

Missouri Balance of State Continuum of Care Adopted Educational Rights Policy

Introduction

Homeless service providers in the Missouri Balance of State Continuum of Care (Mo BoS CoC) assist in rehousing homeless individuals and families within their community while connecting participants to mainstream benefits and support services. Part of this work includes connecting families with school-aged children and unaccompanied youth to all educational opportunities available to them based on each household's particular circumstances.

Connections with Education Providers across the CoC

The Mo BoS CoC Board, the Mo BoS CoC Collaborative Applicant, and the Mo BoS CoC Membership consist of agencies with multiple connections to state educational representatives. Additionally, the Mo BoS CoC and the Governor's Committee to End Homelessness (GCEH), which has an appointed representative from the Department of Education as a committee member, work closely together to directly influence homeless services planning in the state. On a local level, the Mo BoS CoC recommends as a best practice that all funded agencies coordinate with local education providers to ensure that homeless families and unaccompanied youth are aware of and have access to the educational resources available to them. It is also recommended that local education providers and liaisons participate in Mo BoS CoC regional meetings and other relevant planning and service-related activities.

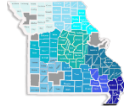
Agency Representative(s)

Mo BoS CoC grantees and sub-recipients must provide information for accessing appropriate education services to homeless families with children and unaccompanied youth. This may include, but is not limited to, referral information about enrollment in school, early childhood programs, or other relevant education programs within the community.

It is recommended that there be a designated staff member available to those experiencing homeless to help them understand the implications of this policy and their decision-making rights under it. Ideally, the agency representative should maintain regular contact with local school liaisons and other community education representatives to ensure that their agency can offer immediate and balanced services to homeless families and connect the family to the breadth of resources outside of the agency's services.

Relationships with Local Homeless Liaisons

Upon intake with a family with school-aged children or an unaccompanied youth, Mo BoS CoC and ESG funded agencies should make every attempt to connect with the school liaisons on behalf of the client, unless barred by confidentiality requirement. Establishing close working relationships with local education establishments within the community should be a priority for homeless service providers working within the Mo BoS CoC. There is significant variation in structure and processes set forth by homeless liaisons and educational entities across the 101 counties in the Mo BoS CoC, and homeless service providers should respect and work with the procedures set by local education entities.



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Working relationships with homeless liaisons and other education providers should help homeless service providers identify homeless families, particularly those meeting the HUD definition of homelessness and those at risk of homelessness, to ensure that homeless families access resources available to them.

Family Choice

In order to uphold The McKinney–Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1987 (Pub. L. 100-77, July 22, 1987, 101 Stat. 482, 42 U.S.C. § 11301 et seq.), Mo BoS CoC agencies should address families' education needs and issues and any impact that changing schools may have on a family's stability. Children should be allowed to continue enrollment in their school of origin, unless the family chooses otherwise. Specifically, agencies should make every effort to place families in temporary accommodations and permanent housing in locations in close proximity to a child's school. Additionally, the agency should assist in providing transportation resources to schools and education programs as necessary. Agencies should make reasonable allowances to ensure that families are able to access all education services such as those that take place in the evening, including after school programs.

Further Agency Obligations

Homeless service providers must ensure that any agency protocols and policies do not infringe upon the rights of homeless families. Further, agencies should not replace schooling for homeless families with their own services or projects. Any programs offered by an agency should be supplemental to the formal educational opportunities available to the family.

Discrimination

Service providers must use discretion in their work with local education entities to maintain the confidentiality and privacy of families they assist, particularly regarding housing status. Discretion is critical to avoid any discrimination based on the family's housing status.