Understanding COHHIO Course to HOME Community of Practice

Introduction

About COHHIO Course to HOME

COHHIO Course to HOME is an exciting new opportunity for Ohio school districts and educational service centers. The Ohio Department of Education (ODE) received federal formula allocated funds through the American Rescue Plan to provide increased support, and professional development opportunities to districts specifically in meeting the need of the following vulnerable student populations experiencing homelessness:

- rural children and youth
- students of color
- children and youth with disabilities
- English learners
- LGBTQ+ youth
- students in foster care
- justice-involved youth and
- pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students

ODE has teamed up with the Coalition on Homelessness and Housing in Ohio (COHHIO) to provide communities of practice and other professional development supports, called COHHIO Course to HOME. You can read more about the partnership by reviewing Ohio's ARP-HCY state plan here. The purpose of COHHIO Course to HOME is to increase resources and coordinate intentional responses for districts in order to meet the need of vulnerable students experiencing homelessness. Additionally, COHHIO Course to HOME provides on-demand technical assistance to help districts respond to the needs of student homelessness.

What is community of practice?

Community of Practice

A widely used definition of community of practice comes from Etienne and Beverly Wenger-Trayner, who helped articulate the concept in 1991 – *Communities of practice are groups of people who share a concern or a passion for something they do and learn how to do it better as they interact regularly.*

Why community of practice?

The motivation for convening a community of practice at the most fundamental level, is a group of people coming together driven by a shared learning need, in this case student homelessness with an emphasis on the following vulnerable groups;

- rural children and youth,
- students of color,
- children and youth with disabilities,
- English learners,
- LGBTQ+ youth,
- students in foster care

- justice-involved youth and
- pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students

By engaging each other, over time, in collective learning, we develop a bond that in turn fuels the production of resources to influence our own practices. The combination of a shared field/area of expertise, community, and practice lie at the heart of a community of practice.

Essential elements of an effective community of practice include:
- Articulating a clear, shared-learning need
- Identify other people working towards a similar mission
- Gather with one another, in person or virtually
- Collectively create a shared vision, definition and set of norms for our community of practice
- Be open to continuous improvement and evolving to meet the needs of our community
- Focus on the quality of the content and programming; less is more; depth over breadth.
- Time for reflection and planning is critical

How does community of practice work?

In order to operationalize the community of practice vision outlined in the state plan, two groups or "communities" have been developed. COHHIO Course to HOME identifies these communities as "*Ohio McKinney-Vento Community of Practice*" and the *"HomeRoom Network*". In naming the communities we begin to offer a welcoming space for the communities of practice to form and clarify communities for logistical operations. Naming will be used to distinguish learning communities in materials shared like announcements, invitations and slide decks.

Community of Practice Agreements
As mentioned above community of practice agreements are the group norms the communities use to coexist in a meaningful way. The agreements are routinely discussed in sessions. The COHHIO Course to HOME agreements:
- Check in and Check out
- Listen for understanding
- Expect and accept non-resolution
- Practice "both/and" thinking
- Be aware of intent and impact
- Make space, take space
- Safe Terms:
  - "ELMO"
  - "Ouch"

Community of Practice Principles

- We recognize that all communities and districts are unique but have some shared challenges and can learn from each other's experiences
- We embed youth and young adult leadership in decision-making, designing and implementing strategies
- We ensure strategies and approaches improve equity, including racial & LGBTQ+ equity
- We are solution-oriented and creative in our planning and problem solving
- We promote peer support and shared learning opportunities
- We explore, develop and integrate best practices at the core of our approaches

COHHIO is here to facilitate the conversation and share knowledge learned from working with communities, not to own the space

Who should attend community of practice and when?

The Ohio McKinney-Vento Community of Practice is a quarterly peer learning opportunity organized by sessions. The intended audience of the Ohio McKinney Vento Community of Practice is McKinney-Vento liaisons, ARP-HCY I sub-grantees, ARP-HCY II sub-grantees, McKinney-Vento sub-grantees, ESC Liaisons, and public-school staff who are striving to increase knowledge and response for students at-risk of or experiencing homelessness in an Ohio school district or region. Each session is a time to join at your leisure (join if/when you can, leave when you want) and receive virtual training, discussion, and sharing of resources with a focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. All session are recorded and content is collected and made available [here](#).

The HomeRoom Network Community of Practice is a bi-monthly interactive, workshopping experience organized by sessions. The intended audience of HomeRoom Network Community of Practice is ARP-HCY I sub-grantees, McKinney-Vento sub-grantees, and ESC liaisons striving to increase knowledge and response for students at-risk of or experiencing homelessness in an Ohio school district/region. Each session is a time to join at your leisure (join if/when you can, leave when you want) and participate in virtual learning, discussion, workshopping and sharing of resources with a focus on meeting the needs of vulnerable youth at risk of or experiencing homelessness. All session are recorded and content is collected and made available [here](#).

Can I access HomeRoom Network content?

Yes, the HomeRoom Network has a smaller more targeted audience however all districts are invited to explore the content from HomeRoom sessions in order to further creative ideas and peer learning. HomeRoom Network content is available [here](#).

Questions

The COHHIO Course to HOME team is here to answer your questions. We want COHHIO Course to HOME to be as effective as possible. You can reach out to the COHHIO Course to HOME team with any questions by sending an email to homelesseducation@cohhio.org.

Feedback

The COHHIO Course to HOME team is inspired and motivated by the input districts have about community of practice. If you have feedback to share about community of practice please share your input here.