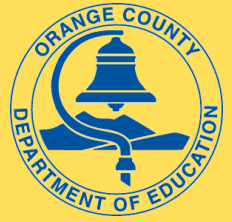


# SUPPORTING YOUNG CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



Orange County Department of Education - Homeless Outreach Promoting Educational Success (HOPES) Collaborative

**IDENTIFYING, RECRUITING and ENROLLING** young children experiencing homelessness starts with collaborating with **Local District's McKinney-Vento Liaison**.

## Local Homeless Services

Coordination between homeless liaisons and Head Start/Pre School Programs include:

- Coordinated/centralized entry intakes for referrals
- Waiting lists
- Prioritized educational supports
- Streamlined resources and information when young children have older siblings



find your liaison here

## Training is key



- Train all staff on how to identify homeless children during their **enrollment**
- Share the local liaison's contact information on preschool applications as a resource for families who do not have proof of address; the local liaison should follow up with the family and provide **service referrals** as needed
- Avoid referring to families as "homeless" on school forms or in conversation. Instead, provide examples of living situations that meet criteria:

"Are you renting a room or sharing with other families?"

"Is your family living in a motel?"

"I understand you are staying with friends until you find a new place?"

"Since the pandemic started, has your address changed or have you had to move?"

## Ways to collaborate

### Districts

- Partner with local school districts and ensure K-12 registration forms have a section to list preschool-age children or younger siblings
- Request educational materials for younger siblings

### Shelters

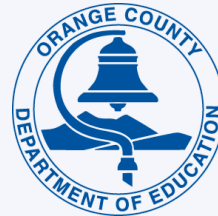
- Send enrollment information to all family shelters including: domestic violence survivor and pregnant & parenting youth

### Motels & Public Areas

- Partner with family resource centers, library outreach programs, local motels, transportation centers, grocery stores and gasoline stations
- Post educational rights outside the following:
  - pediatricians' offices; low-cost health clinics; libraries
  - Application offices for:
    - Temporary Aid for Needy Families (TANF), Special Supplemental Nutrition Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC), the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP); Community Resource Centers



# SUPPORTING YOUNG CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



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Homelessness is a state of vulnerability for children and families. Young children need stability and consistency to form the foundation for future social, emotional, physical and cognitive development.

## Ways to help

- Allow children to keep personal items close to them if they need them for comfort
- Offer choices and reinforce their sense of control
- Reinforce positive behaviors
- Create a relationship and connection so the child learns that adults can be safe and supportive
- Seek to understand the meaning of a specific behavior in a specific moment
- Look for patterns of behavior, including individual triggers that activate children's stress response systems
- Use different means of parent communication (email, social media, text, voice message, request shelter to allow the family to use a phone or computer)
- Be informed about transportation resources in the area (bus and gas vouchers, carpools, partnerships with agencies)
- Provide referrals for medical, dental, and health/wellness services as well as domestic violence program and housing
- Practice self-care as it is the best prevention for burnout and you deserve it!

## Safety

- Provide informal support for parents to discuss issues or private concerns, and help them understand the services available:
  - Assistance with participation in school meals, before/after-school programs, mentoring, summer programs
  - Necessary school supplies, clothing to meet a school requirement
  - Technology devices and Wi-Fi support
  - Transportation to and from school

## Environment

- Create a calming environment
- Provide stable, predictable routines
- Take advantage of outdoor natural settings

Young children develop resilience in the face of sustained stress and trauma by experiencing a consistent relationship with a supportive caregiver who is responsive to the child's needs. Be sensitive, patient, calm, and reassuring. YOU can make a difference!

MORE INFO



[find your liaison here](https://ocde.us/educationalservices/learningsupports/mv/pages/default.aspx)

[HTTPS://OCDE.US/EDUCATIONALSERVICES/LEARNINGSUPPORTS/MV/PAGES/DEFAULT.ASPX](https://ocde.us/educationalservices/learningsupports/mv/pages/default.aspx)