



Building Futures Through Education

**HUD CONTINUUM OF CARE HOMELESS ASSISTANCE –
2010 NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY
EDUCATION AND EARLY CARE ASSURANCES**

As a result of the passage of the HEARTH Act (the reauthorization of the HUD McKinney-Vento programs), there are several changes to this year's NOFA related to education and early care. These assurances, and suggestions for implementing them, are described below. For more information, please contact the [National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth](#) or the [National Center on Homeless Education](#).

HUD ASSURANCE (1): The Continuum of Care applicant will be required to demonstrate that it is collaborating with local education agencies to assist in the identification of homeless families as well as informing these homeless families and youth of their eligibility for McKinney-Vento education services.

Strategies for collaborating with schools, generally:

- Under [the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act](#), every local educational agency (school district) is required to designate a liaison for homeless children and youth. Contact local school district homeless liaisons to learn more about what they do, and to discuss ways to collaborate. Contact information for school liaisons is available from the [state homeless education coordinator](#) or the local school district administration office.
- Invite local school liaisons and/or the state homeless education coordinator to attend Continuum of Care meetings, to join the Continuum of Care as members, and to conduct trainings for the Continuum on eligibility and the educational rights of homeless children and youth.
- Explain the Continuum strategic planning process to school liaisons, as well the importance of active school participation in the strategic planning process, so that education issues can be part of community needs assessments.
- Form a child/youth subcommittee of the Continuum, where education and early care issues may be discussed in more depth.
- Offer to conduct trainings for school district liaisons, so that they are informed of HUD homeless services in the area, the local Continuum of Care structure and operation, and Ten-Year Plans to End Homelessness.

Strategies for identifying homeless families:

- Develop Memoranda of Understanding (MOUs) between the Continuum of Care and area school districts on protocols for identification and school enrollment, including procedures for information-sharing. For example, develop joint "release of information" forms for parents, so shelters and schools can share appropriate information, such as the shelter informing the school district when a family enters the shelter, and providing forwarding address information to the district when a family leaves the shelter.
- Develop protocols for liaisons to refer families and youth to HUD programs.
- Become familiar with the education definition of homelessness in order to be able to refer families and youth who do not qualify for HUD homeless services, but who may qualify for education services, to school liaisons.

Strategies for informing families and youth of their eligibility for education services:

- As part of intake, talk to parents and youth about their education rights, including the right to continue to attend the school they had been attending prior to moving into the shelter, with transportation provided by the school district, or to enroll in the school in the local attendance area where the shelter is located.
- Ensure that school-aged children are referred to the local liaison immediately so that as little time as possible lapses in their school attendance, either in their school of origin or the local attendance area school.
- Inform unaccompanied youth of their rights to enroll in school without a parent or legal guardian, link them with the school district homeless liaison, and assist them with school enrollment.
- When a family or youth exits a HUD homeless program, ensure that the family or youth knows that they continue to have educational rights for at least the remainder of the school year.
- Provide parents and youth with [brochures](#) and other information that summarizes their educational rights, as well as contact information for the school liaison and/or state homeless education coordinator.
- Place [posters](#) about educational rights in places where parents and youth can see them
- Encourage Continuum of Care programs to sign up for free educational webinars offered by the [National Center on Homeless Education](#) or their state department of education's homeless education program.

HUD ASSURANCE (2) The Continuum of Care applicant will be required to demonstrate that it is considering the educational needs of children when families are placed in emergency or transitional shelter and is, to the maximum extent practicable, placing families with children as close to possible to their school of origin so as not to disrupt the children's education.

Strategies for considering educational needs:

- As part of the intake process, develop an education check list to ask families and youth about educational needs, including the following whether or not children and youth are enrolled in and attending school or preschool, the names of schools, and any special programs, such as special education, gifted and talented, or English language learner programs.
- Ask families and youth if they have any concerns about school attendance, particularly fears related to domestic violence. Help families and youth address these concerns with the school.
- Discuss with families the impact that changing schools might have on children's education, social, and emotional well-being. Develop a joint checklist with local school districts to help families and youth consider the benefits of school stability. A sample checklist is available [on-line](#).
- Develop an education plan for children and youth as part of a family's case plan.
- Contact the school liaison to find out who is the Title I coordinator, and what forms of tutoring are already funded and available. If none are available, collaborate with the school district to establish a tutoring program at shelters.
- Establish a study area at the shelter that is quiet and has educational resources for students, such as computers, calculators, and books.
- Actively encourage children and youth to participate in after-school programs and eliminate any conflicts; for example, offer meals to students who arrive back to the shelter or transitional housing program at a later time because they participate in after-school activities.

Strategies for placing families with children close to their school of origin:

- Invite local school district homeless education liaisons to discuss school stability strategies with the Continuum, to develop a cohesive, community-wide strategy to support school stability.

- Work with school districts to create a map that matches school addresses with shelter and transitional housing addresses, to assist in placing families and youth as close as possible to their schools.
- Include school stability as a standard criterion in assessing the appropriate shelter or transitional housing programs for families or youth.
- Invite school district homeless liaisons to share information about the availability of before or after-school programs in schools in the areas where shelters or transitional housing programs are located.

HUD ASSURANCE (3) Project applicants must demonstrate that their programs are establishing policies and practices that are consistent with, and do not restrict the exercise of rights provided by the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act, and other laws relating to the provision of educational and related services to individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

Strategies for establishing policies and practices that are consistent with [the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act](#):

- Ensure that children and youth are not required to enroll in a new school in the attendance area, or change schools, as a condition of receiving services or a shelter bed. Allow parents or youth to make decisions regarding their school placement, as is their federal right.
- Ensure that HUD programs do not automatically refer parents or youth to a particular school. Let homeless families and youth know that they have the right to continue to attend where they had been attending, or enroll in any school in the attendance area that other children who are not homeless are eligible to attend.
- Ensure that children will not be required to attend an after-school program at the shelter that would prohibit them from staying enrolled in their original school (for example, if remaining in the school of origin will result in them returning to the shelter too late for the after-school program).
- Under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act, the segregation of homeless students in separate schools is expressly prohibited. Therefore, clarify that HUD agencies will not operate educational programs for school-age homeless children and youth that replace the regular school day. Educational programming at shelters should be supplemental, and expand on the regular educational services offered by the school district.

Strategies for establishing policies and practices that are consistent with other education laws:

- Under the [Higher Education Act](#), HUD-funded shelter directors and designees, as well as school district homeless liaisons and Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program directors or designees, are authorized to verify youth as homeless and unaccompanied for purposes of accessing federal financial aid, and GED testing in some states. Learn more about [these policies](#) and develop relationships with local colleges and universities to help unaccompanied homeless youth access higher education opportunities.
- Allow early intervention and special education providers to conduct screenings at the shelter, particularly for children birth to five, to determine if the children are eligible for special services due to a development delay or disability.
- Work with early intervention providers to provide space at the shelter for services to children under age three who have developmental delays.
- Ensure that homeless families with children ages 0-5 are aware of, and can access, Early Head Start and Head Start and other public preschool programs. Facilitate their attendance by assisting, for example, with transportation.

HUD ASSURANCE (4) Project applicants must demonstrate that programs that provide housing or services to families are designating a staff person to ensure that children are enrolled in school and connected to the appropriate services within the community, including early childhood programs such as Head Start, Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, and McKinney- Vento education services.

- Consider who is the most appropriate person in the agency to be the “education and early care” consultant. Is there someone with a strong interest in children, youth, or educational issues, or who has a background in education?
- Contact the local school district homeless liaisons or the state homeless education coordinator to convene a meeting of the newly designated HUD education/early care contacts, local school district liaisons, Head Start staff, and preschool staff, so that they may discuss ways to expedite enrollment and services.
- Ensure that newly designated HUD education/early care contacts have the opportunity to attend homeless education workshops offered by the school district or state, or to participate in webinars offered by the National Center on Homeless Education or the state education agency.
- [Part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act](#) (also called early intervention) provides services to infants and toddlers, ages 0-3, who have developmental delays (and, in some states, services to infants and toddlers who are at risk). Find out who operates this program in your area (contact information is available at <http://nectac.org/contact/ptccoord.asp>). It may be the school district, a mental health or human services agency, or other agency. Set up a meeting with the program director to learn more about early intervention services and how young children served by the shelter may be screened for developmental delays and other disabilities.
- Offer newly designated HUD education/early care contacts the opportunity to be trained in assessment programs ([Ages and Stages](#), [Early Intervention programs](#), and [Special Education Child Find](#)) that provide indicators of potential developmental delays
- [Head Start](#) is a comprehensive early childhood and family support program serving families with children ages 3-5. Early Head Start serves families with children ages 0-2 and pregnant women. Homeless children are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start, and must be prioritized for enrollment. Contact local Head Start programs to learn more about services that they offer, and the best way to make referrals for homeless families with young children.