

# Module 5: Identifying and Reaching Out to Families Experiencing Homelessness

Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

An Interactive Learning Series for Early Childhood Professionals

## Welcome

This module is intended for professionals in Head Start, Early Head Start, and child care, including early childhood and school-age child care providers, Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agency (or designated entity) staff, and other key stakeholders. It is intended for use at program and systems levels.

## Module Features

Before you get started, take a moment to review the features of this module. Select the numbered buttons on this page to learn more about each feature. When you are finished, choose "Next" to continue.

Select the **Menu** tab to:

- See a drop-down list of the module's contents
- Jump to a particular section by selecting its title
- Check your progress by selecting "Completion Status"
- Access your Certificate of Completion once you have completed all module sections

Select the **Transcript** tab to open a printable text version of this module.

Choose the **Resources** tab for a list of helpful resources.

Select the **Federal Policies** tab for links to sections of federal legislation and regulations related to family homelessness.

The **page numbers** show how many pages you have completed in a specific section, and how many you have left to complete.

Select the **"Play"** button to play the narration on each slide.

Select the **"Pause"** button to pause the narration on each slide.

Choose **"Previous"** to return to the previous slide.

Choose **"Next"** to go to the next slide.

## Module Instructions

- Each module takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. You can spend as much or as little time as you like on a module, depending on your level of experience.
- If you are using your own computer, you can stop a module and come back to it later; the program will remember where you left off. However, if you are using a computer that others will also use to access the learning series, plan to finish the module in one sitting.
- Select the Transcript tab to download or print the text of the module.
- Select the Federal Policies tab for direct links to the federal legislation and regulations referenced in this module. You can bookmark these links for future reference.
- Select the Resources tab to view the full list of reference citations and helpful resources. A number at the end of a sentence indicates a reference citation.
- When you select a link within the module or through one of the tabs, the page will open in a new tab. To return to the module, select the module tab.
- When you finish all sections of this module, you can download a Certificate of Completion.

## Introduction to Module 5

This module explores how to identify and reach out to families experiencing homelessness and connect them to community partners.

You will learn about:

- The importance of focused efforts to identify and reach out to families experiencing homelessness
- Local- and state-level partners for identifying and reaching out to families experiencing homelessness
- Strategies and activities that can enhance identification and outreach at local and state levels

## Importance of Identifying and Reaching Out to Families Experiencing Homelessness

High-quality programs offer services and supports that can lessen the negative effects of homelessness on children and families. However, young children experiencing homelessness have relatively low rates of participation in early childhood and school-age child care programs.<sup>1,2</sup> Effective identification and outreach activities are essential for children to access these programs.

Reaching families experiencing homelessness requires planned and active efforts by Head Start, Early Head Start, and child care programs, including early childhood and school-age child care providers, Child

Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agency or designated entities, and programs that receive CCDF subsidies.

The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) and the CCDF Final Rule include requirements to identify children and families experiencing homelessness, prioritize them for services, and remove barriers to program enrollment and participation.

Explore the Federal Policies tab for more information about the HSPPS and CCDF.

Identifying families experiencing homelessness is both necessary and challenging for a number of reasons. For example, families experiencing homelessness:

- May not disclose their living situation or see themselves as homeless
- May not know what services they qualify for or where services are located, or how to find and apply for free or subsidized early childhood and school-age care programs
- Can be invisible in communities, which means typical recruitment and outreach efforts may not reach them
- May be unable to take advantage of typical parent information and enrollment services because they are without resources or a stable address
- Face barriers to enrolling and participating in early childhood and school-age child care programs, and may require accommodations to complete enrollment requirements and continue participation when they move

Select the "Next" button to explore each of these reasons in more detail.

**Families experiencing homelessness may not disclose their living situation or see themselves as homeless.**

Families experiencing homelessness may not disclose where they are staying or see themselves as homeless. They may keep their situation and circumstances hidden from friends, providers, teachers, and others because they feel ashamed or embarrassed. Families also may hide their living situation if they fear child welfare involvement. Explore the Federal Policies tab for more information or [view the definition](#).

The definition of "homeless" varies across social service systems. Families may be unaware of the wider criteria of the definition of "homeless children and youth." It is included in Section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act [42 U.S.C. § 11435a(2)], hereinafter referred to as the "McKinney-Vento Act's definition." This definition is used by Head Start, Early Head Start, and programs that receive CCDF subsidies.

**Families experiencing homelessness may not know what services they qualify for or where services are located, or how to find and apply for free or subsidized early childhood and school-age care programs.**

Each community has a unique patchwork of programs and services. Head Start, Early Head Start, center-based and family child care, public pre-K, and other programs have different names, offer different services, and use different eligibility criteria and enrollment procedures. Some schools offer before- and after-school-age child care on site. Families may find this confusing, and they may not understand how to access services, especially if they are in crisis or if they have moved to a new community or state.

**Families experiencing homelessness can be invisible in communities, which means typical recruitment and outreach efforts may not reach them.**

Most families experiencing homelessness don't live in shelters, and move frequently. They may seek resources, supports, and assistance to meet their basic needs in places, such as motels, food pantries, soup kitchens, and thrift stores. Each community has its own network of supports and emergency services. These differ for rural, urban, and suburban communities.

**Families experiencing homelessness may be unable to take advantage of typical parent information and enrollment services because they are without resources or a stable address.**

Web-based parent education and information-sharing strategies may be effective for reaching some families. Other families may not have internet access, computers, mobile phones, or other electronic devices. They may not have a reliable way to be contacted. Family members may hesitate to provide an address if they are not sure they should use the address where they are staying, especially if they do not know how long they will be staying there.

**Families experiencing homelessness face barriers to enrolling and participating in early childhood and school-age child care programs, and may require accommodations to complete enrollment requirements and continue participation when they move.**

Families may not have what they need to apply for and participate in programs for their young children. Homelessness can create barriers both to enrolling in early childhood and school-age child care programs (barriers to access) and to ongoing participation in these programs (barriers to continuity of care).

For these reasons, HSPPS and the CCDF Final Rule include requirements to identify children and families experiencing homelessness, prioritize them for services, and remove barriers to program enrollment and participation.

Being sensitive to families' living situations can help identify and connect them to appropriate services and supports.

Review Module 4 for opportunities to practice having conversations with families about housing in sensitive ways.

## **Collaborating with Local Partners to Identify and Reach Out to Families Experiencing Homelessness**

A key strategy for identifying and reaching out to families experiencing homelessness is to work with local partners. Partners may include programs that use the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless," housing service providers, and other community resources.

Select the "Next" button to learn more about these local partners. Explore the Federal Policies tab for more information or [view the definition](#).

Early childhood and school-age child care programs are often the most important places for conducting identification and outreach activities. Professionals can develop authentic relationships with the

families and communities they serve. They can serve as trusted resources for families, who may be willing to share personal concerns and the concerns they have for other families in their community.

Head Start, Early Head Start, and child care, including early childhood and school-age child care providers, and CCDF Lead Agency (or designated entity) staff can work with partners that use the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" to focus and strengthen identification, outreach, and follow-up efforts.

Local partners that use the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" include:

- **Head Start and Early Head Start.** In local communities, Head Start and Early Head Start programs identify and conduct outreach to families experiencing homelessness as part of their recruitment plans.
- **CCDF Lead Agencies (or designated entities) and providers.** CCDF Lead Agencies are responsible for identification, outreach and data reporting for families who are experiencing homelessness. They may delegate some of these activities to contractors, such as child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies or 211 providers (e.g., a United Way agency, a public-private partnership, or a Smart Start or School Readiness Council in states, counties, or local communities).
- **Local educational agencies (LEAs).** LEAs designate a McKinney-Vento homeless liaison to act as a central point of contact, coordinate identification and service, and collect and report data.
- **Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) Part C and Part B 619.** IDEA providers offer early intervention and special education, educational supports and accommodations to children with delays and disabilities as defined by states. Many have established enhanced practices for children whose living situation meets the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless."

Entities where families may seek temporary housing or shelter are potential partners for identifying and enrolling children experiencing homelessness. These may include:

- Local motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds
- Emergency shelters and transitional and supportive housing programs, including residential programs for families escaping domestic violence or for families in recovery
- Local U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care and public housing agencies
- Community action, faith-based, and other nonprofit social service entities providing emergency and temporary housing
- Laundromats, 24-hour businesses, and public spaces

Remember, the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" describes stable housing as "fixed, regular, and adequate."

Explore the Federal Policies tab for more information or [view the definition](#).

Places in the community where families may seek resources and supports for their basic needs are also potential partners. These may include:

- Food pantries and soup kitchens
- Thrift stores and clothing closets
- Medical facilities and mobile health clinics
- Public benefits offices
- Community action, faith-based, and other nonprofit social service entities that provide for basic needs

Local coordination and advocacy organizations, councils, and workgroups focused on services to families experiencing homelessness may provide information and connections to these community resources. These resources may be good places to communicate with families about access to programs and enrollment. Outreach efforts may include regular visits to share information with families and staff about available early childhood and school-age child care resources in their community.

#### **Activity: Making Connections at the Local Level**

Consider the local partners you work with to identify and reach out to families experiencing homelessness, and those with whom you might connect. Explore the buttons to learn more about each local partner. Once you have completed the activity, select the “Next” button to continue.

#### **McKinney-Vento LEA Liaisons**

McKinney-Vento LEA liaisons are great partners because they are ideal to help:

- Identify children experiencing homelessness, especially those who are living doubled-up due to economic hardship
- Make referrals and assist with enrollment for public preschool and school-aged care, including for younger siblings of school-aged children
- With outreach and public notice dissemination activities
- Collect and report data for children experiencing homelessness as required by McKinney-Vento reporting requirements, the Head Start Program Information Report (PIR), and CCDF quarterly reporting
- Strengthen collaborations with IDEA Parts C and B 619 providers to support identification

The local McKinney-Vento LEA liaison has many legal duties, which include identifying young children experiencing homelessness and ensuring their access to programs for which they are eligible. These programs include Head Start, Early Head Start, child care and preschool, and early intervention and special education services offered under IDEA Part C and Part B 619.

<p><b>Owners and Managers of Motels, Hotels, Campgrounds, and Trailer Parks</b></p> <p>Owners and managers of such businesses are great partners because families may seek shelter in low-cost motels, hotels, campgrounds, or substandard trailers, especially in communities or rural areas where there are no emergency shelters. Some community agencies use hotels and motels as temporary housing for families. Thus, owners and managers of these facilities would be aware of families with young children and can be key partners for identification and outreach activities.</p>
<p><b>Emergency Shelter and Transitional and Permanent Supportive Housing Providers for Families and Unaccompanied Youth</b></p> <p>Emergency shelter and transitional and permanent supportive housing providers for families and unaccompanied youth can be key partners in identification and community outreach. Shelters and transitional housing programs for families may include domestic violence programs or residential recovery settings for parents with young children. Homeless youth programs—such as street outreach, drop-in centers, shelters, and transitional living programs—can help identify and engage pregnant and parenting youth.</p>
<p><b>Local HUD Continuum of Care and Public Housing Agencies</b></p> <p>Federal housing supports under HUD are available through Continuum of Care, which is a community-based coordinating coalition of housing agencies and providers. They are great partners because they use a narrower HUD definition of homelessness. However, they still need to be aware of the broader McKinney-Vento Act definition of "homeless" used by Head Start, Early Head Start, and programs funded by CCDF subsidies. These agencies are a valuable source of referrals.</p>
<p><b>Community action, Faith-based, and Other Nonprofit Organizations</b></p> <p>Community action, faith-based, and other nonprofit organizations are great partners because they may provide or sponsor:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Short-term housing for families in crisis</li> <li>• Food pantries</li> <li>• Soup kitchens</li> <li>• Clothes closets</li> <li>• Other resources that provide for the basic needs of families experiencing homelessness</li> </ul> <p>These organizations can assist with identifying and engaging families and making referrals to early childhood and school-age child care programs.</p>
<p><b>Laundromats, 24-hour Businesses, and Other Public Spaces</b></p> <p>Laundromats, 24-hour businesses, and other open public spaces are great partners because families may seek shelter in facilities and locations like these. They can provide shelter, protection from weather and other elements, and anonymity. Staff at such locations may notice families and act as sources of referral.</p>
<p><b>Advocacy Organizations and Homeless Coalitions</b></p> <p>Local advocacy organizations, homeless coalitions, and task forces that address homelessness are great partners because they are important resources for service providers and stakeholders. Attending coalition or task force meetings is an important way to learn about services to families experiencing homelessness. Local agencies can assist with identification and outreach efforts.</p>
<p><b>Other Resources, including Health and Social Services Providers</b></p> <p>Other resources like health and public benefits providers, along with child and family social service providers and programs, are great partners. The following programs may be key partners in identifying and reaching out to families experiencing homelessness, and can be a source of referrals:</p>

- Medicaid
- State Child Health Insurance Program (SCHIP)
- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF)
- Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP)
- Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) Food and Nutrition Service
- Mental health and other health and wellness providers

They may not be familiar with the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" or aware of early care and education resources that families can access because of their living situation.

Module 8 in this series addresses potential partnerships with social services and other providers that provide family support.

## Local-Level Strategies and Activities to Enhance Identification and Outreach to Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

There are a number of strategies and activities that may be used in local communities to enhance identification and outreach to families experiencing homelessness.

Select the “Next” button to explore examples.

Activities that focus on families:

- Address housing stability in program materials and procedures
  - Adapt program application forms and intake protocols to include questions about housing stability and related issues
  - Provide information for families about housing and early childhood and school-age child care program access and supports
- Make information about the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" available and visible, using posters, brochures, and other recruitment materials
  - Place posters, newsletters, flyers, and other recruitment materials where families experiencing homelessness may find and use them, including:
    - Early childhood and school-age child care programs
    - Social service agencies
    - Shelters
    - Low-cost motels
    - Food pantries and soup kitchens
    - Campgrounds
    - Laundromats
    - Libraries
    - Thrift shops
    - Community centers
    - Faith-based organizations



- Other places
      - Talk with families to learn about other places for outreach
- Create a universal prevention approach for families already enrolled in programs
  - Engage families in discussions about their living situation and any related goals or needs related to housing
  - In Head Start and Early Head Start programs, discuss living situations as part of the family partnership process

Module 4 provides examples of sensitive ways to gather information from parents about living situations and sleeping arrangements.

Strategies that focus on subsidy eligibility staff, family services and support workers, and providers include:

- Providing training about the definitions of homelessness, relevant information and resources, and ways to have sensitive discussions with families about housing situations
  - Make the Decision-Making Tool to Determine a Family's Homeless Situation readily available for reference during discussions staff may have with families
- Offering coaching and supervision so staff feel confident and adequately prepared to be responsive to families who may be experiencing homelessness, trauma, and other crises
- Reviewing requirements about reporting program information related to families experiencing homelessness for Head Start and Early Head Start
- Developing a plan that guides identification, outreach, and quarterly reporting related to families experiencing homelessness for CCDF Lead Agencies

Access handouts at any time in the Resources tab.

Strategies that focus on connecting and working with community partners include:

- Developing relationships to identify strategies and locations for outreach and recruitment
- Collaborating to host enrollment events or resource fairs at shelters, motels, food pantries, and other places
  - Offer subsidy and program application assistance
- Reviewing applications and strengths and needs assessment forms together to address housing and the importance of high-quality services for children
- Creating directories for families and partnering agency staff about available resources
  - Include information about the importance of high-quality services for children

## Planning to Enhance Local Identification and Outreach

Explore these helpful handouts to support planning for identification and outreach.

- **Connecting with Local and State Partners—Resource List:** Explore potential local and state partners to enhance identification and outreach. This list includes major homeless and housing services, programs, and agencies that provide basic needs, such as free meals and clothing. The

list also includes links to program websites.

- **Connecting with Local and State Partners Planning Worksheet:** Use this worksheet to record information about housing programs and other partners for identification and outreach activities.
- **Planning to Identify and Reach Out to Families Experiencing Homelessness Template:** Use this template to develop a plan using a four-step approach

**Access these handouts at any time in the Resources tab.**

## **Collaborating with State Partners to Identify and Reach Out to Families Experiencing Homelessness**

State-level partners work together using systems structures to encourage efforts to identify and reach out to families experiencing homelessness. Local programs may also consider opportunities for state-level partnerships. Together, partners can monitor enrollment and participation at the state level to determine whether young children experiencing homelessness are benefiting from early childhood and school-aged child care programs being provided in their state.

State partners can also provide support in building state capacity to serve families experiencing homelessness and overcoming barriers to enrollment and regular attendance. They can work together to create new policies, strategies, and activities that guide state- and local-level implementation and encourage collaboration, both of which are critical elements for successful systems.

Select the “Next” button to learn more about these state partners.

State partners that use the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" can assist in strengthening state systems related to identification, outreach, and data reporting. These partners include:

- CCDF state administrators, Lead Agency staff, statewide contractors, and designated entities
- Head Start State Collaboration Office directors
- McKinney-Vento state education agency (SEA) coordinator
- IDEA Part C state coordinators and Part B 619 state directors
- State Advisory Councils (SACs)
- Federal system-building grant projects related to early childhood and school-age child care; for example:
  - [Project LAUNCH](#)

State agencies and entities and statewide systems that provide resources and programming for families experiencing homelessness are potential partners. These may include:

- Runaway and Homeless Youth Lead Agency
- HUD Lead Agency
- State-level housing and homeless services councils
- State and Territory Domestic Violence Coalitions
- Other statewide entities providing supports for individuals and families experiencing homelessness

Working together at the state level can help to ensure that identification and outreach efforts reach families served by these partner agencies. Partnering can also lead to sharing data and collaboration to monitor trends and needs.

### **Activity: Making Connections at the State Level**

As you work to enhance systems and practices that support identification, outreach, and data reporting related to families experiencing homelessness, consider the state partners you work with and those with whom you might connect.

- Explore the buttons on this page and the next page to learn more about each state partner.
- Once you have completed the activity on each page select the “Next” button to continue.

<b>CCDF Lead Agencies and State Administrators</b>
CCDF Lead Agencies and state administrators are great partners because they are responsible for identifying and reaching out to families experiencing homelessness, as well as gathering and reporting data quarterly on the number of homeless children served. They may delegate some of these activities to statewide or local contractors or partners. CCDF administrators ensure compliance with the CCDF Final Rule in states. They also work with a variety of partners to create and implement policies and best practices that meet the child care needs of children in families experiencing homelessness in their state.
<b>Head Start State Collaboration Office Directors</b>
Head Start State Collaboration Office directors are great partners because they are charged with assessing and supporting the partnership needs of Head Start and Early Head Start grantees in their state. They collaborate on initiatives focused on enhancing services for families experiencing homelessness. Head Start State Collaboration Offices also coordinate advisory committees and other work groups focused on gathering and reviewing data. They create partnerships that increase enrollment and participation of families experiencing homelessness in Head Start and Early Head Start services.
<b>McKinney-Vento SEA Liaisons</b>

McKinney-Vento SEA liaisons for homeless education are great partners because they are vital in identification and outreach efforts. Their required duties under Section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act [42 U.S.C. § 11435a(2)] include:

- Publishing an annually updated list of McKinney-Vento LEA liaisons
- Gathering data on the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness identified by public schools, including IDEA Part C, and reporting data annually on the SEA website
- Developing and implementing professional development programs for homeless liaisons
- Partnering with state leaders to support homeless liaisons in coordinating with early childhood and school-aged child care programs

Explore the Federal Policies tab for more information about how to contact state coordinators for homeless education.

#### **IDEA Part C State Coordinators and Part B 619 State Directors**

IDEA Part C state coordinators and Part B 619 state directors are important partners because they identify developmental delays, disabilities, and special education needs of children experiencing homelessness. Evidence shows that homelessness often results in a need for early intervention, special education, or learning supports. IDEA eligibility criteria are determined by states, and many have established enhanced practices for identifying and supporting children who meet the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless.

See the Resources tab for contact information for IDEA Parts C and B 619.

#### **State Advisory Councils (SACs)**

SACs are governor-designated Early Childhood State Advisory Councils under the Head Start Act. Some states include their state coordinator for homeless education and housing providers as regular SAC members. Many states have included homelessness among their key priorities. Those states have established work groups or subcommittees to create and align policies, assess needs, and coordinate activities related to homelessness. They are great partners because they may include activities focused on identifying, enrolling, or tracking young children experiencing homelessness.

See the Resources tab for more information about SACs.

#### **Project LAUNCH**

A number of states awarded Project LAUNCH federal grants to improve their early childhood services have established homelessness as a project focus. They provide additional sources of funding and capacity building to enhance this work.

See the Resources tab to find more information about Project LAUNCH.

#### **Runaway and Homeless Youth Lead Agency**

They are great partners because the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), Administration for Children and Families (ACF), Family and Youth Services Bureau (FYSB), Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHY) supports street outreach, emergency shelters, maternity group homes, and longer-term transitional living supports for pregnant and parenting youth. State-level partnerships that connect homeless youth and early childhood and school-age child care systems can increase identification, outreach, and enrollment of young children in high quality early care and education.

See the Resources tab for state contact information.

<p><b>HUD Lead Agency</b></p> <p>Federal housing supports under HUD are great partners. They are managed by a HUD Lead Agency, which manages federal and state funds that support a range of housing-related benefits, supports, and projects.</p> <p>HUD Lead Agencies, like CCDF Lead Agencies, often manage resources through contracts and designated statewide or local entities, including Continuum of Care providers, which coordinate housing agencies and providers. The agencies use a narrower HUD definition of homelessness. However, they still need to be aware of the broader McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" used by Head Start, Early Head Start, and CCDF-subsidized programs.</p> <p>See the Resources tab for more information about HUD.</p>
<p><b>State Homeless Coalitions/Interagency Groups</b></p> <p>Many states have statewide interagency groups, like coalitions to end homelessness. State homeless coalitions and interagency groups are great partners because they may:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sponsor statewide conferences</li> <li>• Develop state-specific strategic plans and recommendations on homeless policy and practice</li> <li>• Produce newsletters</li> <li>• Have other means of broadcasting information to local communities</li> </ul> <p>As such, they are important partners for helping to spread the word about early care and education services available to families experiencing homelessness. They are also key partners in creating and implementing policies and best practices.</p>
<p><b>State and Territorial Domestic Violence Coalitions</b></p> <p>State and Territorial Domestic Violence Coalitions are great partners. The Family Violence Prevention and Services Act supports these coalitions, which coordinate improvements within local communities, social service systems, and programs for the prevention and intervention of domestic violence.</p> <p>See the Resources tab for more information about how to contact state domestic violence coalitions.</p>
<p><b>Statewide Entities Providing Supports for Individuals and Families Experiencing Homelessness</b></p> <p>Statewide entities providing supports for individuals and families experiencing homelessness are great partners. There are many state agencies and systems that support families who are experiencing homelessness. It will be important to educate them on the importance of quality early childhood and school-age child care programs, available services, and how to gain access for the children in the families they serve. These may be providers of services aimed primarily at parent needs.</p> <p>Working together at the state level will help connect systems that strengthen identification and outreach efforts to ensure enrollment of young children in quality programs.</p>

## State-Level Strategies and Activities that Enhance Identification and Outreach to Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

Strategies to improve coordination and alignment of identification and outreach across early childhood and school-age child care systems include working with state partners to:

- Coordinate and align the identification, outreach, referral, and recruitment activities of child care subsidy eligibility staff, McKinney-Vento LEA liaisons, and Head Start and Early Head Start programs for children who meet the homeless definition
- Review one another's applications and intake processes to share exemplary practices for embedding the identification of homelessness into current policies and protocols

Encourage collaboration across local-level systems by including guidance in contracts and technical assistance plans for joint identification and outreach activities

Strengthen early childhood and school-age child care staff capacity to identify and enroll children experiencing homelessness with these strategies:

- Ensure state systems for early childhood and school-age child care staff training include:
  - McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless"
  - How homeless status is defined and used for eligibility determination
  - Appropriate methods for respectfully and accurately determining a family's homeless status
  - Data collection and reporting for families applying for services and for currently enrolled families whose living situation meets the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless"
  - Note how homelessness effects child development, family relationships, and parenting in trainings about social and emotional development and trauma-informed care
- Allocate resources that are adequate to meet staff training needs

Strategies to expand outreach and increase referrals and enrollment of families experiencing homelessness include:

- Working with state early childhood and education partners to increase awareness and use of the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" in housing and social service systems
- Partnering with housing and social service systems leaders to disseminate information widely to their providers about the availability of early childhood and school-age child care services and the importance of accessing quality care

- Allocating resources for printing and distribution of posters, brochures, and other public information materials to help families without technology learn about available services and how living situations effect eligibility
- Sharing and analyzing data across systems to set enrollment goals and monitor progress
- Collaborating on state plans to formalize goals to increase enrollment of families experiencing homelessness and to adopt policies, align practices, and plan efforts to identify and reach out to families
- Consulting parent advisory groups or councils or including parents as members of advisory groups and councils to ensure their input

To ensure children and families can access services, programs need to conduct planned and active identification, outreach, and data reporting efforts. The HSPPS and the CCDF Final Rule include requirements to identify children and families experiencing homelessness and encourage the enrollment of children experiencing homelessness in quality programs. These activities are essential due to the nature of family homelessness.

This module addressed local- and state-level efforts to identify and reach out to families experiencing homelessness as an initial step to enrollment.

## Completion Status

To complete Module 5, review all sections listed below. If a section is not checked, use the Menu tab to return to and complete that section. Once all sections are checked, select the "Next" button to continue to your Certificate of Completion.

- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ Importance of Identifying and Reaching Out to Families Experiencing Homelessness
- ✓ Collaborating with Local Partners
- ✓ Activity: Making Connections at the Local Level
- ✓ Local-Level Strategies and Activities
- ✓ Planning: Enhance Local Identification and Outreach
- ✓ Collaborating with State Partners
- ✓ Activity: Making Connections at the State Level
- ✓ State-Level Strategies and Activities

## Certificate of Completion

Congratulations! You have completed Module 5: Identifying and Reaching Out to Families Experiencing Homelessness

To access your certificate, select the “Open Your Certificate” button. A PDF document will open in a separate tab. Enter your name and the date on the certificate. Print or save the certificate to your computer.