

Family Support NEWS BRIEF

A publication of

 CENTER FOR SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES



Homelessness and the Impact on Families and Children

Introduction

Families experiencing homelessness has been on the rise since the COVID-19 pandemic, and the trend continues in 2023. The negative effects on families and their children are profound and creating a nationwide crisis. Prevention and support initiatives are being developed through state and federal organizations. Several home visiting and early childhood programs, homeless shelters, and other agencies are working to help families who have been displaced.

Research

In efforts to prevent homelessness, organizations at the state and federal level have conducted research on the number of families experiencing homelessness. In Pennsylvania there are at least 12,376 infants and

toddlers experiencing homelessness, and 10.29 percent are being served by early childhood and home visiting programs. According to the U.S. Department of Education, approximately 1.3 million children under the age of six have experienced homelessness.

Barriers for Families

Families experience several barriers when they do not have a permanent place of residence. Some of the challenges they face include educational needs, access to health care, transportation, lack of nutrition, access to high quality childcare, and several others. Families may not be aware of the supports that are available to them and their young children. These supports may include housing assistance, childcare, early childhood education programs, financial assistance, food, and several other resources.

Eligibility and Criteria for Homeless Supports

The McKinney-Vento Act defines homelessness as not having a regular place of residence. Example are sharing housing or living in motels, emergency shelters, cars, or public spaces. Family support staff can use a decision-making tool, provided by the National Center on Parent, Family and Community Engagement, in determining eligibility. Using this tool when talking with families can help aid in the referral process for assistance.

For pre-kindergarten programs, the McKinney-Vento Act requires a staff member to identify any young children who are homeless to ensure enrollment in early childhood programs including childcare and home visiting. Additionally, programs are required to have reserved spots for families who are homeless. Childcare programs allocate funds for enrollment of homeless children.

Impact on Child Development

There are several negative outcomes affecting infants and toddlers and their development. Many young children who experience homelessness have developed health problems and have been hospitalized. Researchers have found that some infants can have delays in language, literacy, and social and emotional learning. During pregnancy, pre-term delivery has occurred, and the baby may have low birthweight. Young children can also experience learning difficulties, which can impact school readiness.

Importance of Early Childhood Programs

According to the School House Connection, it is imperative young children experiencing homelessness have access to high-quality early learning programs such as Head Start, childcare, and home visiting. These programs provide developmentally appropriate learning opportunities that can reduce the effects of homelessness.

Young children who attend programs like Head Start have been shown to improve their problematic behaviors, emotional regulation, vocabulary, and cognitive stimulation. Early Head Start has the largest enrollment rate of children experiencing homelessness. In Pennsylvania, there are 659 families and children enrolled in Head Start programs, and 322 families enrolled in the Parents as Teachers (PAT) home visiting program.

Support through Home Visiting

Family support professionals in home visiting programs can play a vital role in supporting families facing homelessness. Several home visiting programs have connections with local organizations that can help families with housing, food, and other assistance programs.

Systems Working Together

There are several cross system collaborative efforts being made to improve the outcomes for families struggling with homelessness across Pennsylvania. Pennsylvania state agencies working together include Head Start State Collaboration Office, Early Intervention, and Early Learning Resource Centers. Through these partnerships, organizations are teaming up to create positive changes for families and children experiencing homelessness.

Resources for Family Support Professionals

[Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program \(ECYEH\)](#)

[School House Connection](#)

[National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth \(NAECHY\)](#)

[National Coalition for the Homeless](#)

[U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development](#)

[HopePHL](#)

[Head Start State Collaboration Office \(HSSCO\)](#)

Sources

"Infants and Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness." Schoolhouseconnection.org, https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/SHC_Infant-and-Toddler-Homelessness_2022.pdf. Accessed 24 Mar. 2023.

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Sucsy, Anna. "An Invisible Crisis: Early Childhood Homelessness -A Primer." Childcareservices.org, https://www.childcareservices.org/wp-content/uploads/CCSA_2021_An_Invisible_Crisis_Early_Childhood_Homelessness_A_Primer.pdf. Accessed 24 Mar. 2023.

"A State-Level Brief: Participation of Young Children Experiencing Homelessness in Early Childhood Programs In." Pcdn.Co, 2022, <https://s35729.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/PA-State-Level-Brief-GW-FINAL-1.28.22.pdf>.

"Enhancing Early Learning Opportunities for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness in Pennsylvania: A Summary Report." Pakeys.org, 2022, <https://www.pakeys.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/2022-Enhancing-Early-Learning-Opportunities-for-Young-Children-Experiencing-Homelessness-in-Pennsylvania.pdf>.

SchoolHouse Connection. Using Data to Advocate for Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness in Pennsylvania. Youtube, 16 Feb. 2023, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=owwsSmp5_lw.

"Continuums of Care and Head Start Working Together to Address Housing Vulnerability of Pennsylvania's Families." Pcdn.Co, <https://s35729.pcdn.co/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/PA-HS-CoC-2022-01-24-FINAL.pdf>. Accessed 24 Mar. 2023.



Upcoming Family Support Webinars

Wednesday, April 20, 2023, from 10:00 AM to 11:15 AM

Mothers and Babies: Bridging the Mental Health Gap

Join us in our discussion surrounding mental health, particularly in communities with limited access to services and intervention. We will share our experience implementing the Mothers and Babies curriculum and the challenges and successes that we've found with the families we serve. This flexible curriculum is a great tool to have in your toolbox, so put on your hardhats and get ready to brainstorm ways of building stronger families!

Presenters

Nicole Wilson, Family Support Specialist

Alaura Tuft, Family Support Specialist

Stephanie Ghormley, Supervisor for NOWCAP Parents as Teachers, Fremont County

[Register for Mothers and Babies webinar](#)

May – No Webinar. See you at the 2023 Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Conference!

June 7, 2023, from 10:00 AM to 11:15 AM

Healthy Outcomes from Positive Experiences: Supporting Families through HOPE



Register Now

**Thriving Together
Growing Stronger**

May 2-4 Harrisburg, Pennsylvania

[Register now for the 2023 Pennsylvania Strengthening Families Conference.](#)

Parents as Teachers Online Courses

Foundational and Model Implementation

For new parent educators and new supervisors of affiliate programs.

Monday, April 17 – Friday, April 28, 2023

Monday, May 8 – Friday, May 19, 2023

Foundational 2: 3 Years Through Kindergarten

Monday, May 30 – Friday, June 2, 2023

Monday, June 26 – Friday, June 30, 2023

Register for courses at the National Parents as Teachers' [training website](#).

Questions regarding registration for PAT trainings? Contact [Jennifer Esposito](#).



Family Support March Webinar Recap

The March Family Support webinar, "Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect - It's More than a Family Matter!", was held March 1, 2023. Presented by Angela M. Little of the Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance, the webinar provided the most recent data on child maltreatment in Pennsylvania to form the basis for a discussion on prevention. The discussion also included information about key prevention programs available through Pennsylvania Family Support Alliance and what's on the calendar for Child Abuse Prevention Month in April.

[Watch Preventing Child Abuse and Neglect recording](#)



Family Support Team

Family Support at Center for Schools and Communities provides training and technical assistance to Parents as Teachers providers, Children's Trust Fund grantees, and the Strengthening Families Leadership Team.

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[Pennsylvania Parents as Teachers](#) at Center for Schools and Communities

[Pennsylvania Children's Trust Fund](#)

[Pennsylvania Strengthening Families](#)

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Safe Kids Corner



Boating

During the warm weather months, families across the country will be spending more time enjoying lakes, rivers, and oceans. Being aware of the risks these open waters pose, and following these boating safety tips, can keep those outings fun.

The Hard Facts About Boating Safety

In 2018, 77 percent of all fatal boating accident victims drowned, and of those who drowned, 84 percent were not wearing a life jacket.

Top Tips for Boating Safety

1. Wear a U.S. Coast Guard approved life jacket when boating. Choose a life jacket that is right for your child's weight and water activity.
2. Young kids are at a higher risk for hypothermia, so take extra precautions to keep them warm. If your children seem cold or are shivering, wrap them tightly in a dry blanket or towel.
3. Learn basic water rescue skills and CPR. It is important to know how to respond in an emergency without putting yourself at risk of drowning.
4. Follow U.S. Coast Guard recommendations for boating safety. Learn about available boating resources, such as free vessel safety checks and boating safety courses.

Source: https://www.safekids.org/safetytips/field_risks/boating

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A meal.
Essentials.**

Locate the services you need and deserve with the Finding Your Way in PA app.

Finding Your Way in PA
Resources for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

findingyourwayinpa.com