Home Visiting for Homeless Families

Tuesday, March 28, 2023
General Housekeeping

- Webinar will last 1 hour
- Audio is muted - please ask questions through Q&A
- Session is being recorded
- Follow-up email after the session will include the recording, powerpoint, and resources
About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education.

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

WEBSITE: schoolhouseconnection.org

NEWSLETTER: schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up

- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships
Erin Patterson, Director of Education Initiatives, SchoolHouse Connection

Dr. Amy Dworsky, Senior Research Fellow, Chapin Hall

Dr. Amanda Griffin, Researcher, Chapin Hall

Shawanda Jennings, Program Specialist, Start Early
Overview
DEFINITION

Who is Eligible?

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons.
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters.
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
McKinney-Vento Act requires liaisons to proactively identify children and youth experiencing homelessness and ensure enrollment in Head Start and ECE programs. For public PreK, provides immediate enrollment, stability, transportation.

Categorical eligibility for homeless families. Also requires proactive outreach, grace periods for immunizations, prioritized enrollment. Allows programs to reserve slots.

Requires prioritization, use of funds for outreach and enrollment of homeless families, expedited enrollment.

Requires programs serving families to designate a staff person to ensure enrollment in early childhood programs and school.
Families often stay with others temporarily because of lack of shelter availability, and the fear of having children removed from their custody.

Staying with others puts families, infants, and toddlers in vulnerable, harmful situations, and, conditions that may contribute to developmental delays. Parents may stay with abusive/exploitative people, or trade sex in order to have a place to stay.
**DEFINITION**

**Unaccompanied Youth**

A child or youth without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

Youth run away from home due to abuse or neglect.

- 40-60% of unaccompanied youth were abused physically at home.
- 17-25% of unaccompanied youth were abused sexually at home.
- Research links parental substance abuse and youth running away from home.

Parents force youth out of the home due to conflicts.

- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Pregnancy
Homelessness Has Serious Consequences for Young Children

Homelessness in infancy has been found to be associated with delays in language, literacy, and social-emotional development, putting children at risk for later academic problems.

The younger and longer a child experiences homelessness, the greater the cumulative toll of negative health outcomes.

The impacts of homelessness on young children are long-lasting, even once families are housed, including on children’s school readiness.
Homelessness Also Has Long-Term Consequences

The high school graduation rate for students experiencing homelessness is 68% compared to 85% for all students. This is the lowest graduation rate of any student sub-group, including economically disadvantaged.

High school students who experience homelessness are 10x more likely to become pregnant or get someone pregnant.

In addition to the academic impacts, homelessness in the early years can cause developmental delays, social-emotional challenges, and long-term trauma.
Homelessness Creates Barriers to Accessing Early Childhood Programs

- **High Mobility** of families moving in and out of motels, staying with others, living in cars, etc.
- **Lack of documentation** and other enrollment barriers, including child immunization and parent work requirements
- **Lack of transportation** to and from programs
- **Lack of awareness** among early care providers of both the definition of homelessness and the best ways to reach families
Across all 20 states, there are approximately 311,961 infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness. 22,220, or 7%, are currently identified and served by an early childhood program. That means there are 289,741 who are not identified and/or enrolled in an early childhood program.
Enrollment
Across 20 states:

Child Care Programs
enroll 2.3% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness

Early Head Start Programs
enrolls 4.2% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness

Home Visiting Programs (Parents as Teachers)
enroll 1% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness
DATA TRENDS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness

Enrollment

Key Takeaways

State-Level Breakdown: Child Care Enrollment

- **OR**: Estimated Total 7,134, Child Care 1,245
- **CA**: Estimated Total 92,126, Child Care 474
- **NV**: Estimated Total 6,825, Child Care 154
- **NE**: Estimated Total 1,011, Child Care 179
- **IL**: Estimated Total 14,235, Child Care 360
- **OH**: Estimated Total 11,581, Child Care 434
- **MD**: Estimated Total 5,420, Child Care 161
- **VA**: Estimated Total 12,376, Child Care 293
- **NY**: Estimated Total 55,973, Child Care Insufficient Data
- **NJ**: Estimated Total 4,332, Child Care 508
- **NC**: Estimated Total 10,941, Child Care Insufficient Data
- **TX**: Estimated Total 37,084, Child Care 2,457
- **LA**: Estimated Total 5,504, Child Care 282

16
State-Level Breakdown: Early Head Start Enrollment
DATA TRENDS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness

State-Level Breakdown: Home Visiting

Or
Estimated Total: 7,134
Home Visiting: 23

CA
Estimated Total: 92,126
Home Visiting: 492

NV
Estimated Total: 6,825
Home Visiting: 21

NE
Estimated Total: 1,011
Home Visiting: 77

IL
Estimated Total: 14,235
Home Visiting: 142

MI
Estimated Total: 11,882
Home Visiting: 322

PA
Estimated Total: 12,376
Home Visiting: 41

NY
Estimated Total: 55,973
Home Visiting: 52

NJ
Estimated Total: 4,332
Home Visiting: 52

NC
Estimated Total: 10,941
Home Visiting: 129

TX
Estimated Total: 37,084
Home Visiting: 83

LA
Estimated Total: 5,504
Home Visiting: 23

SC
Estimated Total: 5,862
Home Visiting: 87

WI
Estimated Total: 6,088
Home Visiting: 77

OH
Estimated Total: 11,581
Home Visiting: 58

MD
Estimated Total: 5,420
Home Visiting: 40

DC
Estimated Total: 3,093
Home Visiting: 41

Enrollment

Key Takeaways
Home Visiting with Families
Experiencing Homelessness
CHAPIN HALL AT THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
Presenters

Dr. Amy Dworsky  
Senior Research Fellow  
Chapin Hall

Dr. Amanda Griffin  
Researcher  
Chapin Hall

Shawanda Jennings  
Program Specialist  
Start Early
Acknowledgement
Too many families with young children experience homelessness.

Homelessness during early childhood can have long-lasting negative consequences for children’s health and development.

It can also heighten levels of parental stress, lead to less responsive parenting, and interfere with parent-child bonding.
High rates of mobility

Questions about eligibility

Lack of documents required to enroll

Distrust of service providers

Barriers to Engagement
HVHF Project Goals

- Remove barriers to home visiting for families experiencing homelessness
- Make home visiting programs more responsive to the needs of families experiencing homelessness
- Inform changes in policy and practice
- Increase integration and alignment across homeless service providers and home visiting programs.
Home visiting providers that assign families experiencing homelessness to all of their home visitors

Aunt Martha's Youth Service Center

YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago

Facing Forward to End Homelessness

Homeless service providers that have a home visitor

Primo Center for Women and Children

New Moms

New Moms Oak Park

Family Focus Englewood

Family Focus Lawndale

Pilsen Wellness Center

Sangamon County Health Department

The Night Ministry

Home visiting providers that assign families experiencing homelessness to a specialized home visitor
HVHF PROJECT PARTICIPANT AGREEMENT

Flexibility and Adaptation

- Enroll mothers through age 25
- Enroll babies through age 12 months
- Continue serving families that move
- Reduce caseloads
- Disregard completion rates requirements
- Employ specialized home visitors
- Use active status instead of creative outreach
- Extend creative outreach
- Use alternative communication strategies
- Visit at nontraditional locations
• Review of relevant literature
• Development of logic model
• Analysis of administrative data
• Interviews with home visitors, home visiting supervisors, & homeless service providers
• Interviews with mothers who were receiving home visiting services
• Interviewed 17 home visitors and 12 supervisors from the 10 HVHF project partners as well as one project consultant

• Interviewed 13 mothers and one pregnant woman whose families received home visiting services from 7 HVHF project partners
Results from Participant Interviews
PARTICIPANT SAMPLE CHARACTERISTICS (N = 14)

- Ages 18–29 (Average = 23)
- Pregnant at enrollment (n=8)
- Black (n=11)
- Completed high school (n=10)
- 0 - 3 children
  Ages 0–24 months
  Average = 1.6 years old
- Enrolled in school (n = 2)
- Employed (n = 5)
LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF PARTICIPANTS

- Doubled up
- Renting with subsidy
- Interim shelter
- Transitional housing
HOW DID PROJECT PARTICIPANTS DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH HOME VISITING SERVICES?

• Many mothers reported developing a close and trusting relationship with their home visitor.

• Mothers valued the social and emotional support and information they received from their home visitors.

• Mothers appreciated that home visitors let them make their own decisions rather than telling them what to do.

• Mothers described their home visitors as very responsive to their needs.
She always makes sure I know like I'm not doing this alone. I'm doing a good job. . . . [Of] all the services that they offer, the emotional support for me is the most important because sometimes I be needing [it] especially as a single mom.

I would describe it like a mother-daughter relationship.

Everything that I need to know or that I didn’t know, she helped me with.
HOW DID PROJECT PARTICIPANTS DESCRIBE THEIR EXPERIENCES WITH HOME VISITING SERVICES?

• Many mothers reported that their home visitor showed them how to engage their child in activities that would promote their development.

• Several mothers also reported that they learned how to regulate their own emotions and respond to their child’s behavior in more developmentally appropriate ways.

• Mothers reported receiving essential items from their home visitor and being referred to “giveaways” and other services.
They did activities I never thought of, and [child] loved those activities.

They said, “Okay, sometimes you got to ask, like, why is this child acting this way? . . . You got to figure out why. . . . So I'm like okay, you're right, maybe this is the issue. . . . This is how you handle it.
Results from Practitioner Interviews
DID THE HVHF PROJECT ENHANCE THE ABILITY OF HOME VISITING PROGRAMS TO SERVE HOMELESS FAMILIES?

- Degree to which home visiting programs took advantage of the increased flexibility varied widely.

- Concerns about meeting performance benchmarks persisted despite flexibility.

- Specialized home visitors had reduced caseloads, but caseloads for most home visitors remained the same.

- Challenges developing referral pathways through homeless service providers.
**WHAT CHALLENGES DOES PROVIDING HOME VISITING SERVICES TO HOMELESS FAMILIES PRESENT?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identification</th>
<th>Engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staying in touch</td>
<td>Lack of privacy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra time and effort</td>
<td>Emotional toll</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Helping families access services and supports</td>
<td>Focusing on parent education despite unmet basic needs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
WHAT CHALLENGES DOES PROVIDING HOME VISITING SERVICES TO HOMELESS FAMILIES PRESENT?

- Identification
- Engagement
- Staying in touch
- Lack of privacy
- Extra time and effort
- Emotional toll
- Helping families access services and supports
- Focusing on parent education despite unmet basic needs
WHAT CHALLENGES DOES PROVIDING HOME VISITING SERVICES TO HOMELESS FAMILIES PRESENT?

- Identification
- Engagement
- Staying in touch
- Lack of privacy
- Extra time and effort
- Emotional toll
- Helping families access services and supports
- Focusing on parent education despite unmet basic needs
WHAT CHALLENGES DOES PROVIDING HOME VISITING SERVICES TO HOMELESS FAMILIES PRESENT?

- Identification
- Engagement
- Staying in touch
- Lack of privacy
- Extra time and effort
- Emotional toll
- Helping families access services and supports
- Focusing on parent education despite unmet basic needs

I know I’ve had home visitors who ended up doing the visit in the bathroom, because it’s the only place that the participant could go that she could have her own space.
WHAT CHALLENGES DOES PROVIDING HOME VISITING SERVICES TO HOMELESS FAMILIES PRESENT?

- Identification
- Engagement
- Staying in touch
- Lack of privacy
- Extra time and effort
- Emotional toll
- Helping families access services and supports
- Focusing on parent education despite unmet basic needs
WHAT CHALLENGES DOES PROVIDING HOME VISITING SERVICES TO HOMELESS FAMILIES PRESENT?

- Identification
- Engagement
- Staying in touch
- Lack of privacy
- Extra time and effort
- Emotional toll
- Helping families access services and supports
- Focusing on parent education despite unmet basic needs

Homeless participants can call you or text you at 3:00 in the morning. Maybe they got pulled out the place that they were staying in. . . . So they connect that trust with you to know that hey, I can call my home visitor or my doula when it's an emergency. . . . So that trust becomes super heavy, because now they're dependent on you.
WHAT CHALLENGES DOES PROVIDING HOME VISITING SERVICES TO HOMELESS FAMILIES PRESENT?

- Identification
- Engagement
- Staying in touch
- Lack of privacy
- Extra time and effort
- Emotional toll
- Helping families access services and supports
- Focusing on parent education despite unmet basic needs

So, when someone has run into homelessness, I just kind of felt a little hopeless, I really didn't know how to help them...I really just didn’t know what to do since I’ve been geared and trained to help them just with the child development.
WHAT CHALLENGES DOES PROVIDING HOME VISITING SERVICES TO HOMELESS FAMILIES PRESENT?

- Identification
- Engagement
- Staying in touch
- Lack of privacy
- Extra time and effort
- Emotional toll

You try to talk about parenting. What are your questions about child development? [It’s] a lot harder for us to kind of go into that conversation when they are trying to figure out where to lay their kid every night.

- Helping families access services and supports
- Focusing on parent education despite unmet basic needs
WHAT CHALLENGES DOES PROVIDING HOME VISITING SERVICES TO HOMELESS FAMILIES PRESENT?

- Identification
- Engagement
- Staying in touch
- Lack of privacy
- Extra time and effort
- Emotional toll
- Helping families access services and supports
- Focusing on parent education despite unmet basic needs

It’s hard to focus on what you’re there for when they’re going through a crisis. You wanna help them as much as possible but you have to be able to just provide them what you got.
HOW DID THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AFFECT HOME VISITING WITH HOMELESS FAMILIES?

Home visitors’ perspective: Virtual visits were extremely effective for engaging families.

Parent perspective: Virtual visits did NOT have a negative effect on their experiences with home visiting or their relationship with their home visitor.
Implications & Recommendations
Home visitors provide families with parenting and child development education, baby supplies, referrals to other services, and emotional support.

Home visitors need both the training and flexibility to respond to priority needs and crises.

Adequate supply of safe and affordable housing is essential.
• Involve additional homeless service providers

• Promote awareness of increased flexibility and document how home visitors leverage it

• Provide home visitors with additional training

• Implement a coordinated care model for homeless families

• Give families the option of doing virtual home visits post-pandemic
HVHF Partner Insights
• Evaluation findings are consistent with the experiences of working on the project and with programs serving this population

• Staff often feel that they aren’t doing enough to help families in need of housing

• Challenges to serving highly mobile families are real but staff are incredibly resilient and creative.
• Participants are so appreciative of the work staff are doing with them around parent-child relationships and child development.

• Comprehensive holistic approach to services is needed to meet the complex needs of families experiencing homelessness.
https://www.chapinhall.org/research/hvhf-evaluation/

Amy Dworsky: adworsky@chapinhall.org
Amanda M. Griffin: agriffin@chapinhall.org
Shawanda Jennings: sjennings@startearly.org
Questions?
Let’s Connect!

Facebook: SchoolHouse Connection

Facebook Group: Homelessness & Education - A SchoolHouse Connection Group

Instagram: @SchoolHouseConnection

Twitter: @SchoolHouseConn

Linkedin: SchoolHouse Connection
Sign up for our Mailing List!

Get on the list for important legislative updates, useful resources, webinar announcements, and news related to homelessness and education.
QUESTIONS & NEXT STEPS

Erin Patterson
Director of Education Initiatives
erin@schoolhouseconnection.org