

EDUCATING THE HOMELESS YOUTH — A FORGOTTEN DOMESTIC BATTLE

By

Islam H. Attalla

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Advisor:

Dr. Lori Buza

Abstract

According to a 2007 report by the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, approximately 3.5 million people (including 1.35 million children) become homeless each year. Of that number, about 125,000 people--a group the size of the entire population of Hartford, Connecticut or Waco, Texas--are persistently homeless, but the vast majority of homeless persons are temporarily homeless.

In my thesis, I will focus more on the homeless youth. Many homeless youth lack the essential needs to have a successful transition to adulthood. Across the nation, an increasing number of families without homes are trying to provide or maintain a relatively stable educational setting for their children. It is reported that there are roughly 3.5 million homeless people in the United States. An estimated 40 percent of this figure is made up of homeless families. Close to 26 percent are children under the age of 18.

The obstacles involved in educating homeless children are numerous. Homeless families often move from place to place, making it hard for their children to regularly attend school or even follow through with important paperwork requirements like school records transfers and immunization documentation. Many families simply lack the money for transportation to and from school. And for school districts, identifying homeless children is a daunting task – especially given the recently expanded definition of the term homeless to include those living in parks, motels, and doubled-up with relatives or extended family. “Distinguishing who is homeless and who is not is very difficult,” says Josh Diem, a homeless advocate and doctoral candidate at the University of North Carolina. “You can’t just pick them out of a crowd.” (Jackson, nhi.org).

New Jersey has several objectives and regulations put in place to help homeless children and youth attain the fundamental right of a free education. As we all know, everything is easier said than

done. I want to make sure that these objectives are in fact put in place. As the Chinese Proverb says, “Give a man a fish and you feed him for a day. Teach a man to fish and you feed him for a lifetime.”

Chapter I: A Brief History of Homelessness

Many homeless children and youth have difficulty in school due to their loss of stable housing, and lack of consistent contact with family and friends. When a child becomes homeless, schools are federally mandated to identify these students and provide the same access to a free and appropriate education as their non-homeless counterparts. Within a historical and legal context a review of federal and state legislation that addresses the education of homeless children and youth will be conducted. This paper will provide an overview of the history of homelessness in the United States, specifically its impact on homeless children and youth and its relationship to education. It will outline a critical analysis of The New Jersey Public School Systems' response to these federal and state laws in an effort to demonstrate the need for continued support, advocacy and enforcement of homeless educational policy.

Since settlers came to the New World there have been homeless people (Barak 1991). It has been noted that the first real incidence of massive homelessness in the United States occurred during the period of the Civil War (Stronge 1992). Post Civil War, there was a decrease in jobs and people were forced from their homes, creating an increase in the number of homeless persons. The Great Depression of 1929 created a dramatic increase in the number of homeless individuals. More recently, cuts in federal low-income housing programs and state cash assistance programs in combination with rising housing costs and a minimum wage that has not kept up with the cost of living has created a context in which homelessness continues to spread throughout U.S. society. From the 1980s forward, homelessness has been recognized as a result of a transition from “an industrial-based capitalist

economy to a postindustrial capitalist service economy within the context of internationally developing global relations” (Barak 1991). Recognizing cuts in funding to programs that serve homeless persons, along with the rise of the cost of living, and the fact that the U.S. has become a postindustrial capitalist service economy, still does not adequately account for the continued rise in homelessness. When attempting to understand and discuss the various policies that have been created in response to homelessness one must have an idea of which the homeless population consists of historically and the changes in demographics. Studies on the homeless population have found the following: 1. More and more homeless people are young people, 2. Racial and ethnic minority groups are disproportionately represented, 3. Families with children constitute approximately 35% of homeless people, 4. Working people account for an average of 30% of the homeless population, 5. Homelessness is becoming a chronic and recurring event, reflecting the inadequacy of existing solutions in the face of low public-benefits levels and wages and high housing costs (Hombs, 1983; United States Conference of Mayors 2006). Critically examining the common characteristics that currently and historically compose the homeless population, we see that they are often persons living on the margins of society (e.g. poor, mentally ill, minority status, women and children), and lacking the political power to significantly change the social structures that create and perpetuate homelessness.

Changes in the homeless demographic in the U.S. over the past 20 years have led to increases among homeless families, and unaccompanied homeless youth. Since the 1980s there has been an increase in the number of families that have become homeless, and notably so, as the United States has not seen such an increase since the Great Depression (Stronge, 1999; Sommer, 2000). During the Reagan Era, social inequities reached an extreme, widening the gap that existed between rich and poor. Reagan cut the budget for the Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) by three-fourths, from 32 billion in 1981 to 7.5 billion by 1988. Under Reagan’s administration, the number of people living below the federal poverty level rose from 24.5 million in 1978 to 32.5 million in 1988 (Goodman 2004).

As a result of these inequities, there was a sharp increase in the number of adults, youth and children who lacked adequate housing, rendering this group homeless (Varney, 2008). The populations hit hardest by conditions of poverty were children and youth; of this population, almost half of them were under the age of 18. In the United States, homeless young people constitute a subpopulation of the more than 12.3 million children living in poverty (Varney, 2008). Previously, the homeless population was comprised primarily of older single men, often with dependency issues (Sommer, 2000). The composition of homeless persons has since become more diverse with an increase of people of color, and a sizeable number of women, children and young people are now among the ranks of those without homes or shelter (Toro, 1999; Woody 1992). Many of the funding cuts impacted programs that served this population (e.g. W.I.C) pushing them even further on the margins of society. The loss of monetary and service benefits makes it even harder to provide for one's family. This situation often forces women and their children to seek temporary housing—often family, friends, or a shelter—if these resources are available and accessible (Morgan 2006). This is even more difficult for women with older children, as many shelters only take young children (up to age 12). This situation obliges older children and youth to seek housing independently, often leaving them on the streets to fend for themselves.

HOMELESS YOUTH AND EDUCATIONAL POLICY

The first reported case dealing with homelessness and education was *Richards v. Board of Education of Union Free School District Number 4* in 1985. This case was related to residency requirements that prohibited children from enrolling unless they, or their parents/guardians, reside in the school district. Mrs. Richards and her child had lost their housing and were in the process of seeking a new residence. During this time they resided outside of the school's district and therefore she was told that her son was no longer eligible to continue to attend his home school. Mrs. Richards had no intentions of moving from the district, actively seeking housing in the area, maintaining a P.O. Box in the area and sustained contact with the local social service agency where she received services (Helm 1992).

The judge in this case ruled that “it is well settled that a residence is not lost until another residence is established through both intent and action expressing such intent.” Because Mrs. Richards had demonstrated her intent to remain in the area where the school was located—reporting weekly to the Social Security office, and requesting housing in the area—the judge found that the child could attend the school. Although this was a “win” for this particular family, this ruling was not to be applied to all homeless children. Instead it was determined that “until the legislature enacted legislation ‘specifically addressing the education of homeless children, the residence of such children must be determined on a case-by case-basis” (Helm 1992). This ruling demonstrates the lack of sustained systemic change that would protect the rights of all homeless families and their children.

HOMELESS STUDENT’S BARRIERS TO EDUCATION

Homeless students face multiple barriers to accessing education. Homeless children lack a stable living environment, food, and clothing and often suffer from depression and anxiety (Heybach and Platt 1998). Homeless children that are granted school enrollment are often denied key services such as transportation, which is necessary in facilitating full access to their right to an education. When children are denied transportation to attend their school of origin they face rates of high mobility. Every time children and youth move from a stable environment they must enroll in a new school. This has significant detrimental effects on their education, as it has been found that every time a child changes schools they are set back academically 4–6 months (Rogers 1991). The experience of being homeless often means that children and youth have difficulty attending to their basic educational tasks. Living in shelters, doubled up with friends/family or living on the streets, makes it difficult to complete fundamental schoolwork. One of the most difficult tasks for homeless children is finding a quiet place to complete their homework (John Hopkins Institute for Policy Studies 1987; Curtis 2006). In addition, homeless students may need tutoring, special education and counseling services.

In 1985, the US Department of Education estimated that 220,000 school-aged children were homeless and 67,000 (30%) of them were not attending school (www.endhomelessness.org). Two years later, the National Coalition for the homeless estimated that between 500,000 and 750,000 school-aged children were homeless and 57% of them were not attending school. Between 1989 and 1998, the percentage of children in the homeless population never dropped below 22% and rose to a high of 30% in 1993. (Library Index 2008). According to the most recent Congressional report regarding homeless students, during the 2003–2004 academic year, 602,568 homeless children were enrolled in school (U.S. Department of Education 2006). As can be seen by these statistics, the number of school-aged homeless children continues to rise, having great implications for children’s ability to navigate the school environment. Furthermore, homelessness dramatically impacts children and youth’s physical, psychological and educational needs (Rafferty 1999; Zerger, Strehlow and Gundlapalli 2008).

Additional studies have found that homeless children are less likely to score at or above grade level in math and reading (Eddowes 1993; Buckner 2008). Moreover, homeless children and students score lower than their housed peers on achievement tests and are less likely to be promoted. When children and their families are trying to find stable housing, they are continually on the move, meaning that these children are not able to regularly attend school. Lack of a stable living environment has been found to result in frequent absence and transferring, with student’s worried/pre-occupied with their home situation and the continuous disruption in their school experiences, and many feeling socially isolated (Walsh 1992). Going to a new school means having to make new friends and adjust to new teachers and schoolwork. That is, if children are allowed entrance and enrollment.

FEDERAL RESPONSE TO HOMELESS STUDENTS

In response to the growing number of homeless persons in the United States, Congress passed the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, Pub. L. 100–77, 101 Stat. 525, 42 U.S.C. § 11431–35

(1987). This was this was the first and only federally funded comprehensive Act, which includes funding for a wide array of services such as shelter, food and medical care. All segments of the Act have been modified significantly and improved since its initial passage. Of particular interest to this paper is Subsection “Part B—Education for Homeless Children and Youth,” which provides federal-state funding that mandates certain actions by any state that agrees to accept funding under the Act (Heybach 2000). The McKinney Act “requires that states receiving funds under the McKinney Act assure that each homeless child shall have access to a comparable free, appropriate public education in the mainstream school environment ...including transportation services, gifted and handicapped educational services, school meal programs, vocational education, bilingual programs, and before and after school programs” (Dohrn 1991, McKinney 1987). This was the first comprehensive Congress engineered homeless assistance package, indicative of the fact that states and local grants alone could not bear the economic burden of homelessness (Heybach and Platt 1998). Prior to the 1987 McKinney Act, there were no mandates (state or local) to address the education and educational related rights of homeless children and youth. Therefore, many children who were homeless were denied the right to an appropriate education. The McKinney Act was an attempt to respond to the growing population and complex needs of homeless individuals.

The Act specifically stipulated that each participating state review and revise their residency requirements in order for children to stay at their school of origin (school they were attending prior to becoming homeless) and appoint a state Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. Despite the efforts of the federal and state bodies, implementation of the Act was far from a seamless process and many problems began to surface. Although children were allowed to stay within their district under the first version of the McKinney Act, this did not assure the children could remain in their school of origin. This was especially relevant to Chicago, due to the large number of schools contained in one district. Additionally, children were only allowed to stay within the district until the end of the

academic year, therefore children were not allowed to enroll within the same district the following academic year, even if they remained homeless.

The Act was amended substantially in 1990, Pub. L. 101-645 and again in 1994, Pub. L. 103-382, in order to address many, but not all, of its original shortcomings. The amendments sought to provide: stronger mandates for access to education; requirement of States accepting McKinney funds to bear responsibility for examining all policies, laws, regulations and practices that may serve as a barrier to the enrollment, attendance or success of homeless children and youth; homeless families be provided with a choice in determining their child's school, not just the school district; requirement that schools have procedures in place to assist homeless families with obtaining records, immunization, guardianship and other factors that may serve as a barrier to enrollment; homeless children must be provided with transportation services to ensure that they are able to attend their school of choice when distance is an issue; prevents homeless children from being separated from the mainstream school environment; States should ensure the enrollment and attendance of children not enrolled in school; and schools are required to provide referrals for services such as school meals, physical and mental health services and any other school activities that children are eligible for (Heybach 2000). In the face of these federal mandates, many school districts continued to violate the rights of homeless students by not adhering to the standards outlined above.

The McKinney Act was revised once again in Bush's "No Child Left Behind", renamed the "McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act of 2001". The intent of this amendment was to increase children's access, stability and support in school, including immediate enrollment, liaisons in all schools, and the right to stay in the school of origin for the duration of homelessness. However, there are two areas of concern, the first being a provision that would allow school districts that currently segregate homeless students from their housed peers to continue to do so and the second being an authorized funding level of only \$36 million (only \$1 million above the current act). The amendments prior to 2001

are especially critical in Chicago's context, as Illinois was one of the first states on board to obtain funding to implement the McKinney Act, due to its large homeless population. The Chicago Public School System receives the most funds out of any other school systems in Illinois due to its large population of homeless children and youth (Heybach 2000).

Single male adults, while still the most visible of the homeless population, represent only about five percent of the total. Sixty percent of the homeless are families with children, and most of these children are of elementary school age.

Annual estimates of the number of homeless children in America range from 310,000 to 1.6 million. The United States Department of Education estimated that in 1989, 273,000 school-age children were homeless at some point during the year and that 28 percent of these children did not attend school during the time they were homeless.

Whether from lack of access or restriction of access, the failure of a child to attend school is one of many direct consequences of the parents' homelessness. Those children and youth who do succeed in enrolling in school face other obstacles, which are mostly noted in high school dropout rates, inconsistent attendance, and poor academic performance.

The plight of New Jersey's homeless mirrors the nation's. Among the most heavily populated of all states, New Jersey ranks fifth in the number of homeless children and youth. Most of New Jersey's homeless children and youth are housed in welfare hotels, congregate shelters and transitional housing for families. Homeless children and youth are also living in:

- Institutions that provide a temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized; or

- A public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings, such as cars.

Additionally, New Jersey children and youth are considered homeless if they:

- Live with a parent in a domestic violence shelter;
- Live in a shelter after running away from home;
- Live in a home for adolescent mothers;
- Live in a hospital because they are sick or abandoned and would otherwise be released if they had a permanent residences;
- Live with relatives or friends out of necessity; or
- Live with their migrant families who lack adequate housing.

State and local agencies have taken significant measures to ensure that homeless children enroll in school, attend school regularly, receive the range of services they require and succeed in school. These strides were made possible by the passage in 1987 of the Stewart B. McKinney Act and the amendments to the act in 1990. Following is a description of the major features of this landmark piece of legislation.

THE STEWART B. MCKINNEY ACT

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act (P.L. 100-77) was signed into law on July 22, 1987, and reauthorized, with amendments, on November 29, 1990 (Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments of 1990 P.L. 101-645). Subtitle A, Section 612 of the amended, reauthorized act deals with education for homeless children and youth.

The original legislation provided states with the direction and resources to assure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth have the same access to a free and appropriate public

education that would be provided for any other state resident, consistent with state laws governing school attendance. States with compulsory attendance laws that include residency requirements must review and “take steps to revise” such laws to ensure educational access for homeless children and youth.

Grants awarded to state educational agencies under the act were used to 1.) review and revise residency laws; 2.) establish a state-level office to coordinate the education for homeless children and youth; 3.) develop and carry out a state plan with ensures access to education for homeless children and youth; and 4.) gather data on the number, location and educational needs of these children.

The enactment of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1990 substantially changed the original law. The McKinney Act of 1990 requires state departments of education to look beyond residency issues and focus on the educational barriers that may exist for homeless children and youth. The law specifies that “homelessness alone should not be sufficient reason to separate students from the mainstream school environment.” Responsibilities for educating homeless children and youth now include:

- Reviewing and undertaking steps to eliminate laws, regulations, practices or policies that act as barriers;
- Providing activities for and services to homeless children and youth to enable them to enroll in, attend and achieve success in school;
- Gathering data on the number, location and education needs of homeless children every two years;
- Developing, revising and carrying out state plan activities;
- Facilitating coordination among various agencies providing services to the homeless;
- Developing relationships and coordinating with other relevant programs and providers;

- Developing and implementing programs for school personnel to heighten awareness of problems of homeless children and youth;
- Awarding grants to school districts for direct educational and supportive services for homeless children; and
- Submitting reports to the U.S. Department of Education, as required.

OFFICE OF EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

The Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth operates within the Division of Educational Programs and Student Services of the New Jersey State Department of Education. The mission of the office is to ensure that each homeless child and youth has the same access to a free and appropriate public education that is provided to any other state resident. The office has a coordinator and one full-time staff member. Since its foundation in 1988, the office has been instrumental in fulfilling several major mandates. Following is a summary of the major activities of the office.

Review of Residency

As directed by the Stewart B. McKinney Act, residency requirements were reviewed. New Jersey's residency requirements entitle every student to a free, public education in the school district where he or she is domiciled [N.J.S.A. 18A:38-1 (d)].

While it was clear that state residency requirements did not deny homeless children and youth to public schools, it was also evident from a review of the requirements that they did not address the issue of homelessness directly, nor did they address the McKinney Act provision that permits homeless students to attend school in either the district of residence or the district where they are temporarily living. Revisions to the residency requirements were drafted by Department of Education staff and presented as a proposal for amendments to Senate Bill Number 2352. These amendments defined

“homeless” persons as individuals who temporarily lack a fixed, regular and adequate residence and set forth specific procedures for determining the district of residence and appropriate educational placement for homeless children and youth. The amendments were signed into law in January 1990 and became effective on July 1, 1990.

The amendments designate the district of residence as responsible for the educational placement decision after consultation with the parent or guardian. This determination shall be either to – whichever is in the student’s best interest --:

- Continue the student’s education in the school district of last attendance;
- Enroll the student in the district of residence if the district of residence is not the district of last attendance; or
- Enroll the student in the school district where the student is temporarily living.

The amendments also clarify the responsibilities of the district of residence for paying tuition and transportation for homeless students to outline the method by which placement decisions can be appealed. On November 7, 1990, the New Jersey State Board of Education adopted rules and regulations to implement the new revised residency requirements for homeless students (N.J.A.C. 6:3-7). The rules were established to assist school districts in determining placement of homeless students and to respond to appeals made by parents or other parties.

Coordination

The Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth established ongoing working relationships with the department’s Division of Adult Education; the Department of Human Services; the inter-faith network; advocacy groups; and others responsible for, working with, and concerned about the homeless. The office also developed a State Advisory Council on the Education of Homeless Children and

Youth and an intrastate response network, which identifies a homeless education contact person in each county office of education, and district liaison in each school district. These contact persons are responsible for facilitating all the activities needed to ensure the timely educational placement of homeless children and youth. A statewide directory of district liaisons is available through the Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth.

An interagency agreement was also formalized between the Department of Education and the Department of Human Services on August 1, 1990. Its purpose was to facilitate delivery of educational services by supplying to school districts information to ensure that homeless children are enrolled in school.

Technical Assistance

The office has provided technical assistance and workshops on meeting the needs of homeless children and implementing the homeless law. These sessions have been presented to school districts, county welfare agencies, social service agencies, professional and community organizations, and advocacy groups.

Since its establishment in February 1988, the office has helped to resolve approximately 400 cases involving educational services to homeless students. The office has also developed a parents pamphlet detailing the educational rights of homeless children in New Jersey, which is also available in Spanish.

Pilot Projects

The office distributed grant funds to support pilot projects in the school districts of East Orange and Newark. These projects focus on providing comprehensive educational services to homeless students and will identify successful strategies which can be replaced throughout the state.

Advisory Council

An advisory council, consisting of homeless parents and representatives from shelters, advocacy groups and school districts, was established in February 1990. Its purpose was and continues to be to advise the Commissioner of Education on policies and practices having to do with the education of homeless children and youth. The council meets five times each school year and has developed a mission statement and goals.

Needs Assessments

Needs Assessments were conducted by means of two major surveys, which were the first to identify the number, location and educational needs of homeless children in New Jersey.

The first data collection was conducted by the New Jersey State Department of Human Services. The study gathered data from a one-year period, November 1986 through November 1987. The Department of Education conducted a one-day survey on November 18, 1988. Data were collected for a second time by the Department of Education in the fall of 1989 (Section II).

The following chart summarizes the activities of the Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth in its first year of establishment from October 1989 through September 1991.

New Jersey Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth

Summary of Activities: October 1989-June 1991

What	When
1. Needs assessment conducted	November 15- December 15, 1989
2. Law passed amending residency requirements	January 1990
3. Advisory Council Established	February 1990
4. County and district liaisons named throughout the state	June 1990
5. Agreement between Department of Education and Department of Human Services formalized	August 1990
6. Pamphlet for parents produced and distributed	August 1990
7. Training on implementation of law conducted statewide	September and October 1990
8. Requests for proposals mailed to pilot projects	September 1990
9. Administrative code adopted	November 1990
10. Pilots operational	February 1991- September 1991

Chapter II: Needs Assessment

The New Jersey State Department of Education, working with data provided by the New Jersey State department of Human Services, conducted a study in the fall of 1989 to update its information regarding the number, location and educational needs of homeless children and youth in the state. Following is a description of the study.

Purpose

The purpose of the study was threefold: a.) to determine the number and location of homeless children and youth in New Jersey from September 1, 1988 through August 31, 1989; b.) to further identify and verify obstacles to the provision of educational services to this population; and c.) to identify educational needs more specifically.

Data Collection

Data was gathered using two methods:

- Administration of a survey designed by the Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth to obtain information on children and youth not receiving emergency assistance; and
- Calculation of projections, using Department of Human Services data regarding families and children receiving emergency assistance.

The Survey Instrument

A questionnaire was designed to collect information on the number of homeless children who were receiving services apart from the public welfare Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) emergency assistance system. The questionnaire was divided into the following sections:

- The current number of homeless children and youth by age level;
- The source of the respondent's information;

- The numbers of school-age homeless children who were attending or not attending school;
- The type of facility where homeless children were currently residing;
- The educational obstacles faced by homeless children and youth;
- The major educational needs of this population; and
- Additional comments regarding problems encountered in identifying and meeting the educational needs of homeless children and youth.

Administration of the Survey

In conducting the survey, the Department of Education targeted shelters and social service agencies providing services to families not on emergency assistance. This population, a segment of the homeless working poor, would not be reflected in the data obtained from the Department of Human Services, since they would not be eligible for assistance. The questionnaire was mailed on November 15, 1989, to family shelters, domestic violence shelters, runaway youth shelters and interfaith networks providing services to this group.

Of the 73 eligible agencies throughout the state, 36 returned completed questionnaires by December 1, 1989, representing a 49 percent response rate. Follow-up of non-respondents revealed one or more of the following reasons for their lack of participation:

- Lack of staff or resources to obtain yearly figures for the targeted group;
- Inability of agencies to separate the two populations (AFDC emergency and non-AFDC emergency); and
- Unavailability of age or grade level data.

The Projections

A five-county sample of families and children receiving emergency assistance (AFDC/EA) funds was drawn from the records of the Department of Human Services. The following describes the procedure used to arrive at statewide projections of numbers of homeless children and youth.

Calculation of Projections

- The total number of homeless children and youth for the sample counties was determined by school level.
- The total public school enrollment for the sample counties was obtained from the New Jersey State Department of Department of Education's Vital Education Statistics, 1988-89.
- The total number of homeless children in the sample counties was divided by the total school enrollment to estimate the proportion of public school children who are homeless in the sample counties (by school level).
- The proportions obtained for the sample counties were used to estimate the number of homeless children in the remaining 16 counties in New Jersey (based on the total school enrollment in each of the counties).
- The actual number of homeless children in the five-county sample was added to the estimated number in the other 15 counties to arrive at a statewide projection.
- In calculating statewide projections it was assumed that the proportion of homeless students in the elementary, middle/junior high school and high school levels in the five-county sample is representative of the statewide proportion of students in those three levels.

Survey Results: Numbers Served

Table 1 summarizes the numbers of homeless children and youth served during the survey period and not receiving emergency assistance (AFDC/EA). The data is shown by school level and age group.

Table 1

Numbers of Homeless Children/Youth Served, by School/Age Groups

September 1, 1988 – August 31, 1989

School Level	Ages	Total
Preschool	3-4	1,065
Elementary (K-6)	5-11	1,485
Middle/Junior High (7-9)	12-14	863
High School (10-12)	15-18	806
Total		4,219

The largest number of homeless children was found in K-6 age group. Of the 36 responses received, 23 reported using records to obtain this information; 5 reported estimates; and the remaining eight did not indicate a source. Respondents reported that of the 3,154 children in grades K-12, 2,649 were currently attending school and 505 were not attending.

Table 2 shows the type of housing which served homeless children and youth who were not receiving emergency assistance (AFDC/EA).

Table 2

Non AFDC/EA Homeless Children/Youth Served by type of Housing

Type of Housing	Total
Motels/Hotels	1689
Both Shelters and Motels	N/A

Privately and Publicly Operated Shelters	2134
Relatives or Friends	274
Church Placements	51

As the table shows, most of these children were sheltered in privately and publicly operated shelters.

Projection Results

Table 3 summarizes results of projections derived from the five-county sample. These figures represent only those children and youth receiving emergency assistance (AFDC/EA). The data is shown by school level and age group.

Table 3

Numbers of AFDC/EA Homeless Children/Youth Served September 1, 1988 – August 31, 1989

by School/Age Groups

School Level	Ages	Total
Preschool	3-4	1653
Elementary (K-6)	5-11	5610
Middle/Junior High (7-9)	12-14	1580
High School (10-12)	15-18	1377
Total		10220

Table 3 shows further that these homeless children are also concentrated in the K-6 group. The pre-school data represents actual counts only. No estimates of numbers in the other sixteen counties have been added, since the New Jersey Department of Education data do not include pre-school enrollments.

Table 4 shows the type of housing which served homeless children and youth who have received emergency assistance (AFDC/EA).

Table 4

AFDC/EA Homeless Children/Youth Served by Type of Housing

Type of Housing	Total
Motels/Hotels	6511
Both Shelters and Motels	86
Privately and Publicly Operated Shelters	1970
Relatives or Friends	0
Church Placements	N/A

As can be seen in Table 4, the vast majority of these children were sheltered in motels. Children sheltered in both shelters and motels received both types of housing during the duration of their homelessness. Relatives or friends are not offered as a type of housing to emergency assistance recipients. This accounts for zero in that column.

Table 5 shows the numbers of children and youth receiving emergency assistance (AFDC/EA) obtained from the Department of Human Services for the five sample counties and the projected figures for the 16 remaining counties in New Jersey. These figures do not reflect the numbers received from the

survey conducted by the Department of Education. As can be seen, Essex County has the greatest number of homeless students in the state.

Table 5

Numbers of AFDC/EA Homeless Children and Youth by County

Homeless Children and Youth in Five-county Sample:

Atlantic	339
Cumberland	408
Essex	954
Hudson	493
Passaic	234

Projected Numbers of AFDC/EA Homeless Children and Youth Based on Five-county Sample:

Bergen	772
Burlington	471
Camden	620
Cape May	104
Gloucester	291
Hunterdon	132
Mercer	346
Middlesex	650
Monmouth	650

Morris	484
Ocean	486
Salem	93
Somerset	240
Sussex	185
Union	497
Warren	118
Total	6139

Results: Obstacles to the Provision of Educational Services

Based on the information reported in the statewide survey and office involvement on a case-by-case basis, the following are the major obstacles faced by homeless children and youth in obtaining access to educational services:

- Lack of Transportation: Throughout the state this has been a major issue. This is particularly critical when motels are located near busy highways or if families request their children be sent across school boundaries to the original district of residence.
- Residency Requirements: These requirements posed a problem when families were temporarily housed in school districts outside of their original municipality. Residency requirements have since been revised to meet the unique circumstances of homeless students by providing them the option of returning to the school district they attended prior to becoming homeless (see section 1).

- Lack of follow-up and coordination between school districts and social service agencies: At the time of the survey, no formal procedures were in place to ensure that homeless children had enrolled in and were attending school.
- School Records: The immediate enrollment of homeless students in school is often delayed because health and school records from the previous school have not yet been obtained.

Results: Educational Needs

Respondents identified the need for services such as special, compensatory and bilingual/English as a Second Language (ESL) education as the most pressing educational need of children and youth they served. They also indicated a need for counseling, after-school activities and alternative educational programs.

Also described by respondents were the difficulties they faced in identifying educational needs.

These included:

- Frequent relocation of families and the transitory nature of homelessness, causing families to move from district to district;
- Priority given to survival needs (permanent housing, food, clothing, and good medical care), causing educational needs to recede in importance;
- Difficulty in formal assessment and documentation of educational needs because of frequent moves from district to district; and
- Delays in transfer of school records between districts.

Conclusions

The population

Data from the two sources, as well as information gathered by the Department of Education on a case-by-case basis, indicated that the number of children and youth ages 0-18 served for the one-year period, September 1, 1988 to August 31, 1989, was 14,439. This seems to correspond to the estimate of between 10,000 and 15,000 homeless youngsters served over a one-year period derived from the previous needs assessment described in the first state plan. It does not, however, reflect accurately the total number of children and youth who were homeless in that time period. The reasons for this are:

- Absence of projected pre-school emergency assistance (AFDC/EA) numbers for 16 of 21 counties;
- Inability to count hidden homeless, who may be doubled up with friends or relatives, living in campgrounds, makeshift shelters, cars, etc.; and
- Difficulty reported by many surveyed agencies in providing the necessary information, yielding a 49 percent response rate.

Obstacles

The obstacles faced by homeless children and youth in obtaining access to educational services for the one-year period 1988-1989 continued to be the same as those reported in the previous needs assessment. Transportation, residency requirements, lack of follow-up, and delays in transmission of academic and medical records emerged as the major obstacles faced by homeless children and youth.

Chapter 3: The State's Role in the Delivery of Educational Services to Homeless Children and Youth

STATUS OF 1989 STATE PLAN OBJECTIVES

The comprehensive state plan developed in 1989 included 12 objectives, each of which responded to one or more of the obstacles encountered by homeless students seeking educational access. Below is a list of the state's 12 objectives.

Objective 1: To ensure that all homeless children and youth have access to a free and appropriate public education.

Objective 2: To revise current residency requirements to better address the needs of homeless students.

Objective 3: To ensure that homeless student school placement decisions are made in the best interest of the students.

Objective 4: To provide technical assistance to school districts in developing and implementing transportation systems which meet the needs of homeless students.

Objective 5: To assist districts in developing and implementing alternative registration and transfer policies which ensure that school and health records of homeless students are available for immediate entrance to school.

Objective 6: To ensure that all homeless students receive educational services comparable to services offered to other students, including educational programs such as compensatory, bilingual and special education.

Objective 7: To provide technical assistance to school districts, social service providers and parents in meeting the unique educational needs of homeless children and youth.

Objective 8: To facilitate the establishment of linkages between social service agencies, school districts, advocacy groups and other state agencies in order to meet the needs of homeless children more effectively.

Objective 9: To identify, recognize, and disseminate information on exemplary educational programs and practices for homeless children and youth.

Objective 10: To monitor educational and other related services provided to homeless children and youth.

Objective 11: To increase public awareness of and sensitivity to the issues surrounding homelessness and its effects on children and youth.

Objective 12: To assist districts in developing programs of supplementary supportive services, including health, nutrition, recreation and social services for homeless students.

The objectives proposed and implemented are great; however, problems still exist when looking at educating homeless children and youth. The following section summarizes obstacles identified as major and continuing problem areas for New Jersey's homeless students.

1. Transportation

- Unavailability of district transportation in many urban school districts;
- Limited abilities of families to provide transportation;
- Location of motels and hotels on busy highways and other roadways; and
- Lack of fixed location at which to pick up students whose location may change from week to week.

2. School and Health Records

- Lack of timely enrollment due to variations in school district policies regarding school and health records;
- Denial of registration due to lack of school and health records from a previous school district;
- Guardianship prerequisites for school registration; and
- Incomplete records sent by the previous school district.

3. Educational Services

- Lack of accurate data on the number, location and educational needs of this population;
- Inappropriate placement because of delayed or incomplete records;
- Exacerbation of learning problems and increase in educational needs due to the condition of the homeless;
- High mobility, leading to discontinuity of educational services;
- Difficulty in completing special education evaluation requirements due to mobility.
- Lack of continuity in programs such as special education, compensatory and bilingual/ESL education due to mobility; and
- Exclusion of many homeless children of pre-school age from participation in early intervention or preschool programs.

4. Coordination

- Lack of coordination among social service providers and educational agencies on state, county and local level;
- Inadequate outreach and follow-up procedures;
- Absence of uniform interstate records transfer policies; and
- Lack of coordination among school districts.

5. Establishment of Exemplary Programs

- Lack of processes by which exemplary programs can be identified, evaluated and replicated by other school districts; and
- Lack of state and federal funding to support exemplary projects.

6. Identification of Homeless Students

- Lack of awareness by school personnel that homeless children and youth can be found living in various circumstances, such as doubled up with friends or relatives;
- Lack of information by homeless parents about the choice of school district and other rights available to their children.
- Lack of awareness that homeless is not always correlated with socioeconomic status.

7. State Monitoring

- Lack of criteria related specifically to educational services for homeless students in current NJDOE monitoring instruments and procedures;
- Lack of formal guidelines for monitoring educational services to homeless children and youth; and
- Lack of corrective action procedures for districts not in compliance with state and federal mandates.

8. Public Awareness

- Lack of information about rights, needs, enrollment procedures, transportation, and access to other social services;
- Lack of awareness of the embarrassment, shame and social stigma that often results from the condition of homelessness;
- Lack of information, resulting in the persistence of stereotypes based on outmoded images of homelessness; and

- Lack of opportunities to sensitize service providers, parents, teachers and students concerning the problems resulting from homelessness.

9. Supplementary, Supportive Services

- Lack of comprehensive educational programs which include:
 - Adequate health and nutrition services;
 - Space, equipment and materials for homework;
 - Counseling services;
 - Access to recreational and social activities;
 - Before- and after-school care programs; and
 - Parent involvement.

10. Pre-School Educational Services

- Lack of coordination to ensure enrollment of homeless preschool children in school district programs.
- Lack of preschool services to prevent academic deficits;
- Lack of preschool services to address developmental delays; and
- Lack of information to parents and provider agencies on the availability of preschool services.

11. School District Programs

- Lack of available funding to school districts for additional programs for homeless students;
- Lack of coordination between school districts and community agencies to establish programs; and
- Lack of awareness of existing community resources which serve homeless families.

Chapter 4: Objectives

With the reauthorization of the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1990, and the educational obstacles that continue to face homeless children and youth, the following objectives and steps will focus the activities of the Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth.

Objectives

1. To ensure that all homeless children and youth have access to a free and appropriate public education.
 - Clarify and disseminate communication that each district is responsible for ensuring that all homeless children and youth attend school.
 - Revise a list of designated staff in districts having homeless students. These persons should be responsible for ensuring that all homeless children and youth are enrolled in school and receiving appropriate educational services.
 - Establish system between social service providers and school districts which ensures that homeless children and youth are enrolled in and attending school.
 - Assist school districts in developing specific outreach plans that include parents so that homeless children and youth housed in their district attend school.
 - Provide assistance to social service providers in developing case management strategies which enforce the state's compulsory attendance education laws.
 - Review possible funding sources for districts heavily affected by large numbers of homeless children and youth.
 - Prepare annual application for federal funding and complete required reports.
2. To monitor school districts' policies, programs and services to homeless children and youth to ensure compliance with federal and state laws and regulations.

- Identify areas of documentation needed for review.
 - Develop an instrument to be used in monitoring for compliance with state and federal specifications for districts.
 - Conduct district site visits in preparation for state monitoring. Site visits will focus on, but not limited to: obtaining information on parent consultation, choice of educational placement, timelines for enrollment, and identification of homeless students
 - Notify districts and state agencies of dates of monitoring.
 - Implement monitoring schedule during the year for selected school districts.
 - Implement compliance visitations as a follow-up to complaints reported in the area of services to homeless students.
 - Develop and implement a process for resolving findings.
 - Develop and conduct a schedule of program assistance as a follow-up to the monitoring visitations.
 - Identify areas of program improvement as a result of program assistance visitations.
3. To ensure that all homeless students receive educational services comparable to services offered to other students, including educational programs such as compensatory, bilingual and special education programs.
- Develop timely identification and assessment procedures of homeless student educational needs in order to provide required services.
 - Assist districts in developing inter-district coordination to foster completion of child study team evaluations.
 - Coordinate educational services to districts having large numbers of homeless students requiring compensatory, bilingual and special education programs.

- Ensure that all homeless students who are eligible for Chapter I programs are enrolled and receiving services.
 - Provide technical assistance to school districts and social service providers in order to ensure that homeless students receive appropriate educational services.
 - Monitor districts to ensure that homeless students receive appropriate educational services.
4. To revise any state laws, regulations, policies or practices that may act as barriers to enrollment, attendance or success in school for homeless children and youth.
- Review and revise state laws and regulations to comply with the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1990, P.L. 101-645.
 - Develop and adopt state and school district policies and practices to ensure that homelessness children and youth are not isolated or stigmatized.
 - Clarify and disseminate communication that each district's board of education review and revise any policies which may act as a barrier to homeless students.
 - Coordinate the implementation of regulations and policies to comply with state laws.
 - Visit targeted school districts to ensure implementation of revised residency law for homeless students. Site visits will focus on obtaining information on parent consultation, choice of educational placement, record transfer and enrollment procedures, timelines for enrollment, identification of homeless students, use of educational service emergency referral form, tuition and transportation policies, procedures for inter-district communication, and appeal process on county and local level.
 - Conduct site visits to targeted shelters and social services providers. Information will focus on knowledge of state law and issues in implementation.

- Develop guidelines to assist school districts in implementation of laws based upon site visits to school districts and social service providers.
5. To assist school districts in developing and implementing transportation and school records transfer systems which meet the needs of homeless students.
- Evaluate districts' implementation of transportation services to homeless students.
 - Develop guidelines to help districts provide transportation services to homeless students.
 - Explore funding sources and coordinate services to help school districts provide transportation to homeless students.
 - Identify counties which have developed successful transportation strategies as models for other counties.
 - Review current state and district policies regarding registration and transfer of students.
 - Establish specific strategies addressing school and health records and timelines applicable to all school districts that would result in timely registration and immediate entrance of homeless students to school.
 - Encourage school districts to assist homeless families in securing school and health records and to obtain proper immunizations.
 - Monitor to ensure that school districts appropriately provide transportation services and enroll homeless students according to state policy.
 - Establish and disseminate statewide list of agencies serving homeless families.
6. To establish a statewide data collection system to determine the number, location and needs of homeless children and youth.
- Coordinate data collection efforts with other public and private agencies at the state and county level to determine what procedures are in use.

- Conduct a survey of all agencies serving homeless children and youth who are not ADF eligible to determine their numbers, ages and needs.
 - Conduct survey of school districts to ascertain number, location, educational needs and services provided to homeless children and youth.
 - Review homeless student survey results, case studies and other information to project the number and location of homeless children and youth who are not attending school.
 - Collaborate with other state and local agencies in the development of a statewide system by which to count children of AFDC families, children of working poor families, and children of doubled up families.
 - Present findings to the U.S. Department of Education in year-end report.
 - Establish and disseminate statewide list of agencies serving homeless families.
7. To assist school districts in developing programs of supplementary supportive services, including health, nutrition, recreation and social services for homeless students.
- Survey districts regarding the health, nutritional, recreational and social needs of their homeless student population.
 - Develop strategies and activities to meet the specific needs identified by district surveys.
 - Coordinate with the Bureau of Child Nutrition the development of programs for homeless students.
 - Develop strategies which facilitate the health screening process of homeless students at school district level.
 - Facilitate establishment of networks with nutritional, health, recreational and counseling agencies.
 - Establish and disseminate statewide list of agencies serving homeless families.

- Develop and administer grants to school districts for the development of programs which address the educational, physical, social and psychological needs of homeless children and youth, which may include the following: Tutoring, counseling services, enrichment activities, recreation activities, summer programs, nutritional support, health and hygiene counseling, and parental involvement (See objective 8).
8. To provide and administer grant programs to school districts to facilitate enrollment, attendance and success of homeless children and youth in school.
- Use established department procedures to disseminate a request for proposal and make grant awards to districts.
 - Allocate grants using the following federal criteria:
 - At least 50 percent of the funds provided to a school district must be used to provide tutoring, remedial education services, or other education services, or other education services to homeless children and youth.
 - At least 35 percent, but not more than 50 percent, of the funds provided to school districts may be used for activities that may include: expedited evaluations of the strengths and needs of homeless children and youth; professional development for school personnel to develop awareness and heighten sensitivity to needs and rights of homeless children and youth; referral services for medical, dental, mental, and other health services; assistance to defray excess cost of transportation not otherwise provided through other funding; developmentally appropriate early childhood programs; before- and after-school and summer programs with qualified personnel; parent education about rights and resources available to their children; counseling, social work and psychological services; and school supplies at the shelter or temporary housing facilities.

- Evaluate projects' performances and disseminate successful models for replication in other districts throughout the state via reports and workshops.
9. To ensure that eligible homeless students are able to participate in before- and after-school care programs.
- Review district policies to ensure that homeless students are not denied enrollment in any available before- and after-school care and summer programs.
 - Identify community resources providing these services.
 - Provide information to parents on the services available to students.
 - Assist districts to develop services by disseminating grant applications and allocations. (See Objective 8)
 - Facilitate coordination among school districts, parents and social service providers to ensure participation of homeless students in programs.
10. To ensure that homeless pre-school children receive appropriate services.
- Identify preschool programs on a district and community level.
 - Provide information to parents on the benefits and availability of preschool programs.
 - Coordinate service delivery between school districts and community preschool programs, e.g., Head Start, Even Start, etc.
 - Determine that homeless students are not denied enrollment in preschool programs because of residency requirements.
 - Encourage school districts to include preschool services when applying for homeless assistance grants.
 - Disseminate information to districts and service agencies on the needs of preschool homeless children to heighten awareness and foster program development.
 - Coordinate services on the state level to homeless preschool children.

11. To identify, recognize and disseminate information on exemplary educational programs and practices for homeless children and youth.

- Develop criteria for identifying exemplary homeless education programs and practices.
- Identify existing exemplary homeless education programs and practices.
- Disseminate criteria and application form to school districts and/or interested agencies and encourage participation.
- Review submitted applications and rate according to established criteria.
- Select and visit programs.
- Review above data and make final selection of exemplary educational programs for homeless children and youth.
- Recognize and disseminate exemplary program information for replication in other communities.
- Provide technical assistance in developing exemplary programs and practices which meet the educational needs of homeless students.
- Evaluate progress and outcome of homeless education pilot projects in Newark and East Orange.
- Explore public and private funding sources to support and expand exemplary programs.
- Support state and federal legislative efforts that provide funding for these services.

12. To coordinate the establishment of linkages between social service agencies, school districts, advocacy groups and other state agencies in order to meet the needs of homeless children and youth more effectively.

- Evaluate system between county welfare agencies and school districts which facilitates identification and enrollment of homeless students.

- Investigate and implement systems whereby homeless students of working poor and doubled up families are identified and receive appropriate educational services.
 - Identify and develop statewide list of social service providers' services to homeless families.
 - Disseminate to school districts resource list of social service providers.
 - Participate in local county and state level committees and conferences which deal with homeless children and youth issues.
 - Coordinate activities of the New Jersey Advisory Council on the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.
 - Coordinate assistance network of school districts and local resources to meet the educational needs of homeless children.
 - Participate in network of state agencies providing services to homeless children and youth.
 - Coordinate with other state agencies to plan and hold a statewide conference on homeless children.
 - Participate in national and regional meetings of state homeless education coordinators from around the country to develop systems of information exchange and problem resolution.
13. To develop and implement training programs for school district personnel that addresses the comprehensive needs of homeless and runaway youth.
- Assess the training needs of school personnel.
 - Conduct research to identify effective strategies used by educators serving homeless children and youth.
 - Develop training materials and publications based on the research conducted and the needs determined.
 - Coordinate training programs with social service providers to elicit their perspective and enlist their participation.

- Conduct training programs for school personnel to heighten awareness of and sensitivity to the specific educational needs of homeless children, including runaway youth.
- Administer an evaluation form to participants to determine effectiveness of training.
- Offer workshops through Chapter I Training Institute (COTI).
- Conduct county and district liaison training sessions.

14. To develop programs to increase public awareness of, and sensitivity to, the issues surrounding homelessness and its effects on children and youth.

- Develop programs which will create awareness of the effects of homelessness on children and youth.
- Identify key community groups and agencies through which to present awareness programs.
- Conduct workshops in collaboration with other agencies for social service providers, parents and community groups on the educational issues surrounding homelessness.
- Develop opportunities for homeless or previously homeless parents to address groups about the experiences of homelessness.
- Serve as an information clearinghouse for school districts, social service providers, advocates, parents and the community at large.
- Support and encourage public awareness initiatives on the needs of homeless children and youth.
- Assess the need to establish a toll-free telephone number as a source of answers to individual questions and concerns.
- Coordinate with other state agencies to plan and hold a statewide conference on homeless children and youth.

Chapter 5: Plan of Action and Evaluation

Management Plan

All of the Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth activities and service operates within the Division of Educational Programs and Student Services. Staff from the Office and Education for Homeless Children and Youth will implement all objectives listed in the previous section. This office will coordinate program activities with other state and local agencies providing services to homeless children and youth.

All program activities will be coordinated as follows:

- The coordinator of the Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth will oversee all objectives and will be responsible for ensuring that activities are completed in a timely manner.
- Meetings will be held with county office of education staff assigned to serve as contacts to the office.
- Personnel from the Departments of Education and Human Services responsible for cooperative activities will meet in a regular basis to plan and coordinate.
- All activities will be documented and evaluated.
- The Department of Education abides by and follows all fiscal regulations and procedures of the State Department of Treasury. The Treasury department governs the expenditures of all funds, including those related to federal grants. The control of the funds will be the responsibility of the Director of the Bureau of Basic Skills, who will keep an account of all balances and expenses.

Methods Used to Provide Services

To provide the major services proposed in the activities section, the Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth will use the following:

- Data gathering: through surveys, evaluation reports and questionnaires;
- Training: throughout regional workshops, seminars, general meetings and on-site visits;
- Program monitoring and evaluation; through on-site visits to school districts and shelters, interviews with staff, use of surveys and checklists;
- Technical assistance: throughout on-site meetings, group sessions, seminars, workshops and published documents;
- Information dissemination; throughout correspondence, newsletters; phone contacts, meetings, conferences, news releases, publications; and
- Outreach activities: throughout mailings, direct phone contact, on-site visits, round-table discussions and conferences.

Evaluation

Throughout the development and implementation process, evaluation activities will be undertaken by the Office of Education for Homeless Children and Youth. These evaluation activities will measure progress made towards the objectives. The evaluation data will include the following:

- Notices, agendas, minutes and records of attendance at meetings;
- Workshop and conference evaluation forms;
- Reports by staff;
- Copies of documents and materials produced for dissemination;
- Logs of technical assistance sessions; and
- Program reports of field and monitoring visits to school districts.

Implementation of these tasks is not difficult. The state of New Jersey has already started on the right path when it comes to fostering education to homeless children and youth since the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 1989 was established. Hopefully as time progresses, we can maintain

our focus on educating our homeless children and youth. Also, with the proper resources, we can implement these great objectives among the rest of the 49 states so greater consistency can exist within the United States.

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