

Spring, 2024

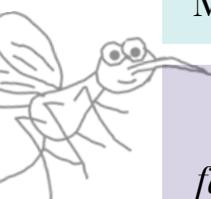
Better TOGETHER

Sharing information and resources for supporting Wisconsin's youngest students experiencing homelessness



What's in this issue?

New Data Report	2
Home at Head Start	3
ARP-HCY	4
Birth to Three Tip Sheet	5
Module	6



Early care and education (ECE) programs provide tremendous benefit to all children, especially our nation's most vulnerable children. Children and their families who experience homelessness deal with a great many challenges. Quality ECE programs buffer the challenges and risks associated with homelessness by supporting children's learning and development in safe, stable and nurturing environments

.-Serving Homeless Families in Early Care and Education Programs

This edition of *Better Together* shares information, professional development opportunities, and resources for early care and education professionals to support Wisconsin's children and families experiencing homelessness.



Wisconsin Early Childhood
Collaborating Partners



New State-by-State Early Childhood Homelessness Data Report

Infant & Toddler Homelessness Across 50 States: 2021-22 - Unveiling the most detailed examination yet of homelessness impacting infants and toddlers. This groundbreaking analysis is the first-ever state-by-state compilation of data, shedding light on the challenges faced by our nation's youngest children.

With 364,390 infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness, what now? SchoolHouse Connection lays out clear and strategic recommendations on addressing these needs head on. [Read the report here](#) or by clicking on the image below.



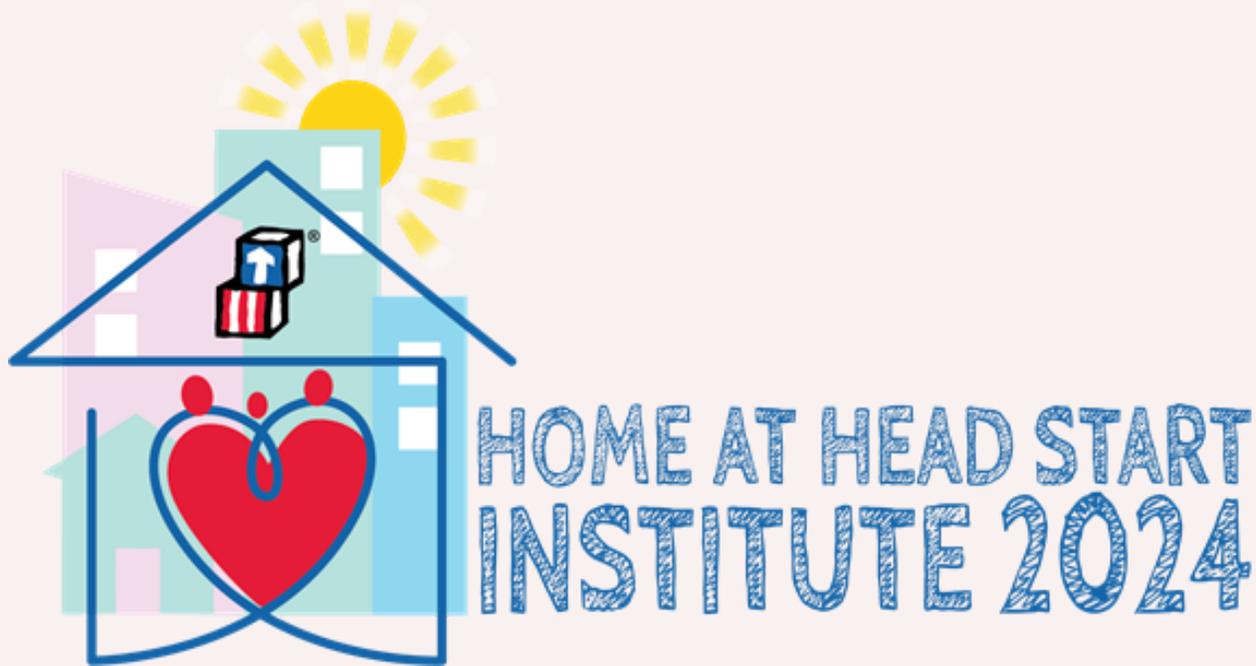
NEW REPORT!

INFANT & TODDLER HOMELESSNESS ACROSS 50 STATES:

2021-2022

FIRST EVER STATE-BY-STATE COLLECTION OF DATA





-image from Office of Head Start (OHS) National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement

Join the Office of Head Start (OHS) National Center on Parent and Family Community Engagement for a free three-day virtual professional development event focused on supporting young children experiencing homelessness. The event has English and Spanish offerings and has information for early care and education professionals working both in and out of Head Start. This training also has information targeting parent leaders.

OHS defines the goals of the event as:

- *Ensuring families have access to all available supports and services*
- *Strengthening community partnerships that address housing instability*
- *Refreshing program staff's understanding and application of homelessness-related regulations*
- *Boosting recruitment, enrollment, and retention of children and families experiencing homelessness*

The virtual professional development event takes place on May 7, 8, and 9, 2024.

Find more [information about the event and register here.](#)

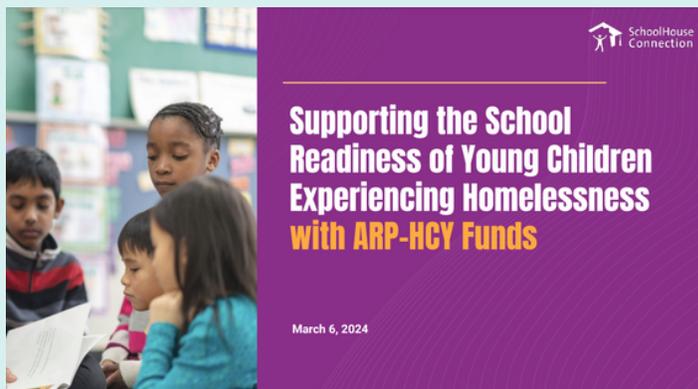


American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) Funds

In September, the US Department of Education released a Dear Colleague Letter that not only stressed the importance of spending American Rescue Plan -Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funds, but it also updated the use of the funds to include young children **not yet** enrolled in the LEA. This inclusion of early childhood now allows ARP-HCY funding to be used directly for young children, ages birth to five, where it was previously only allowed to incidentally benefit them.

Here are some ARP-HCY for early childhood resources:

SchoolHouse Connection recently hosted a webinar *Supporting the School Readiness of Young Children Experiencing Homelessness with ARP-HCY Funds*. Watch the webinar here, and find other SchoolHouse Connection Webinars on their Archived Webinars page.



Learn more about ARP-HCY in the winter edition of *Better Together* which took a closer look at the US Department of Education's Dear Colleague Letter.

The Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (DPI-EHCY) updated its ARP-HCY Frequently Asked Questions document which includes the new guidance.

Learn more about building relationships in *Engaging with Families in Conversations about Sensitive Topics* from the Office of Head Start (OHS) National Center on Parent, Family, and Community Engagement.



Training Opportunities

The Wisconsin Department of Health Services (DHS) recently released *Child Find Outreach Resource: For Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness*. The tip sheet was created for local county Birth to Three Child Find efforts, however the tip sheet is helpful for all outreach and home visiting efforts.

WISCONSIN BIRTH TO 3 PROGRAM CHILD FIND OUTREACH RESOURCES

FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

DEFINING HOMELESSNESS

The [McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act's](#) definition of "homeless" includes the following living situations for children:

- Sharing housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
- Living in motels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Living in cars, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, or train stations
- Lacking a nighttime residence that is fixed, regular, or adequate (accessible to individual needs and without worry of eviction)
- Primary nighttime residence that is public or private place not designed for human beings

RESOURCES FOR STAFF

- [Serving Homeless Families in Early Care and Education Programs Tool Kit](#)
- [Wisconsin Balance of State Interactive map](#): local coalitions of housing providers throughout 69 counties. Provides an interactive map to locate services and contact information for local homeless and housing services.
- [Self-assessment tool](#) for early childhood programs serving families experiencing homelessness

MAIN BARRIERS TO ACCESSING THE BIRTH TO 3 PROGRAM

- Lack of awareness
- High mobility
- Transportation
- Lack of documents

FEDERAL REGULATIONS

"The lead agency, as part of the child find system, must ensure that all infants and toddlers with disabilities who are eligible for early intervention services under this part are identified, located, and evaluated, including infants and toddlers with disabilities who are homeless." [34 CFR 303.303\(a\)\(1\)\(ii\)](#)

OUTREACH ACTIVITIES

- 1 Fostering staff awareness of the McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act and recognize common signs of homelessness.
- 2 Use interactive map to locate housing providers in your area to disseminate child find materials and build relationships.
- 3 Conduct visits and outreach at sites where families experiencing homelessness spend their time and/or reside to increase awareness of the Birth to 3 Program.
- 4 Provide a sensitive approach in communicating with families experiencing homelessness by adjusting language to reduce fears or stigmas.

Wisconsin Department of Health Services
Division of Medicaid Services
P-02548A (12/2023)

Learn more about the Birth to 3 Early Intervention in Wisconsin and how to make referrals with DHS's *Tips for Birth to 3 Program Referrals* sheet.

Educator Training to Support Learners Experiencing Homelessness Module

The *Educator Training to Support Learners Experiencing Homelessness* module is a new and free self-paced virtual training. The module was created in partnership with Education Leads Home, Wisconsin Technical College System, SchoolHouse Connection, Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction, and Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners.

While the module does have a focus on 4K-12th classrooms, the module prepares educators of all types to meet the needs of children and families experiencing homelessness in all learning environments. [Access the free module here.](#)



The mission of the WI Early Childhood Collaborating Partners: All children will be healthy, nurtured, safe and successful.

