

The Needs of Students Experiencing Homelessness: A Checklist for School and Community Partners

(This resource was created in partnership with Pearl Strategies.)

School and community partners jointly steward a variety of resources and supports that can help to meet the needs of students experiencing homelessness. This student needs checklist can serve as a starting place for school and community partners to consider how they can work together to make a difference for students and their families.

Educational Needs

- Immediate school enrollment**, even when lacking records normally required
- Assistance gathering records** once immediate enrollment and full school participation have occurred
- School stability supports**, including assistance choosing between the local school and school of origin, and school-of-origin transportation, if needed
- Support for regular school attendance** and timely intervention when school absences occur
- Supplemental academic assistance**, including tutoring, mentoring, connection to before and after school programming, credit accrual support, graduation coaching, and Title I, Part A supports
- Supplies needed for school engagement**, including materials for completing school assignments and technology equipment and connectivity
- Flexibility with school assignments**, particularly those that might require access to technology or resources that students experiencing homelessness may not have
- Support for participation in extracurricular activities**, including assistance with fees, needed equipment, and transportation
- College preparation and readiness supports**, including understanding degree and non-degree post-secondary pathways, how to select a pathway, the application process, financial supports for paying for higher education, and accessing campus-based supports once enrolled in postsecondary education
- Referrals to community-based supports**, including housing, medical and mental health care, public benefits, and other needed services
- Connections to early care and education** for families with young children experiencing homelessness

- Parent engagement supports**, including information about educational and other assistance available to their children and support for being a part of their children's education

Questions for consideration:

- Is the school providing students experiencing homelessness with all available rights and supports under the McKinney-Vento Act?
- How can community partners support school efforts?

Basic Needs

- A safe and stable place to call **home**
- Regular and predictable access to **healthy meals and snacks**
- Access to preventive and responsive medical, mental health, dental, vision and other **health-related care**
- Access to **reliable transportation**
- Clean clothes and shoes** to wear to school
- Access to **personal hygiene items**, like soap, hairbrushes, shampoo, toothbrushes, and toothpaste
- Access to **laundry and shower facilities**
- Wraparound services** to help students and families understand and access available basic needs assistance

Questions for consideration:

- What basic needs supports are available through local school and community partners?
- How can school and community partners develop clear protocols for

referring students to assistance available from one another?

Social-Emotional Needs

- A sense of **normalcy, safety, and belonging**
- A clear, consistent, and predictable **school routine**
- A sense of **choice and agency**
- School- and community-based **counseling and other mental health supports** to address trauma that may cause social and behavioral issues at school
- Support from trauma-informed educators and service providers who **understand and can respond restoratively to challenges that may be caused by homelessness**, such as fatigue, school tardiness or absences, fatigue, late or incomplete schoolwork, lack of school preparation or supplies, and emotional dysregulation
- Understanding for parents** who seem frustrated or disengaged from their children's education because they may be feeling stressed and overwhelmed with the upheaval caused by homelessness

Questions for consideration:

- How can school and community partners train staff to understand the social-emotional needs of students and families experiencing homelessness and respond in a trauma-informed way?