



## LEARNING SUMMARY:

### *Rising Practices & Policies in the Workforce | Homelessness and Home Insecurity among Youth and Families*

#### **About the 2022 Rising Practices & Policies Learning Series**

In the Spring and Summer of 2022, the Pacific Southwest Mental Health Technology Transfer Center Network (MHTTC) brought together regional leaders and implementers in a four-part learning series on emerging issues for the mental health and school mental health workforce with the goal of identifying considerations and elevating promising practices.

#### **Session 3: Working with Youth and Families Experiencing Homelessness and Home Insecurity**

» [View the Webinar Recording Here](#)

Rates of homelessness and housing insecurity among children and youth in our region are staggering and have worsened since the pandemic. Because of their developmental stage, children and youth who experience homelessness are at increased risk for violence, mental health challenges, trafficking, and chronic homelessness. Many unhoused students cannot fully engage in school and either fall behind or do not complete high school.<sup>1</sup> MHTTC convened leaders in the school and mental health workforce to share strategies for responding to youth homelessness and housing insecurity in school and community-based settings. Highlights from the panelists and group discussion, along with resources shared, are presented below.

#### **What considerations and rising practices emerged?**

Considerations	Rising Practices and Strategies	Resources
<b>Teachers and school staff are on the frontlines of responding to youth homelessness and housing insecurity,</b> yet are often unaware of how to identify and address youth homelessness/housing insecurity. This can perpetuate stigma and prevent students from getting needed support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• In addition to training teachers and school staff to recognize youth who may be experiencing homelessness/housing insecurity, schools can educate teachers and school mental health staff about specific practices they can use with individual students, between peers, and in classrooms.</li><li>• Schools can implement classroom/school-wide discussions to raise awareness about resources.</li><li>• Teachers and staff can be mindful of stigma by using words like “youth safety” instead of “homelessness.”</li><li>• School and mental health staff can support skill-building for youth and families to communicate their needs and connect to resources.</li></ul>	<p><a href="#">Tips for Teachers &amp; Staff: How to Support Students Experiencing Homelessness</a></p> <p><a href="#">Local Homeless Education Liaisons: Understanding Their Role</a></p>

Considerations	Rising Practices and Strategies	Resources
<b>Schools are where students spend the majority of their time</b> and can make an impact by offering services onsite and adapting policies and practices to support students experiencing homelessness/housing insecurity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools can provide wraparound services and Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS) through Community Schools. Even non-Community Schools can create wellness teams with social workers, school counselors, and family partners who can coordinate with McKinney-Vento and Title I liaisons.</li> <li>Schools can change policies and practices to support students experiencing homelessness (e.g., having more class time to do homework, creating guidelines to prevent and address bullying and stigmatization based on clothing or hygiene).</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Community Schools Playbook</a>  <a href="#">Multi-Tiered Systems of Support (MTSS)</a>  <a href="#">Centering Students Experiencing Homelessness in School District Plans</a>
<b>Meeting the needs of students and families experiencing homelessness requires a coordinated response</b> involving schools and community-based organizations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools can partner with community-based organizations (CBOs) to provide culturally responsive wraparound supports and link students to services. Innovative school-based programs include mobile drop-in centers and shelters at schools.</li> <li>Programs should align with the needs of young people at higher risk of homelessness due to structural inequities (including youth of color, LGBTQ+ and two-spirit youth, unaccompanied youth, and youth impacted by child welfare and/or probation systems). Programs should use a strengths-based approach that recognizes, <i>"We are not here to save people, we are here to serve them."</i></li> <li>Peers and family partners can help reduce stigma and increase cultural responsiveness.</li> <li>Data sharing between schools and community programs supports service coordination.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Stay Over Program - School-Based Homeless Shelter</a>  <a href="#">Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students Experiencing Homelessness</a>
<b>Youth who are not in school and transition age youth</b> (who may or may not be in college) need a different type of response.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>CBOs can conduct outreach in the community and use common locations—for example, convenience stores, fire stations, libraries, or buses—as access points to services.</li> <li>CBOs can provide holistic services including shelter, hygiene, clothing, behavioral health services, and education and employment services.</li> <li>Community college homeless liaisons can coordinate with K-12 homeless liaisons and CBOs.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Safe Place</a>  <a href="#">TXT 4 HELP</a>  <a href="#">Tips for Homeless Higher Education Liaisons</a>
<b>Effective interventions require sufficient staff capacity and funding</b> , which are often stretched thin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Schools can pursue hiring school-level homeless liaisons to work with McKinney-Vento district homeless liaisons.</li> <li>Schools and CBOs can engage youth and families in Know Your Rights trainings and policy advocacy to press systems to respond to youth homelessness.</li> <li>In addition to government funding, schools and CBOs can pursue funding from philanthropy, corporate partners, and in-kind donations.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Dismantling Student Homelessness in California</a>  <a href="#">The Conditions and Outcomes of Homelessness Among California Students</a>

<sup>1</sup> Burns, D., Espinoza, D., Ondrasek, N., & Yang, M. (2021). *Students experiencing homelessness: The conditions and outcomes of homelessness among California students*. Learning Policy Institute. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/students-experiencing-homelessness-report>



## ***What current issues is our region facing in supporting youth and families experiencing homelessness and home insecurity?***

Deeply rooted structural inequities mean that homelessness and housing insecurity will remain a challenge for years to come. Some topics at the forefront for school and school mental health professionals are:

- Hiring and supporting the capacity of district and school-level homeless liaisons, social workers, and other staff that support youth experiencing homelessness/housing insecurity.
- Supporting schools to offer onsite services and adopt the Community Schools model.
- Understanding and addressing the intersections of youth homelessness with policies and regulations related to immigration, Native youth living on tribal land, and transition age youth over age 18 who may have a criminal record.

