Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness: CCDF State Self-Assessment

Carie Bires, Carmen Garcia, Julia Zhu, Rose Gallagher

NAEHCY

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

the Ounce

About this self-assessment tool

This self-assessment tool identifies key policies and practices that may improve inclusivity of homeless children in early care and education settings. State advocates or administrators can use the tool to identify policies and practices that are already in place, as well as those they could consider implementing or enhancing. Most states will not be able to implement every best practice and model policy included in this tool; however, using the self-assessment can provide states and advocates with a better understanding of what those best practices and model policies are so they can better identify those that are most feasible to implement. Although the tool was primarily created to support states in leveraging the Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan to improve access to child care for homeless families, the policies and practices laid out could be applied to virtually any early care and education program.

The tool is organized into six sections, which are described below. Each section addresses one critical component necessary to ensure high-quality child care is accessible to children and families who experience homelessness. With the exception of the requirements checklist, each section includes recommended items and where that item can be addressed in the CCDF preprint, a space to describe the state's current status on the item, and space to record notes or a brief action plan for addressing the item.

- **Requirements checklist:** This section provides an at-a-glance look at the requirements related to homelessness in the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014 (the CCDBG Act); it includes a description of the requirement and corresponding references to where the requirement can be found in the CCDBG Act and the CCDF draft preprint released on September 14, 2015. States can use this checklist to ensure that they are in compliance with the new law.
- **Policy and administration:** This section focuses specifically on the administrative level of the child care program and identifies CCDF policies that promote access to high-quality early care and education for children who experience homelessness.
- **Family support:** Families who experience homelessness face unique barriers to services. This section identifies key supports that facilitate participation in early care and education programs for families who experience homelessness.

- **Professional support:** Working effectively with families who experience homelessness requires a well-prepared workforce that understands the unique needs of this population, has knowledge of best practices for delivering services, and has adequate support for managing its own self-care. This section identifies the crucial training and support needs for the field.
- **Collaborations:** Families who experience homelessness often have very complex needs that cannot be met by any one service system. Collaboration is required to ensure families can access the services they need and can be successful in early care and education programs. This section identifies recommended collaborations that support the goal of serving more homeless families in high-quality early childhood programs.
- **Accountability:** The CCDBG Act requires data collection on the number of homeless families served by the CCDF, which presents new opportunities to ensure early care and education programs are accountable for serving this population. This section identifies some additional metrics that can support states in understanding if the policies, procedures and practices they have in place are effective in reaching homeless families.

Requirements checklist	CCDBG Act	CCDF preprint
Health and Safety Requirements: Concerning the compliance with immunization and other health and safety requirements, the state will establish a grace period that allows homeless children and children in foster care to receive services while their families (including foster families) procure relevant documentation.	658E(c)(2)(I)(i)(I)	3.2.2 c
Meeting the Needs of Certain Populations: State will develop and implement strategies to increase supply and improve quality of child care services for underserved children, infants and toddlers, children with disabilities, and children who receive care during nontraditional hours.	658E(c)(2)(M)	4.6
Coordination with Other Programs: To expand accessibility and continuity of care, particularly for full-day child care services, the state will coordinate with local, state, and federal early childhood programs, including those serving infants and toddlers with disabilities, homeless children and children in foster care.	658E(c)(2)(O)(i)	1.4.1
Use of Block Grant Funds for Child Care Services: The state shall use CCDF amounts (1) to provide child care services on a sliding fee scale basis, (2) to improve the quality or availability of such services, and (3) to improve access to such services, including (a) the establishing of procedures to permit enrollment of homeless children while required documentation is obtained, (b) training and technical assistance on identifying and serving homeless children and their activities, and (c) specific outreach to homeless families.	658E(c)(3)(B)(i)	(1) 3.4 (2) 7.1, 4.1.3 b (3a) 3.2.2 (3b) 6.1.10 (3c) 3.2.2
Reports on Required Information: On a monthly basis, states will collect information on families receiving CCDF assistance concerning: family income; county of residence; gender; race; and age of child(ren) receiving assistance; all sources of family income; whether the family is receiving public benefits and for how long; type of child care in which the child is enrolled; whether the child care provider was a relative; cost of child care; average hours per month of child care received; and whether the child(ren) receiving assistance is homeless. States will submit this information on a quarterly basis to the Secretary of Health and Human Services.	658K(a)(1)(B)	ACF Forms for CCDF Reporting

Section A: Policy and administration	CCDF Plan reference[1]	Current status	Notes and next steps
A1: We have policies and procedures in place that allow homeless families to enroll in the *child care subsidy program* without documentation, such as health records, birth certificates and identification.	3.2.2		
A2: We have policies and procedures in place that offer grace periods for homeless families to enroll in *early care and education programs* without documentation, such as health records, birth certificates and identification.[2]	3.2.2		
A3: We include homeless families in our definition of children in need of protective services.	3.1.3 c		
A4: We include homeless children in our definition of children with special needs or who are high risk.	3.2.1		
A5: We provide child care subsidy during an initial period of job search for parents who experience homelessness.	3.1 3.2.2		

---

[1] All of the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Plan references are taken from the CCDF Preprint for Public Comment 9-14-15 and are subject to change once the public comment period has closed.
[2] Early care and education programs include preschools, child care facilities and other early learning providers such as Head Start.

Section A: Policy and administration	CCDF Plan reference[3]	Current status	Notes and next steps
A6: We waive co-payments for families experiencing homelessness.	3.2.2 3.4		
A7: We provide a higher payment rate for providers caring for children who are homeless.	3.2.1 4.3.2 4.6		
A8: We exempt housing assistance from income determination.	3.1 3.2.2		
A9: We use grants or contracts to reserve dedicated child care slots for homeless children.	4.1.3		
A10: We use grants or contracts to improve the quality of child care programs for children who are homeless.	4.1.3		
A11: We include GED programs[4] as allowable activities.	3.1 3.3		
A12: We provide expedited processing of child care subsidy applications for homeless families (less than 1 week).	3.2.1 3.2.2		

---

[3] All of the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Plan references are taken from the CCDF Preprint for Public Comment 9-14-15 and are subject to change once the public comment period has closed.

[4] 49% of homeless parents do not have a high school diploma or GED. Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness. (2013). *An Unstable Foundation: Factors that Impact Educational Attainment Among Homeless Children.* New York City: Author.

Section A: Policy and administration	CCDF Plan reference[5]	Current status	Notes and next steps
A13: We have a policy for prioritizing homeless families when we have a waitlist for subsidies or slots in contracted services.	3.2.1 3.2.2		
A14: We use a definition of homelessness consistent with the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.	3.2.2		
A15: We work with Quality Rating and Improvement Systems or other quality rating systems to create designated competencies that indicate programs are structured and staff are trained to serve children experiencing homelessness and their families.	4.6 6.1.2 6.1.6 6.1.10 7		
A16: We coordinate with early learning programs serving homeless families (as defined by McKinney-Vento) to expand access and continuum of care.	1.4.1		
A17: We encourage program initiatives to support and serve homeless children and families.	3.2.2		

---

[5] All of the Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) Plan references are taken from the CCDF Preprint for Public Comment 9-14-15 and are subject to change once the public comment period has closed.

Section B: Family Support	CCDF Plan reference	Current status	Notes and next steps
B1: We provide extra resources to providers who serve homeless families and require that those resources be used to provide additional support to families.	4.6.2 d		
B2: We have policies and procedures that ensure homeless families are informed about available programs that provide *comprehensive services*.	2.1.1 2.2. 3.2.2		
B3: We have policies and procedures to intentionally increase access for homeless families such as outreach at motels and shelters.	3.2.2		
B4: We provide transportation (or transportation funds) to early care and education programs for families experiencing homelessness.	3.2.2		
B5: We have policies that protect homeless families from excessive extra fees for late pick up, early drop off, etc.	3.2.2 3.4.5		
B6: We provide information to parents about program quality in a mobile-friendly format (many homeless parents access the Internet using mobile phones).	1.7 2.1 2.2 2.3 3.2.2		

Section B: Family Support	CCDF Plan reference	Current status	Notes and next steps
B7: We provide convenient and welcoming locations for homeless parents to apply for a child care subsidy, such as family shelters or other community centers that serve homeless families.	2.1.1 b 2.1.2 3.2.2		
B8: We provide training to staff who assist homeless families in applying for child care subsidy to ensure that they have a basic understanding of homelessness and can serve families in a trauma-informed way.	3.2.2		
B9: We establish homeless points of contact in child care programs, at Child Care Resource & Referral agencies or other county/district entities.	3.2.2 7.4		
B10: We provide expanded availability of child care during non-traditional and irregular hours, when many homeless families work.	3.2.2 4.6.2 c		
B11: We ensure the availability of quality child care during non-traditional and irregular hours.	3.2.2 4.6		
B12: We have policies that support co-location of child care services where homeless families receive services, such as shelters or food pantries.	3.2.2		
B13: We have processes to help homeless families apply for child care subsidies at community locations they frequent, such as shelters or food pantries.	3.2.2		

NAEHCY
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

the Ounce

Section C: Professional support	CCDF Plan reference	Current status	Notes and next steps
C1: We provide training on the identification of homeless families for child care providers and administrators.	3.2.2 6.1.10		
C2: We provide training for individuals who process child care subsidy requests on identifying, serving and working with homeless families.	3.2.2 6.1.1 e 6.1.10		
C3: We provide interprofessional training for all service providers, including child care providers, who support homeless families.	3.2.2 6.1.10		
C4: We provide and leverage existing training available through Head Start or McKinney-Vento to support child care workers and administrators in working with homeless families.	1.4.1 3.2.2		
C5: We provide training on trauma-informed practice to child care providers and administrators.	6.1		

NAEHCY
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

the Ounce

Section C: Professional support	CCDF Plan reference	Current status	Notes and next steps
C6: We provide training on the impacts of homelessness on children and families to child care providers and administrators.	6.1.10		
C7: We provide mental health consultation to child care programs working with homeless families.	6.1		
C8: We provide training and support for cross-sector collaboration.	6.1		
C9: We provide and promote reflective practice for child care programs working with homeless families.	6.1		
C10: We provide and promote opportunities to providers who work with children experiencing homelessness to engage in self-care.	6.1		

NAEHCY
NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

the Ounce

Section D: Collaborations	CCDF plan reference	Current Status	Notes and next steps
D1: Our McKinney-Vento State Coordinator or designee provides input into the CCDF State Plan.	1.3.1		
D2: Our state's Head Start collaboration director provides input on the CCDF State Plan.	1.3.1		
D3: Our homeless service providers give input into the CCDF State Plan.	1.3.1		
D4: Our child welfare and juvenile justice programs' relevant policies and procedures are incorporated into the CCDF State Plan.	1.3.1 1.4.1		
D5: Our CCDF State Plan is aligned to the state education agency's policies and procedures regarding McKinney-Vento.	1.4.1		
D6: Our state interagency council on homelessness is consulted in developing the CCDF State Plan (if applicable).	1.3.1		
D7: Our CCDF administrator is actively involved in our state's interagency council on homelessness (if applicable).	3.2.2		
D8: Our Child Care Resource and Referral agencies are actively involved in local Continua of Care, rapid rehousing and coordinated intake efforts.	1.4.1 1.7		

Section D: Collaborations	CCDF plan reference	Current Status	Notes and next steps
D9: Our homeless service providers and McKinney-Vento liaisons collaborate with us to identify and assist homeless families in applying for a child care subsidy.	1.4.1 3.2.2		
D10: Our homeless service providers and McKinney-Vento liaisons collaborate with us to assist homeless families in enrolling in child care.	1.4.1 3.2.2		
D11: Child care subsidy staff co-locate regularly at homeless services programs to facilitate application to and enrollment in subsidized child care for homeless families.	2.1.2 3.2.2		

NQEHCY

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

the Ounce

Section E: Accountability	CCDF plan reference	Current status	Notes and next steps
E1: We track the number of homeless children, by age, who *receive* a child care subsidy.			
E2: We track the number of homeless children, by age, who *apply* for a child care subsidy.			
E3: We track the number of homeless children, by age, who *enroll* in child care.			
E4: We track the number of homeless children, by age, who *lose* a child care subsidy.			
E5: We track the number of homeless children, by age, who are *expelled or suspended* from child care settings.			
E6: We set targets for enrollment of homeless children in child care.			
E7: We monitor child care data collected on homelessness from E1–E6.			
E8: We make the child care data collected on homelessness available to the public.	2.2.1		