



# Leveraging Data to Support Children Experiencing Homelessness

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Photo Courtesy of Allison Shelley/The Verbatim Agency for American Education: Images of Teachers and Students in Action



# Introduction

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States and communities lack accurate and reliable data on young children's housing status. This can challenge states in their efforts to identify young children experiencing homelessness and to provide important supports to their families, such as enrollment in early care and education (ECE) and housing assistance. In addition, the lack of strong data may hinder states' abilities to estimate rates of early childhood homelessness to support projections of service needs and allocation of resources to better assist these children and their families. The purpose of this research brief is to understand the challenges that states and communities face in using data, as well as potential opportunities for strengthening data collected to estimate rates of early childhood homelessness and identify young children experiencing homelessness.

This report begins with a discussion of the various federal definitions of homelessness and the federal data sources that influence how states and communities collect data on young children experiencing homelessness. The report then summarizes findings from a series of key respondent interviews with agency or organization leaders in selected states and communities to highlight challenges and promising practices around data on early childhood homelessness. The brief concludes with a summary of key themes, and based on these themes, provides future directions for strengthening data sources and data usage to support young children experiencing homelessness.

## Collecting Data on Homelessness: ED vs. HUD Definitions of Homelessness

The U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) use different definitions of homelessness in their data collection efforts.

**U.S. Department of Education Definition (McKinney-Vento):** ED defines homelessness as the absence of stable, adequate nighttime shelter. Homelessness includes the use of public shelters, doubled-up or shared housing, automobiles, or other inadequate shelter, and substandard housing, as well as living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations (42 USC 11431 et seq.).

The "doubled-up" category specifically refers to families that are doubled-up due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or another similar reason. Homelessness also includes individuals living in any home whose conditions make it unsafe for human habitation.

**U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Definition:** HUD's definition of homelessness for data collection purposes does not include families living doubled-up but specifies that an individual is experiencing homelessness if he or she is residing in an emergency shelter or transitional housing, or is sleeping either on the street or in some other location not meant for human habitation, often referred to as literal homelessness.

## Data Sources on Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

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Data on young children's housing status are limited.<sup>1</sup> Differences in data collection methods across federal agencies make it difficult to provide accurate estimates of the proportion of children ages birth to 5 experiencing homelessness in the United States.<sup>2</sup> Despite this fact, we do know that almost half of all children in federally funded shelters are children ages birth to 6 (49.6%),<sup>2</sup> and that children are at the greatest risk of entering the shelter system during their first year of life.<sup>3</sup> The two federal

<sup>1</sup> The U.S. Department of Education has data on children ages 3 to 5 if they are enrolled in a public preschool program that receives a homeless education grant from ED. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development can only report on the number of children who meet their definition of literal homelessness.

agencies primarily responsible for collecting data on children experiencing homelessness are (1) the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), and (2) the U.S. Department of Education (ED). Given that each agency has its own priorities and goals for supporting families that are homeless, they collect data on family housing status differently. For example, HUD’s goal is to provide stable and affordable housing to families, while ED’s goal is to promote academic excellence and ensure equal access to free, appropriate education. ED and HUD collect some of the same information; however, one major difference between them is that ED collects data on children living doubled-up (e.g., staying with family or friends due to loss of housing from economic hardship, or a similar reason), while HUD does not.<sup>b</sup> Another important difference is that HUD’s data captures information on infants, toddlers, and preschoolers who are literally homeless (see the textbox above), while ED has very limited data on infants and toddlers. In addition, although ED’s data more comprehensively captures children and youth experiencing homelessness from kindergarten through grade 12, ED’s data only captures preschoolers if the child is enrolled in a preschool program that receives a homeless education grant from ED. Furthermore, unlike their school-aged peers who are subject to compulsory education requirements, children ages birth to 5 do not always have access to public education.

**Early childhood definitions of homelessness**

Both the Head Start Program Performance Standards and the Child Care and Development Fund Final Rule use the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness. Therefore, children living doubled-up are identified as experiencing homelessness in their data systems.

As shown in Table 1, there are additional federal data sources that provide information on early childhood homelessness, but these data sources also have limitations given that each source captures only a portion of the population.<sup>c</sup>

The information from these sources is often collected at state and/or local levels and then aggregated at the federal level to estimate rates of homelessness. As a result, HUD, ED, and other agencies have different estimates of early childhood homelessness. Moreover, because these definitions influence how state and local agencies collect information from families about their housing status, not only do state and local agencies have estimates that fail to capture the full population, but agencies may also be limited in their abilities to identify families in need of services and supports, such as housing assistance and ECE.

**Table 1.** Information included in and limitations of data sources

Data Source Type	Program	Data Included	Limitations of Data
ECE/Education Data Sources			
Program Information Report (PIR)	Early Head Start/Head Start	Number of <u>families</u> experiencing homelessness in Head Start, number of children eligible for Head Start due to homelessness, and number of families experiencing homelessness that acquired housing	Data are not inclusive of all early care and education programs. Information on homelessness is not collected in a systematic way across programs.

<sup>b</sup> It is important to note that there have been robust discussions (e.g., Bires, Kenefick, & Gunderson, 2017) concerning the differences between ED’s and HUD’s definitions of homelessness. However, for the purpose of this brief, we are limiting our discussion to the definitions used for data collection purposes only.

<sup>c</sup> Using some of the data sources described in this brief, ACF compiles estimates on early childhood homelessness. For the most recent 50-state profile please see: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/eecd/resource/early-childhood-homelessness-in-the-united-states-50-state-profile>.

Data Source Type	Program	Data Included	Limitations of Data
State CCDF Plans/ databases	Child Care Development Fund (CCDF)	Number of children experiencing homelessness who receive child care subsidy	Data are not systematically available across states. When available, data may not tell us where children experiencing homelessness are enrolled. Also, data are available only for children receiving subsidies. Many children outside of the subsidy system are not captured.
Department of Education, ED Facts	Department of Education - McKinney-Vento	Number of children ages 3 to 5 experiencing homelessness enrolled in Lead Education Agency-funded early care and education programs	Data are not inclusive of children experiencing homelessness who are in non-publicly funded early care and education programs.
<b>HUD/Housing Data Sources</b>			
Information report - Point In Time (PIT)		Number of children in emergency shelters and transitional housing or counted on the street during one January night	Data do not capture the number of individuals living doubled-up or in other substandard housing locations outside of the living situation included in the point in time count.
Database - Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)		Number of children in emergency or transitional housing programs	Type of data collected varies across communities. <sup>d</sup> Typically, there are very limited data on children ages birth to 5.

Note: Early Head Start/Head Start data are collected at the program level and reported up to the federal level. For all other data sources, data are collected at the state level and reported up to the federal level.

In addition to definitional differences that influence data collection, other challenges also make it difficult for states and communities to identify and estimate the rates of children ages birth to 5 experiencing homelessness.

First, high rates of mobility among families that experience homelessness make it difficult to obtain accurate estimates of this population and identify families for services. It is not uncommon for families to experience multiple moves prior to and during their homelessness episode. For example, families may move between friends' and families' homes as they look for housing (sometimes called couch surfing) or may experience moves between housing programs (e.g., moving from emergency shelter to transitional housing).<sup>4</sup> Therefore, the frequency with which data are collected (e.g., one point in time vs. regular intervals) may impact population estimates and identification of families experiencing homelessness.

<sup>d</sup> HMIS systems vary across states and communities. Each community has a certain number of required elements from HUD that they must include in their system; however, they also have a certain degree of flexibility in adding elements that are important to their local jurisdiction.

Second, it is also important to consider the quality of these data. For example, housing status is typically collected through self-report. Families may not want to self-identify as homeless due to stigma.<sup>5</sup> Parents may also be concerned about the perceived consequences of disclosing their housing status, such as the involvement of child protective services.<sup>6</sup> Finally, families living doubled-up may not consider themselves homeless. For these reasons, it is likely that data on family housing status does not capture the full population.

Despite these challenges, states and communities are using data to estimate rates of homelessness, and to identify families facing housing instability to provide needed supports. It is important to gain a deeper understanding of how states and communities are doing this work, especially with regard to both the challenges in using data and opportunities to strengthen data systems. Therefore, the current brief explores findings from interviews with key informants in six states and communities who work to support young children experiencing homelessness.

## Interviews with Key Respondents

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Researchers from Child Trends interviewed key respondents from agencies at the state, county, or local level within a set of six selected states and communities to further explore the data sources and initiatives that states and communities use to identify and support families experiencing homelessness. When determining which states to include, the research team considered the number of children ages birth to 5 experiencing homelessness in the state or community, whether there were any special programs or initiatives in place to increase access to ECE for this population, and whether their Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) plan had specific provisions in place to support subsidy access for this population. The final list of states and communities was selected in consultation with the research team and the project officer from the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation. Key informants were interviewed from four states (North Carolina, Idaho, Minnesota, and Oklahoma) and two cities (Washington, DC and Los Angeles).

### Design and methods

Key respondents included child care subsidy staff, housing administrators, Head Start state collaborators, and others across the housing and education fields. Since each key respondent supports families in different capacities, we developed four interview protocols to capture each agency's unique perspective: (1) ECE, (2) subsidy, (3) housing, and (4) early childhood community and school-based programs. (Please see Appendix B for all interview protocols.)

1. The **ECE interview** protocol includes questions about how families experiencing homelessness access ECE, and the data sources that support or facilitate this process.
2. The **subsidy interview** protocol focuses specifically on the role of the CCDF legislative changes and how these new provisions impact access to high-quality ECE for families experiencing homelessness.
3. The **housing interview** protocol focuses on the role of HUD's data systems in identifying children experiencing homelessness, as well as barriers that families face when accessing ECE.
4. The **early childhood community and school-based program interview** protocol includes questions about the role of public education in identifying children experiencing homelessness and education data sources used to identify and provide support to families experiencing homelessness.

The purpose of the interviews was to answer the following research questions:

1. How do states and localities use data to identify families with young children who are experiencing homelessness?
2. What are the strengths and challenges of the data practices used to identify and reach families experiencing homelessness?

The researchers interviewed the key respondents in January and February of 2018. Each interview took approximately one hour to complete, and the interviewer transcribed the interviewee’s responses. A total of 17 interviews occurred across two interviewers (see Table 2 for additional details). One researcher interviewed respondents from North Carolina, Idaho, and Los Angeles, and the other interviewed respondents from Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Washington, DC. The research team invited staff from comparable offices and programs across all states and communities to participate in the interview; however, not all staff were able to participate. Respondents across all states and communities, except Los Angeles, completed at least three of the four protocols (see Table 2). Using interview notes, one researcher coded the ECE and early childhood community and school-based program protocols, and the other coded the subsidy and housing protocols. To ensure reliability of the codes, researchers worked together to summarize data and identify key themes on four of the interviews. After the initial themes were identified, the research team developed codes by consensus. The research team then audited each other’s code application for 10 percent of the interviews. Key themes were then compared across respondent types.

**Table 2.** State/Localities by interview protocol and respondent type

Interview Protocol	North Carolina	Minnesota	Idaho	Oklahoma	Los Angeles, CA	Washington, DC
Early Care and Education	✓ (n=1)	✓ (n=1)		✓ (n=1)		✓ (n=1)
Early Childhood Community and School-Based Program		✓ (n=1)	✓ (n=1)	✓ (n=1)		✓ (n=1)
Subsidy	✓ (n=3)		✓ (n=2)		✓ (n=1)	✓ (n=2)
Housing	✓ (n=2)	✓ (n=1)	✓ (n=1)	✓ (n=1)	✓ (n=1)	

Note: Child Trends completed 17 interviews with 22 respondents. The total number of respondents participating in each interview varied from one to three respondents.

## Findings

Findings from the interviews primarily touched on states’ and communities’ use of data to identify families experiencing homelessness and to estimate the rates of homelessness. The findings are organized by five common themes that emerged across all interviews: (1) strategies for collecting data to identify families experiencing homelessness, (2) challenges that data quality concerns pose for using data to identify families experiencing homelessness, (3) strategies to strengthen data systems for estimating rates of homelessness, (4) lack of data sharing across agencies, and (5) concerns about defining homelessness for data collection purposes.

### **Strategies for collecting data to identify families experiencing homelessness**

States and communities all use a variety of approaches to collect information to identify children and families experiencing homelessness. Often they use forms that families complete for enrollment or services. For example, a respondent from the Minnesota Department of Education stated that families experiencing homelessness may self-declare their housing status when they complete applications for scholarship services for children, which ask families to report where they are residing (the state does not require additional verification above and beyond self-declaration).

In addition to identifying young children enrolled in their district's public pre-K programs, McKinney-Vento mandated liaisons (i.e., staff who are responsible for ensuring the identification, school enrollment, attendance, and opportunities for academic success of students in homeless situations) may also identify young children experiencing homelessness through student enrollment questionnaires completed for older siblings in school. The respondent from the Oklahoma Department of Education elaborated on this by stating that families complete a student enrollment questionnaire, which is shared with their McKinney-Vento liaison. This enrollment questionnaire has a section that asks for students to report on "all children currently living with you." Younger children and siblings can then be identified through this process.

### **Challenges that data quality concerns pose for using data to identify families experiencing homelessness**

Although states and communities have a number of promising practices for using data collected from families to determine their housing status, several respondents reported concerns about the ability of the data collected to capture all families experiencing homelessness.

Subsidy office staff from all states and communities, and housing providers from Minnesota, Los Angeles, and North Carolina, noted that parents may be concerned about disclosing their housing status due to fear of potential consequences such as child welfare involvement. Therefore, states and communities continue to face challenges in gathering accurate data to help identify families experiencing homelessness. The respondent from the child care subsidy office in Idaho was interested in professional development to help subsidy staff become more sensitive in how they ask questions concerning housing status.

### **Strategies to strengthen data systems for estimating rates of homelessness**

Respondents also discussed a number of challenges and successes in using data to estimate the rates of homelessness. For example, respondents from the Minnesota Department of Education, the Idaho McKinney-Vento office, and an ECE program in Washington, DC discussed the importance of improving their data systems to increase collaboration between ECE, education, and housing to support young children experiencing homelessness. Minnesota's data system can help school districts, community agencies, and other stakeholders understand where scholarships for low-income families or families experiencing homelessness are being used, and what other programs a child with a scholarship might be using. Over time, the longitudinal data system will be able to track a child with a scholarship and their future educational data. The respondent from Idaho stated that they are working on including younger children and toddlers in their longitudinal data system.

Subsidy office staff from all six states and communities reported that in addition to implementing the new provisions under the CCDF final rule, they have made changes to data systems associated with child care subsidy use. For example, states are now tracking housing status for the first time. Additionally, respondents from subsidy offices in Idaho and Washington, DC reported that their subsidy data system does not systematically collect information concerning housing status. The respondent from North Carolina's subsidy office also indicated that housing status was only included in their data if it was required as part of the state's eligibility process. In other words, a family may be determined to be eligible for child care subsidy based on their homelessness status; however, if a

family was determined subsidy eligible for some other reason (e.g., their income), staff would not ask, or enter information, about the family's housing status.

Housing providers also highlighted challenges with collecting data on young children from the housing system. The respondent from Idaho reported that they have very limited data on young children experiencing homelessness and called for more systematic data collection to capture this population. As previously mentioned, many of the housing providers said that it is difficult to obtain accurate estimates of the number of children experiencing homelessness. Housing providers indicated this is due, in part, to the lack of data HUD collects on children from birth to age 5 through their Homeless Management Information System (HMIS). HUD collects data on individuals through their HMIS, which focuses on family-level characteristics<sup>e</sup> and requires limited information at the child level (see Table 1 above). Additionally, the HMIS does not collect any information on families living doubled-up. Some housing providers believe that the education system is collecting better data on children ages birth to 5 experiencing homelessness than is the housing system; however, others noted that the education system also has flawed estimates for young children group because not all children engage in pre-kindergarten. One housing provider noted that without appropriate identification and collection of data that capture the full population of young children experiencing homelessness, it is difficult to demonstrate need and allocate appropriate funding for services designated for young children experiencing homelessness.

### **Lack of data sharing across agencies**

Respondents from the Minnesota Department of Education, the Idaho McKinney-Vento office, and an ECE program in Washington, DC discussed the importance of improving their data and data sharing practices to increase collaboration between ECE, education, and housing. Few respondents actually indicated that data are shared across agencies. None of the subsidy office respondents in the current study reported sharing their subsidy data with other agencies or entities. Furthermore, very few of the states or communities linked their subsidy data with other systems outside of the subsidy agency. One subsidy administrator did report matching data from other systems with subsidy data in order to determine eligibility. Additionally, none of the housing providers were sharing data with another organization at the time of the interview. However, housing providers from Minnesota and Idaho, as well as a housing advocacy agency in North Carolina, expressed interest in participating in data sharing efforts.

### **Concerns about defining homelessness for data collection purposes**

Housing providers and subsidy office staff from all states and communities discussed concerns regarding the differences between HUD's and ED's definitions of homelessness. While housing providers reported using the definition provided by HUD, all respondents from ECE and education systems reported using the definition provided by the McKinney-Vento legislation. For example, respondents from Head Start collaboration offices in North Carolina, Minnesota, and Washington, DC reported that their agency or organization uses the McKinney-Vento definition to identify young children experiencing homelessness. Housing providers reported a misalignment between housing and education concerning data collection on children's housing status due to the differences in the definitions the two agencies use. As one housing provider reported, without appropriate identification and data, it is difficult to demonstrate need and allocate appropriate funding for services designated for young children experiencing homelessness.

## **Summary of findings**

The ECE systems and the housing system are experiencing challenges in using data to identify families experiencing homelessness and estimate rates of homelessness. Respondents discussed concerns around the lack of a shared definition of homelessness across agencies. These definitional differences affect agencies' ability to collect data on children's housing status.

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<sup>e</sup> Each HMIS is designed to meet the needs of the local community. Therefore, some states and communities may include questions about children's development.

Respondents also discussed limitations with all data sources collecting data on children from birth to age 5. For example, consistent with previously published findings,<sup>7</sup> respondents reported that families may not wish to disclose their housing status due to stigma or concerns about drawing attention from child welfare agencies. There was also uncertainty concerning which agency is currently collecting the best data on children ages birth to 5, given that several agencies only recently adopted the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness and were still adjusting to using it. Specifically, housing providers reported that the education system under the McKinney-Vento offices may be collecting better data on early childhood homelessness; however, the ECE system is in fact only just starting to collect data on this population, and is only reaching a fraction of children in this category. Moreover, respondents expressed a desire to improve their data and data sharing practices to increase collaboration across the ECE, education, and housing systems.

## Future Directions

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We offer two areas for agencies to consider for additional exploration, based on analyzing the interviews.

### **Explore ways to collect information about housing status more frequently and thoughtfully.**

Subsidy and education systems should consider creating a systematic approach to collecting information on housing status of children ages birth to 5. For example, often this information is only collected upon enrollment into services. However, since housing instability can occur at any time, it may not be captured if this data is only collected annually.

Very few of the respondents interviewed for this brief reported a systematic approach to collecting information on families' housing status. Child care subsidy leaders may wish to consider asking questions about housing status when determining subsidy eligibility. None of the respondents interviewed reported regularly monitoring (more than at time of enrollment, or redetermination for services) the housing status of families receiving ECE services.<sup>f</sup> Therefore, subsidy and education agencies could explore collecting data on housing status during more regular intervals in order to capture changes in housing status as they occur. Given the high rates of school mobility among children experiencing homelessness, individual programs may choose to assess housing status frequently.<sup>8</sup>

In addition, agencies should be sensitive toward families and mindful of their concerns when asking about housing status. As many of our respondents indicated, families may be concerned about reporting housing status for fear of potential repercussions.<sup>9</sup> States and communities may wish to adopt a more open-ended line of questioning with families concerning their housing status, for example, asking, "Where did you sleep last night? Will you be able to sleep there next week?" Respondents in North Carolina have utilized a similar line of questioning.

### **Develop high-quality data systems to support families experiencing homelessness.**

Data sharing may be one way for states and communities to enhance their outreach efforts for families experiencing homelessness. As many respondents indicated, their agencies would benefit from having a more complete picture of the families that they serve (see Figure 1). Sharing data *may* help systems better understand the service utilization and needs of the families that they support. For example, with data on families receiving housing services—data that the housing system has collected and shared—the ECE system might be able to provide more targeted outreach, or advocate for more publicly

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<sup>f</sup> It should be noted that the lack of monitoring of housing status during the eligibility period may be due to the regulations that put parameters around what states can require families to report during the eligibility period.

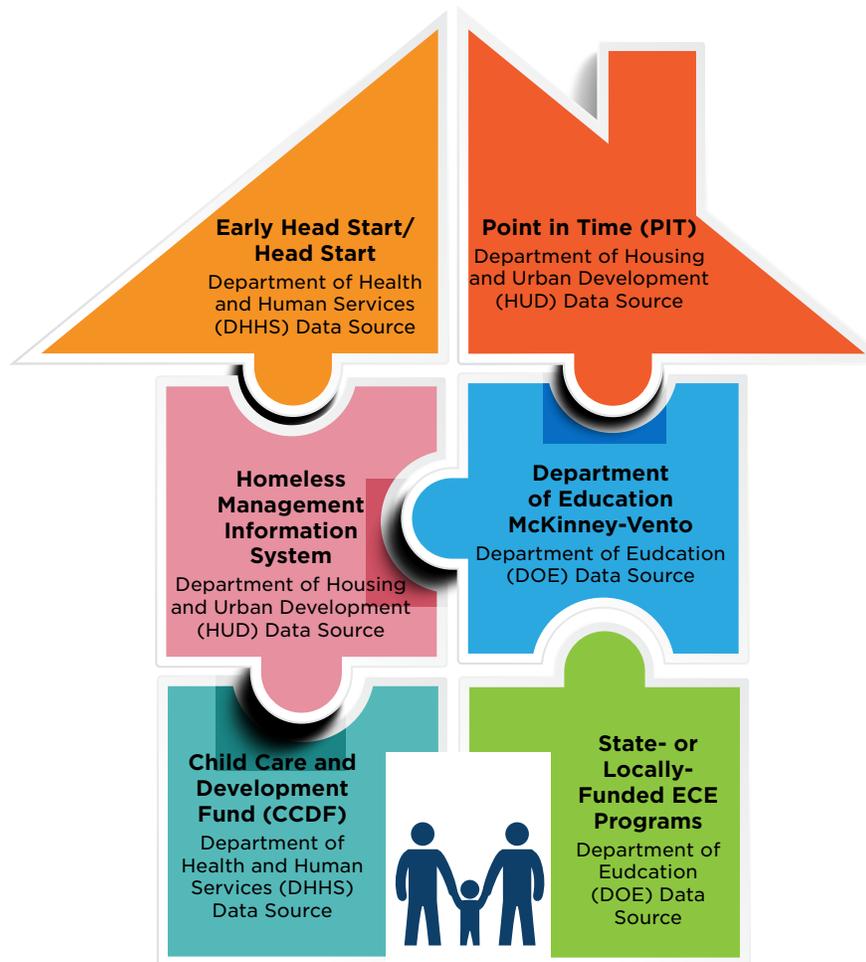
funded ECE slots, in the neighborhoods where these families receive services.

For more information on linking administrative data systems, please see the following resources: (1) [Building Capacity to Use Linked Early Childhood Data](#), and (2) [A Planning Guide for Linking Data to Support Program Improvement in Early Care and Education](#).

## Conclusion

High-quality early care and education can help to overcome some of the negative effects that the experience of homelessness may have on young children's development and well-being;<sup>10</sup> thus, it is important for states and communities to estimate rates of homelessness and to identify young children and families experiencing homelessness so they can access needed services. To do so, however, states and communities need adequate data. Existing ECE, education, and housing data sources have not captured adequate data on the population of children ages birth to 5 who are experiencing homelessness. Themes that emerged from the interviews suggest that exploration of targeted data quality improvement efforts, more systematic data collection, and data sharing across systems are needed to support the process of collecting accurate data on families and young children experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The areas for further consideration provided in this report are meant to support states and communities in improving their practices for data collection and sharing. With more and better data to identify young children who are experiencing homelessness, states and communities can develop practices and resources to better address the early learning needs of this extremely vulnerable population.

**Figure 1.** Early childhood homelessness data systems can be coordinated to better identify and support young children experiencing homelessness



# Appendix A. Glossary of Terms

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## Early Care and Education Terms

**Head Start and Early Head Start:** As defined by the Office of Head Start, Head Start programs promote school readiness of children ages birth to 5 from low-income families by supporting their development in a comprehensive way.

Head Start and Early Head Start programs offer a variety of service models, depending on the needs of the local community. Many Head Start and Early Head Start programs are based in centers and schools. Other programs are located in child care centers and family child care homes. Some programs offer home-based services that assign dedicated staff who conduct weekly visits to children in their own home and work with the parent as the child's primary teacher.<sup>11</sup>

**Local Education Agency:** As defined in ESSA, a local education agency is a public board of education or other public authority legally constituted within a State for either administrative control or direction of, or to perform a service function for, public elementary schools or secondary schools in a city, county, township, school district, or other political subdivision of a State, or for a combination of school districts or counties that is recognized in a State as an administrative agency for its public elementary schools or secondary schools.<sup>12</sup>

**McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison:** Local homeless education liaisons are Local Educational Agency (LEA) staff responsible for ensuring the identification, school enrollment, attendance, and opportunities for academic success of students in homeless situations. Some of these activities may be performed by the local liaison himself or herself, while others are accomplished by coordinating the efforts of other staff.<sup>13</sup>

## Subsidy Terms

**Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) State Plan:** As defined by the Office of Child Care, the CCDF Plan serves as the application for the Child Care and Development Block Grant (CCDBG) funds by providing a description of, and assurance about, the grantee's child care program and all services available to eligible families. The Office of Child Care reviews the Plans for approval. If they are approved, funds are awarded for the next federal fiscal year.<sup>14</sup>

**Child Care Subsidy:** This term refers to financial assistance from state or federal funds available to low-income families that meet the state's income eligibility requirements. Subsidized care is available in licensed child care centers, family child care homes, and by license-exempt providers.<sup>15</sup>

## Housing Terms

**Doubled-Up:** This term is used to describe those living with friends or extended family and not paying rent due to loss of housing, economic hardships, or another similar reason.<sup>16</sup>

# Appendix B. Interview Protocols

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## ECE Protocol

1. Could you please describe your role and responsibilities?
2. How do you identify young children (ages birth through five) and their families experiencing homelessness?
  - a. What are the challenges of providing services for children age birth to five experiencing homeless in your state/community?
3. How does your agency support young children experiencing homelessness?
  - a. Have you made any recent (within the past two years) changes to the ways in which you support these children?
4. What other groups in the state are providing supports to children ages birth to five experiencing homelessness? These groups could be other state agency, local or county agencies, school districts, non-profit social service organizations, or community groups.
  - a. What kind of supports do each of these groups provide?
5. Do these agencies coordinate their work? If so, how?
  - a. What facilitators exist to support this coordination? (Ex. Formalized work groups, statute language, funding)
  - b. What barriers inhibit coordination?
6. What are the resources available to programs that are providing services to children age birth to five experiencing homelessness in your state/community? (Ex. Funding, technical support, staff time, consultation etc.)
7. Does your state/community engage in any innovative practices around the enrollment or support of children experiencing homelessness in early care and education settings?

## Subsidy Administrator Protocol

1. How do you define when children are experiencing homelessness in your child care subsidy system?
2. How are children experiencing homelessness included into your child care subsidy system?
  - a. Are they categorically eligible? Are they given priority over other eligible children?
    - i. What priority urgency are they given?
  - b. Do you provide any enrollment materials targeted to families experiencing homelessness?
3. Have you made any changes to the ways in which you address the needs of children experiencing homelessness in response to the CCDBG reauthorization?
  - a. Are these outlined in your state plan? For example, does your state plan outline how barriers to access to child care will be removed for children experiencing homelessness? Do you have a plan for grace periods for meeting health and safety requirements?

- b. What steps are you taking to implement these components of the plan?
4. Do you have a process for identifying when children receiving subsidy become homeless?
  - a. If so, please explain this process.
  - b. How is this process similar to or different from the process counties and localities use?
5. Do you have a process for identifying children experiencing homelessness who are not receiving subsidy?
  - a. How are they identified?
  - b. What is the process like to extend child care subsidy to their families?
    - i. How is it similar to or different from the typical process?
  - c. Does your subsidy database have a variable to indicate whether a child was homeless at any point in time? In any given month?
6. Do you share data with any other state agency? If so, which agencies? And for what purpose?
7. Specifically, does your subsidy database link to other databases with information about children experiencing homelessness?
  - a. What are those databases?
  - b. What data are linked across the databases?
  - c. How do you use these linked data?
  - d. Do you share data with other agencies in other ways?
8. What barriers do you face in identifying and serving children experiencing homelessness?
9. What else is important for me to know about how you serve children ages birth to five experiencing homelessness within the child care subsidy system?

## Housing Protocol

1. How many children ages birth to five do(es) your housing program(s) currently serve?
  - a. Has that number been increasing, decreasing, or holding steady compared to previous years?
  - b. What data do you collect on children ages birth to five in your HMIS system?
  - c. Do you collect any information regarding the number of children in your housing program who are enrolled in early care and education programs?
  - d. Do you collect any other formal or informal information on children birth to five in your housing program? Is there any additional information you think would be useful to know about children birth to five in your program?
2. Does your agency have a relationship with the early care and education system?
  - a. What does this relationship look like?
  - b. How do you communicate/collaborate with the early care and education system?
  - c. How often do you communicate with the early care and education system?

- d. Does your service delivery vary based on whether you are working with a family with infants or toddlers, preschoolers, or school-age children?
3. Do housing staff in your state/community receive training or professional development concerning the early care and education needs of young children experiencing homelessness?
    - a. If so, what does that training or PD consist of in terms of content?
    - b. Which housing staff, if any, is required to receive this training/professional development?
    - c. How extensive is the training/PD in terms of duration (e.g., a one-hour training? A full-day workshop?)
    - d. Who provides the training or professional development?
    - e. Is there any training specific to working with families with children ages birth through family who are experiencing homelessness? What are those trainings?
  4. Do you provide families with young children experiencing homelessness with supports that help them access child care so they can work?
    - a. What are some of the barriers that these families face in finding child care?
    - b. What programs/policies do you have in place to address these barriers?
  5. What do you think the ECE system should know about how the housing system identifies and supports families experiencing homelessness?

## Early Childhood Community and School-Based Program Protocol

1. What early learning services are available through your agency to support young children (ages birth through five) experiencing homelessness?
  - a. Do these services vary based on children's ages?
2. How does your agency know if a child is experiencing homelessness?
3. Does your state have an Early Childhood Longitudinal Data System (ECLDS)?
  - a. [IF YES] Does your ECLDS have a way to indicate whether a child is or has experienced homelessness?
    - i. How do you use these data?
  - b. [IF NO] Do you have another education database that has this data?
    - i. How do you use these data?
    - ii. Are you able to link this data to other databases within or external to your agency?
4. How do you work with your Local Education Agencies (LEAs) or districts to provide supports for young children experiencing homelessness?
  - a. How do the McKinney-Vento liaisons in your state/community support families with young children ages birth to five experiencing homelessness with enrollment into early care and education programs?
5. Are young children experiencing homelessness given priority for educational services?

a. [IF YES] How so?

i. How does application of these policies vary between LEAs?

6. In what ways do you think your agency could improve the ways in which it identifies and addresses the needs of young children experiencing homelessness?

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