



OUR HOME

Opening Doors: Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

OUR HOME

November 2005

Inside this issue:

BEST PRACTICES	2
SB1931 AMENDS ILLINOIS HOMELESS LAW	2
RECOGNITION BY NAEHCY	2
WELCOME TO AREA ONE LEAD LIAISONS	3
OPENING DOORS	3
POSTER CONTEST WINNER	4

“ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF HOMELESS YOUTH”

*Zenaida Alonzo - Equal Justice Works Fellow/Youth Futures
Chicago Coalition for the Homeless*

NAEHCY Listserv

The NAEHCY Listserv provides colleagues across the nation with a forum for communicating about emerging issues in the field of homeless education, including the application of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and strategies for educating and protecting the rights of homeless children and their families.

The listserv is sponsored by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) and hosted by the National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE (NCHE).

To subscribe to the listserv, please send an e-mail request to homeless@serve.org

Resources on the Web
National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE
<http://www.serve.org/nche/>

National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty
<http://www.nlchp.org>

Hotline Assistance

If you have questions or comments regarding the Opening Doors Project, or a homeless student, you may contact the ISBE Homeless Hotline at **800/215-6379** or contact Rich Dehart, Principal Consultant, Accountability Division, Illinois State Board of Education, 100 North First Street, Springfield, IL 62777-0001, Phone 217/782-2948, Fax 217/524-8750

According to the National Runaway Switchboard, there are 1.7 million to as many as 2.8 million (5% of the total homeless population) runaway and homeless youth on the streets of America every year. The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) estimates that annually there are approximately 26,000 homeless youth in Illinois, ages 14 - 21. In 2004, the National Runaway Switchboard received 9,264 calls from Illinois.

Homeless youth end up on the streets for a variety of reasons, but most find themselves there because of abuse and neglect at home. Leaving home because of serious family problems such as abuse (physical, sexual or emotional), substance abuse by a parent, absence of a parent, and long-term family economics is common among youth experiencing homelessness. Often pregnant and parenting teens, former and current wards, as well as youth who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or who are questioning their orientation become homeless because of their family's inability to accept these choices. In a 2005 survey of 400 youth, released by the Night Ministry and the Center for

Impact research, 40% of the youth reported that a bad relationship with their family led to their homelessness, and 35% reported that they were shut out or locked out of their home. In a National Gay and Lesbian Task Force report, 26% of gay and lesbian youth must leave home because of family conflict over their sexual orientation.

Many homeless youth survive by "couch-surfing," traveling from one home to another, living outside and in other public places for extended periods of time. They oftentimes face insurmountable odds to returning home and have an especially high likelihood of being abused or victimized. In the 2005 "Where Can I Lay My Head" survey by the Center for Impact Research, 33% of the youth reported living on the street while 46% reported living in a home while homeless.

Homeless youth are at greater risk of anxiety disorders, depression, PTS disorder, suicide, and at higher risk of HIV/Aids (5,000 die annually). In the 2005 survey by The Night Ministry and the Center for Impact Research, 65% of youth reported having been abused. They are at

increased risk of illegal or risky behaviors, lack the self-sufficiency skills necessary to provide for themselves, and find that there are a lack of shelters and supportive services. Though some homeless youth participate in risky and illegal behaviors, many do not. According to the National Runaway Switchboard, in 2004 only 1% of youth sold drugs while 49% reported they survived by relying on friends or family.

Many of these youth are not enrolled in school and those that are do not always attend regularly, resulting in their leaving school before graduation. In the 2005 survey by the Night Ministry and the Center for Impact research, only 40% of the 400 youth were enrolled in school and only one-third reported having completed their high school/GED or a higher level of education. The survey also revealed that 14.4% of youth reported needing educational resources or services. Informing unaccompanied homeless youth about their educational rights is an essential step in helping them overcome their homelessness and succeed in life.

*Save the Date - November 11—14, 2006
The Peabody—Little Rock, Arkansas*

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth 18th Annual Conference
For more information go to <http://naehcy.org>

BEST PRACTICES

This good collaborative idea hails from Kansas City. During the NAEHCY Conference, some attendees were able to catch an interesting segment of the Kansas City Sun's news magazine program. The KC school district has a "Snack Pack" program that works like this: each Friday, low income students are sent home with a backpack of food items to help ensure they will receive something nutritious outside of school time. The program has increased attendance and performance and decreased behavior problems. Worked out in partnership with the local food pantry, the cost is only \$3.00 per student each week.

Our second best practice using collaboration was home-grown in Southern Illinois: The K.I.D.S. Foundation, which stands for Kids in Difficult Situations, was created by Mickey Sullivan and Becky Malkovich, our Area 6 Lead Liaisons, in 2002. The non-profit organization helps children who are at risk both educationally and economically. The primary goal of the foundation is to identify and assist children whose families cannot provide the necessities of life. Most of the money raised comes from teachers in school districts in Franklin and Williamson Counties. K.I.D.S. Foundation uses money raised to purchase school supplies, clothing, emergency health care (including medical, dental, and eye care), educational field trips, and scholarships. Help may also be available for situations, such as a threatened shut-off of utilities, in which a family might otherwise "fall through the cracks." What a great example of teachers joining forces to help meet some of their students' basic needs!

SB1931 Amends Illinois Homeless Law

Jeanne Rowe, Opening Doors Coordinator

The Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act was amended earlier this year by SB1931 and signed into law in July. Two sections of the law have significant changes.

Section 1-25 has new language about ombudspersons: "Each regional superintendent of schools shall appoint an ombudsperson who is fair and impartial and familiar with the educational rights and needs of homeless children within his or her jurisdiction relating to the rights of homeless children under this Act." Previously, the law had said that in Cook County each school district would designate the ombudsperson; this is no longer allowed. Also new is (a-5), allowing a district to conduct a review of a doubled-up situation after 18 months has passed. However, any change resulting from this review would be effective solely at the close of the school year.

Section 1-30 abolished the Homeless Children Committee, stating that in its place, the McKinney-Vento State Coordinator's office "shall convene meetings throughout the State for the purpose of providing technical assistance, education, training, and problem-solving regarding the implementation of this Act and the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act."

Copies of the amended law are available as PDF or Word files from *Opening Doors* on the web at <http://homelessed.net>.

RECOGNITION BY NAEHCY

Jeanne Rowe, Opening Doors Coordinator

On October 24th, a number of Illinois McKinney program people gathered at the awards luncheon at the NAEHCY Conference in Kansas City, MO, and cheered on one of our own: Eileen Worthington received the Distinguished Service and Leadership Award for an individual within NAEHCY.

As editor of *Our Home*, Eileen was naturally very reluctant to include this item in the newsletter. However, her director, Lou Battin, and other *Opening Doors* staff were quite insistent. Majority rules. Congratulations, Eileen!! Richly deserved.



(l. - r.) Deb Dempsey (ROE #31), Jamel Allen (ROE #50), Jeanne Rowe (ALRC), Bill Alexander (ISBE), Eileen Worthington (ROE #26), Nancy Lurkins (ROE #3), Linda Delimata (ROE #47).

Welcome to Area One Lead Liaisons

*Deb Dempsey - Area 1 Lead Liaison
ROE #31 - Kane County*

"In districts that operate successful programs to serve students in homeless situations, there is one common denominator; a homeless liaison".¹ We all know that although our job is a mystery to most people, liaisons make a difference in the lives of students and families, on a daily basis.

With that being said, Area One welcomes seven new liaisons into the new *Lead Liaison Program* out of the Kane County Regional Office of Education #31. Formerly Project Reach, this new configuration places a Lead Liaison in each of the Regional Offices of Education in Area One. Having a Lead Liaison to assist LEA's with their duties is a sensible approach to servicing all of the area and school districts that are contained in Area One.

Training for all the Liaisons was held on August 23, 2005 at the Kane County ROE #31. The training was presented by Jeanne Rowe of Opening Doors, Matt Hanafee of Opening Doors and The Illinois Coalition to End Homelessness, with the assistance of Patricia Nix-Hodes, Senior Attorney for the Law Project/Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, and Deb Dempsey, Kane County ROE #31. As a result of that training, all Liaisons received a copy of the new film "In Their Own Voices," which came highly recommended by Dave Levek, Assistant Regional Superintendent, Will County ROE.

On September 21, the Kane County ROE invited all the Lead Liaisons, along with the Kane ROE Youth Outreach team, to attend Ruby Payne's workshop *Framework for Understanding Poverty*. All that attended agreed that this workshop is a must for anyone working with our populations.

Would you join us in welcoming the new Lead Liaisons for Area One. They are all a great asset to our "family" of liaisons and know from the phone calls we receive that they are making a daily difference in the lives of the families and students we service.

Counties Lead Liaison

McHenry	Joseph Williams	815 334-4475	jwilliams@co.mchenry.il.us
Lake	Melissa Romero	847 223-3400x220	mromero@lake.k12.il.us
DuPage	Barbara Trczinski	630 247-5636	barbtrczinski@ameritech.net
Grundy Kendall	Sharon Schultz	630 553-4110	sschultz@grundy.k12.il.us
Cook/Sub Cook	Georgia Edwards	708 865-9330x312	gedwards@cook.k12.il.us
Kane	Deb Dempsey	630 444-2974	ddempsey@kane.k12.il.us
Will	Ron O'Connor	815 740-4787	roconnor@willcountyillinois.com

Other Area 1 ROE McKinney funded programs:

Waukegan	Rafael Mendez	847 360-5574	rmendez@waukeganschools.org
U-46 Project Access	Maggie Dempsey	847 888-5185	mdempsey@u-46.org
Bridges Community	Barb Trczinski	630 247-5636	barbtrczinski@ameritech.net

¹ Charles A. Dana Center, 1997. *Pieces of the Puzzle*. Austin, TX: Author



Opening Doors

Who are we?

Opening Doors is an Illinois State Board of Education grant-funded project provided through the McKinney - Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001.

Under the direction of Rich Dehart, Principal Consultant, Accountability Division, the goal of this initiative is to disseminate information and provide technical assistance to Illinois schools and shelters as to the educational rights and needs of homeless children and youth. The Opening Doors project partners include:

Adult Learning Resource Center

1855 Mt. Prospect Road
Des Plaines, IL 60018
Phone 847/803-3535
Fax 847/803-3231

Regional Office of Education #26

Hancock/McDonough
130 S. Lafayette Street
Suite 200
Macomb, IL 61455
Phone 309/837-4821
Fax 309/837-2887

Illinois Coalition to End Homelessness

P.O. Box 3956
Oak Park, IL 60303
Phone 708/263-3590
Fax 708/401-0105

Visit us on the world wide web at
<http://homelessd.net>
to receive FREE materials!

SAVE THE DATE

Illinois McKinney-Vento Statewide Conference

Homeless Strand at NCLB - Conference within a Conference - February 15-17, 2006

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: Barbara J. Duffield

Barbara Duffield is Policy Director for the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. NAEHCY, a national grassroots membership association, serves as the voice and the social conscience for the education of children and youth in homeless situations.

Our Home

To submit an article for OUR HOME please send to:
Eileen Worthington
ROE #26 - Hancock/McDonough
130 South Lafayette
Suite 200
Macomb, IL 61455
Phone 309 / 837-4821
Fax 309 / 837-2887
mworthing@roe26.k12.il.us



Opening Doors

Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

ROE #26 Hancock/McDonough
130 S. Lafayette - Suite 200
Macomb, IL 61455
Phone: (309) 837-4821
Fax: (309) 837-2887
Email: mworthin@roe26.k12.il.us

We're on the Web! <http://homelessd.net>

OUR HOME was supported 100% through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education funded by the United States Department of Education under the McKinney-Vento Education for the Homeless Children & Youth Program for an approximate cost of \$350.00.

YOUTH POSTER CONTEST

In recognition of National Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week, *Opening Doors* is pleased to announce the winner of its Youth Poster Contest, Colleen Trinidad of South Elgin High School. Colleen is a 9th grader and lives in Bartlett.

On Wednesday, November 16th, during an ISBE Board committee meeting at the Merchandise Mart in Chicago, Rich Dehart, ISBE's Principal Consultant for McKinney-Vento in Illinois, presented Colleen with a Senate Certificate honoring her for promoting awareness about and outreach to homeless youth through her artwork. She also received gift certificates from Opening Doors. The winning poster will be professionally printed and displayed throughout the state.
Congratulations, Colleen!

"The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH) estimates that over the course of a year approximately 26,000 youth in Illinois experience homelessness. This is slightly more than reported in a 1985 state-funded study. Homeless youth are between the ages of 14 and 21, have left home because of serious family problems, and are not in a safe and stable living situation. Youth that experience homelessness are likely to experience abuse and neglect both before and after becoming homeless."

For more information visit The Chicago Coalition at:
<http://www.chicagohomeless.org/factsfigures/youthstudy.pdf>



Colleen Trinidad with (l.) Donna Luallen, Division Administrator, ISBE Accountability Division and (r.) Rich Dehart, State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth.