

Education Planning and Collaboration

Presented by:

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What we will be covering today

- Legal basis and requirements for child welfare workers.
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and how it includes foster youth.
- Responsibilities of education planners and McKinney-Vento liaisons.
- How one education planner and McKinney-Vento liaison have partnered.

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Why a focus on education?

- A Midwest study found that 58% of foster youth had their diploma at age 19, compared to 87% of their same-age peers.
- Only 2% of former foster youth obtain a bachelor's degree.
- Foster youth test 16 to 20 percent lower in standardized tests than non-foster youth.

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Why these outcomes?

- School mobility
 - Foster youth attend an average of 6 different schools.
 - When moving so often, students never “catch up” to other students.
 - Delay in school enrollment causes a student to get even further behind each time they are forced to move.
 - Delay in record transfer from previous school. This leads to incorrect class placement.

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Legal Basis for Implementing New Policy

- *Dwayne B. v Granholm* Settlement Agreement (2008)
- Fostering Connections to Success and Increasing Adoptions Act of 2008, Pub. L. No.110-351
- McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, Pub. L. No. 107-110
- 1976 PA 451 as amended by 2009 PA 186, MCL 380.1148
- 1979 PA 94 as amended by 2009 PA 187, MCL 388.1606

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Dwayne B. v Granholm Settlement Agreement Provisions

Sources:

Section VIII.A.5(a)-(c) *Provision of Educational Services, 36-37*
Dep't of Human Servs., *Children's Foster Care Manual: Foster Care-Developing the Service Plan (FOM 722-6)*

- DHS shall:
 - Ensure each child is screened for general and educational needs within 30 days of his/her entry into foster care.
 - Take reasonable steps to ensure that school-aged foster children are registered for and attending school within 5 days of initial placement or any placement change.
 - Make reasonable efforts to ensure the continuity of a child's educational experience –
 - Keeping the child in a familiar or current school and neighborhood, when this is in the child's best interest;
 - Limiting the number of school changes.

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Education Provisions of *Fostering Connections*

- Child welfare agencies **must** include within the case plan assurances of educational stability.
- DHS **must** ensure that child welfare agencies:
 - Consider appropriateness of **current** school **selection** and proximity to school of origin when making foster care placements.
 - Work with schools to ensure child remains in the school in which the child is enrolled at time of placement.

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Education Provisions of *Fostering Connections*

- If remaining in same school is not in the *best interest* of the child, the case plan must include assurances the child welfare agencies have worked with the schools to:
 - Provide immediate and appropriate enrollment in a new school; and
 - Provide all of the educational records of the child to the **new** school.

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Dwayne B. v. Granholm, et al. Provisions

Source:
Section VIII.A.4.b(v) *Supports for Children Transitioning to Adulthood*, 35-36

- By October 2009, DHS shall hire 14 regional Education Planners who shall provide consultation and support to youth age 14 and older in accessing educational services and in developing individualized education plans, including identifying all available financial aid resources.

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McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001

formerly known as **No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)**

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McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act: Key Provisions

Reauthorized in 2001 as Title X of NCLB/ESEA

- Main themes:
 - School stability
 - Access to school and school services
 - Support for academic success
 - Child-centered focus
 - Decision making in best interest of child

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McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act: Key Provisions

Districts must:

- Provide educational stability for homeless students
- Provide immediate school access for homeless students
- Appoint a local homeless education liaison
- Serve homeless students with Title I funds

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McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act: Key Provisions

Districts must:

- Develop, review, and revise their policies to remove barriers to the enrollment and retention of children and youth in homeless situations
- Address problems resulting from enrollment delays caused by immunization and medical records requirements; residency requirements; lack of birth certificates, school records or other documentation; guardianship issues; or uniform or dress code requirements

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School Stability – Key Provisions



- Students can stay in their school of origin the entire time they are homeless, and until the end of any academic year in which they move into permanent housing
- If a student becomes homeless in between academic years, he or she may continue in the school of origin for the following academic year
- If district declines placement requested by a parent or guardian, the district must provide a written explanation to the parent or guardian of its decision and the right to appeal

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School Stability – Key Provisions

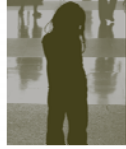


- Children and youth experiencing homelessness can stay in their school of origin, school of residence, or enroll in any public school that students living in the same attendance area are eligible to attend, according to their best interest
 - **School of origin** — school attended when permanently housed or in which last enrolled
 - **School of residence** — school where other students living at that address are assigned to attend, or charter school
 - **Best interest** — keep homeless students in their schools of origin, to the extent feasible, unless this is against the parents' or guardians' wishes

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Impact of Homelessness on Children and Youth



• Developmental Milestones and Academic Performance

- Four times more likely to show delayed development
- Twice as likely to have learning disabilities as non-homeless children

• Academic performance problems

- 2.5 times more likely to perform below grade level in math
- 1.5 times more likely to perform below grade level in reading
- 1.5 times more likely to perform below grade level in spelling

National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009

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Michigan's Guidance on "Awaiting Foster Care Placement"

- In 2007 MDE Homeless Education Program published guidance for public school districts clarifying the M-V definition of "awaiting foster care placement"
- **Any child/youth in the first 6 months of any new out-of-home placement is considered to be awaiting foster care placement - and is eligible for M-V homeless education services**
- Once identified as M-V eligible, services continue through the end of the current school year

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Who is considered homeless?

Children who lack a *fixed, regular, and adequate* nighttime residence: (McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Improvements Assistance Act, 2001)

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason
- Living in motels, hotels, RV/trailer parks, camping grounds due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations
- Living in emergency, domestic violence, or transitional shelters
- **Temporary foster care placement or "awaiting placement"**
- Living in a public or private place not designed for humans to live or sleep
- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, bus or train stations, under bridges, etc.
- Migratory children living in above circumstances
- Runaway or "throw-away" youth not with parent/guardian

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Strategies to Maximize the M-V Act for Youth *Awaiting Foster Care Placement*

- **Build and maintain** effective collaborations between child welfare and education
- **Note State Ed. Agency definition** of “awaiting foster care placement” under the McKinney-Vento Act, and share legal requirements for both agencies
- Design and implement LEA/DHS/FC strategies to maximize school stability and provide transportation
- **Ensure that education and child welfare agencies staff have sufficient training and capacity** to ensure immediate enrollment, attendance, and services

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Strategies to Maximize the M-V Act for Youth *Awaiting Foster Care Placement*

- **Design and implement procedures for schools and child welfare agencies to share confidential information in order to deliver timely, effective services to children in care**
- Clarify education-related roles and responsibilities of both agencies
- Treat youth in out-of-home care with dignity, understanding, and discretion
- Assist students aging out of care in applying for college financial aid and to institutions of interest
 - Higher Education Act
 - College Cost Reduction and Access Act

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Strategies to Maximize the M-V Act for Youth *Awaiting Foster Care Placement*

- **Develop and use shared definitions and procedures via inter-agency agreements**
 - Consult the State Coordinator for Homeless Education at the state education agency for existing definition, policies, and procedures
 - Cross-train state and local personnel on the definition, policies and strategies to implement these

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Strategies to Maximize the M-V Act for Youth *Awaiting Foster Care Placement*

- **Coordinate school transportation and share responsibility for costs**

- The Fostering Connections Act permits states to access federal child welfare funding that may be used to cover reasonable transportation to the school of origin for a student in foster care
- State child welfare agencies must contribute state dollars in order to access these federal funds

Building Futures Through Education, National Assoc. for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth and the Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2009

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Partnership of McKinney-Vento and Education Planner in Oakland County

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What will an Education Planner Do?

- Provide technical assistance and training.
- Act as a liaison between the education system and the foster care system.
- Advocate for students and teach youth to advocate for themselves.

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What will an Education Planner Do?

Provide specific assistance:

- In developing long-term educational goals.
- In the transition between high school and post-secondary education.
- In the educational transition between residential facilities and the return to the community.
- In the transition from the educational system to the workforce.
- In enrollment and record transfer between schools when a move is unavoidable.

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What will an Education Planner Do?

- Ensure that Michigan policy and Fostering Connections guidelines are being met.
- Collaborate with McKinney-Vento liaisons to ensure that students receive services.

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Oakland Schools Grant Coordinator for Oakland County

Total Enrollment 224,000
*Attending 28 LEAs and 16 PSAs, covering 910 square miles. Includes 186 elementary, 62 middle, and 60 high schools, and 4 vocational technical campuses

Number of Homeless Students Served during the 2009-2010 Year 1511
*It is estimated that there are between 3,000-10,000 McKinney-Vento eligible students in Oakland County

Approximate Number of Foster Youth 885

Number of Foster Youth Identified and Served during 2009-2010 Year 99
*128 FY have been served so far during the 2010-2011 year

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Role of McKinney Grant Coordinator

- Assist in coordinating educational services for homeless students which includes ensuring that enrollment/transportation is arranged in a timely manner
- Ensure that homeless students have appropriate school supplies and clothing, access to tutoring if needed, school activities, etc.
- Provide Technical Assistance to LEA's and PSA's
(Local Educational Agencies and Public School Academies)
- Provide education and training on McKinney-Vento to district staff and local district liaisons
- Educate and train newly appointed district liaisons on their role as a McKinney-Vento District Liaison
- Provide community resources to homeless families
- Work closely with the DHS Educational Planner to ensure that Foster Youth receive services they are eligible for
- Central Data Collection for County to report to MDE

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Referral Process Used in Oakland County

- Once a referral is made to Oakland Schools from DHS, the information is sent to the district in which the student is attending
- The district liaison (in conjunction with Oakland Schools) begins working on addressing the needs that have been identified on the referral (examples include expediting enrollment, arranging transportation from current residing district, getting school supplies to the student, school uniforms, shoes, school records, birth certificates, etc.)
- Most collaboration and communication is done between the DHS Education Planner and Oakland Schools Homeless Student Education Program. However, in complicated situations, the ED Planner is also in direct contact with the local liaison.

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Case Example - Scenario

- Hazel Smith is in the 9th grade at Coolidge High School in Southfield School District (Oakland County). She was removed from her mother's care in January 2011 and was placed with her maternal aunt in Utica Community School District (Macomb County).
- **Step One:** Determine if it is in Hazel's best interest to remain at her school of origin or enroll in the new district.

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Making *Best Interest* Decisions

- **The local liaison and school staff should always be involved in the best interest decisions. Ideally, the local school can:**
 - Provide input on academic, social, and emotional impact that changing schools may have on the child, the child's progress and services.
 - Help determine which programs at the schools are comparable and appropriate for the child.
 - Provide information on the commute to the schools in terms of the distance, mode of transportation, and travel time.

Best interest factors foster care workers need to consider regarding school placement include:

- The parent/guardian's and child's school of preference.
- Educational input from school personnel and educational liaison.
- The child's:
 - Social and emotional state
 - Academic achievement/strengths/weaknesses
 - Continuity of relationships
 - Special education programming
 - Extra-curricular activity participation
 - Distance/travel time to and from current school/new placement and the impact on the child
 - Supportive relationships and/or services
 - Length of anticipated stay in placement and the permanency plan.

Best Interest Other Questions to Consider

- How many schools has the child attended over the past few years?
- How would changing schools affect the child or youth's ability to earn full academic credit, proceed to the next grade or graduate on time?
- What schools do the siblings attend?

Case Example - Scenario

- After collaboration with the school district, M-V liaison, foster parent, student, DHS education planner, and foster care worker, the determination was made that it would be in Hazel's best interest to complete the remainder of the academic year in Southfield.
- **Step Two:** Complete a referral form and Needs Assessment.

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The Referral Process and the Plan that was Developed...

- A referral form and Needs Assessment were completed by **Kristen Donnay** at DHS and sent to **Sara Orris** at Oakland Schools.
- Needs indicated on Needs Assessment:
 - Transportation to Southfield from Utica
 - Shoes for gym class
 - School Supplies as most were left behind

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Case Example - Scenario

The Plan...

- Sara immediately sent the information on to the Southfield School District local liaison who began working on transportation arrangements with Utica School District.
- Sara immediately sent a clothing voucher to the family to purchase new shoes for gym class as well as a backpack full of supplies
- Sara arranged for a cab to provide transportation for Hazel while Southfield and Utica made reasonable transportation arrangements.

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Case Example - Scenario

The Plan Continued...

- Within a few days, Southfield and Utica had developed the following transportation plan:
 - Utica would pick Hazel up at her aunt's home in the morning and transport her to the Macomb/Oakland County line where a Southfield bus would pick her up and transport her to school.
 - In the afternoon, Southfield would transport her back to the Macomb/Oakland County line where a Utica bus would meet her to take her back to her aunt's home.

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Case Example - Scenario

The Result...

- The plan worked out nicely and Hazel was able to successfully complete the year in Southfield. She plans to enroll in Utica in the Fall as the long term plan is for her to remain with her aunt.
- Alternate Ending...
 - The following September, Hazel's mother is making progress with her treatment plan and it is likely that Hazel will be returned home by February 2012. Hazel is excelling academically at Coolidge High School and has developed many friendships with her peers. She runs track and plays volleyball at school. It is determined that it would be in Hazel's best interest to remain at Coolidge High School.

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Case Example - Scenario

- The school contacts Sara Orris regarding Hazel's situation.
- However, Hazel is no longer McKinney-Vento eligible since she has been in her placement for longer than six months and the school year in which she was eligible has ended.
- Sara Orris contacts Kristen Donnay, DHS Education Planner, regarding Hazel, who is now eligible to remain at her school under Fostering Connections guidelines.
- The Fostering Connections Act includes payment for reasonable transportation in the foster care maintenance payment (i.e. payment to foster parents).
- DHS is responsible for arranging and paying for transportation, which is billed on a DHS-1582-CS

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Questions?

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