



Reauthorization of the Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program (MIECHV): Recommendations for Children & Families Experiencing Homelessness

An estimated 1.3 million children ages six and under experience homelessness across the United States.¹ Homelessness in early childhood is associated with delays in language, literacy, and social-emotional development, as well as higher rates of acute and chronic illness. The younger and longer a child experiences homelessness, the greater the cumulative toll of negative health outcomes, which can have lifelong effects on the child, the family, and the community. Yet families experiencing homelessness face many barriers to accessing high quality early childhood services.

Home visiting is uniquely poised to address the two-generational impacts of homelessness: by meeting families where they are, despite their mobility, parents and children continually benefit from the program's services and supports. Reauthorization of MIECHV is an opportunity to ensure children and families experiencing homelessness have access to services that can disrupt the generational cycle of homelessness, yielding lifelong benefits.

Many families with young children who are experiencing homelessness go unseen and unserved because they are staying in hidden homeless situations. In fact, nearly 80% of K12 students experiencing homelessness are staying in doubled-up situations - sharing the housing of others due to lack of alternatives. Shelters for families may not exist in many communities, or they may be full; in addition, families experiencing homelessness with infants often do not feel safe in shelters, which are often not designed to support the developmental needs of young children. For this reason, they often stay temporarily with other people in situations that are unstable and unsafe, leaving children and their families exposed to abuse, trafficking, and other potential dangers. Federal PreK12 education law, Early Head Start and Head Start, and the Child Care and Development Fund recognize this reality and use a definition of homelessness that includes families staying with others temporarily, as well as those in motels due to lack of adequate alternatives. It is important for all early childhood programs, Home Visiting in particular, to be equipped to identify and serve all families experiencing homelessness, regardless of where these families find a place to sleep

¹ [USED Early Childhood Homelessness State Profiles](#), 2018-2019

To increase homeless families' access to MIECHV-funded home visiting programs, SchoolHouse Connection recommends that the MIECHV reauthorization package:

1. Include "homeless" as a priority population for services, aligned with the definition of homelessness in the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act.
2. Include continuation of virtual home visiting services, which are critical for ensuring that families experiencing homelessness may continue to access services even when they cannot be physically present. These families are often highly mobile, moving from one location to another in order. Virtual programming options are particularly important so that families can continue the learning and relationships they develop, despite moving out of a particular service area.
3. Increased overall funding, which will support the goals of home visiting in general, and provide the ability for programs to expand access to families experiencing homelessness. Increased overall funding could help programs secure the technology needed for continuing virtual services, train staff about identifying and serving families experiencing homelessness, and increase capacity to track participation and outcomes data for families experiencing homelessness.