



Chapter 4: Families Experiencing Homelessness

Checklist Questions: State/Territory Strategies to Increase Access to High-Quality Child Care for Families Experiencing Homelessness

The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Final Rule has made children experiencing homelessness a priority category, which means that Lead Agencies shall give such children priority for services (45 C.F.R. § 98.46, 2016). The CCDF Final Rule also defines “child experiencing homelessness,” adopting the definition in section 725 of Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a), which aligns with other federal early childhood programs, including Head Start.

This definition of homelessness means those lacking “a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence” and includes but is not limited to children:

- ◆ “Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason”;
- ◆ “Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations”;
- ◆ “Who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings”; or
- ◆ “Migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described above.”

For more information about this definition, visit the U.S. Department of Education’s website at <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/education-department-releases-guidance-homeless-children-and-youth>.

The following questions are designed to help you think about addressing the needs of infants, toddlers, and families experiencing homelessness in your State or Territory. All questions may not be applicable to your plans for increasing the supply and quality of child care for this population. The questions are provided as prompts to help initiate the conversation about this issue in your State or Territory.

Assessing Need and Level of Service Provided

- ◆ What data do you have and what data do you need on the number of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness who need child care in your State or Territory (e.g., data from local, state, and federal partners, including state homeless education coordinators)?
- ◆ What data do you have and what data do you need on the number of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness who are in child care settings in your State or Territory (e.g., data from local, state, and federal partners, including Early Head Start and Part C coordinators)?
- ◆ What funding streams pay for child care for infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness in your State or Territory (e.g., CCDF funds, Early Head Start funds, or other funds)?
- ◆ Does your State or Territory have a tracking system for how long infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness stay in child care and why they leave (e.g., family moves, no longer eligible)?



- ◆ Does your State or Territory have a system for assessing the quality level of child care programs serving infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness (e.g., a quality rating and improvement system)?
- ◆ Does your State or Territory have a clear understanding of the definitions used to identify homelessness? Does your State or Territory use appropriate definitions when assessing needs and developing services that support access to high-quality care?
- ◆ Does your State or Territory have a plan for offering training to child care programs about trauma-informed care? Does it address the needs of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness?

State-Level Planning and Collaboration

- ◆ Does your State or Territory have a plan to increase the accessibility of high-quality infant toddler child care for families experiencing homelessness? A data map that specifies the State's or Territory's populations of families experiencing homelessness as well as the ages of children experiencing homelessness is one way to support development of this plan.
 - Who collaborates in the creation and implementation of this plan? Consider the following suggestions of state-level collaborators as well as other potential partners:
 - Head Start collaboration directors;
 - McKinney-Vento State homeless education coordinators;
 - Part C coordinators;
 - Early childhood comprehensive systems coordinators;
 - Child Care and Development Fund Administrators and technical assistance staff;
 - Workforce development agencies;
 - Department of education administrators;
 - Universal prekindergarten representatives;
 - Statewide child care resource and referral agencies;
 - State longitudinal data systems administrators;
 - State advisory councils on early childhood education and care;
 - Task forces or coalitions that address homelessness;
 - Child protective services; and
 - State department of transitional assistance.
 - Does the plan outline action steps and goals or outcomes that are specific to each partner participating in the collaboration process?
 - Does the team of collaborating partners meet regularly to review the plan and the outcome data, and determine next steps?
- ◆ Do you have a plan for defining, collecting and sharing the outcome data or reports with appropriate agencies and policymakers?
- ◆ Is there a State or Territory emergency plan for disasters?
 - Does it include a plan for providing child care for families who are temporarily homeless?
 - Does it include a plan for the recovery of infant and toddler child care services in affected areas?



State Policy Development

- ◆ What state or territory child care policies, strategies, and procedures do you have in place that support child care services for children of families experiencing homelessness? The following are some examples:
 - Outreach procedures, that are culturally and linguistically responsive, to identify and offer services to families experiencing homelessness;
 - Communication with agencies serving families experiencing homelessness about the CCDF program, the importance of high quality child care for children experiencing homelessness, and how families can locate a high-quality program;
 - Child care subsidy information and/or staff at homeless shelter programs to facilitate the application process;
 - Materials designed specifically for families experiencing homelessness on choosing infant and toddler child care and applying for child care subsidies;
 - Priority eligibility for families experiencing homelessness with children younger than 3 years;
 - Alignment and collaboration with existing programs, such as Early Head Start, that have policies and practices in place to identify, engage in outreach, prioritize eligibility, and provide services to families experiencing homelessness;
 - Expedited processing of child care subsidy applications for families experiencing homelessness;
 - Expanded definition of CCDF eligibility for families to include job search and housing search;
 - Job training included as a qualifying activity for eligibility;
 - Waivers or grace periods to provide documentation (e.g., income, financial statements, documentation of child's age, immunizations records);
 - Housing assistance exempted as countable income;
 - Waived copayments;
 - Procedures to facilitate serving mobile families experiencing homelessness;
 - Grants and contracts to increase supply, including dedicated slots for infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness;
 - Targeted technical assistance (TA) for providers and educators serving families and youth experiencing homelessness, including school district homeless liaisons and programs serving pregnant and parenting youth;
 - Specific resources for child care programs to provide or refer families experiencing homelessness to more comprehensive services;
 - Transportation support or vouchers to child care that accommodates the unique needs of infants and toddlers;
 - Child care during nontraditional and irregular hours is encouraged with the provision of additional resources, such as increased reimbursement rates and flexible subsidy policies;
 - Regulatory policies that encourage location of child care near families experiencing homelessness, such as shelters or food pantries;



- Training for child care providers, TA staff, and subsidy staff on the national, state, and local data on homelessness and the impact of homelessness on families and their infants and toddlers;
- Training for child care providers, TA staff, and subsidy staff on identification of families experiencing homelessness, positive outreach strategies, supportive policies, additional resources, and supportive communication that engages families in a plan for the care of their infants and toddlers;
- Policies that address the unique needs of families who are temporarily homeless after a disaster;
- Criteria for program staff in agencies and in child care settings to receive training on trauma-informed care, be familiar with housing supports, and be connected with homeless services; and
- Co-location of family support agencies (CCDF, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, Medicaid) or a streamlined application process for these types of services to minimize the disruption of the application/reauthorization process on work schedules and travel demands.

Local-Level Planning and Collaboration

- ◆ Are there plans at the local level to increase access of high-quality infant and toddler care for families experiencing homelessness?
 - Which agencies collaborate in creating and implementing that plan?
 - If there is not a plan in place, lead agencies can reach out to local homeless coalitions, agencies, early childhood councils, and educators that serve families experiencing homelessness, to help develop a plan.
- ◆ The Administration for Children and Families (2001) provides the following as potential local-level partners to collaborate with when serving families experiencing homelessness:
 - Local early intervention or early learning councils;
 - Local educational agencies/school districts/local homeless liaisons;
 - Head Start and Early Head Start programs;
 - Local child care providers;
 - Housing and Urban Development Continuums of Care programs;
 - Domestic violence shelters;
 - Homeless coalitions; and
 - Child care resource and referral agencies; and
 - Child protective services (p.1)



References

Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Program, 81 Fed. Reg. 67438 (September 30, 2016) (codified at 45 C.F.R. Part 98). Retrieved from <https://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-2016-09-30/pdf/2016-22986.pdf>

Definitions of Homelessness for Federal Program Serving Children, Youth, and Families. (n.d.). Retrieved January 9, 2017, from https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/eecd/homelessness_definition.pdf

The State Capacity Building Center (SCBC) works with State and Territory leaders and their partners to create innovative early childhood systems and programs that improve results for children and families. The SCBC is funded by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Child Care.

**State Capacity Building Center,
A Service of the Office of Child Care**

9300 Lee Highway
Fairfax, VA 22031

Phone: 877-296-2401
Email: CapacityBuildingCenter@ecetta.info

Subscribe to Updates
http://www.occ-cmc.org/occannouncements_sign-up/



ADMINISTRATION FOR
CHILDREN & FAMILIES