



OUR HOME

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

OUR HOME

September 2004

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Resources on the Web

National Center for Homeless Education at SERVE

<http://www.serve.org/nche/>

National Law Center on Homeless & 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

Teaching an old dog a new trick!

or

***What do I know about homeless students?
What am I doing here?***

Bob Bowen, Area 5 Program Director - ROE #3-Bond/Fayette/Effingham

When our office, Regional Office of Education #3, decided to apply for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Child and Youth Program Lead Liaison Grant for Area V I thought, "If we get this grant at least I will have a job." My next thought was "What do I know about homeless people and their problems?" Like most people I thought about the homeless people you see on the streets or in the news.

I read a little about the program and still didn't understand the concept of homeless students. After receiving notification we had been awarded the grant, followed by the "Toolkit" and the folder from Opening Doors, I began to understand more about the program. I attended a meeting in Mt. Vernon and met people that had been working within this program for a few years. After hearing some of the obstacles they were dealing with, trying to get homeless students into school, I thought, "What am I doing here? How am I ever going to understand all of this?"

At that meeting, I met Jamel Allen, Local Liaison from Regional Office of

Education #50, and Mary Kay Bonness, Executive Director of Good Samaritan House, a homeless shelter in Granite City. These programs are located in Area V. I met with Jamel and Mary Kay a few days later at Good Samaritan House and took a tour of the shelter. It was really an eye-opener. After the tour they explained their roles in getting homeless students into school.

After this meeting my attitude about my job changed. My plan to educate local liaisons from Regional Offices of Education and school districts in Area V became much clearer. The definition of homeless is much broader than "the person on the street." Getting local liaisons to understand who is considered homeless, according to law, is just the beginning.

Our office staff that would be involved in the training was brought together to start planning. Dates were set. Eileen Worthington ROE #26 and Jeanne Rowe, Opening Doors, agreed to help with the first two trainings. The first training was as much for me as local liaisons. Atten-

dance at the first training was over sixty and everyone left with a better understanding of the program and how to assist homeless students. The next training was very well attended but our third training was canceled because of low registration. We did, at a later date, have two more trainings which were very successful--even though I was the presenter. First-hand experience from Mary Kay and Jamel helped answer many questions from those attending.

There were over one hundred school personnel trained last year, representing over eighty school districts, a few safe school programs and all Regional Offices of Education in Area V. Each person attending received the Toolkit on cd and in a three-ring binder as well as the packet of materials from Opening Doors.

During the last few months of FY04, I visited each Regional Office of Education and school district in Area V and gave them copies of the Toolkit in the three-ring binder and packets of Opening Doors materials

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Best Practices

This column will showcase best practices in homeless education from the field. We hope to receive great ideas from Illinois programs to more than fill this space. While awaiting them, we share some created by Beth McCullough, the Adrian (MI) Public Schools Home & School Liaison. Beth really hit the ground running as a new liaison; she shared these ideas at NAEHCY last fall.

In 2003 she ran a Summer Book Club, "Bringing Books Alive," at a soup kitchen. The attractive poster listed the following: storytelling, murals, plays, crafts, reading, free books. For kids ages 6-11, the club met for four Tuesdays, mid-July through early August, from 11:00-2:00.

A poster for August school registration was titled "Feed the Body. Feed the Mind." It was placed with free books that parents were urged to take for their child. While choosing a book, they also had a good chance to read about rights of children in homeless situations—bullet points on the poster.

For Homeless Awareness Week in November, Beth created an essay contest, with \$25 prizes for three grade levels. She also had a banner/sign contest with three winners. The grand finale was the Homeless Awareness Walk to the County Court House on November 20th. The winners were invited to read their essays, and the banners were judged on creativity and knowledge of issues.

More of Beth's next time. Please send your own ideas in!

A New Year

Rich Dehart, Principal Consultant
Accountability Division - ISBE

Welcome to the new year, fiscally speaking! As fiscal year 2004 is closed, it is imperative that we look back and thank the local projects for the services extended the last few years under the McKinney – Vento Act. Their efforts have been noted much more than can be adequately conveyed. Their initiatives and local expertise, though, are not lost as fiscal year 2005 comes "tumbling" in.

Prior to fiscal year 2005 the State Board of Education (ISBE) had used the homeless program grant to fund a combination of individual school district and limited regional proposals. As a result, not all school districts were receiving services under the program. In February 2003 a regional format was implemented, along with the local grants, to establish a lead local education agency liaison to provide training to all school district liaisons and assist them in meeting the requirements of the homeless law. In FY 2005 ISBE combined the locally funded programs and lead liaison effort into a single regional system of program delivery. The expertise of the previous local providers continues, however, through sub-contracts with the regional grant recipients. Seven grants were funded to provide services and programs to all of the school districts in their region of coverage to ensure that homeless children and youth have an opportunity to meet the same challenging state standards to which all students are held.

As a new school year starts, more will depend on the assistance of this program. Thank you for continuing to assist!

BACK TO SCHOOL, BUT WHERE? . . . I AM HOMELESS

Becky Malkovich

That is the question I had from a homeless family the week before school started. The children had switched schools and school districts already four times. The youngest is going into 2nd grade and the other child is going into the 4th grade. The last school district they had attended was one they both really enjoyed and the boys had a great year. The mother promised the boys to keep them in their same school, no matter what happened in their lives.

Well, they did become homeless again and moved in with her sister 30 minutes away. The mom didn't know what do to keep her promise to her boys. The children were upset with summer coming to an end and school starting.

The mom got the Homeless Hotline number at the financial aid office and called Rich Dehart. Rich called me and I contacted the family. The mother and children were so relieved that there was help. I gave the mom my name and said all would be OK. The children kept asking the next day when Becky would call. When I did they were so HAPPY! I told them all would be taken care of and they would receive transportation to continue going to their home school.

Now two more children are excited to "Go Back to School!"

National Hunger & Homelessness Awareness Week

Nov. 14 - 20, 2004

Co-sponsored annually, one week before Thanksgiving, by the National Coalition for the Homeless and the National Student Campaign Against Hunger. During this week, schools, communities, and cities take part in a nationwide effort to bring greater awareness to the problems of hunger and homelessness.

NEW 2004 Awareness Week Manual is available at:
<http://www.nationalhomeless.org>

Transitions

Jeanne Rowe - Opening Doors Coordinator - Adult Learning Resource Center

With the 2004-05 school year, McKinney-Vento in Illinois is completing a transition--from a combination of locally funded programs plus the new lead liaison ones to a system of seven Area Lead Liaisons. Chicago Public Schools is now being designated as Area 7 for these purposes.

CPS has already had a model program, the Homeless Education Program, in place for several years. Since CPS is the largest school district in the state by far, the Program also serves the largest number of students in homeless situations. For over a year now, Patricia Rivera has been at the helm, meeting the many demands the HEP faces. Her office is located at 125 S. Clark St. in Chicago (tel. 773/553-2242)

Area 1, consisting of suburban Cook and collar counties, contains the largest number of school districts, 305 to be exact. Diane Nilan and Karen Turk have undertaken the daunting task of getting the word out and training 305 district liaisons. During last school year they presented training at Administrators' Academy. ROE 31, Kane County, is their home base, at 210 S. 6th St., Geneva 60134 (tel. 630/208-3142).

Area 2 heads straight west of Area 1, to the Mississippi River. Linda Delimata, based in Dixon with ROE 47, is the lead liaison. Last year several local programs covered large parts of the area; this year some of those experienced people will work closely with Linda as a part of the Area 2 program. The address is 7772 Clinton St., Dixon 61021 (tel. 815/652-2054, ext. 234)

Eileen Worthington of ROE 26, an Opening Doors partner, is the Area 3 lead liaison. In her area she is collaborating with the other nine ROE offices. Faith Sanderson, Sangamon ROE 51, is a program partner, covering Area 3 to the southeast of the Illinois River. Contact information follows. Eileen: 130 S. Lafayette, Macomb 61455 (tel. 309/837-4821); Faith: 200 S. 9th St., Springfield 62701 (tel. 217/535-3281).

Area 4 lies south of Areas 1 and 2, east of Area 3. Jim Moberly is the lead liaison, based at ROE 32, 189 East Court St., Kankakee 60901 (tel. 815/937-2950). His program partner is ROE 9 in Rantoul, with Linda Peete working with Jim. Her contact information is as follows: 200 S. Frederick St., Rantoul 61866 (tel. 217/893-3219)

Bob Bowen heads up Area 5 (see his article in this newsletter). He works out of ROE 3 in Vandalia. This area is south of Areas 3 and 4, with Effingham and Marion Counties the ones furthest east. To the west Bob covers the counties in the general St. Louis area. He is at 1805 W. Fletcher, Vandalia 62471 (tel. 618/283-1763).

Last but not least, Area 6 includes the remaining southernmost counties. Mickey Sullivan of ROE 21, based in Marion, is the program administrator. Becky Malkovich, program director, is at the ROE office in Benton. Their contact information: Mickey—1006-C North Carbon, Marion 62959 (tel. 618/998-1283); Becky—202 W. Main St., Benton 62812 (tel. 618/438-9711).

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for administrators and local liaisons who were unable to attend a training.

My attitude and concern for homeless families has changed over the past year and I hope that was evident during the training sessions. I have received many calls from local liaisons during registration for this school year, and no, I don't have all the answers in every homeless situation. There are too many variables. Most districts are doing their best to allow students into class and give them the supplies they need. My goal for this year is to assist homeless students in continuing their education and to continue educating school personnel on the rights of homeless students. We are just beginning a new school year; I hope one of your goals this year is to give homeless students an education and a chance at a brighter future.



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

127 North Marion Street
Suite 7
Oak Park, IL 60301
Phone 708/848-0503
Fax 708/263-3590

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

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
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Fax 309 / 837-2887
mworthing@roe26.k12.il.us



Opening Doors

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Email: mworthin@roe26.k12.il.us

We're On the Web! <http://homelessed.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.

Updates from Area IV

Jim Moberly, Co-Lead Liaison Area IV

I am pleased to announce that Linda Peete has joined me as the new co-lead liaison for Area 4. Linda is located at ROE #9-Champaign/Ford. Linda will be responsible for ROE #54-Vermillion, as well as ROE #11-Clark/Coles/Cumberland/Douglas/Edgar/Moultrie/Shelby, and ROE #9-Champaign/Ford.

Linda has been busy distributing school supplies and backpacks supplied by Office Depot to local shelters and schools within Champaign and Ford Counties. ROE #9 has also hired a new liaison, Sarah Croy, for their local homeless program. We are excited that Sarah is now on board to help us all in our mission to get all kids into school.

On August 12th and 19th Iroquois and Kankakee Counties held their annual Back to School Fair. Supplies were given to approximately 400 students in Iroquois County and approximately 1350 students received supplies in Kankakee County. Our Local Continuum of Care organized and solicited local agencies and businesses for the supplies.

This year the Bloomington School District #87 local homeless program consolidated into our grant for Area 4. Rebecca Francois is the coordinator of that program. This fall Bloomington and Normal held a community-wide event at which homeless children could receive school supplies. The event was held at the Illinois Wesleyan University's Shirk Center.

Lastly, we would like to welcome ROE #39 -Macon/Piatt on board with a new local program for our Decatur-area schools. Dick Shelby, the Assistant Superintendent for ROE #39, has worked hard in bringing a program to the Decatur area to meet the needs of the homeless kids they serve.

Here's hoping everyone has a good year and continues to work toward our goal of making sure that every child receives an education and has a safe place to go home to after school.