

Stakeholder Input: Utilizing Focus Group Feedback and Case Study Interviews to Improve Outcomes for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

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McKinney-Vento Grant 2019-2022

How can Title I HOPE provide strategic support to improve the educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness?

Session Overview

Overview of Activities, Services, and Resources

Year 1: Student Focus Groups & School-Wide Survey

Year 2: District Personnel Focus Groups

Year 3: Individual Interviews

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

Defines children
and youth who lack
a ***fixed, regular,*** and
adequate nighttime
residence as
homeless.

Overview of Activities, Services, and Resources

Attendance Support and other Key Services

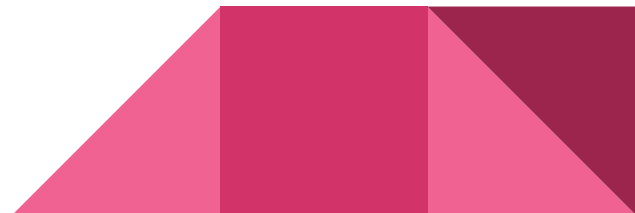
- Nevada IDs
- Extra-curricular Fees
- Bus passes
- Technology (e.g., chromebooks and wifi hotspots)
- PE Uniforms
- Bedding
- Air mattresses
- Specialty hair care and skin care products
- Clothing distribution
- Toiletries

Early Childhood and After School Assistance (Identify and refer)

Transition to Higher Education

Professional Development

Shelter Collaboration (e.g., school of origin requests, bus passes, technology, backpacks)



Includes:



**SHELTER
DOUBLED-UP
HOTEL/MOTEL
UNSHELTERED**

External Evaluation - AY 2019 - 2022

Principal Responsibilities:

1. Plans appropriate evaluation strategies
2. Develops/validates evaluation instruments
3. Meets and collaborates with team members
4. Facilitates data collection
5. Analyzes data
6. Reports on those data




Year 1: Focus Group Interviews (2019)

Guiding Question: What are the students' perspectives when it comes to Title I HOPE?

- Selected 5 high schools
 - 519 students identified at the 5 schools
 - 46 students participated
 - Grades 9-12 represented
- Met with school administrators
- Worked with CIT Advocate
 - Gathered permission forms
 - Coordinated date/time/location
 - Provided pizza for lunch meeting and snacks for breakfast



Focus Group Findings

- **Allies** - students see allies in the school and these relationships help
 - **Antagonists** - there are also systems and individuals that are perceived to work against students' interests
 - **Inconsistent Access to Information** - experiences varied in terms of what those in charge shared about services, to whom, and how
 - **Access to Basic Needs** - meeting basic needs continues to be a problem
 - **Sleep Deprivation** - travel, domestic responsibilities, and other pressures translate into significant loss of sleep
 - **Logistical Barriers** - IDs, no paperwork, mailing addresses, knowing about forms, connectivity, commutes, etc.
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Year 1: School-wide Survey “School Matters”

Guiding Question: Are there differences in the ways Title 1 HOPE students respond relative to their peers?

- School Matters Survey - 97 items Across six themes (Jacqui Ragin, CCSD Grants & Dev)
 - Attendance and Participation (26 items)
 - Personal concerns that might interfere with school (21 items)
 - Support systems and services (18 items)
 - External factors (4 items)
 - School dynamics and social engagement (10 items)
 - Personal needs (18 items)
- 2,812 responses across 4 of 5 sites (one site did not participate due to COVID-19)
 - Title I HOPE = 113
 - Conventional peers = 2,669
- Non-parametric analyses (Mann-Whitney U)



School Matters - Findings

Transportation - Significant differences in availability, duration, and reliability

School Policies - Absenteeism due to suspension

Social Engagement - Need significantly more guidance and assistance to navigate social opportunities (e.g., after-school clubs, sports, etc.)

Basic Needs - Beyond items, the Title I HOPE population has significantly greater needs relative to medical and mental health services

Logistical Barriers - Adult responsibilities and technology



Year 1: Suggestions and Comments

Transportation continues to be a challenge; taking this into account in terms of policies, interactions with students, etc. is advised

Policy decisions have unintended consequences (e.g., RPC, tardy lockouts) and interact with common characteristics in this population

Social engagement is vital for this population, but also something often lacking

Basic needs, as applicable, are available through Title I HOPE, services, and partners

External factors for this group are often quite distinct from their conventional peers


Training is one key mechanism to offset some of these issues

Information is also a key factor for students, teachers, and school personnel



Year 2: District Personnel (Dec. 2020)

Guiding Question: Given what we've seen from students, what are the perspectives of school constituents?

- Conducted focus group interviews over 5 sessions
 - 18 school administrators
 - 18 counselors/social workers
 - 10 clerks/registrar
 - Questions about findings in Year 1 (Focus Groups and Survey Results):
 - Inconsistent access to information
 - Social engagement and campus relationships
 - Basic needs
 - Logistical barriers
 - External factors
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Administrators

Key Themes and Findings:

- Directionality of Information
 - Split in terms of how to obtain actionable data (i.e., self-disclosure or system-level tracking)
- Identification/Hotline #

Counselors and Social Workers

Key Themes and Findings:

- Reported high levels of personal effort (unsustainable)
 - Need ongoing training
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Clerks and Registrars

Key Themes and Findings:

- Data Restrictions and student tracking services complicate their role
 - Communication is a vital component of working with this population
 - Need ongoing training
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Year 2: Community Partners (April 2021)

Guiding Question: Given what we've seen from students, what are the perspectives of community partners?

- Conducted focus group interview with six community partners
 - Structured similarly to District Personnel Interviews
 - Findings
 - **Ongoing Training** - School personnel have limited training in dealing with community partners (e.g., shelters).
 - **Personal Effort** - Community partners voiced significant personal effort as a means to affect positive change.
 - **Language Services** - There is an ongoing need for language services.
 - **Technology Training** - Although there are tools available, students in this group appear to lack the skills to take advantage of them.
 - **Awareness** - Community partners confirm that students are unaware of services, including services associated with shelters.
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Year 2: Suggestions and Comments

Training and professional development - The need for ongoing or additional training was voiced by everyone in students' encapsulating context. There is a lot that is unknown about working with students experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness.

Logistical barriers - Barriers for Title I HOPE students are often unique to this population. What works for their conventional peers may cause a cascading failure for Title I HOPE students. Knowing that this potential exists is a first step to addressing it.

External factors - Title I HOPE students contend with numerous factors out of their control, including transportation, employment, domestic caregiving, and more. Understanding these factors is a key component of a positive academic environment.

Materials marketing - Almost every constituent indicated that there was a level of ignorance associated with Title I HOPE services, resources, and activities. This should be addressed by improved materials and communication to key stakeholders.



Year 3: Individual Interviews (December 2021)

Guiding Questions:

(1) How can McKinney-Vento and Title I HOPE support students as they pursue educational goals?

(2) Given what we know from previous data, what are the individual experiences and narratives of students who rely on Title I HOPE services?

- Conducted with 3 students who had a multi-year history of leveraging Title I HOPE services.
 - Two participants were involved in Year 1 Focus Group Interviews.
 - One participant recently graduated and is a first year student at a university.
- Sessions recorded (with consent)
- Content transcribed using Artificial Intelligence and verified by evaluator
- Narrative analysis protocol
 - Interpret the content and nature of stories shared within a specific context
 - Examine individual perspectives obscured by other methods
 - Results were triangulated with previous findings (confront bias)

Mariah's Story

Interview #1

- Senior in CCSD
 - Focused on GPA
 - College trajectory (Nursing)
 - Mother contracted COVID-19 twice - loss of work, increased debt, etc.
 - Domestic responsibilities = stress
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Interview #1: Mariah

Theme 1: Struggle can be transformative, but any benefits come at a heavy cost.

My mom, she's a single mom, and I've seen, ... she didn't get to go to college ... and I've seen how she struggled. I just, ... I don't want that for my future, so I've always known that college was the route that I needed to take.

We aren't lucky to have resources... resources and access to things, that other kids in our like, classes get, like money or whatever. And because of that, a lot of us have to start looking at the world, like early on, and we have to start facing real world problems, as teens.

Theme 2: Arduous or extreme challenges are diminished, minimized, or equivocated.

I get really carsick. So, like, when I'm trying to focus on these assignments, it's really hard. And like, sometimes there's, you know, crazy people on the bus where they're screaming or they're like, blasting music. ... I I just need to like quiet to really just absorb when I'm trying to do.

*Obviously, the pandemics suck too for everybody. It's just ... it's just been really hard. Just how much it affected my one family and how like it just changed everything in like an instant. **Um, but other than that, that's about it.***

Theme 3: Obstacles or pathways are not predictable; flexibility and understanding are keys to success.

... because we all have some so much things happening around us. And so, to have that less stress, knowing that like, oh, if I don't turn in this assignment today, I can turn it in tomorrow or next week, and I can still get the full points on it. And I it's less stress on me as a student.

... as we transition back into in person, we have to adjust once again, and so far, a lot of the teachers have been very understanding of that process and knowing that it's going to take a little bit time for students to go to get back that motivation...

Mark's Story

Interview #2

- Father died during pandemic
 - Moved homes twice, including out-of-state
 - Generally isolated and numb
 - Was interested in college but will now work for a year
 - Most difficult to engage
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Interview #2: Mark

Theme 1: Arduous or extreme challenges are diminished, minimized, or equivocated.

... in the middle of COVID, my dad passed away. So that was kind of like a blank space. Other than that, I'm the youngest... actually... well the second youngest, but my sister lives with my mom. So, it's normally my oldest sister taking care of me and my mom, but my mom was graveyard, so mostly my older sister and she takes care of me, she normally does the cooking. She does, she actually got a job recently at a tattoo shop actually.

I can't cook for the life of me, but I can make you a mean cake. My grandmother taught the first thing she ever taught me how to bake was peach cobbler. Oh, yeah! Good stuff. We put a special type of dough inside into the crust ... just a special type of dough inside of it.

Theme 2: Individual circumstances can exacerbate feelings of isolation and loneliness that need to be addressed professionally.

I don't really talk to other people as either school or nothing at all. All my friends are back in Chicago. So other than a phone call [no contact] really. We talked on Snapchat every once in a while, but...

I didn't have much of a commute where I was at my sister's house but now, we... now it's I've take two different buses to get here. [And it is] definitely more... difficult because of motivation. Motivation wise was ... definitely more difficult. Because there wasn't anybody pushing me to do it wake up and do my homework or go to school.

Shane's Story

Interview #3

- Former CCSD student
 - Evicted and forced to live with his sister
 - Forced to care for family
 - Home situation was dire
 - Attempted suicide
 - Now: a freshman at a university
 - Future: Video Games and eSports (League of Legends) or Clinical Psychologist
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Interview #3: Shane

Theme 1: Sometimes, a few services and resources make all the difference to a student.

My family situation is, like, I never had any documents, like, ever. So, like, towards the end of my senior year, I was working with my high school social worker to get my Social Security and my birth. And that was just like a hassle because I had like, nothing to prove my identity.

I'm glad I got to go to college. first generation student, no one in my family has gone to college. So, it's nice. It's definitely something I can look forward to and like, you know, guide my life around.

Theme 2: Students in Title I HOPE may be at increased risk for emotional avoidance and repression and the fallout of both.

... in high school, school was like more of an escape from my home life, I guess.

...I wanted out of my home.

... my sister wasn't like happy to take care of us like she never wanted to... [she] could not care less about me. ... She just wouldn't look at me or interact with me. So, like, being home was like me being alone... she wasn't like really willing to help me get any of my documents or anything.


I very much struggled with like depression and like suicidal thoughts. I even ended up going to a mental hospital because of an attempt.

Year 3: Suggestions and Comments

Mental Health Awareness - A common theme among all three cases involved coping mechanisms associated with extraordinary situations. Emotional repression, equivocation, detachment, isolation, or loneliness are all present to varying degrees. These are also key indicators of depression and suicide.

Knowing and Understanding the Individual - Each student's circumstances are unique, but a common thread among these narratives was the need to be "known" and understood. When that wasn't present, situations worsened. Personnel who invest in the individual are able to make significant differences in lives.


Training and Professional Development - Across all data and findings, there is an ongoing need to continue training in areas of *empathy, compassion, understanding*, and *fostering a positive school climate and culture*.



Shane's about His Advocates - *It All Matters*

[My advocates] helped me plan ahead, helped me move into the dorm, helped me get housing of course. They kind of helped me with my getting my documents, as well. I worked with school social worker and then kind of contacted Title I HOPE through there um, yeah, mainly that helping me to like the resources. And once I'm in the dorm... with like food and all that.

*I don't like, know, how to describe exactly like... like **they just pretty much saved me from like everything** that I was struggling with for the past, you know? Like, my entire teenage years and a little bit more... just helping me be on my own and experience the world like how it should have been you know?*



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