

(9/13/23) **This continuing education resource is from the national Center for MH in Schools & Student/Learning Supports at UCLA**

**Featured**

**>School support for homeless families and students**

**>Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

**For discussion and interchange:**

**>School support for homeless families and students**

As is widely acknowledged, the number of homeless families with school aged children is growing. While all districts outreach to homeless families, some do more than others. Housing, of course, is a critical concern. Aiding families to find housing is a major factor in enhancing school enrollment and attendance. At a minimum, temporary housing can provide enough stability to ensure homeless families enroll their children in schools.

At this time, we are trying to amass and share examples of how districts are aiding homeless families related to finding housing, and we hope to hear what you can share.

As a first step, we contacted a range of colleagues and homeless liaisons to begin the process:

We asked:

- (1) Let us know about any districts that are using closed schools as temporary housing.
- (2) Given that every neighborhood has places that could be used for temporary housing (e.g., churches, empty offices and stores), are districts working with other entities to use such spaces for transitory housing for homeless families?
- (3) Are you aware of any county/city agencies that are offering funding incentives for schools and other entities to provide temporary housing?

In addition to sharing about the above matters, please feel free to share any ideas you have about what role schools could play in facilitating housing for homeless families with children.”

Here is a sample of what we heard from them:

>“Thank you for your email and interest in collecting data about temporary housing and district coordination. Currently, none of our schools serve as temporary housing for the summer. A few of our districts work with entities to use community spaces to provide temporary housing (churches movie theater, etc.) I am unaware of county/city agencies that offer funding incentives for temporary housing but have reached out to our state Housing and Finance Association (IHFA) if any such exists. I will let you know if they offer these programs.

One of responsibilities of our McKinney-Vento liaisons is to connect families experiencing homelessness with resources, including housing. We are actively working with IHFA’s regional coalitions on access point and coordinated entry processes to facilitate a cohesive system between our agencies to better identify homeless children and youth. Additionally, in the more rural parts of the state, housing resources are limited and winter weather exacerbates the situation. While schools have not served as temporary housing, there has been discussion about schools serving as warming shelters. I am highly interested in the results of your research as these questions have prompted our liaisons to consider new spaces for temporary shelters.”

>“Wow... what a challenge! We are not addressing 1 or 2 but for #3 we are aware that our Federally Qualified Health Centers have outreach services for homeless populations, including families. We also have housing projects that have waiting lists. Right now, our school social workers and our Homeless Liaisons work with families to connect them to the community health center service opportunities. That is all I am aware of right now.

One more thing that is quite a challenge right now... we cannot hire folks to do the work. Both our Homeless liaisons have resigned, and we pay so little that few want to apply. I am also struggling to employ mental health workers in the schools and have 66% vacancy rate for Clinical Psychologists, 35% vacancy rate for Behavioral Health Specialists, and 50% vacancy rate for School Psychologists. ...”

>“Homeless families are a difficult challenge. My experience showed me that the districts who have a large homeless population have more avenues and resources. As you would expect, as it confirms your work, the districts who have systems in place are most equipped to handle the challenge.

From what I experience and see, social workers, counselors, - support team people- have protocols for connecting with community agencies and using resources for McKinney-Vento referrals. Homeless placements are varied- hotels, shelters, campgrounds- wherever a community offers space. I am not aware of any school district that has used space for homeless shelters.

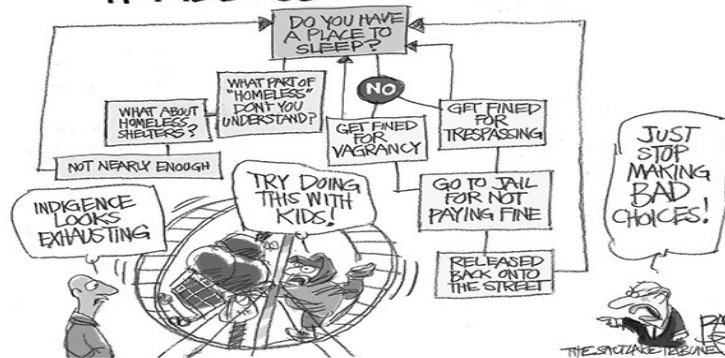
Using the McKinney Vento funds in collaboration with community providers and integrating the efforts- for food, housing, clothing, school supplies, transportation, etc.- is what I’ve found.

In some large districts, there are so many agencies and resources that it is particularly important for support teams to work together or the family may be overwhelmed. We worked with 2 or 3 schools that had a shelter located close by. Those schools had the most fluid service.

Would love to learn more about this..”

>“The thing that comes to mind I learned from an incredible elementary principal. The district assigned her to an elementary that was "failing" on standardized test scores. This school was in a poor neighborhood, with about 40+% turnover each month (when the rent came due). She asked the district administration for three years to implement strategies to improve test scores. One of the first things she did was to change the calendar to year-round school and institute before and after school programs so kids had a safe environment during the day. They had the required number of days as other schools but took longer breaks (2 to 3 weeks) between quarters to offer tutoring and AP classes. Teachers could opt in or out during those breaks as students were organized by need/topics rather than traditional classrooms. She worked with law enforcement to ensure that "shady" individuals didn't hang around the school grounds. (Ladies of the evening were known to take shelter in the school's covered entrances during the rain/snow and drug dealers were a common sight.) Then she worked with local social services to get additional staff on site to work directly with high-risk families. With substantial changes to the status quo, she was able to improve scores in the 3 year period. Her focus on learning supports made the difference and scores improved, but she did it as one individual rather than systematically organizing the school. And as you would expect, many of the supports left after she did.”

### HOMELESS FLOWCHART



## Related News Stories

***School homeless shelter model gives families a safety net.*** When Buena Vista Horace Mann K-8 school in San Francisco opened its gym to be a temporary shelter for students and their families, it was the first such program in the country.

Four years later, school districts across the U.S. and Canada are taking notice of the program – especially as a lack of affordable housing and a spike in the number of evictions are front of mind for thousands of Americans.

Proponents of this temporary shelter say it connects with hundreds of people that city services struggle to reach — leading to fewer homeless students and better classroom behavior.

Families eat a hot meal together, and students have time to do homework. Staff set up partitions and cots for up to 60 people at a time. Any student from the district is eligible to stay for as long as they need it. Most families stay for about two to six weeks.

To date, more than 500 people associated with the San Francisco Unified School District have used the shelter.... Most had not previously been connected to city homeless services, according to a city report from 2020. The school's shelter was 21% cheaper per bed than other similar shelters.

There are more than 1.3 million public school students without permanent housing nationwide, according to the most recent data released from the National Center for Education Statistics. Many are known as "housing insecure," meaning they bounce between family members and friends, sleep in the family car or sometimes stay in shelters — and they bring the related stress and anxiety into the classroom.

***LAUSD to Explore Housing and Wraparound Service Provision for its 17,000+ Homeless Students.*** In response to the problem of homelessness among youth in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), the school board approved a resolution directing the Superintendent to "explore innovative solutions to provide permanent and or interim housing for homeless students and their families," advocate for the expansion of Section 8 voucher program, and lobby for more federal funds to be allocated toward programming for homeless students.

Specifically, the resolution also directs the Superintendent to report back to the board within six months on the feasibility of

Allowing overnight parking for homeless families living in their vehicles as part of the Safe Parking L.A. Program (including security and supportive services, such as maintenance);

Providing overnight shelter, meals, and wraparound supports for homeless families throughout the year or, at minimum, during winter and summer recesses;

Converting or building new buildings that provide temporary or permanent shelter for homeless youth or families;

Converting or building permanent shared housing using the FlyawayHomes shipping container apartment model seen in South L.A.;

Expanding the wraparound supports provided to homeless students and families and supporting homeless students as they transition to local institutions of higher education in areas like housing, transportation, food stability, mental health supports, etc.;

Assessing the effectiveness of our current Homeless Education Program and supports, including its impact on student learning;

Exploring the possibility of expanding the District's Homeless Education Program;

Assessing ways to better support school site homeless liaisons;

Assessing the effectiveness of the annual Student Residency Questionnaire.

Research shows [homeless] students are eight times more likely than their peers to repeat a grade and twice as likely to score lower on standardized tests. About 23 percent of homeless youth in L.A. Unified also miss 10 percent or more of the school year — nearly twice the district average, according to the California Department of Education...."

For more on this concern, see our Center resources

- >*Homeless children and youth*
- >*Homeless Students: Program Examples*
- >*About homeless youth*

>**Links to a few other relevant shared resources**

**Fiscal Cliff Threatens Student/Learning Supports: It's Time to Braid and Rethink Resource Use**

**What does it mean to be homeless**

**Districts' and schools' role in identifying and providing services for homeless students**

**Addressing Attendance Problems**

**Improving attendance among homeless children**

**Safe and supportive learning environments**

**Enhanced Academic Support for children in child welfare services**

**How to Help Kids Deal With Criticism**

**Understanding sources of youth distress in enhancing resiliency**

**How to Help Kids Learn to Fail**

**Artificial Intelligence's Use and Rapid Growth Highlight Its Possibilities and Perils**

**Back to School: legislative updates & Resources** (from SSWAA)

### **A Few Upcoming Webinars**

For links to the following and for more webinars, go to the Center's Links to Upcoming/Archived Webcasts/Podcasts – <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/webcast.htm>

- 9/13 Improving newcomer education
- 9/13 Be well: centering mental health in schools
- 9/13 Improving newcomer education
- 9/14 Whole school wellness
- 9/19 Newcomer school supports
- 9/20 Strategies for Schools to Enhance Relationships with Families
- 9/20 Collaboration across school systems
- 9/21 Student motivation and engagement
- 9/21 Being stress wise at school
- 9/22 Expanding teacher impact
- 9/26 All about stress
- 9/26 McKinney-Vento School Selection Rights
- 9/27 Schoolwide wellness
- 9/27 Working Towards Positive Educational Outcomes Mental Health and Special Education
- 9/27 Improve engagement and attendance
- 9/27 Part two: bullying and discriminatory harassment differences
- 10/4 Why leaders should be curious about their students
- 10/4 Strategies for Educators and School-Based Staff

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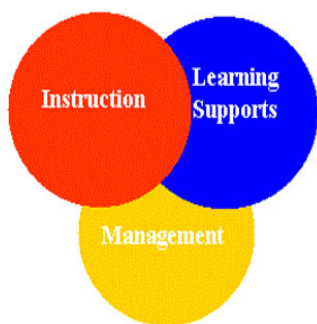
## To Listserv Participants

- Please share this resource with others. (Everyone has a stake in the future of public education and this is a critical time for action.)
- Let us know your views about the topics shared and about what's going on to improve how schools address barriers to learning & teaching and reengage disconnected students and families. (We can share the info with the over 130,000 on our listserv.)
- For those who have been forwarded this and want to receive resources directly, send an email to Ltaylor@ucla.edu
- Looking for information? (We usually can help.)
- Have a suggestion for improving our efforts? (We welcome your feedback.)

We look forward to hearing from you!

Send to [ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:ltaylor@ucla.edu)

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### For information about the

***National Initiative for Transforming Student and Learning Supports***

go to <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newinitiative.html>

Equity of opportunity is fundamental to enabling civil rights; transforming student and learning supports is fundamental to promoting whole child development, advancing social justice, and enhancing learning and a positive school climate.

**THE MORE FOLKS SHARE, THE MORE USEFUL AND INTERESTING THIS RESOURCE BECOMES!**

**For new sign-ups – email [Ltaylor@ucla.edu](mailto:Ltaylor@ucla.edu)**

**Also send resources ideas, requests, comments, and experiences for sharing.**

**We post a broad range of issues and responses to the Net Exchange on our website at <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/newnetexchange.htm> and on Facebook (access from the Center's home page <https://smhp.psych.ucla.edu/>)**