

## Early Childhood Education and Head Start Provisions for Homeless Children

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Tim Stahlke, Education Consultant



This presentation includes some information used with permission and adapted from [www.schoolhouseconnection.org](http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org)

1

## About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. SHC provides strategic advocacy and technical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- Website: <http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org>
- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships



2

## Education Leads Home: A National Campaign Building Stronger Futures for Homeless Students

- Young children will participate in quality early childhood programs at the same rate as their housed peers by 2026.
- High school students will reach a 90 percent graduation rate by 2030.
- Post-secondary students will reach a 60 percent post-secondary attainment rate by 2034.



[www.educationleadshome.org](http://www.educationleadshome.org)

3

## Overview

1. Background
2. Early Childhood Overview
3. Partnership Approaches
  - a. Kristi Byfield, David Douglas School District, OR
  - b. Melinda Bordelon, Rapides Parish School Board, LA
4. Questions, discussion and resources

4

## Young Children and Homelessness

5

## National Data on Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers Experiencing Homelessness

24,139,090 children < 6 live in the U.S.

1,211,348 children < 6 experienced homelessness in 2015

1 in 20 US children experienced homelessness in 2015



Source: ACF 50 State Profile & Institute for Children, Poverty and Homelessness

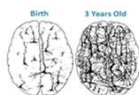
6

## Why The First Five Years Matter:

"Early Years as Foundation"

### Homelessness Harms Children

- lower birth weights
- acute/chronic health problems
- hunger, sleep deprivation
- developmental delays, trauma, social/emotional/behavioral issues
- repeat a school grade, be expelled or suspended, or drop out of high school



7

## Homelessness Harms Young Children

- Experiences of homelessness and housing instability in early childhood are associated with delays in children's language, literacy, and social-emotional development.
- Homeless infants and toddlers are more likely to experience later child welfare involvement and early school failure.
- The longer a young child experiences homelessness, the more that negative health outcomes are magnified, causing lifelong effects on the child, and in turn, the family and community.
- More than 1 out of 3 (39%) homeless young women are pregnant or parenting.

<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/ECE-Overview-SHC-December-2017-1.pdf>

8

## Mobility vs. Access and Attendance

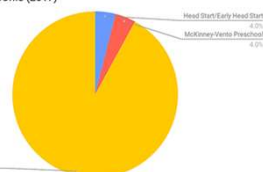
Homelessness and high mobility are associated with higher risks than poverty alone. Findings strongly suggest that the goal of closing the achievement gaps observed for children in the United States is going to require explicit attention to homelessness and high mobility and that **strategies that work for stable children may prove inappropriate or insufficient for mobile children** as mobility itself poses challenges for interventions or policies aimed at addressing the issues of these children and families.

(Ann Masten, *Ordinary Magic*, 2014, p.111)

9

## National Data on Infants, Toddlers and Preschoolers Experiencing Homelessness

Source:  
ACF 50 State Profile (2017)



10

## Well-being of Young Children after Experiencing Homelessness

"Consistent with findings from early care and education research on children in poverty, enrollment in Head Start and other early education or center-based care programs was associated with greater school readiness among children who had been in emergency shelters with their families.

**Housing instability** in center-based child care and education centers that were not identified as Head **was associated with drops** in enrollment Start."

(OPRE Report No. 2017-06, January 2017)

11

## Legal Definition of Homelessness for Early Care and Education Programs

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 reason.
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters.
- Living in a public or private place not designed for or regularly used as accommodations.
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

12

### Fixed, Regular, and Adequate

**Fixed:** Securely placed; not subject to change or fluctuation

- A fixed residence is one that is stationary, permanent, and not subject to change.

**Regular:** Normal, standard

- A regular residence is one which is used on a regular (i.e. nightly) basis.

**Adequate:** Sufficient for a specific requirement; lawfully and reasonably sufficient

- An adequate residence is one that is sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.

13

13

## McKinney-Vento & Children Experiencing Homelessness

14

14

### Overcoming Homelessness Through Education

- The McKinney-Vento Act
  - Removing barriers
  - School of origin
  - Transportation
  - Immediate enrollment
  - Getting to graduation and beyond
- Title I

15

15

### McKinney-Vento liaisons must ensure that:

- Homeless children and youth are identified by school personnel through outreach and coordination with other entities and agencies;
- Homeless children and youth are enrolled and have full and equal opportunity to succeed in school;
- Homeless families, children and youth receive educational services for which they are eligible, **including Head Start**, early intervention (IDEA Part C), and preschool programs administered by the LEA;
- Homeless families, children, and youth receive referrals to health, dental, mental health, housing, substance abuse, and other appropriate services.



16

16

### McKinney-Vento: School of Origin

The school attended when permanently housed or the school in which last enrolled, including a preschool.

Includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level for all feeder schools, when the student completes the final grade level served by the school of origin.



17

17

### McKinney-Vento: School of Origin

The school attended when permanently housed or the school in which last enrolled, including a preschool.

What is a "preschool"?

- Publicly-funded program for children 0-5 for which the LEA is a financial or administrative agent, or is accountable for providing early childhood education.
- Preschools operated, administered or funded by an LEA, including funded by Title I or similar govt. Grants.
- Head Start programs receiving LEA funding or for which the LEA is the grant recipient.
- Preschool special education.
- LEA funded or administered home-based early childhood services.

18

18

## McKinney-Vento: Preschool Enrollment

- Immediate enrollment applies to preschools, as long as there is space.
  - McKinney-Vento children should be prioritized on wait lists.
  - Some preschool programs hold slots open for McKinney-Vento children.
- State McKinney-Vento plans must describe procedures that ensure that homeless children have access to public preschool programs administered by the SEA or LEAs.



19

19

## McKinney-Vento: Collaborations

The McKinney-Vento Act names several collaborative partners, either by program name or by general description (e.g., local housing agencies), with which local liaisons must work to meet the needs of homeless children and youth.

These include:

- Head Start
- Continuums of Care



20

20

## McKinney-Vento: Continuums of Care

Contacts for each CoC are provided online at the following website:  
<https://www.hudexchange.info/grantees>

Each CoC is charged with identifying resources and areas of need and developing a plan for serving homeless persons in their area.

- This planning document will contain much of the community information that schools will need to effectively serve homeless students by providing referrals.
- In addition, CoCs and their agency members are required to collaborate with the school district's local liaison to ensure the educational needs of children and youth are considered.
- This includes placing families in shelters or other housing close to the school of origin when possible.

21

21

## Title I: LEA Title I Plans Getting to Graduation & Beyond!

Don't Forget Pregnant/Parenting Students!

- Must be coordinated with McKinney-Vento programs.
- Must describe the services provided to McKinney-Vento students, including with reserved funds, to support their enrollment, attendance and success.
- Could involve partnership and collaborations with teen parent programs, on-site Head Start/Child Care at public schools and colleges, college search/admissions/scholarships, etc.

22

22

## Early Childhood Systems & Services

23

23

## Pathways to Partnership: Early Childhood

- Head Start and Early Head Start
- CCDF and Child Care
- Pre-K
- IDEA
- Home Visiting
- Overview of each program, eligibility, homelessness requirements:
  - <https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/pathways-to-partnership-early-childhood-education/>

24

24

# Head Start and Early Head Start

25

25

## Head Start and Early Head Start

- Early Head Start – pregnant women and children ages birth to 3 years
  - Less than 5 % of those eligible
- Head Start – preschool-aged children 3-, 4-and 5-year-olds
  - Less than 50% of those eligible
- Program options:
  - Full-day/full-year; school-day/school-year; part-day/part year moving to more full day
  - Family child care home
  - Home-based (home visiting)
  - New Early Head Start-Child Care Partnership
- Categorical eligibility includes **Homelessness (McKinney-Vento definition)**

26

26

## Head Start & Early Head Start: A Perfect Match for Homeless Families

- Head Start *does not* charge fee or copay
- Head Start comprehensive, two-generational, partnership model helps ensure access to stabilizing supports
- Head Start can reserve up to 3% of funded capacity for children experiencing homelessness
- Head Start programs are required to:
  - Identify and prioritize homeless children for enrollment
  - Allow enrollment then assist in gathering paperwork
  - Establish MOU with LEA and coordinate with LEA liaisons



27

27

## Head Start Program Performance Standards: "in Brief"

- HS/EHS programs must **develop a community needs assessment** at least once every five years. This assessment must reflect the needs of homeless children.
- Homeless children are **categorically eligible** for HS/EHS based on the ED definition of homeless and without the need for income verification.
- HS/EHS have a variety of **flexible options for verifying and documenting** a child's homeless status for purposes of program eligibility.

28

28

## Head Start Program Performance Standards: "in Brief"

- HS/EHS programs may **reserve up to 3% of funded slots for homeless** and foster children.
- HS/EHS programs must provide a **grace period** for homeless families to meet immunization requirements and must assist with getting needed immunizations.
- HS/EHS programs must **establish collaborative relationships and partnerships** with the local LEA liaison and homeless service providers.

29

29

# CCDF and Child care

30

30

## Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF)

CCDF is the largest source of federal funding to help pay for child care for low-income working families.

- Has served 1.4 million children under age 13 from 850,000 low-income working families each month.
- Provided \$5.8 billion in discretionary and mandatory/matching funds in FY17 to States, Territories and Tribes.
- 83% funding increase in FY18

**Note:** CCDF underpins the infrastructure of child care services nationwide.



31

## CCDF Requirements

The CCDBG Act of 2014 and CCDF Regulations require:

- Procedures to permit enrollment of children experiencing homelessness prior to completion of all required documentation (including grace periods for compliance with immunization and other health and safety requirements).
- Training and technical assistance on identifying and serving homeless families.
- Specific outreach to families experiencing homelessness.
- Coordination with programs working with children experiencing homelessness.
- Lead Agencies to collect and report whether a CCDF family is experiencing homelessness.

32

## States are Considering:

Some strategies states have considered to increase services to children and families experiencing homelessness are:

- Waiving copayments
- Prioritization through protective services status
- Reserve capacity through vouchers, grants & contracts
- Tiered reimbursement
- Training and outreach plans
- Data collection
- New collaborations

33

## Child Care for Families Experiencing Homelessness

**What:** States had to submit their Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan for 2019-2021 by June 30, 2018. These plans will determine how outreach and services to homeless children and families are carried out.

**Opportunity for action:** Each Lead Agency had to post their draft State Plan for review and solicit and consider input on the draft.

34

## Pre-K

35

## State Pre-k for 4's or 3's & 4's

- State funding of preschool services
  - Often guided by local councils and community partnerships
  - Private funds may drive or supplement state funding
- State-level leadership and funding to LEAs and communities
  - School or community-based providers
  - Targeted or universal designs
  - State administration varies
  - May or may not include support services
- Most states now have some type of state Pre-k system

36

### Federal Pre-K for 4's

- Federal Preschool Development Grants (PDG) to State Education Agencies (SEA) for Pre-k for 4-year olds
  - To develop state Pre-K capacity or expand existing state Pre-K
- **Must use comprehensive model:**
  - Include social services and parent engagement
  - Ideally use Head Start comprehensive services model
  - States define 'comprehensive' which can affect supports for homeless students
- Family income at or below 200% federal poverty
- Enhances teacher salaries

37

## Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

38

### Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA)

- Federal funds to states under IDEA
- Part B, Section 619
  - Ages 3-5, Preschool Special Education
  - McKinney-Vento protections also apply
- Part C
  - Infants and Toddlers – Early Intervention
- Child Find: process to identify eligible children, must include outreach to children experiencing homelessness.

39

## Home Visiting

40

### Benefits of Home Visiting

- #1:** Improved prenatal, maternal, and child health outcomes
- #2:** Enhanced social-emotional, language cognitive, and physical development
- #3:** Reduced child maltreatment and injury
- #4:** Increased school readiness
- #5:** Improved coordination with and connection to social services and community resources

41

### Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting Program – MIECHV

- Administered by the federal Maternal and Child Health Bureau (MCHB).
- Federal block grant through Affordable Care Act to states with additional supplemental grant opportunities.
- 18 approved (2017) evidence-based models, e.g., Early Head Start Home-based, Healthy Families America (HFA), **Parents as Teachers (PAT)**, Nurse-Family Partnership, Home Instruction for Parents of Preschool Youngsters (**HIPPY**),
- Provides information and practical supports for families.
- Letter to states **strongly recommending** prioritizing families experiencing homelessness.

42

## Partnership Approaches – Reaching Across Systems

43

## State Points of Contact

### Laterals to McKinney-Vento State Coordinators:

- Head Start – State Head Start Collaboration Director
- CCDF – State Child Care Administrator
- Pre-K – Early Childhood Specialist(s) in State Departments of Education
- IDEA – State Lead for Part C & State Lead for Preschool Special Education
- Home Visiting – State Lead for MIECHV

44

## Multnomah Early Childhood Program, David Douglas School District, OR

Kristi Byfield,  
Assistant Administrator



45

## Deeper Dives for Schools

- Started a little over a year ago with an idea that we needed to really look at our youngest learners and create some practical strategies to serve young children experiencing homelessness.
- Created 4, one-page tip sheets that share strategies, available at Schoolhouse Connection

<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/deeper-dives-for-schools-practical-strategies-to-serve-young-children-experiencing-homelessness/>

46

## Questions, Discussion, Resources

47

## Tools

1. US DHHS ACF Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tools
  - a. <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/ecd/interagency-projects/ece-services-for-homeless-children/self-assessment-tool-family-shelters>
2. Housing and Homeless Services Childproofing Checklist
  - a. <https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/childproofing-checklist-for-housing-and-homeless-service-providers/>



48



## Training & Technical Assistance

Office of Child Care & Office of Child Care National Centers

**"NEW"** Head Start, Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center:  
<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/search/eclkc?q=homelessness+modules>

National Center on Subsidy Innovation and Accountability:  
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/centers/national-center-child-care-subsidy-innovation-and-accountability>

Child Care State Capacity Building Center:  
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/centers/child-care-state-capacity-building-center>

49

49

## Training & Technical Assistance

Office of Child Care & Office of Child Care National Centers

National Center for Tribal Early Childhood Development:  
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/centers/national-center-tribal-early-childhood-development>

Early Childhood Health and Wellness:  
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/centers/national-center-early-childhood-health-and-wellness>

National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement:  
<https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/centers/national-center-parent-family-and-community-engagement>

50

50

## Reports: US DHHS Administration for Children and Families

HHS-HUD-ED Early Childhood Homelessness  
 Policy Statement

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ecd/expanding-early-care-and-education-for-homeless-children>



51

51

## Reports: US DHHS Administration for Children and Families

Well-being of Young Children after Experiencing  
 Homelessness

<https://www.acf.hhs.gov/opre/research/project/homeless-families-research-briefs>



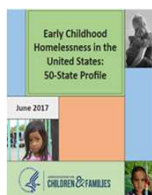
52

52

## Data Resources

Updated Early Childhood Homelessness in the United States: 50-  
 State Profile

[https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/epfp\\_50\\_state\\_profiles\\_6\\_15\\_17\\_508.pdf](https://www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/ecd/epfp_50_state_profiles_6_15_17_508.pdf)



53

53

## Data Resources

Out of the Shadows: A State-by-State Ranking of Accountability  
 for Homeless Students

<http://www.icphusa.org/national/shadows-state-state-ranking-accountability-homeless-students/>



54

54

### **Contact Information**

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55



## **“Deeper Dives” for Schools**

### **Practical Strategies to Serve Young Children Experiencing Homelessness**

#### **1. Collaborating for Success**

##### Where to start: It’s all about relationships.

- Reach out! McKinney-Vento liaisons can make email or phone contact with early care and education programs in their communities. (Use our [Pathways to Partnership tool](#) to get started.) Early care and education providers can contact McKinney-Vento liaisons in local school districts. ([Your McKinney-Vento State Coordinator](#) can provide contact information.)
- Realize relationships are about people, not programs. It will take time (maybe years) to build relationships and develop rapport. Be persistent.
- Be available and positive. Say “How might we do it?” vs. “It can’t be done.”
- Designate a person who is passionate about young children and homelessness to do the work. I do this work because it is the thing that gets me up in the morning and brings me to work.

##### Ask to join existing meetings or set up your own meetings.

- Make sure the right people are at the table. Do they have the ability to change policy and procedures that might be getting in the way?
  - Example: If you want to ensure children experiencing homelessness receive screenings and referrals for early intervention or early childhood special education: Are the team members who manage screenings and referrals present? Do they understand homelessness and associated trauma? Are they compassionate and understanding about what they might hear and see? Can they understand screenings may need to be done at a shelter, motel, public location or coffee shop? Can they make accommodations to work outside the “normal” work day (evenings, weekends, etc.) when families experiencing homelessness can be available?
- Set up regular meetings (monthly may be a good frequency to start) and attend every time. Show through your actions that this topic is important. The whole range of providers of early care and education should be at the table every time, not just twice a year, or when invited.
- Early care and education providers, as well as McKinney-Vento liaisons, should be asked to bring information and share resources as equal partners at the regular meetings. Everyone is a participant, not just an attendee.
- Get out of the office. Meet at shelters, schools and early childhood programs. Share information with those running the programs.

##### Keep the lines of communication open.

- Share resources and information often and openly.
- Share data on the number of families and children experiencing homelessness across programs and providers. Help each other gather data.



## **“Deeper Dives” for Schools**

### **Practical Strategies to Serve Young Children Experiencing Homelessness**

#### **2. Preparing staff and systems**

The realities of homelessness can make it challenging for families to comply with standard policies of many early care and education programs. Families may struggle to organize documents; they may have challenges keeping children’s clothes clean. Children receiving classroom-based services may arrive late or early; they may forget their backpack; they may arrive without having eaten.

##### Think of the small things that make a big difference.

- Do your attendance slips say “tardy” or do they say “We’re so glad you made it today”?
- Do you have signs on your door that say “No entry until 8:00 am” or do the signs say “Come in. We are so happy to see you.” **OR** “This room will open at 8:00 am. You are welcome to go to \_\_\_\_\_ if you arrive before then.” (Designate a safe, comfortable, indoor space where children can go.)
- If possible, create a laundry space, with a washer/dryer that parents can use discreetly. Provide the detergent.
- Set up a computer that parents can use to fill out forms, job applications, and other documentation. They are unlikely to have this resource elsewhere, and offering it can help build a partnership with parents. Provide a printer with paper free of charge.

##### Prepare your staff to understand and respond to the needs of families experiencing homelessness.

- Provide training on homelessness and poverty locally and trauma-informed care.
  - This training should not be a “one and done” training, but ongoing.
  - Provide information to staff in multiple ways, including paper copies, online resources, videos, and social media.
- Provide training on the differences between poverty and safety concerns. Staff might feel that something is a safety concern, when really it is a troubling but not dangerous consequence of the living situations families are experiencing.

##### Work as a team to meet the needs of children and families.

- Make sure whoever maintains data is identifying children experiencing homelessness and able to report that data.
- Help transportation providers understand the reality of homelessness and mobility, and their importance in making sure children can access services.
  - Example: If a child needs a bus to access services, and the family is living in an unstable or hidden location (such as a park, car, or domestic violence shelter) does the transportation database support “little grocery store on the corner of X and Y Streets” for the transportation request? Does the transportation office know who to connect with if they run into problems arranging transportation for a child who is experiencing homelessness?”



## **“Deeper Dives” for Schools**

### **Practical Strategies to Serve Young Children Experiencing Homelessness**

#### **3. Streamlining enrollment and participation**

Cross-train staff so every program is able to begin the enrollment and/or screening process for other programs, providing a single point of entry for early care and education.

- Early intervention and early childhood special education programs can provide training(s) on their screening tools to other early childhood providers, shelters and agencies serving families. Those programs can have the screening tools available on site. With training and supportive relationships with providers, those programs can assist the family to get the screening and referrals completed.
  - Early intervention and early childhood special education programs can give other programs a direct phone line to someone who can help them if they get stuck in the process somewhere or need help.
- McKinney-Vento liaisons can provide housing questionnaires and school enrollment forms to early childhood programs and shelters, and train them to provide pre-enrollment for families with school-age children and to connect parents to the liaison immediately.
- Child Care Resource and Referral programs can train other early childhood providers and McKinney-Vento liaisons about how to help families access child care subsidies, including triggering the prioritization for families experiencing homelessness.
- Head Start and preschool programs can share their applications and contact McKinney-Vento liaisons and shelters immediately when they have an opening.

Make information and applications as accessible as possible.

- Make applications and screening tools available both online (including mobile-accessible) and in hard copy.
- Create a single source of contact information for all programs. Use our [Pathways to Partnership tool](#) as a guide.
  - Include McKinney-Vento liaisons, child care resources, Head Start and Early Head Start, preschool, early intervention, and early childhood special education programs contacts.
  - Post the information online, in schools, and in public locations, such as shelters, motels, libraries, health clinics, campgrounds, laundromats, and soup kitchens.
  - Be sure the contact information will connect parents to a person who can answer questions and provide immediate assistance.
  - Use person first language (families experiencing homelessness vs. homeless family), and be sure the information provided represents families respectfully. Be mindful of photos and images used on information sheets.

Share information appropriately to expedite services.

- Obtain releases of information at the point of intake or referral so you can talk with schools, providers, early care and education programs, and other agencies and stay connected with the family.
- With families' permission, collect information that will streamline their enrollment in other programs and share it with programs for which children are eligible.
- Establish a system where shelters provide information daily about current residents and whether they have young children or school-age children.



## **“Deeper Dives” for Schools**

### **Practical Strategies to Serve Young Children Experiencing Homelessness**

#### **4. Working with families**

##### Connect families to other services they may need quickly and effectively.

- Early care and education programs should ask parents if they have school-age children, and if they are enrolled in school. Offer to connect them to the McKinney-Vento liaison. If children are not enrolled, offer to meet them at the school or invite the liaison to visit the family at your program to enroll in school.
- Schools should ask parents if they have young children, and if they are connected to early care and education programs. Offer to connect them to those programs and assist them to complete screenings and enrollment documentation.
- Connect parents with peer programs, Child Care Resource & Referral programs, and information lines like 211.
- McKinney-Vento liaisons likely have resource lists they can share with early childhood contacts, such as resources for eviction prevention, utility support, and rental assistance. Programs can share that information with parents who need it.
- Early childhood programs can make sure McKinney-Vento liaisons are aware of resources for families with young children, such as diaper resources, child care subsidies, and parenting support.

##### Combine resources to provide holistic services to families where they are.

- Visit shelters with resources from many programs, such as volunteers from medical clinics and early intervention providers with screening and referral information.
- Work “both ways”, with schools sharing information from early childhood programs and early childhood sharing information about school.
- Work together to build successful partnerships with families. Whomever has the best relationship with the family should start the conversation. If no one has a relationship yet, providers should sit down together and determine who should try to start the conversation first, realizing this could change if it doesn't work.

##### Build relationships with families together, across programs. Understand and accommodate the real stressors and trauma parents are experiencing.

- Do joint visits. Early childhood programs should invite McKinney-Vento liaisons to every meeting every time for every family experiencing homelessness, starting at birth. Start young and build relationships!
  - Liaisons should try to attend or send a social worker or other representatives to those meetings, to facilitate children's transition into kindergarten.
  - Liaisons can bring resources with them to meetings with the families, such as a backpack for preschool or a winter coat.
- Stand outside in line with families before they gain entry into the shelter, regardless of weather. You will learn a lot.
- Be flexible, considering access issues such as:
  - The hours of the day your phone lines are answered by someone: can someone be available between 5-8 pm?
  - The hours and days of the week you are available: Can someone meet parents from 7-9 pm or on weekends?
  - The days of the month you call or schedule appointments: Think of cell phone plans and when a family might run out of minutes.