

EARLY HEAD START

NATIONAL RESOURCE CENTER (EHS NRC) @ ZERO TO THREE



Hello!

These are the materials for our May 13 audioconference, *Creating Safe Havens through Community Connections: Serving Expectant Families and Infants, Toddlers and Their Families Experiencing Homelessness*. People who registered for this audioconference will receive information on how to call in and participate by email or fax. This is the second in our two-part series on working with families experiencing homelessness. You do not need to have participated in the first conference to participate in this one. However, if you missed it, and would like to hear it, look for it on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center by early fall.

Copies of faculty biographies, handouts and the audioconference evaluation are enclosed. If you are participating on the call individually, use this information to supplement your learning and to evaluate the experience. If you are participating with a group via speaker phone, please make enough copies to distribute to each person who attends.

To make the most of this training experience:

- **Read the *Faculty Biographies* and *Applying the Information* handouts before the conference begins.** These materials are designed to help you prepare for the program and consider how the information shared by the faculty can be applied in your work.
- **Schedule some time for reflection after the audioconference.** An individual staff member can use the *Applying the Information* handout to consider their practice. However, discussing information as a team is the best way to consider the children and families who you serve and how you might address the special concerns for families experiencing homelessness.
- **Use the handouts** to discuss new information and to think about how to use the information in your work.

Please fill out and return an evaluation! *Your ideas are critical to our success and continuing improvement.* Return evaluations to:

Amanda Perez
Early Head Start National Resource Center
2000 M Street, NW/ Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036
fax: (202) 638-0851

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me. My phone number is (202) 638-1144 x669. Enjoy the program!

Sincerely,

Amanda Perez
Senior Training Specialist

Early Head Start National Resource Center (EHS NRC) @ ZERO TO THREE
2000 M Street, NW, Suite 200 • Washington, DC 20036 • 202-638-1144 • Fax 202-638-0851 • <http://www.ehsnrc.org>

***Part 2: Creating Safe Havens through Community Connections:
Serving Expectant Families and Infants, Toddlers and
Their Families Experiencing Homelessness***

Objectives

During this call, panelists will:

1. Discuss the federal definition of homelessness;
2. Offer clarity on some common questions about working with families experiencing homelessness under the *Head Start Program Performance Standards*; and
3. Share approaches and strategies to building community partnerships that work in providing services to families experiencing homelessness.

Agenda

1:50 PM*

Call-in

Please call in five to ten minutes prior to the start of the conference.

2:00 PM*

Welcome

Panel Introductions

Panel Discussion

Definition of Homelessness

Working with Families Experiencing Homelessness under the
Head Start Program Performance Standards

Building Community Partnerships to Support Families
Experiencing Homelessness

Question and Answer

At this time, the operator will give instructions for dialing in with questions.

Concluding Words

* These times are given in Eastern Daylight Time.

***Part 2: Creating Safe Havens through Community Connections:
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Moderator

Amanda Perez



Senior Training Specialist
Early Head Start National Resource Center

Faculty

Kiersten Beigel



Family and Community Partnerships Specialist
Office of Head Start
Administration for Children and Families

Kiersten Beigel is a Family and Community Partnership Specialist with the Office of Head Start. She began working in the Administration for Children, Youth and Families in 2003 as a Presidential Management Fellow. While there, she worked in a management office that oversaw operations for four Bureaus which managed Child Welfare, Head Start, Child Care, Family Violence, Abstinence Education, Mentoring Children of Prisoners, and Homeless and Runaway Youth programs. Prior to her work in the federal government, Kiersten worked with children of all ages and their families in medical, child welfare, non profit and educational settings providing mental health services, parent support services as well as conducting casework and program development activities in various capacities. Kiersten holds a Masters in Social Work and a certificate in Urban Leadership from Simmons College in Boston and a Bachelor of Arts in International Relations from Syracuse University.

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Faculty (cont'd.)

Ellen Farrar



Deputy Director/Coordinator of Early Childhood Programs
Westchester Community Opportunity Programs (WestCOP), Inc.
Westchester, NY

Ellen Farrar has served as Coordinator of Early Childhood Programs for WestCOP, a multipurpose social service agency in Westchester, NY, for over 35 years. She oversees over 25 Head Start and Early Head Start centers, including two shelter-based sites and one community site targeting families experiencing homelessness. From the beginning, Ellen has seen her program as part of the fabric of community services offered in Westchester, and prioritizes bringing different organizations and entities together in support of the families she serves. Before coming to WestCOP, Ellen was an early childhood educator. She has a Masters in Child Development and Family Relationships from Cornell University.

Anne Giordano



Early Childhood Consultant
EDUCATION CONNECTION
Litchfield, CT

Anne Giordano has been working with infants & toddlers at EDUCATION CONNECTION for 16 years. She served as program manager of both Part C Birth-3 and Early Head Start (EHS) before moving into the role of Early Childhood Consultant. In her tenure as EHS manager, Anne led her program's efforts to build partnerships with local shelters and community organizations in support of families experiencing homelessness. She has particular experience in working with young children with special needs and serves as an Ambassador through the SpecialQuest program. She currently works in partnership with a local hospital, conducting assessments of young children experiencing homelessness and foster care. She holds an MA in Psychology from Southern Connecticut State University.

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**Policy Clarifications Related to Serving Families Who Are
Experiencing Homelessness**

These Policy Clarifications are available on-line at the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center
(http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/Program%20Design%20and%20Management/Head%20Start%20Requirements/Policy%20Clarifications%20and%20FAQs/i_pc.htm?keywords=homeless#I088).

OHS – PC – I – 080

Are “homeless children” eligible for Head Start?

Yes, homeless children are categorically eligible for Head Start.

Requirement

Sec. 642(c)(1)(B) of the Head Start Act

OHS – PC – I – 081

What is the definition of “homeless children”?

The term “homeless children” has the meaning given the term “homeless children and youths” in section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

“Homeless children” means:

1. Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence; and
2. Includes -
 - a. Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;
 - b. 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;
 - c. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
 - d. Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described in a-c above.

Requirement

Sec. 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

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**Policy Clarifications Related to Serving Families Who Are
Experiencing Homelessness (cont'd.)**

OHS – PC – I – 085

What is required for documenting/proving homelessness?

Section 640 (m) (1) of the Head Start Act as amended requires that homeless children be prioritized for enrollment. The Office of Head Start (OHS) recognizes that verification and documentation of the circumstances that fall within the federal definition of homeless children can present unique challenges to Head Start agencies. OHS encourages agencies to enroll homeless children based on the families description of their living situation (if that description meets the definition) while required verification of circumstances and collection of documents are obtained within a reasonable time frame. OHS encourages grantees to engage their school district homeless liaisons, private and public shelter providers, HUD Continuums of Care, and other homeless service agencies in their service area to assist in the verification and documentation process. OHS urges agencies to exercise sufficient care to ensure that their verification activities do not increase the risk that families may be evicted or suffer other resulting adverse consequences.

Informal Guidance

OHS – PC – I – 086

What type of living situation typically qualifies a child to be "homeless"? Also, what is the definition of "substandard housing"?

To be categorically eligible for Head Start services as a "homeless child", a child must meet the definition in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001. That Act defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." In addition the definition goes on to specify a number of living situations that homeless children may be found in, such as living in "trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations". The fact that a child lives in a trailer park does not necessarily cause such child to come within the definition of 'homeless child' unless other factors are present. The examples listed in the definition include many of the more common situations of homelessness but those examples are not meant to be exclusive; there may be some homeless families living in situations not included in the examples in the definition. Head Start staff must gather and analyze information from the family and possibly other sources in order to make the appropriate determination of eligibility. This must be done on a case by case basis because the circumstances of homelessness vary with each family's situation.

In determining whether a child is living in "substandard housing", Head Start staff must evaluate whether the child's housing situation falls short of community standards or is of lower quality than the law prescribes. Staff should consider factors such as whether there are health and safety concerns related to the housing; the number of occupants per square foot; the age(s) of the occupants; and whether the housing meets State or local building codes. Does a comparison of the housing in question with community norms and laws lead staff to conclude that it is lower than what community norms or laws require?

Informal Guidance

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Learning about Housing

Many families who are considered “homeless” under this broad definition in the law would not use this term to describe their own housing situations. Faculty for audioconference talk about the importance of learning about where a family is living, while remaining sensitive to the use of terminology and labels (such as “homeless”). Here are some questions that can help program staff learn more about a family’s living situation:

Where are you living now?

Are you comfortable where you are living now?

Are you able to stay there?

Do you have affordable housing?

Do you have safe housing?

Describe where you are living. What do you like about it? What don’t you like about it?

I heard you say that you are living (fill in the blank with a description, using the same words that the family uses). Tell me more about that.

How can we help you?



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**Addressing Homelessness in
Program Planning and Community Assessment**

How can you use program planning and community assessment to better understand the needs of families with young children experiencing homelessness in your community? Consider the following strategies:

- Consider your program's strengths and weaknesses in serving homeless children and families when conducting your program self-assessment activities.
- Work with your T/TA Specialist to address any identified areas for program improvement in working with homeless families.
- Contact your local homeless education liaison and establish routine communication to coordinate planning.
- Work with local health programs to address providing immunizations, health care, and medical care, and maintaining health records for families experiencing homelessness.
- Include data about homeless children and programs serving families experiencing homelessness in Community Assessments. Consider including the following questions:
 1. How many families with young children in your community are homeless?
 2. What are the trends in homelessness?
 3. Where do homeless families with young children or homeless pregnant women stay?
 4. What is the level of employment of homeless families? Where are they working?
 5. What resources exist in the community?
 - a. What is the availability of child care for very young children who are homeless?
 - b. What are the challenges for homeless families with young children as they attempt to access local resources?
 - c. What is the availability of transportation resources that could assist Early Head Start and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start families?
 6. What task forces or coalitions on homelessness serve your community?
 7. How is the issue of homelessness represented in other community task forces or coalitions (e.g., for pregnant women)?
 8. How do other programs serving infants and toddlers in the community serve homeless children?
 9. Who are the homeless education liaisons in the communities you serve? What do the homeless education programs look like? How do they serve expectant families or families with infants and toddlers?
 10. What state childcare licensing policies might pose barriers to enrolling and serving homeless children?

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Community Partners

Head Start programs must look to community partners as they work to build on the unique strengths and address the varied needs of the families they serve. Faculty for this audioconference have developed unique partnerships in support of families experiencing homelessness. Their list of less traditional partners is included below. Remember that community resources vary widely across communities. In tight economic times, it pays to be creative! Who do you work with in your community? Who can you approach? What services can they offer? Remember how much your program has to offer as well. As you approach potential partners, remember to bring information about your services. Think together about how you can make the most of what all of you have to offer as you serve families.

Community Partners	Resources
Civic Organizations (Lion's Club, Junior League, etc.)	Labor (to work on family housing or facilities), or clothing, toy, food or furniture donations
Freecycle (www.freecycle.org)	Locally managed internet community offering free household items; will need to arrange pick up
Housing Authority	Information on initiatives and programs at the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), available public housing, and housing laws and regulations
Local businesses	Labor (to work on family housing or facilities), or clothing, money, toy, food or furniture donations
McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaisons	Information about homelessness and education for children experiencing homelessness; additional resources for homeless families through subgrants (check availability and eligibility in each locality)
Police	Toys, staff/family safety training
Realtors	Information on available housing and tenant/landlord laws, access to household items that are left behind, cash donations in support of program work
Religious Organizations	Food, clothing, or housing assistance
Senior Centers	Knitted hats/mittens, volunteers
Shelters and Domestic Violence Centers	Access to families, referral source, information on needs of homeless, may offer space
State/Local Legislators	Info on available public funding streams, grants, new state initiatives

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Applying the Information

Use the questions below to help you reflect on your work with young children and families. Respond to the questions yourself, or work with a partner or others on your team to discuss how you identify and serve families experiencing homelessness.

1. Consider the definition of homelessness provided in the Policy Clarification on page 4. Are you serving families who would be considered homeless under this definition? How do you consider homelessness in determining eligibility at your program? How do you document homelessness?
2. How do you or might you prioritize children experiencing homelessness in your enrollment process? Knowing that homeless children are categorically eligible, how will you need to change your enrollment priorities?
3. How do you work with families who are missing income verification or medical records?
4. What challenges have come up for you in your work with families experiencing homelessness? How can you work with your program specialist to anticipate and problem-solve around those challenges? What additional resources/support might your program need?
5. Consider the information and questions on page 7. How do you address homelessness in program planning and community assessment? Will you/how will you look more closely at this issue in the future?
6. What resources are there for homeless families in your community? Describe your relationship with them. Consider the information shared by the faculty on this audioconference. How will you strengthen your partnership(s) with those local resources after this call?
7. Consider the list of potential partners on page 8. You may have many of these partners already. How do you work with them? How might you work differently with them following this audioconference? Which potential partner(s) will you approach to build a new connection? How will you approach them?
8. Do you know the McKinney-Vento homeless liaison(s) serving your community? How will you reach out to learn more about them and the services they provide?
9. Faculty talk about the importance of developing relationships with individual staff at community organizations. Why is that important to families experiencing homelessness? How do you keep your contacts at local organizations up to date?
10. Working with intensely stressed families and children is very difficult and can raise many emotions. *For caregivers and home visitors:* How do you deal with the stress that comes from that work? What supports does your program offer? *For administrators:* How do you support staff working with these families?

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Selected Resource List

For more information, see the following resources:

Articles, Books, and Brochures

- Bassuk, Ellen, John Buckner, Linda Weinreb, Angela Browne, Shari Bassuk, Ree Dawson, and Jennifer Perloff. "Homelessness in Female-Headed Families: Childhood and Adult Risk and Protective Factors." *American Journal of Public Health* 87 (1997): 241-248.
- Bassuk, Ellen and Steven Friedman. *Facts on Trauma and Homeless Children*. Los Angeles, CA: National Child Traumatic Stress Network, 2005.
- Hart-Shegos, Ellen. *Homelessness and Its Effect on Children*. Minneapolis, MN: Family Housing Fund, December 1999. Available online at <http://www.fhfund.org/dnld/reports/SupportiveChildren.pdf>
- Honig, Alice. *Secure relationships: Nurturing infant/toddler attachment in early care settings*. Washington, DC: National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2001.
- Horizons for Homeless Children. *Supporting Children and Families Without Homes: How Can We Help?* Dorchester, MA: Author, 2005.
- Lieberman, Alicia. *The Emotional Life of the Toddler*. New York, NY: Free Press, 1993.
- Norris-Shortle, Carole, Alison Melley, Laurel Kiser, Eric Levey, Kim Cosgrove, and Audrey Leviton. "Targeted Interventions for Homeless Children at a Therapeutic Nursery." *Zero To Three* 26 (2006), 49-55.
- Perry, Bruce. *Helping Traumatized Children: A Brief Overview for Caregivers*. Houston, TX: The ChildTrauma Academy, 2002.
- Rice, Kathleen and Betsy Groves. *Hope and Healing: A Caregiver's Guide to Helping Young Children Affected by Trauma*. Washington, DC: ZERO TO THREE, 2005.
- Sumner, Georgina, and Anita Spietz. *NCAST: Caregiver/Parent-Child Interaction Teaching Manual*. Seattle, WA: NCAST Publications, 1999.

Web Resources

Homeless Resource Center
www.homeless.samhsa.gov

Horizons for Homeless Children
www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org

National Center on Family Homelessness
www.familyhomelessness.org

National Center for Homeless Education at the
SERVE Center
www.serve.org/nche/ibt/ibt.php

National Coalition for the Homeless (including a
directory of local homeless service organizations)
[http://www.nationalhomeless.org/resources/local/
local.html](http://www.nationalhomeless.org/resources/local/local.html)

3. Explain what information was least useful to you and any recommendations you would suggest:

4. What made participating in this experience via audioconference helpful or unhelpful (format, supplemental materials, discussion forum, etc.)? We would be particularly interested in how you used the “Applying the Information” handout provided in the supplemental materials. Please explain:

5. What topics should future audioconferences address?

6. How can we make audioconferences more effective learning experiences for you?

Though **optional**, we would appreciate the following contact information. We may contact you to learn more about your responses so we can continue to develop useful training experiences.

Date: _____
Name: _____ Position: _____
Program Name: _____ Phone: _____
E-mail: _____

Please fax or mail your completed evaluation forms after the audioconference to:

Attn: Amanda Perez
Fax: (202) 638-0851
EHS NRC @ ZERO TO THREE
2000 M Street, NW, Suite 200
Washington, DC 20036

Thank you!