

# Appendix H:

## Collaboration Resources



To implement the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act most effectively, collaboration among district staff and with the local community is necessary.

### Appendix H contains:

- Summary: *Collaborations of Schools and Social Service Agencies*
- Collaboration Action Plan
- Useful Contacts Form

### Additional Resources

- **NCHE Information by Topic: *School Personnel Resources* webpage; visit [http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc\\_collab.php](http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_collab.php):** This NCHE webpage provides resources to assist school districts in building partnerships with community agencies to serve children and youth experiencing homelessness more effectively. Resources include:
  - ***Housing Agency and School District Collaborations to Serve Homeless and Highly Mobile Students* brief; available for downloading at <http://www.serve.org/nche/briefs.php>:** This brief examines several successful housing agency and school district collaborations from across the nation and explains how this type of collaboration can help reduce the frequency of family moves and promote school stability.
  - ***What Service Providers Should Know* brief; available for downloading at <http://www.serve.org/nche/briefs.php>:** This brief supplies providers of services to homeless children and families with a summary of the main points of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.



(Excerpted from the NCHE publication entitled *Collaborations of Schools and Social Service Agencies*. This publication is available for downloading in its entirety at <http://www.serve.org/nche/products.php>.)

## **Collaborations of Schools and Social Service Agencies** **Jan Moore, Assistant Program Specialist**

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### **Summary**

#### **Overall Lessons Learned**

Although collaboration is difficult, the collaborators all agreed that it is absolutely necessary and, ultimately, working together to find solutions makes everyone's job easier. Keeping everyone on the same page is a challenge, but partnerships with diverse agencies (not just those typically involved with the homeless population) may be the only way to provide all the resources to meet the various needs of homeless children and their families.

Creating an atmosphere for open dialogue, examining situations from different perspectives, and having a willingness to change are foundational for developing positive relationships with personnel from other agencies - an imperative for effective collaboration. It is vital to know the other collaborative agencies and their staff members in order to create and maintain common focus, communicate effectively, problem solve creatively, and present requests from perspectives the other agency members understand.

There is no one-size-fits-all model for collaboration, so each collaborative group must examine its own unique situation to develop what works best. Building relationships requires consistency over time. Participants should understand there is a mutual benefit to transparency in their relationships, but everyone needs permission to make mistakes as the collaborative evolves. Members must be patient with themselves and each other as they work to build a safe environment for people to hash out issues and problems and to ask questions. Below are some ideas to consider as a collaboration takes shape:

- Only buy-in from all those involved will sustain the work.
- People will take part in what they help create, so establish the expectation that everyone will contribute.
- The common goal is focusing on the best interest of the kids, not pointing fingers at each other or advocating for a particular agency.
- Learn all you can about the other agencies (vision, mission, history, etc.) and understand their role in the collaborative.
- Provide clear goals and expectations for the relationships.



- Remember that each partner is focused on doing what's best for the kids; find a way to trust and honor each other.
- Nonprofits are competitive for funds, so they also compete for positive publicity that will help garner those funds. When working with them, be sensitive to their organizations' interests.
- Starting the collaboration with a small manageable project will build confidence to maintain momentum and undertake larger tasks.
- Secure a commitment from agency leaders to loosen their agency-specific regulations in order to meet client needs.
- Empower decision making authority within the collaborative instead of requiring each member to clear decisions through their agency channels.

Establishing honest and frank communication patterns is the basis of building trusting relationships. To ensure this:

Agree to have open and honest dialogue. This is particularly important when defining problems, recognizing differences, and deciding the specifics of how to collaborate.

Insist on strict confidentiality.

Agencies have different languages, so communicate clearly. Problems often occur because of semantics; ask for clarification about anything that is unclear.

Establish expectations and design procedures to enhance the frequency and level of communication.

Concentrating on the core vision instead of structures or processes helps collaboratives maintain focus on what they intend to accomplish instead of getting sidetracked by how they go about doing that. This opens opportunities for thinking outside the box and being creative in addressing issues and problems. It also helps the collaborative withstand changes in membership, organizational structure, etc. Each person and each agency will have their own priorities, but the collaborative must concentrate on the overall goal of the group: how to better serve children and families. To do this, collaborators advise:

- Begin with client issues and problems not preconceived solutions.
- Think outside the box; identify the needs of children and their families and search out diverse ways to fill those needs.
- Encourage participants to step back and question why things have always been done in a particular way. One of the principal stumbling blocks to successful collaboration is overcoming customs and habits.
- Take the initiative to address problems and find creative solutions; educators can ensure that the kids get lots of other services, but have failed them unless they receive a quality education.
- Involve the community to provide new perspectives on issues and problems and empower those receiving services to share responsibility for finding solutions.



Special advice for collaboratives seeking outside funding includes:

- Be knowledgeable. Spend time on the web, search data, and watch for trends. Know facts and figures so you can counter misconceptions people have.
- Be the one who believes the glass is half full.
- When approaching possible supporters, remember to ask for referrals to others who might help with funding.
- Share personal stories about the kids. Talk about how your program helps them succeed in school, graduate, attend college, etc.
- Clearly demonstrate to funding sources the value of working together.
- Be patient and persevere!



# Collaboration Action Plan

Level	Strategies	People Needed	Timeline
<b>1 Awareness</b>			
<b>2 Assessment</b>			
<b>3 Coordination of Resources</b>			
<b>4 Collaboration Outreach Case Management</b>			

*Adapted from Miami-Dade County Public Schools, Project UP-START, Homeless Children and Youth Program, Miami, Florida.*



# Useful Contacts for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Updated on: \_\_\_\_\_

Organization/Agency	Contact Person	Phone Number/ E-mail Address	Services Offered
<b>Boys and Girls Club</b>			
<b>Food Bank</b>			
<b>Health Department</b>			
<b>Housing and Urban Dev't (HUD)/Housing Authority</b>			
<b>Medical Contacts (doctors, dentists, mental health, etc.)</b>			
<b>Salvation Army</b>			
<b>United Way</b>			
<b>Shelter (enter name):</b> _____			
<b>Shelter (enter name):</b> _____			
<b>Other (enter name):</b> _____			

