



Supporting Whole-Family Approaches to Housing Stability and Economic Mobility: The Role of Early Care and Education Providers

In *Home, Together*, the federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness, we focus on strategies to ensure that homelessness is a rare, brief, and one-time experience. In order to achieve that goal, national, state, and local partners must work across sectors to build a coordinated community response that addresses the strengths and needs of individuals and families.

This fact sheet, part of a series that focuses on recommendations from the [Policy Statement on Meeting the Needs of Families with Young Children Experiencing and At Risk of Homelessness](#), is designed to strengthen collaboration between early care and education (ECE) providers and housing and homelessness services providers. It provides strategies for supporting a **whole-family approach**—breaking the intergenerational cycle of poverty by simultaneously and comprehensively meeting the needs of both children and parents who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

What is the role of ECE providers in a whole-family approach to ending homelessness?

ECE providers are critical partners in the work to identify families with infants and young children who may be experiencing housing instability or homelessness and to ensure they are connected to the services they need for long term housing stability.

How can ECE providers learn more about whole-family efforts to end homelessness?

You can support your community's efforts to implement whole-family approaches by first learning more about homelessness among expectant families and families with very young children:

- Research the prevalence of family homelessness in your community, including data from your local homelessness [continuum of care \(CoC\)](#) and public [school district](#). Read the [strategies](#) federal partners are supporting to prevent and end homelessness among families.
- Contact your local CoC and your local school district's McKinney-Vento homeless education liaison to learn more about how they are working to prevent and end homelessness among families in your community.
- Seek training from your local CoC and housing providers to learn more about the shelter and housing programs in your community.
- Consult the [Self-Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Programs Serving Families Experiencing Homelessness](#) to explore how to strengthen early childhood programs.
- Learn how you can become a part of or advise your local CoC.

How can ECE providers partner with housing and homelessness services providers to implement whole-family approaches?

Housing and homelessness services providers would benefit from your expertise in early learning and development in order to better meet the developmental, health, and overall wellness needs of infants and young children using their services.

- Offer training opportunities and resources to help housing and homelessness services partners understand the importance of assessing and addressing the needs of infants and children who have or are at risk of having disabilities and developmental delays. Connect partners to [developmental and behavioral screening](#) resources and tools, as well as contact information for additional services.
- Raise awareness about and discuss the key resources available to identify and support the needs of parents with developmental, mental, or substance use disorders.
- Offer trainings on best practices and strategies to identify and refer infants, young children, and families experiencing homelessness to ECE programs.
- Train housing and shelter providers on how to use tools, like the [Early Childhood Self-Assessment Tool for Family Shelters](#), to ensure their facilities are safe and appropriate for the development of young children.
- Share information on referral options for meeting the physical, developmental, and mental health needs of young children and their families within the community.
- Inform your local CoC about ECE providers in your community that can prioritize young children for enrollment because of current homelessness. For example, Head Start programs have certain flexible criteria for enrolling children experiencing homelessness.

How can ECE providers deepen their partnerships with housing and homelessness services providers and strengthen whole-family approaches?

You've laid the groundwork, shared information, and outlined best practices for collaboration. Now you can institutionalize shared commitments and complementary, coordinated, and joint activities.

- Broaden relationships with partners across your community, including CoCs, Emergency Solutions grantees, Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness grantees and other outreach providers, public housing agencies, Runaway and Homeless Youth providers, domestic violence service providers and statewide coalitions, and homeless coalitions and advocacy groups.
- Offer to connect housing and homelessness services providers to primary and secondary education partners and local homeless education liaisons, as well as behavioral health care providers, who can offer training and supports to staff working directly with infants and young children.
- Establish recurring meetings between leaders and staff across programs or systems to explore innovative ways to facilitate referrals, coordinate services, and increase collaboration.
- Develop memoranda of understanding to help formalize partnerships and commitments to work together on identified action areas.
- Regularly assess how partnerships are functioning and the efficiency and efficacy of referrals. Make mid-course corrections, when appropriate, to improve the quality of collaborative efforts.