



21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) and McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youths (EHCY) Programs: Building Collaborative Connections

As a 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) professional, you provide a safe environment for learning outside of the typical school day, particularly for students who attend high-poverty and low-performing schools. Your program is uniquely positioned to support those faced with risk, such as students experiencing homelessness. This takeaway provides actionable ideas and resources shared during a webinar cohosted by the 21st CCLC National Technical Assistance Center (NTAC) and the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) on Sept. 4, 2025.



“Educational stability can be a protective factor for children and youth experiencing homelessness. When everything else in the world feels uncertain, schools can provide that structure, safety, relationships, and hope for the future.” — Julie Ratekin, Technical Assistance Lead, NCHE



Key Takeaways

Defining homelessness – According to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, section 725, “homeless children and youths” refers to “individuals who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence.” This includes those living in emergency or transitional shelters, or in shared housing as a result of a financial emergency or natural disaster.

Education for Homeless Children and Youths (EHCY) program – Like 21st CCLC, EHCY is a formula grant program administered by the U.S. Department of Education (Department). EHCY funds serve to identify students experiencing homelessness and ensure they’re able to enroll in and attend school.

Cross-functional collaboration – 21st CCLC and EHCY programs have meaningful opportunities to work together to fill the gaps for students experiencing homelessness. For instance, through coordinated referrals, each program can make sure the students it serves are aware of the other program’s offerings.

Targeted academic support – Students experiencing homelessness often miss school. 21st CCLC programs can help close learning gaps through tutoring and remedial activities.

“A lot of this work comes from really making good on the information that students and families trust us with.”

— Mike Adler, OST Director, McKinney-Vento Liaison,
Lake County School District, Colorado





Examples From the Field

Community-based support: Webinar participants reported collaborating with social workers, guidance counselors, community action organizations, chambers of commerce, rotary clubs, United Way chapters, churches, schools, local businesses, sheriff's departments, and neighboring school districts.

Comprehensive services for students and families: Services mentioned included apps that connect families with resources such as food, clothing, toiletry items, care packages, school supplies, appliances, beds, utility assistance, rental assistance, employment, medical services, gas cards, and holiday gifts.

Caring Connections

A school district partnered with a church-operated thrift store to provide McKinney-Vento families with vouchers for clothing and other essentials. Once families secure permanent housing, the thrift store provides household necessities.

A school social worker connected with an optometrist who sees McKinney-Vento students free of charge, and a mobile dentist who visits schools each fall and spring.



Resources

[Collaborative Connections: 21st CCLC and McKinney-Vento EHCY Programs](#) – This fact sheet, developed by the 21st CCLC NTAC and NCHE, can help State and local 21st CCLC and EHCY program leaders engage in strategic collaboration.

[National Center for Homeless Education \(NCHE\)](#) – This technical assistance center for the EHCY program supports the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

[21st CCLC Non-Regulatory Guidance](#) – Guidance from the Department for 21st CCLC programs. Section D-5 discusses coordination with programs like McKinney-Vento

[EHCY Non-Regulatory Guidance](#) – Guidance from the Department for EHCY programs. Section V discusses collaboration and coordination.

[Transporting Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness](#) – This NCHE brief summarizes the key provisions related to transportation in the McKinney-Vento Act, suggests transportation implementation strategies, and recommends funding resources.

[NCHE Helpline](#) – This helpline (by phone, 305-306-8495) is available to anyone who works with and supports children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness.



“Building awareness is building capacity.” — **Paula Gumina, Highly Mobile Student Programs Manager, Colorado Department of Education**

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