

# Bemidji Area Schools - Title I District Parent Advisory Council

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## **Luncheon Meeting Minutes** **March 29, 2017 – District Office**

### **Members**

*Parents:* Angie Berg, Becky Bentfield, Twila Bolte, Sondra Gudmanson, Robin Harris, Berit Rosenberg, Alisa VanDyke, Jennifer Verdugo

*District:* Kathy Palm, Jacque Pearce

*Special Guests:* Bayley Ertl, Social Work Intern – Bemidji State University, Dr. James Hess, Superintendent of Schools – ISD 31, Nancy Vyskocil, President – Northwest Minnesota Foundation

### **McKinney Vento/Fostering Connections**

Angie Lauderbaugh, Licensed School Social Worker/Homeless Liaison, along with Greg Liedl, Director of Transportation, provided a presentation to parents. This offered insight into the *McKinney Vento Act*, the *Fostering Connections to Success Act*, and transportation for transitional students.

#### *McKinney Vento Act*

Summarily, schools are required to:

- Remove barriers to enrollment, attendance, and success for homeless students
- Provide stability for students by keeping them in their schools of origin
- Provide adequate transportation for students in transition (when feasible and in the best interest of the student)
- Provide classroom materials to students in transition
- Pay for students in transition to attend school functions and educational programs

#### *Fostering Connections to Success Act*

This act requires child welfare agencies to create and implement a plan to ensure educational stability for children in foster care.

#### *Bemidji Area Schools Transition Program*

This program was implemented locally to provide necessities for transitional families including school supplies, personal care items, bedding, clothing, etc.

#### *Bemidji Area Schools Transportation*

The district a student is enrolled in is responsible for transportation, even when the student is living at a location outside of the district boundaries. This can be challenging and requires much communication between the Homeless Liaison, Transportation Director, and neighboring districts that students may transition in to or out of.

Through combined efforts, the district is able to keep transitional students at their schools of origin with approximately a 90% success rate.

Attached to this document is a copy of the PowerPoint presentation.

**Upcoming Meetings**

- April 21: Lincoln Elementary
- May 5: District Office Board Room (Kindergarten Packets)
- Late May: Solway Elementary

# McKinney Vento/Fostering Connections

Angie Lauderbaugh, LSW  
Homeless Liaison  
Bemidji Area Schools

Greg Liedl  
Director of Transportation  
Bemidji Area Schools

# tran·si·tion

- tran'ziSH(ə)n, tran'siSH(ə)n/
- *Noun*
- the process or a period of changing from one state or condition to another.

States of Change



# McKinney-Vento Roles

## State Coordinator

- Every state in the U.S. has a State Coordinator
- Identifies children and youth in transition and determines eligibility for program
- Coordinates with other agencies to determine services for children in transition
- Educates schools and districts on working with students in transition

## Local Liaison

- Every district has a Homeless Liaison
- Identifies children and youth in transition
- Assists with enrollment and services
- Advocates for students and their ability to succeed in school
- Assists and advocates for children utilizing special education services
- Supports parents to get involved in their children's school activities
- Collaborates with programs within the district as well as other agencies and community service providers
- Provides students and families with school supplies, hygiene products, and clothing if needed

# Who qualifies?

The McKinney-Vento Act defines “**homeless** children and youths” as “individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”

## Qualifying Factors:

- Sharing a house with other families
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds
- Living in emergency or transitional shelter
- Abandoned children
- ~~Awaiting foster placement~~
- Living in vehicles, parks, abandoned buildings, public spaces
- Unaccompanied youth



# Overview

- Requires schools to remove barriers to enrollment, attendance, and success for homeless students
- Keeps students in their schools of origin - provides stability
- Schools must provide adequate transportation for students in transition (*when feasible and in the best interest of the student*)
- Schools are required to provide classroom materials to students in transition
- Schools are also required to pay for students in transition to attend school functions and educational programs

# Challenges

- Children in transition often face many unique challenges
  - Lack of routine – lack of stability
  - Inadequate or unstable housing
  - Inadequate living conditions (overcrowded, limited space and play area)
  - Inconsistent or inadequate health care
  - Inadequate nutrition
  - Inadequate clothing
  - Limited extended family support
  - Single-parent families
  - Adolescent parents
  - Emotional stress





# Educational Challenges

- Difficulty enrolling without proper records
- Attending school irregularly due to circumstances out of student's control
- Frequent school changes –each time a child switches schools, they can lose 4-6 months of academic gain.
- Not completing homework due to instability at home
- Lack of basic needs – school clothes & supplies – may need to provide for the child more than one time
- Embarrassment or stigma related to living conditions
- Not knowing if a child's academics and behavior are situational child should be tested for special education



# Fostering Connections to Success Act

*"The Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008 amends Titles IV B and IV E of the Social Security Act, to improve educational stability for children in foster care" (Minnesota Department of Education, 2013)*

- Act that requires child welfare agencies to create and implement a plan to ensure educational stability for children in foster care.
  - Assures that a child is placed with regards to an appropriate school setting as well as the proximity of the school in which a child is currently enrolled.
  - County child welfare agency is responsible for ensuring the student's educational needs will be met at the new foster placement
  - If the current school is not in the best interest of the child, the child welfare worker and local education agency must provide immediate enrollment in a school that would best fit the student's needs
    - Must provide proper documentation for the new school
  - Cost of transportation should not be a factor for consideration under this act

# Effects of Homelessness

- Children experiencing homelessness are mobile – which can lead to many implications
  - It may **take four to six months for a child to recover academically** from a school transfer
  - Highly mobile students are **half** as likely to graduate from high school
  - Isolation after a move impacts school attendance and performance
  - 21% of homeless children repeat a grade because of frequent absences from school, compared to 5% of other children
  - **Have four times the average rate of delayed development**
  - Are suspended twice as often as other children

# Every day, children in transition are confronted with stressful, often traumatic events.

60% has a parent who has been incarcerated

52% have a significant mental illness

58% worry they will have no place to sleep

27% have been sexually abused as a child

87% worry that something bad will happen to their family

44% have been physically abused as a child

16% have a substance abuse disorder

74% of homeless children worry they will have no place to live

31% have been neglected as a child

36% have a chronic physical health condition

# Support & Guidance

- Understand services available for students and families
  - Create and share a fact sheet of the services McKinney-Vento provides as well as services in the area the student may benefit from
- Provide those eligible for services through McKinney-Vento a letter explaining the program and its benefits
- Educate educators in your district so everyone is aware of ways to support student
- Work with local agencies to support homeless families and collaborate



# Show Video Removed

- Show youtube video
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=lOeQUwdAjEo>
- There is a removed part 2
- <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l1fGmEa6WnY>

# Considerations for Placement

- Ensure the chosen school has a proper understanding of foster care and engage in efforts to reach out in such situations
- Placement with a relative
- A child's preference to change schools or remain in the same school
- The safety of the child in the current school
- The appropriateness of educational programs in the current school
- Special education considerations
- Preference of a child's parent
- Expected length of time in a placement

# Trauma Informed Care

*Many students & families experiencing transition have gone through major traumatic events*

- Trauma-informed care – strengths-based framework
  - Understand and be responsive of the impact of trauma
  - Emphasize safety for the student
  - Empower the student to be in control
- Assess program's structure and alter it to incorporate trauma-informed practices and procedures
- Be committed to change practices and policies to best fit the student's needs
- Maintain a holistic view of the student
- Help heal relationship strife within the family



## **Be aware of your surroundings when talking about students and families**

- Don't refer to students as "Homeless" – also when talking with parents talk about "looking for permanent housing vs. Homeless".
- Use the term in transition
- Focus on student and family strengths – comment on one thing the student has done well that day.
- Talk positively about resources
  - Ex. "Angies Store" vs. Donations

# How to better serve our students

- Educate ourselves! We have a great network of resource staff – ask questions and utilize our support
  - Research and learn more about homelessness
- Practice cultural awareness & humility
- Understand and utilize a variety of intervention methods
- **Provide a support system for students**
- Be adaptable!
- Create realistic goals for students
- Understand student's barriers
- Practice patience & understanding
- Teach other students about homelessness to develop empathy and understanding
- Fair does not always mean treating a person equal.

# Support & Guidance

- Help children acquire a beloved object
  - Do not take away possessions. Students may need their “stuff” nearby for security
- Hold the student accountable for what she or he CAN control, not what he or she CANNOT control – don’t discipline for not having homework done or materials when it is out of their control
- Maintain a supply of materials for students to use at school
- Help students get organized
- Help students keep up with homework at school as they often do not have that opportunity out of school
- Keep a supply of healthy snacks and extra school supplies ( even clothes or personal products)

# How to help students

- Help them identify their emotions and where those emotions are coming from
  - Ways to help with that
    - Feeling/Needs cards
    - Emotions bag
    - Sometimes when basic needs are not met they may be showing anger
    - Let students know you can communicate with their family and offer resources to meet basic needs.
    - **Communication is Key**

# Supporting children in transition

- Make sure the student enrolls in your school's *free meal program*
- Discuss concerns with the Homeless Liaison, guidance counselor, school social worker, school psychologist, principle & assistant principle, and school nurse
- Ensure the student understands the class routine & schedule



**Believe in all students talk positive  
about support programs**





# Transition Program

- Created to provide items for transition families.
- Provides place to meet away from school.



# Transition Program

- Provide school supplies
- Provide personal hygiene items





# Transportation

*The #1 barrier for many families in transition is lack of transportation*

## Survey Results for Beltrami County (n= 140):

- 52% of individuals surveyed do **not** have a vehicle
- Walking was the #1 solution listed
- 59% stated they could **not** afford a Paul Bunyan Transit punch card (10 for \$15)
- The top 3 reasons a person needs reliable transportation are for doctors appointments, shopping, and work
- How the lack of transportation has affected individuals
  - 58% stated "I cannot find work"
  - 55% stated "I have missed work"
  - 82% stated "I have missed critical appointments"



# Transportation OF Students Experiencing Homelessness

Greg Liedl  
Transportation Coordinator  
Bemidji Area Schools

# Transportation Responsibility

- The district that enrolls the student will be responsible for the transportation.
- Even when the student is living at a location outside the district where the school of origin is located.
- Minn. Stat. § 120A.20, Subdivision 2 (c).
  - The serving district is responsible for transporting a homeless pupil to and from the pupil's district of residence. The district may transport from a permanent home in another district but only through the end of the academic school year. When a pupil is enrolled in a charter school, the district or school that provides transportation for other pupils enrolled in the charter school is responsible for providing transportation. When a homeless student with or without an individualized education program attends a public school other than an independent or special school district or charter school, the district of residence is responsible for transportation

# Transportation could be provided by:

- Rerouting regular school bus routes past shelters, motels and other places students live.
- Using existing routes such as those set up to serve special education programs, desegregation programs or nonpublic schools.
- Contracting with the parent or guardian of the child.
- Issuing public transit passes.
- Using a taxi service.
- Contracting with other districts.
- Collaborating with other public agencies.



# Transportation Funding

Finance Dimension 723

Transportation of Pupils Attending Special Education Programs

Finance Dimension 728

Special Transportation of Selected Students (Homeless)

Finance Dimension 720

Regular To-And-From School

Title IV-E reimbursement through local Health and Human  
Services for students in Foster Care



# Other Important Information about Student Transportation in Minnesota

- It is illegal to use a vehicle with a seating capacity of more than 10 persons to transport students unless the vehicle meets school bus construction requirements (yellow in color, stop arm, flashing lights, etc.). In other words, large vans (greater than 10 persons) cannot be used to transport students to and from school or on school-related trips in Minnesota because they do not meet school bus construction requirements.
- The State Patrol must inspect most vehicles before they are used to transport students. The exceptions are parents transporting their own children, taxis if used occasionally, public transit buses, and any vehicle used to transport a student in an emergency situation (sick child home from school).
- Contracted transportation requires written contract and proof of insurance.

# Other Important Points about Transportation

- Students must receive transportation services comparable to those provided other students. For example, districts providing late activity bus service for resident (housed) students must also provide this level of service for students experiencing homelessness.
- The cost of transporting a child who does not have a school of origin to the same school attended by that child's sibling, if the siblings are homeless, may be claimed under Finance Code 728.
- Students who have been identified as homeless may have their bus ride privileges revoked. Under state law, transportation to school is not a right, but a privilege which may be revoked for violations of school bus rules (Minn. Stat. § 121.59). This provision of state law applies to all students including students who have been identified as homeless. There are some conditions that limit a revocation of this privilege, for example if transportation is a related service in the student's IEP.



# “The battle begins”

District Transportation  
Contracted Transportation  
Superintendent or Business Manager  
School Staff





# Questions regarding transportation of students whom are Homeless, “In Transition” or in Foster placement

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Coordinator, Bemidji Area Schools

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## Focus on the “Best Interest of the Child”



<http://www.nationalhomeless.org/factsheets/why.html>

<http://education.state.mn.us/MDE/SchSup/ESEA/HomelessMcKinneyVento/>

<http://www.wilder.org/Wilder-Research/Research-Areas/Homelessness/Pages/default.aspx>

<http://www.air.org/center/national-center-family-homelessness>

<http://www.youthmovingforward.org/>

<http://nationalhomeless.org/>

<http://www.air.org/center/national-center-family-homelessness>

Liaison Toolkit, 2013. National Center on Homelessness

Minnesota Department of Education, 2013. Fostering Connections

Minnesota Department of Education, 2016. Early Childhood Intervention

Diefendorf, M. Goode, S. 2005 The Long Term Economic Benefits Of High Quality Early Childhood Intervention Programs

Popp, P. Project HOPE. Early Childhood Education for Children Experiencing Homelessness PPT

# Thank you!

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