

# Strategies for Coordinating the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) with McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY)

## About this Tool

This guide describes how Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) grantees and sub-grantees can coordinate HPRP services with state and local recipients of McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program funding.

## PURPOSE OF THE GUIDE

HPRP funding provides a valuable new resource for communities to serve households that are homeless or at-risk of homelessness, and it is vital that individuals and families receiving HPRP support are also able to link into existing mainstream resources and other resources intended to assist persons experiencing homelessness. For many homeless or at-risk households with children, housing instability often directly contributes to difficulties in school, including reduced attendance and academic performance. Access to educational and support services through EHCY is an important resource for these households. This guide includes an overview of EHCY and HPRP, a description of strategies HPRP grantees and sub-grantees can use to coordinate with EHCY resources and models from other communities.

## FUNDING: SNAPSHOT OF ARRA FUNDING FOR HPRP AND EHCY

The HPRP program, administered by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, provides \$1.5 billion in American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) resources for state and local governments to use to prevent individuals and families from becoming homeless and help those who are experiencing homelessness to be quickly re-housed and stabilized. Eligible grantees include metropolitan cities, urban counties, and states for distribution to local governments and private non-profit organizations. HPRP may be used by grantees to assist eligible households with financial assistance (including rental assistance, security and utility deposits, utility payments, moving cost assistance, and motel/hotel vouchers) and housing relocation and stabilization services (including case management, outreach and engagement, housing search and placement, legal services, and credit counseling).

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, authorized by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, is of particular relevance for HPRP grantees due to its focus on children and youth experiencing homelessness who are students in public schools. In addition to the regular FY 2009 allocation of \$65 million in EHCY funding, up to \$70 million in funding for the program is available to states under ARRA. The minimum allocation per state is \$175,000.

## EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH (EHCY): AN OVERVIEW

The EHCY program ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness, including children in families who are without their own housing and living doubled up with friends or relatives. Both regular EHCY funding and funding available under ARRA is allocated to State Education Agencies (SEA.) by formula, based on the number of homeless children in each state. Most of the funding is then sub-granted to local educational agencies (LEAs) to support the education of

those students. The ARRA funds may be subgranted either competitively or by formula within each state, based on the number of homeless students identified by the LEA.

Each LEA is required to have a local liaison for students experiencing homelessness, responsible for coordinating services to ensure that these students enroll in school and have the opportunity to succeed academically. Local public schools and homeless liaisons are key community access points for children and families who are experiencing homelessness or housing crises. Teachers and school district staff are in a unique position to identify families at-risk of homelessness and to coordinate with partner agencies to access housing and support services for the children and their parents.

School district homeless liaisons are responsible for ensuring that students experiencing homelessness are identified by school personnel and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in school. Students who have become homeless may be eligible for transportation assistance which will allow them to continue attending the same school, minimizing disruptions or the need to change schools. The liaisons also ensure that these students and their families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including tutoring, before and after school programs, mentoring, summer enrichment programs, Head Start, Even Start, and preschool programs administered by the LEA, as well as referrals to health, mental health, and other appropriate services.

In many communities, the school district homeless liaisons have reported significant increases in the number of students who are homeless during the current economic downturn. In communities with high rates of foreclosures or at schools where students move frequently, these school site programs may be at the “front line” when it comes to identifying homeless students whose families may qualify for assistance from HPRP.

## STRATEGIES FOR COORDINATING HPRP WITH EHCY IN YOUR COMMUNITY

HPRP is a new resource for addressing the needs of people at-risk of homelessness or experiencing homelessness and provides critical resources that can be used in concert with EHCY funded assistance to both stabilize housing and maintain continuity in children’s education. Because HPRP offers new resources for homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing, it creates new opportunities to establish or strengthen partnerships among schools and school districts, school-based service providers, and other programs that assist homeless students and their families. The following are examples of approaches HPRP grantees and sub-grantees can take to ensure HPRP clients are linked to EHCY services for which they may be eligible.

### Coordinated Entry

- In many communities HPRP programs will be implemented in collaboration with existing multi-service centers or agencies where low-income people have “one-stop” access to a range of services. To effectively reach families who may not seek help from these community multi-service centers but do have children in school, local school district homeless liaisons may identify families experiencing homelessness or those at-risk of homelessness that may be eligible for HPRP. At some school sites with many low-income students, homeless and at-risk students and families may also be identified by school-based clinics, family resource centers or other established school-based multi-service centers for students and their families. For example, a **Norfolk, Virginia** program coordinates with local schools to identify families at risk of eviction, as well as those already homeless, and ensures enrollment in appropriate housing (including HPRP), educational and support services for the children and family. See Norfolk, Virginia example below.

## Staff Training and Coordination

- HPRP providers should work with the homeless liaison(s) in the LEA(s) to build or strengthen connections between schools and the other partners engaged in serving homeless families in the community to ensure that information is widely available about HPRP resources, eligibility criteria, and referral procedures. The scope and strength of these partnerships depends greatly on the commitment and capacity of LEAs, principals, and other staff working at the school site. In many communities, the EHCY program operates separately from other homeless assistance programs, and there is enormous variability in the extent to which schools or LEAs have established partnerships to link eligible students and their families with other community resources. In addition, in many schools, classroom teachers or other school site personnel (principals, counselors, nurse or other staff) may be the first to recognize that a student is homeless or experiencing a housing crisis, and they may not be familiar with the rights and services available to students under EHCY, or the types of assistance that can be available to families through HPRP. Therefore, training for LEA staff and non-LEA school site personnel is needed to help them familiarize themselves with HPRP (and other homeless programs) and EHCY.
- Training for HPRP staff on services available through EHCY is also essential. HPRP program staff should become familiar with the services available through the public school liaisons so they can identify potentially eligible families and help them access the services for which they may be eligible. In addition to training, regular, ongoing coordination between LEA and HPRP staff will help to identify needs and work collaboratively to remove bottlenecks or obstacles to serving vulnerable children and their families.

## Targeted Services

- HPRP programs should prioritize homeless families with students in the public school system and coordinate with the public school liaisons to leverage EHCY resources, including transportation to school. Prioritizing client referrals from school homeless liaisons and providing these families with homeless prevention or rapid re-housing services can leverage the casework and on-going support services provided by the school district to families with students experiencing homelessness. In **Tacoma and Sumner, Washington**, a state-funded program has targeted limited housing resources to families experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness. This partnership includes two elementary schools, the homeless school liaison program, the local housing authority, and a transitional housing program. (See Tacoma and Sumner example below.)

## Tailored Policies

- HPRP grantees should require housing providers to increase their focus on children's educational outcomes. This strategy requires strong collaboration among the housing, services and education systems at a state or local level. For example, in **Minneapolis, Minnesota**, the state housing finance agency requires housing providers to report children's educational outcomes. The housing finance agency also provides homeless school liaisons with the opportunity to provide feedback on housing agencies applying for funding. These innovations have resulted in housing provider staff working closely with the school homeless liaisons to ensure that children's education is a key issue addressed concurrently with the family's housing situation. While housing assistance offered through HPRP is of short- and medium-term duration, limiting the ability of housing providers to track long-term educational outcomes, short-term educational outcomes such as attendance and children staying in their "home"

school are feasible for housing providers to track. For example, a **Chicago** rapid re-housing program is tracking school stability and attendance.

#### **Case Study: Coordinated Entry for Service Provision**

In **Norfolk, Virginia**, the City's Homeless Action and Response Team (HART) program works closely with the school homeless liaison to ensure housing stability and immediate access to educational services for homeless families and children. The HART program is a single point entry process operated through the City Department of Social Services, serving both families and single adults experiencing homelessness. The HART program provides homeless prevention services for those at-risk of homelessness as well as housing placement for those who are already homeless. The HART program coordinates with local schools to identify students and their families who are at risk of eviction, as well as those already homeless. As soon as HART identifies a family with children as homeless, the public school homeless liaison is contacted. The liaison ensures enrollment and other educational and support services for the children and family in continued coordination and collaboration with the HART program. The program continues its services after placement in housing to ensure stability of clients through its "after-care" program. HPRP funding is an excellent match for this program, providing both new resources for its homeless prevention services and an alternative to shelter for those already homeless through the rapid re-housing component.

#### **Case Study: Targeted Services**

In **Tacoma and Sumner, Washington**, a state homelessness grant funded a three-year pilot called the Front Door Project beginning in 2007 to improve student educational stability and decrease the impact of mobility on the student and the school districts. The Front Door Project is a collaboration of the Tacoma School District, the Sumner School District, the Tacoma Housing Authority, and Helping Hand House transitional housing. This model supports students and families in a targeted geographical area. Housing supported for families experiencing homelessness within the attendance area of one elementary school in Tacoma and one school in Sumner. Tacoma and Sumner school district counselors and liaisons assist families in applying for housing, and the school district staff provides wrap-around services to the families who are screened into the program. All collaborating agencies meet monthly to coordinate case management services, reduce duplication of efforts, and to ensure accountability for partner follow through. Marilee Hill-Anderson, Sumner School District, explains that *"Schools have existing connections with families in need... This is just so critical now, as so many more families are seeking help, and these families are new to any type of system of support. Schools really are the intermediary between systems of formal resources and the actual families."* This model uses a flexible funding source called the Homeless Grant Assistance Program, unique to Washington State. However, in other communities, HPRP resources could be used to provide the housing assistance portion of the model.

### Case Study: Tailoring Policies

The Kids Collaborative in **Minneapolis, Minnesota**, is a partnership initiative focused on building resilience in Minneapolis kids by fostering stable home and school environments, and cultivating protective factors for children and their families that help to prepare children for success. The collaborative of government, housing, educational and social service partners in Minneapolis has worked together since 2001 to address the complex and interrelated issues of housing instability and its effects on student achievement. Activities are focused on improving stability in the home environment, helping families experiencing long-term homelessness with accessing resources to address issues and challenges, and supporting students to be present, engaged and learning at school.

Homeless housing and support service providers are key to this program's success. Interestingly, the state housing finance agency requirement that housing providers improve children's educational outcomes has strengthened collaboration between the EHCY program and housing programs, providing a solid foundation for HPRP leveraging. The housing finance agency also provided homeless school liaisons with the opportunity to provide feedback on housing agencies applying for funding. These innovations have resulted in housing provider staff working closely with the school homeless liaisons to ensure that children's education is a key factor in housing placement. For example, just as a real estate agent works with a family to find housing within a good school district, housing provider staff work with families experiencing homelessness to find housing that keeps kids in the same school or makes a decision to move to a school that better meets the educational needs of the child.