

## **Pupil Transportation Directors**

### **Tips for Ensuring Educational Access and Success for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

- Ensure that all transportation staff members, including bus drivers and dispatchers, are familiar with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- Train pupil transportation staff about the law and the needs of homeless children; invite input on strategies for addressing homeless children's transportation needs.
- Allow all transportation staff to express their concerns and then work to address these concerns. Unaddressed issues become barriers once you implement a system.
- Develop formal or informal interdistrict agreements for school districts that share homeless students. Convene a meeting of local homeless education liaisons and pupil transportation personnel to establish procedures; consider having quarterly meetings until the procedures are in place firmly. Conduct the meeting with a solution-based approach.
- Develop procedures that address questions such as:
  - Who will make the referral to transportation within each district?
  - Will the referral be made by phone, fax, or e-mail?
  - Who in each district transportation office will be the point person for interdistrict coordination?
  - How will varying school calendars be handled?
  - Which district discipline plan does the student follow?
  - What are the timelines for scheduling alternative routes, etc.?
- Build on existing relationships and encourage sharing ideas about how to meet the challenges of transporting homeless students. Many transportation personnel from nearby districts know one another because they attend trainings and coordinate special education routes.
- Arrange interdistrict transportation by involving dispatchers and transportation directors across districts.
- Keep track of system requirements for the pupil transportation system. For instance, if the funding for the year is based on service being performed early in the school year, work to make sure homeless students are identified prior to that funding window.
- Investigate all possibilities for funding, including from agencies outside of the school system; check with your state's department of transportation regarding your state's coordinated transportation program.
- Look into using special education and/or magnet school buses.

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- Ensure that bus pick-up and drop-off does not stigmatize homeless students by disclosing to their peers that they are staying in shelters. Pick up students at the shelters or hotels first and drop them off last so that their peers will not see where they are staying, or consider alternate pick-up and drop-off points nearby where the students are staying.
- Be careful in domestic violence situations to minimize the risk that an abuser will be able to trace the child to the shelter or other location where he or she is staying.
- Consider electronic means for facilitating communication; for example, a web-based transportation log on a confidential website will allow key staff to have access to alternative transportation routes and changes.
- Develop a handbook for homeless parents to assist them in understanding policies regarding transportation and student rules of conduct; develop forms that parents must agree to and sign regarding expectations for them.
- Ensure that all agree that the safety of the students is paramount; transportation safety for homeless students must be comparable to that for all other students.
- Keep good data on the methods of transportation used for homeless children and the costs.



*For more information about helping students experiencing homelessness succeed in school, visit the National Center for Homeless Education website at <http://www.serve.org/nche>, or contact the local homeless education liaison for your school district:*

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