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Program Strategies

Four suggestions to assist homeless education.

Transportation Strategies

- Coordinate with local housing authorities and placement agencies to house students near their school of origin.
- Re-route school buses (including special education, magnet school and other buses), and ensure that buses travel to shelters, transitional living programs, and motels where homeless students reside.
- Develop close ties among local educational agency (LEA) homeless liaisons, school staff and pupil transportation staff, and designate a district-level point of contact to arrange and coordinate transportation.
- Provide passes for public transportation, including passes for caretakers and older siblings when necessary.
- Take advantage of transportation systems used by public assistance agencies.
- Reimburse parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth for gas.
- Use approved van or taxi services.
- Use local funds for transportation.
- Purchase gas vouchers to assist parents, but verify school attendance.
- Use early and late school buses for access to extra curricular activities.
- Collect and utilize community and faith-based donations for transportation costs.
- Contact public transportation to offer bus tokens and passes at discounted rates for homeless students and families.
- Collaborate with other LEAs to discuss transportation issues and solutions.
- Use vans from other agencies (including Boys and Girls Club, faith-based organizations, and shelters).
- Include transportation in board policies and LEA Plan.
- Allow the transportation department to be part of the solution.

Identification Strategies

- Coordinate with community services agencies, such as shelters, soup kitchens, food banks, street outreach teams, drop-in centers, welfare and housing agencies, public health departments, and faith-based organizations.
- Provide outreach materials and posters where there is a frequent influx of low-income families and youth in high-risk situations, including motels and campgrounds.
- Develop relationships with truancy officials and/or other attendance offices.
- Provide awareness activities for school staff (registrars, secretaries, school counselors, school social workers, school nurses, teachers, bus drivers, administrators, etc.)
- Make special efforts to identify preschool children, including asking about the siblings of school-age children.
- Use enrollment and withdrawal forms to inquire about living situations.
- Have students draw or write about where they live.
- Avoid using the word "homeless" in initial contacts with school personnel, families, or youth.
- Develop and implement districtwide identification form and put it in each registration packet.
- Identify a site liaison at each school to identify and assist homeless students.
- Sort students by address in database to identify double-up situations.
- Conduct family nights to offer health checks, services, and resources.
- Conduct home visits to determine doubled-up situations and verification.
- Collaborate with other LEAs in the area.

- Collaborate with migrant education programs to assist with identification.
- Work with school counselors and outreach workers to work with families and youth.

Title I Strategies

- Establish a formula or other method to allocate Title I set-asides for homeless children and youth.
- Use Title I funds (including set-aside funds) to support the LEA homeless liaison position and to meet basic needs of students experiencing homelessness (clothing, supplies, health).
- Use Title I funds to provide tutoring and/or outreach services to children and youth living in shelters, transitional living programs, motels, and other temporary residencies.
- Pool Title I and McKinney-Vento funds to provide a comprehensive program for homeless students, ensuring that specific needs of children experiencing homelessness or high mobility are met.
- Ensure that the needs of children experiencing homelessness are taken into account in the needs assessments that are required for schoolwide programs.
- Make appropriate testing accommodations for children who are homeless; for example, having opportunities to make up tests if children are absent on testing day.
- Ensure that local liaisons are trained to collect achievement data for all homeless students and that district records systems enable this data collection while taking into account confidentiality issues.

Enrollment Strategies

- Train all school enrollment staff, secretaries, school counselors, school social workers, and principals on the legal requirements for enrollment.
- Review LEA policies and revise them as necessary.
- Develop alternative caretaker forms, enrollment forms for unaccompanied youth, and other forms to replace typical proof of guardianship, ensuring they do not create further barriers or delay enrollment.
- Accept school records directly from families and youth.
- Establish immunization databases, school-based immunization clinics, or mobile health units.
- Be sensitive about smoothly integrating new students into the classroom and school community.

Preschool Strategies

- Connect with First 5 California, Universal Preschool, and Head Start.
- Connect with child development programs in your county and district.
- Expand child care opportunities.
- Build relationships with local daycare center and community resources.
- Allow parents to enroll their children after deadlines.
- Pay for additional staff hours to increase the number of preschool age students.
- Offer clinic referrals by district nurses.
- Use caseworker or eligibility workers to assist with identification and enrollment.
- Educate regarding "priority enrollment" for preschool students.
- Develop identification forms to include slots for siblings and their ages.
- Train an outreach person to identify, enroll, and assist homeless preschool students.
- Educate preschools in your area regarding homeless education provisions.
- Utilize *Feed the Children* resources for students.
- Offer family nights at shelters to provide information and resources.
- Use referrals from Social Services Agencies and non-profit agencies to identify homeless preschool students.
- Utilize Healthy Start programs to identify homeless preschool students.
- Bring awareness to parents of the value of preschool.
- Develop State and Federal preschool guidelines with No Child Left Behind (NCLB) requirements for homeless.

Special Education Strategies

- Educate special education staff, including the director, regarding homeless education provisions.
- Have special education staff educate homeless liaisons on special education provisions.
- Be available for participating in individualized education programs (IEPs) to support parents and/or unaccompanied youth and share information.
- Give parents copies of all IEP paperwork in folder to save.
- Pay for staff to expedite assessments.
- Contact special education local plan area personnel in your area to share information at one of their meetings regarding homeless education and foster youth provisions.
- Contact Parent Resource Network to contact the homeless liaison if the student is homeless.
- Meet annually with school psychologists to inform them of any homeless students with special needs.
- Develop policies, procedures, and board policies for systemic changes.
- Arrange for surrogate or caregiver for unaccompanied youth.
- Develop memorandums of understanding between school and social services.
- Utilize County Resource Collaborative.

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