

Results in Brief:

State and District Implementation of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

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In 2010–11, approximately one million students—or 2 percent of students attending school—were identified as homeless. Most of these homeless children and youth (71 percent) were “doubled-up,” meaning that they resided with another family at night, while some stayed at a shelter (17 percent), stayed at a hotel (5 percent), or were unsheltered (7 percent). Approximately seven out of 10 homeless students attend school in districts that receive funding under the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, which is authorized under the *McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVHAA)*. Congress provided \$65 million for the program in FY 2010, and states suballocated most of those funds to school districts through a competitive process, either by awarding subgrants directly to individual districts and/or to regional entities that provide services to individual districts. Additional EHCY funds provided under *American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)* for use during the 2009–10 and 2010–11 school years could be suballocated to districts through either competitive grants or formula grants. The EHCY program requires every state to have a state coordinator to administer the program and also requires states to ensure that every school district designate a district liaison to identify homeless children and youth and ensure that they receive services for which they are eligible.

STUDY QUESTIONS

1. How do states allocate EHCY program funds?
2. What are the roles and responsibilities of the state coordinator and district liaison? What services do districts provide to homeless children and youth?
3. How do states monitor and provide technical assistance to districts as part of the EHCY Program? What technical assistance needs do state coordinators and district liaisons report?
4. What data do states and districts collect about homeless children and youth?
5. What do state coordinators and district liaisons perceive as barriers to school success for homeless children and youth?

STUDY DESIGN

The study surveyed all 52 state coordinators of the EHCY program and a sample of 448 district liaisons of EHCY districts. The surveys focused on the 2010–11 school year and were administered during the spring of 2012. Response rates were 96 percent for the state survey and 87 percent for the district survey. The study also analyzed state-submitted data on homeless children and youth.

Highlights

- Sixteen states used a regional approach to suballocating EHCY funds; these 16 states accounted for 84 percent of all school districts that received EHCY funds and services.
- State coordinators reported spending the most time on providing technical assistance to districts and coordinating with other organizations, while district liaisons reported spending the most time on identifying eligible students and ensuring that homeless students and families receive services.
- District liaisons indicated that transportation, school supplies, and tutoring and supplemental instruction accounted for the largest expenditures of EHCY funds.
- State coordinators were more likely to report using site visits and integrated monitoring visits in 2012 than in 1998, and the number who reported monitoring non-EHCY districts more than doubled.
- In addition to collecting required data such as homeless students’ achievement on state assessments, many states also collected other data such as graduation rates and attendance rates.
- Barriers to school enrollment and attendance for homeless students that were most frequently identified by district liaisons were transportation and family or student preoccupation with survival needs. Other barriers included delays in obtaining school records and inability to complete school assignments because of the lack of an appropriate study area.

ALLOCATING EHCY FUNDS

On average, states subgranted an estimated 85 percent of their regular EHCY allocations to districts and regional entities through competitive grants, and reserved 15 percent of the funds for use at the state level.

Sixteen states used a regional approach to suballocating EHCY funds; these states accounted for 62 percent of all homeless students and 84 percent of all school districts that received EHCY funds and services. States that provided EHCY funds to regional entities often also provided some EHCY funds to individual school districts.

For *ARRA* EHCY funds, 20 states reported allocating funds to districts on a formula basis only, 19 reported allocating funds on a competitive basis only, and six reported using both formula and competitive grants.

STATE AND DISTRICT ROLES

State coordinators reported spending the most time on providing technical assistance to districts and coordinating with other organizations, while district liaisons reported spending the most time on identifying eligible students and ensuring that homeless students and families receive services.

When asked to report the three activities on which they spent the most time, state coordinators most often said providing technical assistance to districts (42 states), coordinating with other organizations and agencies (30), and helping districts understand EHCY requirements and the role of the district liaison (24).

District liaisons reported spending the most time identifying eligible homeless children and youth (66 percent), ensuring that homeless children and youth and their families receive services (47 percent), and coordinating transportation services (37 percent).

Nearly all district liaisons reported providing school supplies to homeless children and youth and their families (91 percent), and 78 percent reported helping coordinate the efforts between schools and agencies that provided services to homeless children and youth.

District liaisons indicated that their largest expenditures of EHCY funds were for transportation, school supplies, and tutoring and supplemental instruction.

District liaisons indicated that the coordination and collaboration efforts that most improved services were those focused on building programmatic linkages among organizations (40 percent), identifying barriers that impede access to school (36 percent), and reviewing district policies or regulations that affect homeless populations (36 percent).

MONITORING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

The number of state coordinators who reported using site visits and integrated monitoring visits increased from 1998 to 2012, and the number who said they monitored non-EHCY districts' efforts to reduce educational barriers for homeless children and youth more than doubled.

Forty-three states reported monitoring EHCY districts through site visits in the 2012 survey, up from 37 in 1998, and 33 reported using integrated monitoring visits in 2012, up from 27 in 1998. Use of desk monitoring (i.e., phone calls and written correspondence) declined slightly, from 37 to 34 states; 29 of the 34 reporting doing this in addition to site visit monitoring.

Twenty-six state coordinators reported using site visits to monitor non-EHCY districts' efforts to reduce barriers for homeless children and youth in 2012, up from nine in 1998.

State coordinators reported needing more assistance on enhancing parental involvement (31 states), developing additional learning opportunities for homeless students within the school day (26), transportation across district boundaries (25), and coordinating with Title I programs (25).

District liaisons most often reported needing state technical assistance to help them better understand *MVHAA* legal requirements (56 percent), the legal responsibilities of the district liaison (55 percent), and how to collect, use, and report data on homeless students (44 percent).

DATA ON HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

Most states reported collecting more comprehensive data on homeless students than is required under the law.

In addition to collecting required data such as homeless students' achievement on state assessments, many states also collected data on graduation or dropout rates (31) and attendance rates (24); 36 states reported that their state data system uses a unique student identifier to link various data on homeless students. States often collected data from non-subgrantees as well as subgrantees.

BARRIERS TO SCHOOL SUCCESS

Barriers to school enrollment and attendance for homeless students that were most frequently identified by district liaisons were transportation to and from school and family or student preoccupation with survival needs.

Other reported barriers to school enrollment were delays in obtaining school records and residency requirements for school enrollment. Other reported barriers to school attendance were inability to complete school assignments because of the lack of an appropriate study area, lack of adequate clothing and supplies, and poor health or inadequate medical care.