



Integration of Housing Services & McKinney-Vento (MKV) Homeless Student Education

A research brief proposed for the California Department of Education

Jeremy Simon GSPP, PLUS Fellow Spring 2024

BACKGROUND:

There are two major institutions supporting California's students facing homelessness, the California Department of Education (CDE) and Continuum of Cares (CoCs). CDE oversees public education and holds local educational agencies accountable for student achievement. CoCs are the regional or local branch that coordinates homelessness funding for services and housing. The integration of both of these agencies is vital to fully supporting homeless students and their families.

California is home to almost a quarter of the United States' homeless children population (0-18) and a third of youth homelessness (0-24), with CDE identifying 246,480 students facing homelessness during the 2022-23 school year. During the 2022-23 school year, 93,080 students were identified by CoCs as eligible for housing services in their identification system (HMIS). During the same school year, CDE identified 41,163 HMIS eligible students, missing approximately 51,917 students across the state that were accounted for in the HMIS system.

RESEARCH GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

This research explores how housing and education services can better align to meet the comprehensive needs of students facing homelessness to truly support the opportunity to stay and succeed in school. Specifically, this research will highlight:

- a) Data collected by CDE and CoCs, demonstrating data misalignment and the need for enhanced data collaboration between these agencies.
- b) The newly available dwelling-type data released by CDE to explore areas of most need for students facing homelessness.
- c) Explore strategies for increased alignment and improved services for students facing homelessness.

METHODS

- **Interviews** with 9 County of Education staff (COE), 2 Continuum of Care (CoC) employee, education/housing non-profit organizations, and recipients of HUD programming
- **Review of COE survey** (2022, 2023) of 45 participants. This survey focused on coordination efforts among COE and CoC in all California districts.
- **Comparing housing and education data** to understand the newly public dwelling-type data from CDE and comparing it with publicly available housing data.

KEY INSIGHTS & FINDINGS:

- A recommended best practice is to have **COE staff serve on the CoC board and attend CoC meetings to share MKV homeless student needs** and learn what housing support is locally available for homeless families. (*Julie Luera, West Contra Costa USD*) ([Database to find CoC contact](#))
- **COEs/LEAs can gain view-only or edit access to HMIS**, which would give them more detailed information about families and also share information about local organizations posting into the system with other services (*Jennifer Kottke, Los Angeles County Office of Education*)
- **Nevada County has a pilot case manager position this year, housed in the County Office of Ed.** but funded through a CoC grant (ESG-CV2). It has been highly successful to ensure warm hand-offs to services, removing barriers to education, etc. **This position also holds a Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) license.** (*Melissa Parrett, Nevada County Office of Education*)

RECOMMENDATIONS

Ensuring CoC boards save seats for education staff to attend meetings:

It is valuable to have an education staff member on the board of CoCs to both better understand what housing is locally available for homeless families and share resources/data from the school systems.

Ensure education staff have read/edit access of HMIS:

HMIS includes much more detailed information about families than typically known by education staff. Having read and edit access to HMIS allows for school staff to understand the full range of support being offered to their students and reduces retraumatizing families since their story would already be in the system. It allows for more coordinator and wrap-around services.

Uplift youth voices: It is important to hear from youth experiencing homelessness, especially students younger than 18 who are still in school, since their voice is often left out. (*SchoolHouse Connection*, <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/youth-leadership/voices/>) and (*Y-PLAN civic leadership initiative*, *MKV 2021 StoryMap*, <https://y-plan.berkeley.edu/showcase/>)

Adapt the housing questionnaire (filled out by all students during the school year) to include more detailed information to better understand if their family qualifies for housing support:

The housing questionnaire is often the first time a student is identified as homeless and the questionnaire can be an important tool for understanding the needs of the student and their family. The housing questionnaire should include: Veteran status of guardians (there are specific HUD funding streams to support Veterans), pre-school members of family, release of information (in order for data to be shared between education and housing agencies), and which specific service the family would like to be referred to. Additionally, the housing questionnaire should include an indicator for students and families to understand if they qualify for services and the contact information for local resources to give them agency in finding support.