



PROJECT  
**HOPE**  
VIRGINIA

# Early Childhood Special Education and Early Intervention Providers

## Tips for Ensuring Educational Access and Success for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

You play a critical role in identifying young children experiencing homelessness and giving them the support they need to succeed in school.



### Identify Children Experiencing Homelessness and Be Aware of the Importance of Early Identification

- Look for a history of multiple addresses, missing documents, erratic attendance, chronic hunger or fatigue, and poor health or hygiene.
- Listen for parent statements about being in transition or living with relatives or friends due to loss of housing or economic hardship. This is known as “doubled-up”.
- See the [\*McKinney-Vento Quick Guide\*](#) for other common signs of homelessness.
- Know that very young children experiencing homelessness remain significantly undercounted.
- These children are at significantly higher risk for cognitive, social emotional, physical and developmental delays.
- The earlier they are identified and connected to the support they need, the greater the chance these delays can be lessened.



### Collaborate With Community Partners and Connect Families to Resources

- Collaborate regularly with community partners who may be serving families experiencing homelessness.
  - This can lead to more effective Child Find by increasing awareness about early developmental concerns, referral procedures, and available services.
- Offer developmental screenings at shelters, health clinics, and subsidized child care providers.
- Provide family-friendly resources like developmental checklists and apps to parents and guardians and local service providers so that they can recognize early signs of developmental concerns and learn about special education and early intervention programs.





## Expedite Evaluations and Consider Physical and Emotional Stressors

- 🍌 Expedite evaluations to help mitigate the significant challenges faced by children who are experiencing homelessness.
- 🍌 Access and use reports from other agencies and schools, take an interdisciplinary team approach, and determine eligibility as quickly as possible so that services can be provided right away.
- 🍌 Make sure to consider the physical and emotional stressors often associated with homelessness.
- 🍌 Children who are hungry, afraid, or tired must have their basic needs met before they can benefit from the educational services that you provide.



- 🍌 Conduct play-based and family-focused assessments. These methods are especially helpful for children experiencing homelessness who may be wary of strangers and new environments or who are unaccustomed to standardized assessments.
- 🍌 If needed, find alternative locations to meet with families who are not comfortable or able to have interventionists work where they are currently living.



## Connect With Your Local McKinney-Vento Liaison

- 🍌 Your local school division's McKinney-Vento liaison is legally required to coordinate with early childhood programs in their area.
- 🍌 While early intervention programs are usually not part of a school division, this liaison has the responsibility to coordinate with early intervention and can assist with eligibility questions, community referrals, and other McKinney-Vento resources.



PROJECT  
**HOPE**  
VIRGINIA

**Find Your Local  
McKinney-Vento  
Liaison**



### For More Information

Learn more about how to support children and youth experiencing homelessness with these resources:

- 🍌 [Project HOPE-Virginia](#)
- 🍌 [Supporting Young Children Experiencing Homelessness Webinar Series](#)
- 🍌 [Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center \(ECLKC\)](#)
- 🍌 [McKinney-Vento Quick Guide](#)