County Public Schools (VA)</i> <i>Sumner School District (WA)</i>	Rural <i>South Whidbey School District (WA)</i> <i>Wisconsin Rapids Public Schools (WI)</i> <i>Whitfield County Schools (GA)</i>
Biggest challenges faced by populations	Lack of low cost, safe housing, availability of living wage employment, and resources to support stable housing	Lack of affordable housing and large winter utility costs	Lack of subsidized housing and jobs paying a living wage
Identification	Use of district-developed residency questionnaires Trainings for school personnel to understand living arrangements Community awareness	District developed forms for data collection and identification are used for all families at enrollment	Collaborative relationships with shelters and social services ensure families are referred to program
Immediate Enrollment	Training on educational rights and dissemination of key information to school personnel and parents results in immediate enrollment	Liaison meets with central administration staff, principals, counselors, social workers, and teachers to facilitate the delivery of services	All enrollment staff receive annual training on rapid enrollment Registration packets are provided to shelters
Community Outreach/ Collaboration	Program staff, local experts and providers meet and communicate regularly to effectively distribute resources-success of students and their families accessing services is linked to effective collaborations	Must collaborate with community agencies - since families are involved with multiple agencies Interaction leads to creative efforts to maximize services and support	Community works together to meet the basic needs of families Community partners are the cornerstone of program
Needs Assessment	Needs assessments conducted by shelter workers or school personnel when student is first identified to ensure the coordination and provision of appropriate services	Shelters conduct needs assessments with families and make referrals to necessary school programs as part of intake	At enrollment building advocate helps to create a support plan with parent input to be certain student has access to needed services; teacher is encouraged to add learning goals

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

NAEHCY 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.

NAEHCY 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 by visiting our web site.

21st Annual Conference

November 14-17, 2009

Soar to Reach New Peaks

- ◆ NOW accepting PROPOSALS TO PRESENT on topics relating to the EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH. The DEADLINE is June 1, 2009.

For more information, such as examples of past presentations and topic areas, visit the Annual Conference section of the NAEHCY web site.

- ◆ Registration information will be available this winter. The cost includes conference materials, meals, top-notch training and networking opportunities.
- ◆ Conference hotel rate \$149 plus applicable taxes for single or double. Reserve your room at the Marriott Denver City Center by calling (303) 297-1300.
- ◆ Promotional materials to distribute at meetings, trainings, conferences, events are available from the NAEHCY web site.
- ◆ Up-to-the-minute conference details are available at www.naehcy.org.

SOAR TO REACH NEW PEAKS

EDUCATING ALL OUR CHILDREN AND YOUTH

21ST ANNUAL NAEHCY CONFERENCE

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