OUR MISSION

To Overcome Homelessness Through Education

OUR VISION

Children and youth experiencing homelessness will have full access to quality learning, birth through higher education, so they will never be homeless as adults, and the next generation will never be homeless.
A MESSAGE FROM OUR LEADERSHIP

While the traumas of 2020 – COVID-19, the economic crisis, systemic racism, and the deep political divisions that tear at the fabric of our nation – are ongoing, we take strength and build resolve from what we were able to accomplish, collectively, in one of the most difficult of years.

We hope you’ll be reminded of what can be done – together – even in the face of overwhelming challenges; discover useful resources; and find inspiration in our common cause of overcoming homelessness through education.

With gratitude to our funders, our SHC family, and you: your support means the world to us, and we thank you for your partnership. Together with you, we will continue to support children, youth, and families through this crisis and work to break generational cycles of homelessness through the power of education.

Barbara Duffield
Executive Director of SchoolHouse Connection
OUR WORK

We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with early childhood programs, schools, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

RESPONSIVE AND EFFECTIVE POLICY ADVOCACY

- A strong voice for effective and responsive federal and state policies rooted in the realities of local communities
- Timely updates and analyses

Click here for more information about our policy work.

PRACTICAL ASSISTANCE

- Tools and resources for early care, preK-12, and higher education
- Weekly newsletter with Q&A and practitioner voices
- In-person and online training on hot topics featuring national, state, and local presenters

Click here to access our resources from early childhood to higher education.

YOUTH LEADERSHIP

- Scholarships and support to youth who have experienced homelessness
- Full and authentic integration of young people into all areas of our work

Click here for more information about our youth leadership and scholarship program.
When early childhood programs and schools across the country shut their doors and turned to remote learning in March 2020, children and youth experiencing homelessness were left without the most stable and secure place in their lives: school.

Less than a week after the national emergency was declared, SchoolHouse Connection brought hundreds of educators together virtually to learn, share, and discover solutions to the unprecedented challenges of helping children and youth who were both homeless and school-less. Since then, we’ve convened thousands of educators, service providers, and advocates in 12 virtual trainings to learn practical strategies and find strength in the community.

**You told us** the kinds of tools you needed – checklists, guides, PSAs, infographics – and we created them.

**You asked us** questions based on the real-life situations you faced, and we answered them, compiling our responses in a living public archive so that others could learn.

**You let us know** about the policy barriers that prevented you from identifying and assisting children, and we advocated for real resources and solutions.

In sum, we put our advocacy principles into practice, even bringing the voices of youth and parents experiencing homelessness before lawmakers to hear directly about the impact of the pandemic and homelessness on their education and their lives.

In this darkest chapter, we brought the light of our passion, our knowledge, and our amazing national network to the aid of some of our nation’s most vulnerable children, youth and families, helping them survive and thrive.
“I just want to personally thank you for how extraordinarily helpful all of the COVID materials have been from SHC. The quick, practical nature and checklist-style have provided much-needed clarity and direction in what has been a very challenging time to navigate McKinney-Vento liaison duties.”

TALLEY C. WESTERBERG
SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER AND HOMELESS LIAISON, WINNACUNNET HIGH SCHOOL, NEW HAMPSHIRE

I wanted to send a thank you to you all and SHC for your continued support and hard work – I cannot imagine how challenging it has been. Your labor of love on behalf of displaced children and youth is amazing.

I especially want to thank you for the updated Q&A Inbox – that is one of the ways I’ve learned the most – by reading them. And reading them. And reading them. Over and over because that to me is the true heartbeat of a coast-to-coast team connection.

KATHY NELL
MCKINNEY-VENTO LIAISON, PARADISE VALLEY UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT, AZ
Fighting Racism

We reeled at the horrific murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and countless others who lost their lives as a result of systemic racism. These events prompted a reckoning that our mission of overcoming homelessness through education means fighting racism. Systemic racism is a driver of homelessness, as demonstrated by racial disparities in the likelihood of families and youth becoming homeless, in the prolonged harmful consequences of homelessness, and in barriers to accessing education and services.

But we know it takes much more than a statement to create real change. Authentic transformation must be personal, and at all levels of our organization, to be sustained and effective. Internally, we are undertaking a racial justice assessment and year-long training, inclusive of board and staff. Externally, we initiated conversations with local and state McKinney-Vento practitioners of color, and young people of color, about how the McKinney-Vento Act can be implemented as a racial equity tool. We look forward to sharing the lessons and learnings, as well as new resources and tools, in 2021.
OUR IMPACT: FEDERAL POLICY

In 2020, SHC continued to be a strong voice for effective and responsive federal advocacy.

At a time of hyper-partisanship and deep divide, we advanced a Congressional policy agenda with bipartisan support:

- Celebrated the passage of new federal policies to remove barriers to financial aid for youth experiencing homelessness and former foster care youth. These policies, the result of a decade of consistent bipartisan advocacy by SHC, will have far-reaching consequences for hundreds of thousands of youth over the decades to come.
- Led advocacy on four bipartisan bills and federal funding for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program.
- Hosted four bipartisan virtual Congressional briefings featuring the real experts: youth experiencing homelessness; parents experiencing homelessness; service providers; and school district homeless education liaisons.
- Expanded our federal administrative advocacy
- Crafted and released our priorities for the incoming Biden-Harris Administration, and began meeting with the transition team to advance recommendations for children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness.
I’ve participated in hundreds and, perhaps, thousands of hearings during my lifetime. I’ve never been as impacted by any of them that I’ve ever been in before, to this extent. It just occurred to me that each one of these young women are absolute heroes. Real troopers. Who, in spite of odds, have demonstrated real essence of personhood, and are people to be admired, respected, and assisted in any way that we possibly can. I mean, you renewed within me a desire as well as an effort to try and convince all of my colleagues, and all of those who are decision makers, anywhere around the country, to do more to find additional money, additional resources… [to] create additional ways and approaches.”

U.S. CONGRESSMAN DANNY K. DAVIS (D-IL)
OUR IMPACT: STATE POLICY

SchoolHouse Connection’s state policy program supports state-based teams in achieving lasting, state-level policy changes to improve the lives and futures of young people experiencing homelessness.

1. Celebrated the passage of several bills
   - Together with our state and local partners, we celebrated the passage of several bills before the COVID-19 pandemic closed many state legislatures, including:

   **California**
   Our California youth scholars were proud to testify in support of the successful enactment of AB 2416, which will help students experiencing homelessness maintain their financial aid.

   **Maryland**
   Bills allowing unaccompanied homeless minors to receive shelter and supportive services on their own

   **Missouri**
   A bill extending Medicaid to youth experiencing homelessness up to age 21

   “Brianna and I were texting in the chatbox throughout the session — and kept repeating how valuable and appreciated SHC is to the field. My god. We would struggle a lot more without you. It’s so comforting in these times (and before them too), to know that you’re all right there, paying attention and able to help us navigate these waters.”

   **TOBY PORTNER**
   HAWAII STATE COORDINATOR, EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN & YOUTH, HAWAII STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**23 BILLS IN 14 STATES**
17 OF WHICH BECAME LAW
2. Increased our focus on the implementation of state policies
   - We increased our focus on the implementation of state policies, to make sure the policies we help pass actually make a difference for children and youth.

California
Convened over 100 public school districts and charter schools in Colusa, Contra Costa, San Diego counties in California, to help them develop action plans to improve identification, attendance, and high school graduation for students experiencing homelessness, in line with AB 1806.

Nevada
- Partnered with the Nevada Partnership for Homeless Youth, Nevada Office of Vital Records, and Nevada DMV to deliver a statewide webinar and create user-friendly guides to help youth access their birth certificate, ID and driver’s license at no cost and without a parent, implementing our AB 363.
- Collaborated with the Nevada Department of Education on guidance, a webinar, and a practical how-to document to award partial credits to students experiencing homelessness, implementing our SB 147.

3. Laid the groundwork for 2021 in 13 states
   - Building coalitions, conducting state policy needs assessments and drafting bill language in 13 states
   - Extending our state policy work in early childhood by partnering with Baker McKenzie and United Airlines
   - Continuing our work with the National Conference of State Legislatures,
OUR IMPACT: PRACTICE

Educational equity for children and youth experiencing homelessness must be grounded in practice – in the day-to-day work of educators and providers who strive to create access and sustained support.

1. Launched a 15-state community of practice as part of the Education Leads Home (ELH) campaign.

SHC is a core partner in Education Leads Home, a multi-year, national campaign launched in 2018 to improve educational and life outcomes for students experiencing homelessness. In 2020, with our support, 15 state leadership teams are implementing activities across early childhood, K12, and postsecondary that will result in measurable progress toward ELH goals. Over the course of a year, state teams are making progress on practical needs to increase enrollment in high-quality early childhood programs, increase high school graduation rates, and increase postsecondary persistence and attainment.

Highlights:

- **Washington** - Our partner in Washington state, Building Changes, is developing outreach materials to immigrant and refugee communities so they are aware of their child’s educational rights under McKinney-Vento;
- **North Dakota** - Establishing a university pilot for identification of students experiencing homelessness on college campuses
- **Hawaii** - Disseminating an early childhood needs assessment, including raising awareness among state legislators.
2. Helped hundreds of charter schools create action plans to increase the identification and success of students experiencing homelessness.

Federal data show that over 60,000 children and youth experiencing homelessness, particularly students of color, attend charter schools. Understanding their needs is a vital part of addressing the growing child and youth homelessness crisis. Through in-person and virtual convenings in Los Angeles and San Diego CA, San Antonio TX, and Washington DC, and national webinars and publications through our collaboration with National Alliance for Public Charter Schools, we helped charter schools understand their legal duties to students experiencing homelessness and best practices to implement them. We also learned from charter schools through a nationwide outreach, site visit, and interview process that culminated in our publication, “Charter Schools and Students Experiencing Homelessness.”

**Image:** Charter School Convening in Texas in February 2020.

**Image:** Charter School Convening in San Diego in January 2020.

**Image:** Charter School Convening in Washington, D.C. in February 2020.
I was prompted to look into [our online enrollment system] after reading something on your website! I flagged it for a colleague back in the summer. We walked through the online enrollment form together and ensured there were no “required” questions which would trip up a student/family experiencing homelessness. We were also able to identify a feature of our school enrollment platform that allows us to flag enrollment forms where an individual answers a question that indicates they are experiencing homelessness. Our school office staff will receive an email notification that a homeless individual either started an enrollment form or submitted one. We are starting that effort in about a week and school staff will be prompted to reach out to the family/student immediately to either enroll or support them with the enrollment form.

MELISSA PEÑA, STUDENT SERVICES PROGRAMS MANAGER, MCKINNEY-VENTO AND FOSTER YOUTH LIAISON, LOS ANGELES, CA
3. Removed barriers to the FAFSA for unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness.

One of the most significant barriers to higher education for youth experiencing homelessness is accessing financial aid; without financial aid, they cannot transition to and complete their college education. Without post-secondary education, they will remain at higher risk of continued homelessness as adults. This year:

- We published a national report analyzing six years of FAFSA data.
- Created a dedicated FAFSA page with many new resources for youth and educators.
- Continued our partnership with the National Association of Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) with a webinar and a joint COVID-19 resource.
- Contacted directly by many young people facing FAFSA hurdles, and provided hands-on assistance and advocacy to address the individual needs of these students.

HELPING A STUDENT NAVIGATE THE FAFSA

“While trying to further my education, SchoolHouse Connection literally helped me break down barriers that I faced that should have never been there in the first place. As an unaccompanied homeless youth, financing my education is the challenge I have to face, but the financial aid officers at my university who are put in place to help students like me, were the physical barriers that were stopping me. I reached out to the Financial Aid office desperately looking for help and even after a constant barrage of emails and phone calls, I was blatantly ignored.

However, Jillian from SchoolHouse Connection did everything in her power to help me. She appropriately educated my financial aid advisors, asserted pressure for proper and timely communication, reached out to various contacts in her network, and even raised awareness of the barriers that students like me face by giving me a chance to voice my experience to the Wall Street Journal. At the end of the day, I received my financial aid, I’m able to finance my education, and I’m officially on the road to getting my degree in Clinical Psychology and Neuroscience. It seems like a small step, but I consider it a big win. SchoolHouse Connection helped me jump start the change I desperately needed in my life. Thank You.”

JOHN MARK FLORES, STUDENT REACHING OUT TO SCHOOLHOUSE CONNECTION FOR HELP JULY 2020.
In partnership with state Head Start Collaboration Directors, we created guidance for integrating homelessness into working agreements and MOUs between Head Start grantees and local educational agencies.

- We began a new project with the National Head Start Association: an “app” to expedite and streamline referrals between school district McKinney-Vento liaisons and Head Start programs. The app is currently in early pilot testing, and we are excited to see its launch in 2021.

5. Ramped up outreach to Hispanic/Latínx families and youth by creating a Spanish-language webpage.

More than 30% of high school students experiencing homelessness identify as Hispanic/Latínx, and nearly 30% of families in HUD-funded shelters are Hispanic/Latínx. To improve effective outreach and help these families and youth exercise their educational rights, we created a new resource page entirely in Spanish, with fact sheets, flyers, and videos to support children and youth experiencing homelessness, birth through higher education.
1. The creation and release of Youth Connection, a resource hub on our website where all resources are written “by students, for students.”

This past Spring, we recognized that many of our students were struggling financially because of internship and job cancellations due to COVID-19. Initially, we provided $100 monthly stipends to all scholars to help offset these burdens. As the pandemic went on, we realized we could create a resume-building opportunity by providing additional financial support for scholars who were interested and available to write for us. We contracted with six of our scholars to create 14 resources written “by students, for students” that will be released throughout the year. Some of the topics covered include applying to college, completing the FAFSA, the benefits of becoming a Resident Advisor, mental health resources, national hotline information, and planning for college breaks.
2. Strategic case management to offset the impact of COVID-19 and virtual learning.

COVID-19 has created numerous barriers to education for students in both K-12 and higher education. We have worked diligently to help our scholars navigate these barriers and mitigate the impact of COVID-19. This included:

- Strategic outreach and case management to create plans for housing and food access for students staying off campus
- Providing social-emotional support to students to help with feelings of isolation
- Connecting students to each other for peer-to-peer support
- Hosting virtual chat nights and movie streams to maintain a sense of community
- Assisting with FAFSA completion, enrollment, and class registration
- Providing emergency assistance for crises and unforeseen circumstances.

In addition to providing case management and emergency assistance, we were also able to provide $100 monthly stipends to students throughout COVID-19 to help offset financial needs.

3. Promoting youth-created advocacy and educational content with national reach.

Our youth often are asked to speak at virtual trainings, conferences, and advocacy events. This year, our scholars created educational and/or advocacy content more than 100 times, averaging out to roughly 10 new scholar resources or speaking engagements per month. Since most resources are shared at the national level, our students’ voices are heard often and by people all across the country; their lived experiences and insights thus have an impact far beyond our scholarship program. Thanks to our generous donors and foundation partners, in 2020 we have been able to compensate students for their time and expertise for every speaking engagement and writing project.

<table>
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<th>200</th>
<th>$20,000+</th>
<th>$30,000+</th>
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<td>NUMBER OF SHC YOUNG LEADERS WHO GRADUATED COLLEGE IN 2020</td>
<td>NUMBER OF NEW SCHOLARSHIP AWARDED</td>
<td>TIMES WE PROVIDED EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE</td>
<td>DOLLAR AMOUNT OF EXTERNAL SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED</td>
<td>DOLLAR AMOUNT OF DIRECT CASH ASSISTANCE PROVIDED</td>
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“[SchoolHouse Connection has] become a system of great support to me, and I realized that I am not alone. More than that, I am inspired by hearing stories of the accomplishments of others who were once homeless. Being involved with this organization has motivated me to accomplish even more and also helped to erase the shame I once felt. I am so grateful to all that have contributed so that I can achieve my dream of a college degree, something I once didn’t think was possible.”

ANTHONY
SCHOOLHOUSE CONNECTION SCHOLAR

“I’ve absolutely loved my experience with SchoolHouse Connection over the last three years. SHC team members constantly are looking for ways to keep scholars engaged, and go the extra mile in each interaction to let you know they care. The entire organization holds a special place in my heart.”

LORINDA
SCHOOLHOUSE CONNECTION SCHOLAR

“You assisted me when my school could not and even became an information resource for some of the people involved and my school’s employees. I appreciate you providing a voice to others in my situation.”

ELIZABETH HANNIFORD
STUDENT
“Just wanted to let you know that my FAFSA process was correctly finalized today, yay!! The financial aid office did what you had recommended and instead of the appeal did the independent determination the other way. I’ve got a couple verification documents to fill out but other than that I’m all set. And they will waive my hold and allow me to register for spring on time. I am so endlessly grateful for your diligent work on this! This is an immense relief on my schooling and the release of this weight opens up so many more opportunities for me.”

SOPHIA COLLELA
STUDENT

“I have value, I have worth. I am not alone. We are not family by blood, but family in the sense that those who work at SchoolHouse care about me on a personal level. SchoolHouse Connection has allowed me to recognize that I have importance. In doing so they inspired me to help others who have experienced hardships. SchoolHouse Connection will always have a place in my heart.”

DIEGO
SCHOOLHOUSE CONNECTION SCHOLAR
OUR IMPACT: RAISING AWARENESS & EDUCATING THE PUBLIC

Child, youth, and family homelessness is largely an invisible crisis: stigma, shame, fear of authorities, lack of shelter, and high mobility mean that communities and policymakers don’t see children and youth experiencing homelessness in the same way that they see single homeless adults. As a result, homeless youth and families are not prioritized for assistance, and face many barriers to receiving the protections and resources to which they are entitled. In 2020, SHC looked for and found new and creative ways to shine a light on child, youth, and family homelessness, and ramped up our overall media and communications efforts.

1. We developed three public service announcements aimed at reaching families, youth, educators, community organizations, and leaders.

The closing of school buildings and early learning programs in response to the pandemic made it even easier for children and youth experiencing homelessness to fall through the cracks, and become further disconnected from sources of support. To help spread the word and give communities a starting place for outreach and identification:

- We created two PSAs, and worked with Sesame Street Workshop to create a third PSA, and we assembled dedicated resources pages (LetsEducateEveryChild.Org and IDeserveanEducation.Org) to accompany them.
- We also compiled a national directory of school district homeless liaisons to help connect parents and youth to points of contact at every school district.
2. We were sought out for our expertise by numerous print, radio, television, and web media, and were quoted in more than 60 stories in 2020, more than twice the coverage of 2019. Our work was highlighted by a broad range of media outlets including in The New York Times, NPR, 60 Minutes, Vice, Reuters, CNN, 74 Million, Education Week, and Chalkbeat, among others.
3. We found new ways to distribute our resources and communicate our message through social media and web videos, including:

- Launched Medium and Instagram.
  - The Medium page serves as a resource for smart, innovative thinking on solutions to child, youth, and family homelessness. It is a hub of expertise and stories that break down the issue in human terms and make the conversation around solutions more accessible and engaging to broader audiences – including educators, service providers, or community members not as familiar with the issue.
  - Instagram was launched to reach a younger and broader audience, particularly youth experiencing homelessness looking for resources.
- Created college and COVID videos to share higher education institution best practices of supporting students experiencing homelessness. These videos, along with an editable toolkit, provides practical tips for colleges to reach a broader audience and to better provide support to students.
- Published “From the Field: Challenges and Strategies Supporting Children, Youth, and Families,” a video series where we sat down with school district homeless liaisons and other providers from across the nation to share their experiences and tips as they faced the COVID-19 pandemic at the start of the 2020 school year.
## 2020 Audited Financials

### Revenue & Support

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<th>Source</th>
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<td>Contracts</td>
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<td>Other Revenue</td>
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### Programs:

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<td>Education Leads Home</td>
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<td>Higher Education</td>
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<td>Youth Leadership &amp; Scholarship</td>
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### Support Services:

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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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| **Total Expenses**                                | **$1,195,619** |

### Change in Net Assets

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### Net Assets at the Beginning of the Year

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### Net Assets at the End of the Year

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<tr>
<td>$1,116,114</td>
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BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Jennifer Pringle - President
- Viviana Otoya - Treasurer
- Phillip Lovell - Secretary
- Jill Sallows - Board Member
- Lynda Thistle Elliott - Board Member
- Melinda Dyer - Board Member

STAFF MEMBERS

- Barbara Duffield - Executive Director
- Patricia Julianelle - Senior Strategist for Program Advancement & Legal Affairs
- Alleanne Anderson - Policy and Outreach Associate
- Leconte Lee - Senior Communications Manager
- Tamara Lewis - Senior Manager for State Policy & Legal Affairs
- Erin Patterson - Director of Education Initiatives
- Jordyn Roark - Director of Youth Leadership & Scholarships
- Jillian Sitjar - Senior Program Manager, Higher Education
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• Zeta Associates