SUPPORTING STUDENTS WHO ARE HOMELESS

Solutions to homelessness

Presenter: Leslie Carrillo, Homeless & Family Service Program Assistant
Understanding Homelessness

Even under normal circumstances, service providers struggle to meet the needs of children and families experiencing homelessness, and these are far from normal times. Millions of families are now at risk of homelessness due to the impact of COVID-19. The danger associated with unsheltered homelessness and congregate living has increased for families. It has become more challenging for children experiencing homelessness to stay connected with school, more challenging for parents to find and keep employment safely, and more difficult for families to find new housing options to escape homelessness.
A housing crisis is often the result of a financial one. A reduction in work hours, a lost job, an illness or an unexpected expense can spiral into an inability to pay the rent, an eviction, reliance on extended family for a place to stay and sometimes entry into a homeless shelter.

Income support programs that can assist low-income families, such as TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) or unemployment compensation, help many people withstand economic crises. Often, however, people experiencing homelessness find these programs to be inaccessible and the benefits offered may be insufficient to help them achieve stability.
Connecticut Homelessness Statistics

• As of January 2020, Connecticut had an estimated 2,905 experiencing homelessness on any given day, as reported by Continuums of Care to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). Of that Total, 306 were family households, 199 were Veterans, 148 were unaccompanied young adults (aged 18-24), and 177 were individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.
Connecticut Homelessness Statistics (Cont.)

- Public school data reported to the U.S. Department of Education during the 2018-2019 school year shows that an estimated 4,722 public school students experienced homelessness over the course of the year. Of that total, 39 students were unsheltered, 837 were in shelters, 640 were in hotels/motels, and 3,206 were doubled up.
Family Circumstances

Each homeless situation is unique. While most families are homeless due to lack of affordable housing, there are other factors that can contribute to a family becoming homeless or having to move frequently. The personalities of each child and family member, their personal history, their ethnic backgrounds, and the neighborhood where they live all impact how children and other family members respond to their living situation.
Indicators of Need

Being homeless is often a very complex situation for both child and family. Classroom teachers, family support staff, case workers, and others providing support must be alert to indicators of need, but also be cautious about making assumptions or prejudging the situation when inquiring about the family’s living situation and assessing their needs. List of indicators below can assist in identifying possible needs:

MOBILITY INDICATORS

- Frequent absences consecutive days
- Inability or difficulty contacting parents
- Concern for safety of belongings weather
- Hesitancy about what address to use

ECONOMIC INDICATORS

- Wearing the same clothes on
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate clothing based on
- Malnutrition/chronic hunger
Indicators of Need (Cont.)

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL INDICATORS

- Avoidance in making friends
- Poor self-esteem
- Extreme shyness
- Difficulty trusting people
- Concern for safety
- Clinging behavior
- Anxiety when leaving school/program each day
Nostalgia

Children may miss the things they remember from the past and wish their life could be the way it was before they became homeless.

• Talk about the changes in her/his life.

• Affirm her/his feelings. Say something like “it’s okay to miss the way things were before”.

• Find humor in situations to help relieve tension.
Getting Along with Other Children

Highly mobile and homeless children can experience anxiety about making new friends.

• Model being kind to others and show your child how to be a good friend.
• Show respect for other people’s feelings and their personal belongings.
• Participate in events that involve your child’s friends and classmates.
• Plan events that will give your child opportunities to play and meet other children.
Worry

Children may worry when parents are upset.

• Be honest about your situation and explain it your child in simple terms.
• Reassure your child that they will be safe and that family will be there for her/him.
• Help your child to think of all their options.
• Remind your child how special she/he is and that your daughter/son has strengths that will help her to cope with their situation.
Inappropriate Behavior

Children may act out in ways that are inappropriate when they are angry, confused or frustrated.

• Be consistent when enforcing simple rules that fit your child’s developmental level. Children need rules for things like bedtime, chores, and where they can or cannot go.

• Discipline your child only when you are calm. Take time to calm yourself before talking with your child.

• Give the child time to calm down. Children will be more ready to listen when they are calm.

• Be sure that the discipline fits your child’s age. It is important to know what you can reasonably expect of children and different ages.
Guilt and Helplessness

Children feel what their parents feel. They may feel guilty or frustrated for being homeless or living in a transitional situation. Children may feel they are the cause of their parent’s negative feelings.

- Reassure your child that she/he is not to blame for being homeless or in a transitional living situation.
- Suggest ways she/he can help and take responsibility (care of themselves and belongings).
- Help your child to like themselves and feel proud.
- Remind your child her/his strengths.
Free Resources

Available to tenants facing an eviction or loss of housing subsidy:

ONLINE LEGAL HELP
- Visit CTLawHelp to learn about evictions, lockouts, security deposits, rent increases, discrimination, foreclosure, homelessness, and utilities.

RENTAL ASSISTANCE
- UniteCT will provide continued rental and electric utility assistance to eligible households until all funding has been committed. There is no current end date of the program.
DID YOU KNOW?

• 2-1-1 is a free, confidential information and referral service that connects people to essential health and human services 24 hours a day, seven days a week online and over the phone.

• CT Foodshare, network of more than 700 community-based hunger relief programs, including food pantries, community kitchens, and emergency shelters, while also working on long-term solutions to food insecurity--Homepage - Connecticut Foodshare (ctfoodshare.org)
Wednesday, April 20th, 2022
Getting Children Ready For Summer
Hartford Public Schools
Welcome Center
330 Wethersfield Avenue, Hartford CT 06114
(860) 695-8400

Please contact:

Leslie Carrillo
Homeless Coordinator & Family Service Specialist
(860) 695-8504
carrloo3@hartfordschools.org

Shelimar Ramirez
Welcome Center Program Coordinator
(860) 695-8400
ramisoo3@hartfordschools.org