

Examples of Collaboration Between Schools and Housing Assistance Agencies

“Schools have existing connections with families in need. When we spot things happening with kids, we call families. Families disclose what's happening to us, and we help make those connections. 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.”

- Marilee Hill-Anderson, Sumner School District, WA

In **Volusia County, Florida**, a Case Management Program was started in October that is a collaboration with the Women's Initiative Committee of the United Way of Volusia Flagler Counties and the Volusia/Flagler Coalition for the Homeless (the Continuum of Care Provider). The Homeless Children's Case Manager works directly with the Homeless Liaison for Volusia County Schools. The case manager and homeless liaison collaborate on the needs of homeless children and youth in schools, develop assessments, and work with social service agencies that deliver services. Data gathering on needs, services delivery, and gaps in services are also a part of the position. Students residing within West Volusia are the initial focus for support, due to the lack of services for families in that part of our county. The Case Manager has access to \$27,611 Grant In Aid funding from the Department of Children and Families via the Coalition, for the purposes of rent and utility assistance for the parent or guardian of the children to prevent homelessness as top priority, and to stabilize those recently homeless. These funds and the position are managed by the Executive Director of the Coalition.

This example of community collaboration includes the Women's Initiative funding the position, the Coalition supervising the position, the school district providing referrals, the Domestic Abuse Council providing free office space on the west side of the county for the case manager, and DCF committing dollars.

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In **Norfolk, Virginia**, the HART team works closely with the school homeless liaison to ensure housing stability and immediate access to educational services. The HART team is a single point entry process operated through the Department of Social Services. The shelters will "shelter" a family for a night until the HART team can come up with another temporary housing option. The family is then linked up with a housing broker /case management team. The HART team faxes a document to the homeless liaison who then immediately ensures enrollment and other educational and support services for the children and family.

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In **Austin, Texas**, the school district's homeless education program, Project HELP, is a key source of identification for the newly established Rapid Rehousing program. Once Project HOPE identifies a family, they refer them to one of nine local service providers. These service providers serve as the formal bridge for the family and Rapid Rehousing. Project HELP is able to call and let the Project Director of Rapid Rehousing know that it has referred a family, so the family is immediately assessed.

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The **Hillsborough County School District, Florida** is an active paying member of the homeless coalition and continuum of care, working in collaboration on many events and projects as well as serving families. The district completes intakes on all of the homeless families who are referred by school or community personnel, and links the families to appropriate resources in the community including, but not limited to, financial assistance, housing, sheltering, medical needs, and employment. The school district accesses a program called the Challenge Grant that works with clients to help with finding housing, first month's rent, security deposits, and utilities deposits based on their current income. The school district has relationships with a few apartment complexes, hotels, and landlords to help serve their families. In addition, the school district is one of three agencies in the community that have started a pilot program through the local Children's Board that assists families who are homeless, who have children 5 and under, with initial housing cost, rent, utility bills, storage units while moving, transportation, and school-age

child access daycare vouchers.
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In **Adrian, Michigan**, the school district liaison works hand in hand with the Continuum of Care. She attends meetings to find out if there are openings in any of the programs that could help students and families. She makes referrals directly over the phone to the caseworker at the agencies. Housing agencies prioritize the liaison's referrals because they know that the family has already had extensive casework provided by the school district, and that the family will continue to receive it. The liaison articulated the importance of housing families with school age children so they don't have to go out of county, 50 miles to another shelter, thus moving the children from school. As a result, the emergency shelter, rental assistance agency, and Department of Human Services now share the school district's goal of one child in one school for one year. Due to lack of shelter space, many families have had to move on to another shelter because their time ran out before they found an affordable apartment. The liaison brings these situations to the attention of the housing agencies so that these families also are prioritized. The liaison works on Continuum of Care committees and provides access to school district data of doubled-up and motel families, which assists housing agencies in writing grants. The liaison recently realized that no one is counting homeless infants, so she has started an effort of homeless liaisons in all the area schools to counting the infants siblings of the school-age children who are identified. This data will then be used to bring services into the county for homeless infants.

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In the **Vancouver, WA**, the school district liaison helps unaccompanied homeless youth fill out applications for housing assistance. She invites the program officer for the housing program to meet the youth in her office, facilitating the connection for the youth in safe, discreet manner. The liaison has been active in the establishment of a youth subcommittee of the Continuum of Care to focus on the unique needs of this

subpopulation. At this meeting, providers and the liaison craft the most appropriate referral processes for their agencies.

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In **Shelton, Washington**, the school district liaison screens families for eligibility for the Homeless Grant Assistance Program (HGAP), and helps them fill out the applications. This program is operated by the local housing authority and is dispensed by a staff member at a local shelter (see attached). This grant provides rental and mortgage assistance coupled with case management, with strict guidelines regarding households' ability to maintain payments.

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In **Lafayette, Louisiana**, the school parish is a recipient of HUD Continuum of Care dollars to provide case managers in homeless shelters. They work directly with housing programs, community agencies, and private landlords to help families access housing. The school parish provides follow up care to these families to help them maintain their housing. They write letters to the housing authority referring clients, explaining why they believe the family is ready for housing and is able to sustain it. The school parish provides a similar service for private landlords. They share extra school supplies, food, uniforms, and other goods with housing programs for their residents to facilitate a collaborative environment.

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In **Tacoma and Sumner, Washington**, a pilot project called the Front Door Project has been established through collaboration between the Tacoma School District, the Sumner School District, the Tacoma Housing Authority, and Helping Hand House Transitional Housing. For this program, school counselors and liaisons assist families in making applications and submit applications on behalf of the families. This model supports students and families in a very targeted geographical area - housing is supported within the attendance area of one elementary school in Tacoma to try to provide educational stability and decrease the impact of mobility on the student and the school districts. The school districts' staff provide 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 make sure that each partner follows through with providing the services they promised to provide.

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In **Seminole County, Florida**, the school district liaison chaired the housing sub-committee of the Children's Cabinet, which initiated a year-long study to address the housing needs of children in the County. One of the recommendations was a Prevention and Re-Housing Project. The County Commissioner formed a steering committee that includes the Director of Community Services for Seminole County Government, the President and Executive Director Seminole County of Habitat for Humanity, the County Commissioner Chair, Father of St. Stevens Catholic Church, The Greater Orlando Realtor Association and President of the Realtor Association, Seminole County HUD Administrator, Seminole County Community Assistance Manager, the President and CEO of Community Based Care, and the Director of Prevention for Community Based Care. The pilot program (see attached) will look to the school district as a primary referral source. Note: the position paper states that the school district had identified 550 students in February; as of March 12, they have identified 740.

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In **the Twin Cities, Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minnesota**, the state housing authority is requiring all recipients of the Temporary Funding for Families with Children Rental Assistance Program meet and work with school district liaisons to ensure that the educational stability of children is a priority when awarding assistance to families. Both school districts use district-wide questionnaires at enrollment, for all families enrolling in the districts, to determine eligibility status (see attached). These forms, in turn, are shared with housing providers during referral and assessment. In addition, a release of information form for families assists with communication between the school district and housing agencies (see attached).

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