



**Topic: HomeRoom Network Community of Practice
Session 6 – Developing, Maintaining, and Sustaining Transportation for
Vulnerable Youth Experiencing Homelessness**

Date: 12/6/2022

Time: 1:00 pm – 2:00 pm EST

Materials

Presentation Slides: <https://cohhio.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Session-6-2022.pdf>

Recording: <https://youtu.be/R0Sf8R2jCAg>

1. Introductions
 - a. COHHIO Team:
 - i. Amanda Wilson, New Youth Initiative Director
 1. Has been at COHHIO for nearly 10 years, has previous experience in data administration and CoC coordination
 - ii. Ami Diallo, Youth Housing Initiative Specialist
 - iii. Evelyn Garon, Youth Housing Initiative Specialist
2. Transportation Requirements
 - a. The McKinney-Vento Act requires every state and its school districts to adopt policies and practices to ensure that transportation is provided to students experiencing homelessness.
 - i. This includes transportation to and from school, district administered public pre-school programs, and extracurricular activities
 - ii. Liaisons must ensure that parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youths are fully informed of the transportation services available to them and are assisted in accessing these services.
 - iii. Students experiencing homelessness have the right to remain in their school of origin for the duration of their homeless episode or for the remainder of the academic year if the student becomes permanently housed.
 - b. School of Origin
 - i. If a student experiencing homelessness continues to live in the area served by the school district in which the school of origin is located, then transportation to and from the school of origin must be provided or arranged by that district.
 - ii. If a student experiencing homelessness begins living in an area served by another district but remains enrolled in the school of origin, then both districts must agree upon a method to distribute the responsibility and costs for providing the student with transportation.
 - c. Best Interest Determination
 - i. Districts must consider what is in the best interest of the student in determining which school a student experiencing homelessness should attend.



1. It is presumed that remaining in the school of origin is in the best interest of students.
- ii. Factors that districts should consider when making these determinations include:
 1. The student's age
 2. The safety of the student
 3. Graduation requirements and whether that student is on track for graduation, considering whether credits will transfer between districts
- iii. There are no time or distance limits for transportation under McKinney-Vento. Distance and travel time should not be factored into best interest determinations unless it impacts the achievement, education, health, and safety of the student.
- d. Modes of Transportation
 - i. Modes of transportation provided to students experiencing homelessness cannot create any barriers to the student's education. This means:
 1. Ensuring the mode of transportation provided neither arrives late to school or picks up students before the school day has ended
 2. Ensuring the mode of transportation provided does not stigmatize students or reveal students' living situations
 - a. For example, bus routes should be arranged so that student's staying in a shelter can be picked up first and dropped off last so their temporary residence isn't revealed to their peers.
- e. Considerations
 - i. Districts must consider the student's safety when arranging transportation plans.
 1. McKinney-Vento transportation plans cannot override Ohio Department of Education or school district safety policies.
 - ii. Considerations for Urban Districts
 1. Urban districts may rely on public transportation for students experiencing homelessness by providing free bus passes or discounts, or partnering with public transit authorities so students can use school IDs in lieu of specific transportation passes.
 - iii. Considerations for Rural Districts
 1. Rural districts have unique transportation challenges, such as a lack of access to public transportation and increased travel time between districts
 2. May need to consider more creative approaches such as:
 - a. Forming a transportation consortia to pool resources regionally



- b. Considering unique ways to divide transportation responsibilities, such as:
 - i. Transporting students to the school district's boundary, where they meet the neighboring district's transportation service
 - ii. Having one district cover morning transportation and the other cover afternoon
 - f. Comparable Services
 - i. The McKinney-Vento Act states that homeless students have the right to services comparable to those offered to other students. Therefore, districts must provide students experiencing homelessness with transportation services equivalent to those provided to permanently housed students.
- 3. Discussion: Transportation Plans
 - a. *What challenges is your district facing in providing transportation services to students experiencing homelessness?*
 - b. *Does your district have any safety policies that must be considered in your transportation plan?*
 - c. *What is your district's current process for determining transportation plans for students experiencing homelessness?*
- 4. Collaboration
 - a. Inter-District Coordination
 - i. When school districts are arranging transportation across district lines, both districts must work together to determine how to share transportation responsibilities and costs
 - ii. Best practices for collaboration include:
 - 1. Agreeing upon guidelines for sharing transportation responsibilities ahead of time to eliminate confusion and conflicts when transportation needs to be arranged immediately for a student and reviewing these guidelines annually
 - 2. Organizing joint regional McKinney-Vento trainings for all personnel involved in transportation arrangements
 - 3. Convening annual regional meetings to discuss policies and procedures
 - b. Community Collaborations
 - i. Community-based organizations can play a unique and valuable role in providing transportation to students experiencing homelessness by:
 - 1. Providing short- or long-term funding and other resources to fill shortfalls and to help create a sustainable system of transportation
 - 2. Sharing resources such as shelter or social service agency vans
 - 3. Donating bus passes or other transportation services



- c. Working with Families
 - i. Parents experiencing homelessness should be included in decisions about their child's education and transportation plan
 - 1. Parents should be provided with clear expectations for their role in carrying out the plan
 - 2. A written agreement that spells out the district's and the parent's responsibilities is useful in holding all parties accountable
 - ii. Some districts may choose to utilize the family's own car as the student's mode of transportation
 - 1. It is important to reimburse families and/or youth for all transportation expenses incurred getting to and from school, both at the start and end of the school day.
 - 2. While the amount of reimbursement is at the discretion of the district or charter school, it should be comparable to transportation reimbursement provided to staff.
 - d. Professional Development
 - i. All parties involved in student transportation, including bus drivers, should be familiar with the McKinney-Vento Act and how to identify students experiencing homelessness.
 - ii. Bus drivers are uniquely positioned to identify students experiencing homelessness as they are often the first and last school personnel to interact with students over the course of day.
5. Discussion: Collaboration
- a. *Where might there be opportunities for collaboration when it comes to providing transportation for students experiencing homelessness?*
 - b. *How does your district involve parents and guardians in determining modes of transportation?*
 - c. *What does your process of inter-district coordination look like?*
6. Addressing Driver Shortages
- a. Across the state, districts are reporting difficulties in securing adequate numbers of licensed school bus drivers to cover routes, creating a significant impact on school and students
 - b. The Ohio Department of Education has developed a Driver Shortage Playbook that details strategies for addressing shortages across three themes:
 - i. Recruitment
 - ii. Route Logistics
 - iii. Shared Services
7. Funding
- a. Routine Funding Sources for Transportation
 - i. Title I Part A allocation
 - ii. McKinney-Vento funds
 - iii. State or local funds
 - iv. Community partners



- b. American Rescue Plan Funds
 - i. ARP-HCY funds are supplemental and should not replace other required or routinely provided services
 - 1. Can only be used for excess costs, such as purchasing an extra vehicle, paying drivers, contracting a transportation coordinator, etc.
 - ii. Can be used for costs like car repairs for a family or drivers education if those services are considered reasonable and necessary and are the only option for providing transportation
 - iii. Key questions for utilizing ARP-HCY funds: is it reasonable and necessary?
- 8. Innovative Strategies
 - a. New Philadelphia School District
 - i. New Philadelphia has a high student population of unaccompanied minors and English learners
 - ii. The district only provides transportation for students living at least a mile away from school, but many of these unaccompanied minors live just inside these boundaries
 - iii. The district utilized ARP-HCY funds to purchase bicycles specifically for immigrant students within the district's walk zone
 - 1. Different types and colors of bikes were purchased to avoid student stigmatization
- 9. Closing
 - a. Upcoming Sessions
 - i. Session Seven: Establishing and Sustaining Nutrition efforts for Students Experiencing Homelessness on 2/14/23