

# 2012



## Lesson 6: Community Collaborations

Mini-workbook



Updated 1/31/2012

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## About the Mini-workbooks

The **mini-workbooks** are designed to use with the *Interactive Homelessness Lessons* on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC). The mini-workbooks are optional. You can successfully complete the Web version of the lessons without this resource. However, the mini-workbooks offer a multidimensional learning experience for programs who want to use the *Interactive Homelessness Lessons* as a training tool with groups of staff. You will find that the mini-workbooks point to the Web version to find answers and to discover more information.

The **Explore Information** tab in the Web version of each Lesson contains information, resources and materials to support your knowledge gathering and knowledge sharing. Some of the resources that are listed in the Web version are also included in the mini-workbooks. The computer symbol  indicates resources that are included in the Web version of the *Interactive Homelessness Lessons*. This symbol  indicates resources that are included in the mini-workbook version of the *Interactive Homelessness Lessons*. These symbols are used in the table on the next page.

Throughout the mini-workbook you will be asked to share your thoughts in the “Idea Box”. The light bulb is the symbol for the idea box.

This symbol  precedes instructions that direct you to a particular section of the Web version of the *Interactive Homelessness Lessons* for answers and for more information.

The Web version can be found on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC). The instructions on page 6 display how to access the ***Interactive Homelessness Lessons***.

The ***Interactive Homelessness Lessons*** take account of many real-life scenarios that may occur in programs and communities. The Lessons include a myriad of useful resources to support your learning and discovery of new strategies and ideas as you work with families experiencing homelessness.

In ***Lesson 6: Community Collaborations***, Diana Bowman, talks about the importance of building community connections to engender support on behalf of families experiencing homelessness.

In this lesson, you will read three families’ experiences with homelessness. After reading each family’s story, you will go to the on-line version to read how the Early Head Start program used their community connections and resources to support the family. In addition, after each story you will go to worksheets that serve to facilitate and document your thinking about what your program can do to strengthen community collaborations.

## About the Mini-workbooks (continued)

Resources that are listed in the **Explore Information** section of the Interactive Homelessness Lesson 6 are included in this table:

<b>Lesson 6: Community Collaborations</b>	
Legal Definition of Homelessness	 
About Connections	
Case Study of a Community Collaboration	
School Districts' Local Homeless Liaisons	
Videos about Community Collaboration	
Voices from the Field	 

## How to Access the Interactive Homelessness Lessons on the ECLKC

The Interactive Homelessness Lessons can be found on the Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center (ECLKC).

1. Enter [ECLKC.ohs.acf.hhs.gov](http://ECLKC.ohs.acf.hhs.gov) in the browser. After the ECLKC page appears, enter 'Interactive Homelessness Lessons' in the search box. Click on 'search'.

...enter 'Interactive Homelessness Lessons' in the search box



2. Select the Interactive Homelessness Lessons icon.



3. Welcome to the Interactive Homelessness Lessons page will appear.



4. Go to the **Community Collaborations** tab.

## Why Community Collaborations Are Important

Head Start and Early Head Start serve families within the context of the community and recognizes that many community agencies and groups are available to support Head Start and Early Head Start families.

In order to fervently respond to families in homeless situations it is imperative that programs build on relationships within the communities they serve.

Should you join a coalition...begin a support group...initiate an advisory committee...partner with shelters for families in homeless situations? Analysis of your community assessment can help pinpoint the next steps for your program's response to homelessness. After your next steps have been determined, this lesson provides targeted strategies to support your success.

Whatever your program deems necessary to support families experiencing homelessness the Head Start Program Performance Standards state:

1304.41(a)(2)-

Grantee and delegate agencies must take affirmative steps to establish ongoing collaborative relationships with community organizations to promote the access of children and families to community services that are responsive to their needs, and to ensure that Early Head Start and Head Start programs respond to community needs, including:

1304.41(a)(2)(v)

Family preservation and support services

## Why Community Collaborations Are Important (continued)

1304.41(b)

Advisory committees

...Grantee and delegate agencies also must establish and maintain such other service advisory committees as they deem appropriate to address program service issues such as community partnerships and to help agencies respond to community needs.

Community support is integral to the success of your program's work with families experiencing homelessness.

## Legal Definition of Homelessness

According to section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11434a(2)), the term “homeless children and youths”—

(A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence ...;  
and

(B) includes—

(i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

(ii) children and youths 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 ...

(iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

(iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Children and youth are considered homeless if they fit both part A and any one of the subparts of part B of the definition above.

*What is the Meaning of Fixed, Regular, and Adequate Nighttime Residence?*

### **Fixed, Regular, and Adequate Nighttime Residence**

**Fixed nighttime residence:** Stationary, permanent, and not subject to change.

**Regular nighttime residence:** Used on a predictable, routine, or consistent basis.

**Adequate nighttime residence:** Sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.

## Legal Definition of Homelessness (continued)

*What is Substandard Housing?*

### **What is Substandard Housing?**

The Office of Head Start Policy Clarification (OHS-PC- I-0) states:

“...In determining whether a child is living in "substandard housing", Head Start staff must evaluate whether the child's housing situation falls short of community standards or is of lower quality than the law prescribes. Staff should consider factors such as whether there are health and safety concerns related to the housing; the number of occupants per square foot; the age(s) of the occupants; and whether the housing meets State or local building codes. Does a comparison of the housing in question with community norms and laws lead staff to conclude that it is lower than what community norms or laws require?...”

Excerpt from Informal Guidance, May 8, 2008

## Jolene's Story

Jolene Armstrong came to the Magnolia Early Head Start center today to enroll her one-year-old son, Chauncey. Her six-year-old and eight-year-old sons, Arnie and Jack, were with her as well. She said that she just arrived in town by bus to stay with her mother for awhile. She lost her job in the southern part of the state and was evicted. She could only bring with her the items that she could fit in one suitcase. The children had not changed clothes for several days, and the boys did not have coats to keep warm in the wintry weather. They were all hungry. Jolene seemed exhausted and uncertain as to how long she would be able to stay with her mother who lives in a small apartment on a fixed income.

### Your Task

Think about:

- What community resources could help this family with its immediate and long-term needs?
- Who would Magnolia Early Head Start need to collaborate with to provide these resources or services?

➔ Go to ***Interactive Homelessness Lesson 6: Community Collaborations – Jolene's Story*** to find out what Magnolia Early Head Start did.

## Jolene's Story: Expand Your Connections

In Jolene's story, Magnolia Early Head Start mainly used existing partnerships.

Use **Part 1** of the Connections worksheet, to record your current community partnerships.

As you complete Part 1 of the Connections worksheet, **think about** your current community connections and how they support families experiencing homelessness.

Consider these questions:

- Did Jolene's story give you any ideas as to which agencies and service providers, traditional or nontraditional, may be good connections for your program?
- Are there specific agencies or service providers that you would refer families experiencing homelessness? Which ones?
- Are there agencies or service providers that you contact for collaborative activities in supporting families experiencing homelessness? Which ones?
- What is the impact of each referred agency or service provider on the families experiencing homelessness?
- How can each agency or service provider support you in serving families in homeless situations?
- What advisory councils do you have that include representatives from any of the agencies or service providers that collaborate with your program?

## Worksheet: Current Community Partners

### Part 1: Current Community Partners

Agencies and Service Providers	Contact Name, Phone number; Email address	Notes/Comments

## Elsie's Story

Elsie Dribeau and her two-year-old daughter Neema are one of several families who recently came to the area from Haiti. Since arriving, they have been living in a homeless shelter. Volunteers from the Newcomer Center routinely visit the homeless shelter. They provide translating services to communicate with families in their native language regarding the eligibility of their young children for Head Start. Because of limited resources at the Newcomer Center and the large number of families in need of services, the Dribeau family has had to wait to meet with a volunteer. By the time the family met with a volunteer and found out about the Azalea Early Head Start program, the Dribeau family had been living in the homeless shelter for three months.

### Your Task

Think about:

- What organizations can the Azalea Early Head Start connect with to allow non-English speaking families to more quickly receive the information they need?
- Azalea Early Head Start has some contact with the school district's local homeless liaison in order to share information. Will it be useful to strengthen this connection?

➔ Go to ***Interactive Homelessness Lesson 6: Community Collaborations – Elise's Story*** to find out what Azalea Early Head Start did.

## Elsie's Story: Expand Your Connections

In Elsie's story, Azalea Early Head Start strengthened an existing community alliance.

Use **Part 2** of the Connections worksheet, to record your ideas for community partnerships that you could initiate or strengthen.

As you complete Part 2 of the Connections worksheet, **think about** the community connections for supporting families experiencing homelessness that you could initiate or strengthen.

Consider these questions:

- Did Elsie's story give you any ideas as to which traditional or nontraditional agencies and service providers may be good connections for your program?
- Are there agencies or service providers with which your program has had little contact? Which ones? How would you establish contact?
- What is the impact of each referred agency or service provider on the families experiencing homelessness?
- How can each agency or service provider support you in serving families in homeless situations?
- What advisory councils do you have that include representatives from any of the agencies or service providers that collaborate with your program?

**Worksheet: Community Partnerships to Initiate or Strengthen**

**Part 2: Community Partnerships to Initiate or Strengthen**

Agencies and Service Providers	Contact Name, Phone number; Email address	Notes/Comments

## Enrique's Story

When Paloma was almost two years old, she developed a high fever and her father, Enrique, took her to the local medical clinic. After determining the cause of the fever and getting it under control, the nurse practitioner spoke with Enrique. She learned that Enrique did not have a fixed or regular place to live, but his main concern was how to take care of Paloma during the day while he was looking for work. The nurse practitioner told Enrique about the local Juniper Early Head Start program, gave him a brochure that explained the services, and suggested he visit the program. Knowing that it is often difficult for men to get space in a shelter, the nurse called a shelter with which the clinic had an established relationship and arranged for him to stay for a week.

### Your Task

Think about:

- What groundwork do you think the Juniper Early Head Start program did to allow this referral to happen?

➔ Go to ***Interactive Homelessness Lesson 6: Community Collaborations – Enrique's Story*** to find out what Juniper Early Head Start did.

## Enrique's Story: Expand Your Connections

In Enrique's story, Juniper Early Head Start received Paloma as a referral because the program was well known in the community and had established relationships with many community organizations.

Use **Part 3** of the Connections worksheet to record organizations that you can contact and become involved with to raise awareness about Head Start services, for example, by being on their boards or advisory committees.

Consider these questions:

- Did Enrique's story give you any ideas as to which traditional or nontraditional agencies and service providers may be good connections for your program?
- Are there agencies or service providers that may have contact with families experiencing homelessness they could refer to Head Start? Which ones? How would you establish contact with them?
- Are there agencies or service providers that you contact for collaborative activities in supporting families experiencing homelessness? Which ones? What impact do they have on families experiencing homelessness?
- How can each agency or service provider support you in serving families in homeless situations?
- On which councils and advisory committees of other organizations should your program be represented?

## Worksheet: Organizations to Contact to Raise Awareness about Head Start

### Part 3: Organizations to Contact to Raise Awareness about Head Start

Agencies and Service Providers	Contact Name, Phone number; Email address	Notes/Comments

## Key Points about Community Collaboration

In this lesson you explored the importance of community collaborations in your work with families in homeless situations.

First, collaboration is a way to expand your agency's capacity to meet the needs of families and children experiencing homelessness. Revisit some of your existing partnerships to determine if there are uniquely different kinds of partnerships to forge.

In addition, local homeless liaisons are key partners in building effective services for families experiencing homelessness.

And finally, Head Start programs are important voices to have at the table for strategic planning to address the needs of homeless families and children. Your community assessment data can play a vital role in strategic planning with partnering agencies.

In conclusion, community collaborations are key to successful outreach and providing services to children and families experiencing homelessness.

***Remember that serving children experiencing homelessness is crucial to our mission of serving the neediest children in our country. Together let's continue to make Head Start and Early Head Start a reality for as many families in homeless situations as we can.***

***-Office of Head Start***

## Voices from the Field

### Head Start programs that use existing community partnerships:

- The Head Start director in Cheaha, Alabama describes the advantage of being a rural community in serving families in homeless situations:

*One big advantage for being rural is whatever services are available, we know about them. It's not so large that there are things going on that we don't even know they offer. Establishing good partnerships with different agencies in all six counties gives us an advantage of who to call or who to contact when a need arises among any of the families. Each community itself is different because what works in one county may not work in another one.*

- The Northeast Michigan Community Service Agency (NEMCSA) Head Start program has partnerships with the local preschool programs. This helps support families experiencing homelessness by making sure placement is as immediate as possible. If Head Start doesn't have a slot, then they check with the other preschools.
- The Head Start program in Cheaha, Alabama established a formal partnership with public housing. When a family experiencing homelessness comes to Head Start, they can send them to their point of contact in public housing.

*The housing authority renovated a facility for Head Start and Head Start doesn't have to pay anything, including rent, for a year. The only requirement is to give preference to people in public housing. The Head Start family advocate often takes the family to the facility and helps them complete the application.*

### Head Start programs that initiate or strengthen community partnerships:

- A Head Start program in Indianapolis, Indiana has formal and informal partnerships. They participate with the Coalition for Homelessness Intervention and Prevention (CHIP), an organization that provides Head Start families with housing opportunities. CHIP helps with finding housing for Head Start families. It also works with Head Start with training and bringing more awareness about the growing situation of families becoming more and more likely to experience homelessness because of the economy.
- When a family has a complex set of issues such as experiencing homelessness, The Head Start program in Norwalk/LaMirada often contacts the McKinney-Vento liaison in the district and works jointly with her because she has many connections. The McKinney-Vento liaison pays attention to families with elementary-aged children who also might have younger children and she then recommends these families to Head Start.

## Voices from the Field (continued)

### Head Start programs that provide insight about Head Start to organizations or become involved with organizations:

- The Case Manager liaison for homelessness for The Child Development Council of Franklin County (CDCFC) Head Start in Columbus Ohio meets with different community organizations every three months. She goes to the Project Connect meetings where they are trying to eliminate barriers. Participants in the meetings include people from the housing community, CPO property management, CHMA housing, and private landlords. The meetings also cover topics other than housing, for example, they have people who are involved with employment. The liaison also meets with other community organizations every three months to talk about what is happening in the community, including information on crime and drugs and alcohol programs. The liaison shares the information and resources with other case managers.
- The Head Start program in Cheaha, Alabama has established relationships with some local banks. The banks provide training for parents on how to save money, how to get their credit reports cleared, and how to apply for Habitat for Humanity or the Fannie Mae program. A representative from the bank discusses budgeting and the importance of saving consistently.
- A Head Start program in Indianapolis, Indiana's social services coordinator and others in the department work with other child welfare organizations. They disseminate information about Head Start and often families experiencing homelessness are referred to Head Start from these organizations. In return, Head Start works with the organizations and assists them by providing some services.
- The Head Start program in Cheaha, Alabama displays posters at shelters, domestic violence places, and other places where families experiencing homelessness may be. The places know to make referrals to Head Start whenever they get a family in crisis. They do this through the Department of Human Resources and Head Start is on their list of referrals. The Head Start director in Cheaha, Alabama describes making connections:

*One of the big things is to get the people who are the service providers working together because a lot of times other service providers know about families who need us that we don't know about them and they'll make a referral. Some of our partnerships have been set up through other partners and they connect us to that group or we connect them and it keeps the circle going. We don't do the food and we can't pay the light bill for them, but we know people who can.*

## Acknowledgements

The creation of the ***Interactive Homelessness Lessons*** was a collaborative project. The overarching goal, *to create a knowledge base with which Head Start and Early Head Start staff who work with families could enhance their skills and knowledge as it relates to their work with families experiencing homelessness*, was achieved through mutual sharing of ideas, time and an enormous amount of effort.

The Homelessness Workgroup played an integral role to ensure that the experiences in each lesson were far-reaching and all encompassing. The Homelessness Workgroup includes a dynamic group of knowledge experts: Kiersten Beigel (Federal Lead), Marco Beltran, Diana Bowman, Jacqueline Davis, Mary Lynne Diggs, Barbara Duffield, Shirley Fan-Chan, Carolyn Garmise, Khari Garvin, Christina Murphy, Tamara Perez, Mary Vanderwert, Sheri Watkins, and Grace Whitney.

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The Workgroup commends the Head Start Knowledge and Information Management Services (HSKIMS) team who videotaped, formatted, and designed the lessons for use on the Web.

You are encouraged to explore all that this dynamic resource has to offer.

*Thank you*