

Module 6: Enhancing Program Access and Participation for Children Experiencing Homelessness

Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness

An Interactive Learning Series for Early Childhood Professionals

Welcome

This module is intended for professionals in Head Start, Early Head Start, and child care, including early childhood and school-age child care providers, Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Lead Agency or designated entity staff, and other key stakeholders. It is intended for use at program and systems levels.

Module Features

Before you get started, take a moment to review the features of this module. Select the numbered buttons on this page to learn more about each feature. When you are finished, choose "Next" to continue.

Select the **Menu** tab to:

- See a drop-down list of the module's contents
- Jump to a particular section by selecting its title
- Check your progress by selecting "Completion Status"
- Access your Certificate of Completion once you have completed all module sections Select the **Transcript** tab to open a printable text version of this module.

Choose the **Resources** tab for a list of helpful resources.

Select the **Federal Policies** tab for links to sections of federal legislation and regulations related to family homelessness.

The **page numbers** show how many pages you have completed in a specific section, and how many you have left to complete.

Select the **"Play"** button to play the narration on each slide. Select

the **"Pause"** button to pause the narration on each slide. Choose

"Previous" to return to the previous slide.

Choose **"Next"** to go to the next slide.

Module Instructions

- Each module takes approximately 30 minutes to complete. You can spend as much or as little time as you like on a module, depending on your level of experience.
- If you are using your own computer, you can stop a module and come back to it later; the program will remember where you left off. However, if you are using a computer that others will also use to access the learning series, plan to finish the module in one sitting.
- Select the Transcript tab to download or print the text of the module.
- Select the Federal Policies tab for direct links to the federal legislation and regulations referenced in this module. You can bookmark these links for future reference.
- Select the Resources tab to view the full list of reference citations and helpful resources. A number at the end of a sentence indicates a reference citation.
- When you select a link within the module or through one of the tabs, the page will open in a new tab. To return to the module, select the module tab.
- When you finish all sections of this module, you can download a Certificate of Completion.

Introduction to Module 6

In this module, you will:

- Learn how experiencing homelessness creates barriers to access and participation in early childhood and school-age child care programs
- Explore strategies to enhance access and participation in programs for children and families experiencing homelessness
- Practice applying those strategies in your program

Understanding Strategies to Enhance Access and Participation

Early childhood and school-age child care programs provide valuable supports to lessen the negative impact of homelessness on children and families. These programs help create a stable and positive learning environment for children.

Access to high-quality services provides opportunities for families to build on their strengths, identify immediate needs, and plan for the future. However, children and families experiencing homelessness may encounter barriers to access and participation in these programs and services.

The Head Start Program Performance Standards (HSPPS) and Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) Final Rule specify regulatory requirements for removing barriers to access and participation for children experiencing homelessness. Together, they identify seven strategies to expedite enrollment into early

childhood and school-age care services and enhance participation and continuity of care.

See Appendix A for more information about the HSPPS and CCDF.

Strategies to Enhance Access and Participation

Review the seven strategies and best practices to enhance access and participation. Choose the version below that most closely aligns with your interests.

- Head Start and Early Head Start Strategies
- Child Care and Development Fund Strategies

Head Start and Early Head Start Strategies to Enhance Access and Participation

Head Start and Early Head Start programs can use these seven strategies to enhance access and participation for children experiencing homelessness.

1. Prioritization
2. Reserving Slots
3. Categorical Eligibility
4. Verification
5. Grace Periods
6. Training for Staff
7. Continuity of Care and Effective Transition

1. Prioritization

Head Start and Early Head Start programs can prioritize children experiencing homelessness for enrollment in different ways depending on their community needs data and program resources. Prioritizing children who move frequently can improve their chances for timely enrollment in a quality program, especially if there is a waitlist. Families often relocate before they reach the top of a waitlist for enrollment.

Best practices to enhance access to quality services include:

- Assigning sufficient criteria or points to create a priority rating for children experiencing homelessness, especially when there is a waitlist for services
- Incorporating data about family homelessness in the community assessment process so protocols for prioritization are informed by community needs
- Partnering with providers of services to families experiencing homelessness

2. Reserving Slots

Reserving slots can help protect vacancies so enrollment is possible on a more continual basis for children who are experiencing homelessness. Families experiencing homelessness may seek services during the program year outside of typical recruitment and enrollment periods.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Establishing local program policies allowing Head Start and Early Head Start programs to reserve up to three percent of their funded enrollment for children experiencing homelessness
- Creating relationships with shelters and other homeless service providers to streamline the referral and enrollment process
- Coordinating referrals in order to enroll children in vacant slots within the allotted 30-day timeframe

3. Categorical Eligibility

Children experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start enrollment. No other criteria are necessary to establish eligibility.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Creating protocol to ensure families experiencing homelessness are not required to submit income or any other verification in addition to verification of homeless status

4. Verification

Head Start programs can adopt documentation and verification policies that allow flexibility for families experiencing homelessness. Informal or emergency housing arrangements may make it difficult for families to provide verification of temporary housing. Families may also be fearful or uncomfortable verifying housing arrangements that are unstable.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Establishing protocol to accept verification of housing that protects each family's safety
- Creating forms that allow Head Start staff to verify housing status reported by the family
- Adopting policies allowing the designation of McKinney-Vento liaisons as qualified entities for determining homeless status

5. Grace Periods

Head Start and Early Head Start programs can provide a grace period of up to 90 days or the length of time specified by state licensing standards. Families experiencing homelessness often do not have immunization and other health records required for enrollment due to frequent moves and emergency circumstances.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Letting children attend while immunization and other health records are being obtained
- Assisting families to obtain required documentation within the grace period
- Establishing interagency agreements for sharing documentation between health care providers, public schools, Head Start, Early Head Start, CCDF-funded programs, and other agencies that may provide access to health records with family consent

6. Training for Staff

Head Start and Early Head Start programs should provide sufficient training and technical assistance (T/TA) about state and program policies to address the barriers to access and participation for families experiencing homelessness. Given the unique enrollment criteria and processes for families experiencing homelessness, staff must understand how to apply these policies in daily practice.

Programs should ensure full implementation of policies designed to address barriers to enrollment and participation. Programs can monitor the effectiveness of their enrollment procedures, identify any needed changes, and celebrate successes.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Involving staff who work directly with families and partners in designing policies and practices to enhance access and participation
 - Staff and partners can inform assessments of T/TA strengths and needs
 - Solicit family input
- Offering training that de-stigmatizes and increases understanding of homelessness and its impact on children and families
- Providing ongoing T/TA to ensure staff are aware of changes in policies, practices, and implementation
- Ensuring there is a comprehensive training plan for new staff
- Collaborating with community partners to maximize training resources and strengthen working relationships among direct service staff
- Embedding content about serving children and families experiencing homelessness into existing education, T/TA, and public information activities

7. Continuity of Care and Effective Transition

Stability is important for children's development and learning. The HSPPS include requirements to allow children to remain in the program they currently attend in order to prevent disruption and promote continuity of care. If it is in the best interest of the child to transition to another program, effort should be made to ensure smooth transition and seamless participation into a comparable early care and education setting.

Best practices to **enhance participation** and promote continuity of care and education include:

- Identifying children who may become homeless while already enrolled by creating an "early alert system" to monitor children's attendance, health, development, and learning
- Adopting protocol to follow up with families to discuss sporadic attendance, unexplained extended absences, or any atypical appearance or behavior
- Providing support to assist families who have relocated due to homelessness and who are having difficulty getting to the program (e.g., transportation assistance through partnerships with public schools or community agencies, bus or gas vouchers, or facilitating car pools)
- Ensuring continued eligibility and participation in quality services
- Facilitating a smooth transition to another program when a family must relocate out of the service area (e.g., transferring records, cross-program communication with families)

Strategies to Enhance Access and Participation: Child Care and Development Fund

CCDF Lead Agency staff or designated entities (e.g., subsidy eligibility staff, Child Care Resource & Referral (CCR&R) case managers) and others, including CCDF-funded programs, can use these seven strategies to enhance access and participation for children experiencing homelessness.

1. Provide a grace period for submitting documentation
2. Provide multiple ways of verifying homeless status*

*Throughout this module, the word "status" is used to convey an eligibility determination.

3. Prioritize services to children who meet the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act's definition of "homeless" children and youth. It is included in Section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act [42 U.S.C. § 11435a(2)], hereinafter referred to as the "McKinney-Vento Act's definition."
4. Reserve slots for children who meet the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless"
5. Waive additional eligibility requirements
6. Train staff about barriers and strategies to enhance access and participation
7. Ensure continuity of care and effective transition to other programs

1. Provide a Grace Period for Submitting Documentation

Families experiencing homelessness often do not have immunization and other health records required for enrollment due to frequent moves and emergency circumstances. CCDF-funded programs can provide a grace period up to 90 days, as determined by the CCDF Lead Agencies in consultation with state public health officials, state legislators, and other key policymakers.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Letting children attend while immunization and other health records are being obtained
- Assisting families to obtain required documentation within the grace period

Establishing interagency agreements for sharing documentation between health care providers, public schools, Head Start, Early Head Start, CCDF-funded programs, and other agencies that may provide access to health records with family consent

2. Provide Multiple Ways of Verifying Homeless Status

CCDF Lead Agencies can work with state legislatures and policy makers to adopt documentation and verification policies that allow flexibility for families experiencing homelessness. Informal or emergency housing arrangements make it difficult for families to provide verification of temporary housing. Families also may be fearful or uncomfortable verifying housing arrangements that are unstable.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Establishing protocol to accept verification of housing that protects each family's safety
- Permitting immediate approval and enrollment while families gather required documents, such as proof of income
- Adopting policies to reimburse providers if families are later determined ineligible for subsidies
- Providing subsidy during an initial period of job or housing search for families experiencing homelessness
- Adopting policies allowing the designation of McKinney-Vento liaisons as qualified entities for determining homeless status

3. Prioritize Services to Children Who Meet the McKinney-Vento Act's Definition of "Homeless"

CCDF Lead Agencies prioritize children experiencing homelessness for enrollment in different ways depending on community needs, resources, and available data on the child care needs in the state. Prioritizing children who move frequently can improve their chances for timely enrollment in a quality program, especially if there is a waitlist. Families often relocate before they reach the top of a waitlist for enrollment.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Establishing children experiencing homelessness as a priority population
- Using planned and focused outreach to homeless service providers, including McKinney-Vento liaisons, to encourage referrals
- Sponsoring parent information campaigns to let families know how best to apply
- Including homelessness as a designated vulnerable population or protective services category in the CCDF State Plan

4. Reserve Slots for Children Who Meet the McKinney-Vento Act's Definition of "Homeless"

Reserving vouchers or carving out capacity helps increase access by creating availability on a more consistent basis. CCDF subsidies and slots in CCDF-funded programs are typically fully utilized in states and communities. Families experiencing homelessness may be seeking services during times when there are few vacant slots. Reserving vouchers or carving out capacity can aid in creating availability on a more continual and stable basis, thus increasing access for children who are experiencing homelessness.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Setting aside a portion of service capacity by using CCDF grants and contracts to serve children experiencing homelessness
- Reserving a portion of CCDF subsidies/vouchers for children experiencing homelessness

5. Waive Additional Eligibility Requirements

Waiving certain eligibility criteria can enhance access to subsidized child care services significantly. Families experiencing homelessness are unlikely to meet eligibility criteria that include employment or schooling requirements. Families experiencing homelessness are often unemployed or under-employed. They may be experiencing severe poverty, danger or disaster, and/or living with conditions of trauma and adversity.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Waiving income, work/training, or co-pay requirements for families experiencing homelessness
- Exempting housing assistance from countable income
- Including General Education Degree (GED), housing, and job search programs as an allowable eligibility criteria activity
- Paying higher rates to those providing high-quality care to families experiencing homelessness

6. Train Staff about Barriers and Strategies to Enhance Access and Participation

CCDF Lead Agency subsidy eligibility staff, CCR&R case managers, and CCDF-subsidized child care providers should receive sufficient training and technical assistance (T/TA) about state and program policies to address the barriers to access and participation for families experiencing homelessness. Given the unique enrollment criteria and processes for families experiencing homelessness, staff must understand how to apply all of the related state and program policies in daily practice.

Best practices to **enhance access** to quality services include:

- Involving staff who work directly with families and partners in designing policies and practices to improve access and participation
 - Staff and partners can inform assessments of T/TA strengths and needs
 - Solicit family input
- Offering training that destigmatizes and increases understanding of homelessness and its impact on children and families
- Providing ongoing T/TA to ensure staff are aware of changes in policies, practices, and implementation
- Ensuring there is a comprehensive training plan for new staff
- Collaborating with community partners to maximize training resources and strengthen working relationships among direct service staff
- Embedding content about serving children and families experiencing homelessness into existing education, T/TA, and public information activities

7. Ensure Continuity of Care and Effective Transition to Other Programs

Stability is important for children's development and learning. The CCDF Final Rule includes requirements to allow children remain in their current program in order to prevent disruption and promote continuity of care. If it is in the best interest of the child to transition to another program, effort should be made to ensure smooth transition and seamless participation into a comparable early care and education setting.

Best practices to **enhance participation** and promote continuity of care and education include:

- Identifying children who may become homeless while already enrolled by creating an "early alert system" to monitor children's attendance, health, development, and learning
- Adopting protocol to follow up with families to discuss sporadic attendance, unexplained extended absences, or any atypical appearance or behavior
- Providing support to assist families who have relocated due to homelessness and who are having difficulty getting to the program (e.g., transportation assistance through partnerships with public schools and community agencies, bus or gas vouchers, or facilitating car pools)
- Ensuring procedures are in place to assist families who become homeless in completing a redetermination of CCDF eligibility
 - Consider offering co-pay waivers
- Ensuring continued eligibility and participation in quality services
- Facilitating a smooth transition to another program when a family must relocate out of the service area (e.g., transferring records, cross-program communication with families)

Practice Scenarios

Practice what you have learned about the strategies to enhance access and program participation for children and families experiencing homelessness. Examine real-life scenarios and decide which strategy will help you address the barrier presented.

Choose the version below that most closely aligns with your interests.

- Head Start and Early Head Start Practice Scenarios
- Child Care and Development Fund Practice Scenarios

Head Start and Early Head Start Practice Scenarios

Explore four realistic Head Start and Early Head Start scenarios. Consider how these might compare to families you encounter in your work. Remember that each family's situation is unique.

For each scenario:

- Consider the circumstances of this scenario
- Discuss the situation with a colleague, if possible
- Choose your answer and read the feedback
- Read the feedback for the other answers to learn about other strategies that may apply

Select the "Next" button to begin the scenarios.

Select the pictures to open the scenarios. You can complete them in any order.

A checkmark will appear when the scenario is completed. When you have completed all four scenarios, select the "Next" button to continue.

Beatriz

Beatriz, age 4, lives with her mother, Natalia Sanchez. Ms. Sanchez would like to enroll Beatriz in a Head Start program.

Ms. Sanchez shared the following information about their family's situation with you:

"I need to put my daughter in a program. We just moved here two months ago and got an apartment. I thought I would have full-time work at the hotel as a maid, but they have not hired me full-time yet. I don't have the money to pay my rent at the apartment. So, we are staying with a friend. I am paying her a little bit to watch Beatriz when I go to work. I'm trying to get more hours or different work. I need a safe program for her to learn and make friends."

Beatriz's housing situation meets the criteria for homeless status under the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" due to economic hardship. There are limited vacancies in the program.

Think about strategies that need to be in place to remove barriers and enhance access to services for this family.

Select the "Next" button to review the strategies and pick as many strategies as apply.

Which Strategies Apply to Beatriz's Family?

Prioritization	Correct! Prioritizing children for enrollment enhances access, especially if there are waitlists for programs.
Reserving Slots	Correct! Reserving slots for enrollment enhances access for children experiencing homelessness. This strategy increases the likelihood there will be vacant slots for enrollment when needed.
Categorical Eligibility	That is not correct. Try another strategy! Children experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start. No other criteria are necessary to establish eligibility.
Verification	That is not correct. Try another strategy. Criteria for homeless status has already been met.
Grace Periods	Correct! A grace period (up to 90 days) enables the child to begin attending the program while any required documents are obtained.
Training for Staff	Correct! Training about how to address barriers to access can help all Head Start and Early Head Start staff apply these strategies to enhance access and participation.
Continuity of care and Effective Transition	That is not correct. Try another strategy.

Jeremy

Jeremy, age 4, lives with his father, John Thompson. Mr. Thompson is interested in enrolling his son in a Head Start program.

Mr. Thompson shared the following information about their family's situation with you:

"I need to get Jeremy into a good program to get him ready for school. We've been staying in a trailer, but I'm not going to be able to keep paying the rent if I don't get work soon. Honestly, I wouldn't even mind moving. Nothing works. I've told the landlord a bunch of times and he does nothing."

Jeremy's situation meets the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" because of their substandard housing. There is a waitlist for the local Head Start program.

Think about strategies that need to be in place to remove barriers and enhance access to services for this family.

Select the "Next" button to review the strategies and pick as many strategies as apply.

Which Strategies Apply to Jeremy's Family?

Prioritization	Correct! Prioritizing enrollment for children experiencing homelessness can enhance access, especially if there are waitlists for services.
Reserving Slots	Correct! Reserving slots for enrollment enhances access for children experiencing homelessness. This strategy increases the likelihood there will be vacant slots for enrollment when needed.
Categorical Eligibility	That is not correct. Try another strategy. Children experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start. No other criteria are necessary to establish eligibility.
Verification	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The family's homeless status has already been determined.
Grace Periods	Correct! A grace period (up to 90 days) enables the child to begin attending the program while any required documents are obtained.

Training for Staff	Correct! Training about how to address barriers to access can help all Head Start and Early Head Start staff apply these strategies to enhance access.
Continuity of Care and Effective Transition	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The child is not yet enrolled in a program. Therefore, no continuity or transition planning is needed.

Sam

Sam, age 3, lives with his parents, Linda and John Harris. He has attended the same Head Start and Early Head Start program since he was an infant. Staff were concerned that he seemed tired and distracted.

Ms. Harris shared the following information about their family’s situation with you:

“We were evicted from our apartment two weeks ago. Our landlord raised the rent. We got behind and just can’t seem to catch up. We moved in with Sam’s uncle and his family. There really isn’t enough room. It’s impossible for us to keep to Sam’s regular bedtime. He wakes up a lot during the night.”

Sam’s housing situation meets criteria for homeless status under the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of “homeless” due to economic hardship. His family may be eligible to access additional services for families experiencing homelessness.

Think about strategies that need to be in place to remove barriers and enhance access to services for this family.

Select the “Next” button to review the strategies and pick as many strategies as apply.

Which Strategies Apply to Sam’s Family?

Prioritization	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The child is already attending a program.
Reserving Slots	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The family’s homeless status has been determined.
Categorical Eligibility	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The child is already attending a program. Note: Children experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start. No other criteria are necessary to establish eligibility.
Verification	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The child is already attending a program.
Grace Periods	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The child is already attending a program.
Training for Staff	Correct! Training about how to address barriers to access can help all Head Start and Early Head Start staff apply these strategies to enhance access and participation.
Continuity of care and Effective Transition	Correct! Staff can help enrolled families who are experiencing homelessness access additional supports, like transportation assistance, to ensure continued participation. Staff can also help facilitate a smooth transition to a new program, if in the child's best interest. They may work with parents to obtain any documentation from previous providers.

Liam

Liam, age 3, lives with his parents, Emily and Steven Bender. Mr. and Mrs. Bender would like to re-enroll Liam in a Head Start program. They are living in an extended stay hotel after a fire destroyed their home.

The Benders shared the following information with you:

“We know it’s important to provide as much stability for Liam as we can. This has been so hard for us all. The only thing we need now is a program for him close to where we are staying for now. He misses his old program. It has been hard for us to get everything together to apply for homeless assistance services.”

Liam’s living situation meets the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of “homeless” because his family is living temporarily in a hotel due to a natural disaster.

Since the family is now more than two hours from the program that Liam previously attended, it is best for him to enroll in a new program. However, there is a waitlist.

Think about strategies that need to be in place to remove barriers and enhance access to services for this family.

Select the “Next” button to review the strategies and pick as many strategies as apply.

Which Strategies Apply to Liam’s Family?

Prioritization	Correct! Prioritizing enrollment for children experiencing homelessness can enhance access, especially if there are waitlists for services.
Reserving Slots	Correct! Reserving slots increases the likelihood there will be vacant slots available for enrollment when such emergencies arise.
Categorical Eligibility	That is not correct. Try another strategy. Children experiencing homelessness are categorically eligible for Head Start and Early Head Start. No other criteria are necessary to establish eligibility.
Verification	Correct! Families who must relocate due to natural disasters meet homeless criteria. Follow protocol for verification.
Grace Periods	Correct! A grace period (up to 90 days) enables the child to begin attending the program while any required documents are obtained.

Training for Staff	Correct! Training about how to address barriers to access can help all Head Start and Early Head Start staff apply these strategies.
Continuity of Care and Effective Transition	Correct! Staff can help facilitate a smooth transition to the new program. Working with parents to obtain any documentation from previous providers facilitates enrollment and plans for subsidized child care services.

Child Care and Development Fund Scenarios

Explore four realistic CCDF scenarios. Consider how these might compare to families you encounter in your work. Remember that each family's situation is unique.

For each scenario:

- Consider the circumstances of this scenario
- Discuss the situation with a colleague, if possible
- Choose your answer and read the feedback
- Read the feedback for the other answers to learn about other strategies that may apply

Select the "Next" button to begin the scenarios.

Select the pictures to open the scenarios. You can complete them in any order.

A checkmark will appear when the scenario is completed. When you have completed all four scenarios, select the "Next" button to continue.

Jeremy

Jeremy is 4 years old. His father, John Thompson, is interested in an early care and education program.

Mr. Thompson shared the following information about their family's situation with you:

"I need to get Jeremy into a good child care program of some kind We've been staying in a trailer, but I'm not going to be able to keep paying the rent if I don't get work soon. Honestly, I wouldn't even mind moving. Nothing works. I've told the landlord a bunch of times and he does nothing."

Jeremy's situation meets the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" due to substandard housing. There are waitlists for subsidized early childhood services. Mr. Thompson is not working

or attending school and may not meet the eligibility requirements for CCDF subsidy required in some states.

Think about strategies that need to be in place to remove barriers and enhance access to services for this family.

Select the “Next” button to review the strategies and pick as many strategies as apply.

Which Strategies Apply to Jeremy’s Family?

Grace period for submitting documentation	Correct! A grace period (up to 90 days) enables the child to begin attending the program while any required documents are obtained.
Multiple ways to verify homeless status	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The family’s homeless status has already been determined.
Prioritizing enrollment for children experiencing homelessness	Correct! Prioritizing enrollment for children experiencing homelessness can enhance access, especially if there are waitlists for services.
Reserving slots for children experiencing homelessness	Correct! Reserving slots for enrollment enhances access for children experiencing homelessness. This strategy increases the likelihood there will be vacant slots for enrollment when needed
Waiving additional eligibility requirements	Correct! Waiving some additional state eligibility requirements (e.g., work or co-pay requirements) can enhance access for children and families experiencing homelessness.
Training staff to apply strategies to enhance access	Correct! Training about how to address barriers to access can help CCDF Lead Agency (or designated entities) and subsidy eligibility staff, CCR&R case managers, and others apply these strategies to enhance access.
Ensuring continuity of care/Planned transition	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The child is not yet enrolled in a program. Therefore, no continuity or transition planning is needed.

Sam

Sam, age 3, lives with his parents, Linda and John Harris. He has attended the same early childhood program since he was an infant. Staff were concerned that he seemed tired and distracted.

Ms. Harris shared the following information about their family's situation with staff:

"We were evicted from our apartment two weeks ago. Our landlord raised the rent. We got behind and just can't seem to catch up. We moved in with Sam's uncle and his family. There really isn't enough room. It's impossible for us to keep to Sam's regular bedtime. He wakes up a lot during the night."

Sam's housing situation meets criteria for homeless status under the McKinney-Vento Act's definition of "homeless" due to economic hardship. The Harris' meet work and income eligibility requirements for CCDF subsidy in their state. They may be able to access additional services offered by CCDF-funded programs to families experiencing homelessness.

Think about strategies that need to be in place to remove barriers and enhance access to services for this family.

Select the "Next" button to review the strategies and pick as many strategies as apply.

Which Strategies Apply to Sam's Family?

Grace period for submitting documentation	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The child is already attending a program.
Multiple ways to verify homeless status	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The family's homeless status has been determined.
Prioritizing enrollment for children experiencing homelessness	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The child is already attending a program.
Reserving slots for children experiencing homelessness	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The child is already attending a program.
Waiving additional eligibility requirements	Correct! Waiving some additional state eligibility requirements (e.g., work or co-pay) can enhance access for children experiencing homelessness.
Training staff to apply strategies to enhance access	Correct! Training about how to address barriers to access can help CCDF Lead Agency (or designated entities) and subsidy eligibility staff, CCR&R case managers, and others apply these strategies to enhance access.

Ensuring continuity of care/Planned transition	Correct! Staff can help enrolled families who are experiencing homelessness access additional supports to ensure continued participation, like transportation assistance and waiving the co-pay required in some states. Staff can also help facilitate a planned transition to a new program, if in the child's best interest. They may work with parents to obtain any documentation from previous providers.
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Ben

Ben, age 3, lives with his mother, Alyssa Miller, and his 9-month-old sister, Jane. Ms. Miller would like to enroll Ben and Jane in an early childhood program.

Ms. Miller shared the following information with you:

“We are living in a domestic violence shelter. I’m unemployed and have no family to help me. I am planning to enroll in a program to complete my GED. I’m also looking for a job.”

Ben’s living situation meets the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of “homeless” because his family is living temporarily in a domestic violence shelter.

Think about strategies that need to be in place to remove barriers and enhance access to services for this family.

Select the “Next” button to review the strategies and pick as many strategies as apply.

Which Strategies Apply to Ben’s Family?

Grace period for submitting documentation	Correct! A grace period (up to 90 days) enables the children to begin attending a child care program while any required documents are obtained.
Multiple ways to verify homeless status	That is not correct. Try another strategy. Homeless status has already been determined.
Prioritizing enrollment for children experiencing homelessness	Correct! Prioritizing enrollment for children experiencing homelessness can enhance access, especially if there are waitlists for services.

Reserving slots for children experiencing homelessness	Correct! Reserving slots for enrollment enhances access for children experiencing homelessness. This strategy increases the likelihood there will be vacant slots for enrollment when needed.
Waiving additional eligibility requirements	Correct! Waiving additional eligibility requirements can enhance access to subsidized child care services for children experiencing homelessness. Examples include accepting the GED as an allowable activity or waiving the copay required in some states.
Training staff to apply strategies to enhance access	Correct! Training about how to address barriers to access can help CCDF Lead Agency (or designated entities) and subsidy eligibility staff, CCR&R case managers, and others apply these strategies to enhance access.
Ensuring continuity of care/Planned transition	That is not correct. Try another strategy. The children are not yet enrolled in a program. Therefore, no continuity or transition planning is needed.

Najam

Najam, age 2, lives with his parents, Sara and Youssef Amir, and his twin 8-year-old brothers, Amal and Bahir. The family’s home was destroyed by fire.

They moved into a nearby extended-stay hotel so Najam can stay with his caregiver and Part C provider and his siblings can remain at the local public school.

The Amir’s shared the following information with you:

“We know it’s important to provide as much stability for our children as we can. This has been so hard for us all. The only thing we need now is after-school care for the twins. It has been hard for us to get everything together to apply for homeless assistance services.”

Najam’s family’s situation meets the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of “homeless” due to the fire. There is a waitlist for school-age child care vouchers. The school’s McKinney-Vento liaison has offered to help.

Think about strategies that need to be in place to remove barriers and enhance access to services for this family.

Select the “Next” button to review the strategies and pick as many strategies as apply.

Which Strategies Apply to Najam’s Family?

Grace period for submitting documentation	Correct! A grace period (up to 90 days) enables the children to begin attending a school-age child care program while any required documents are obtained.
Multiple ways to verify homeless status	Correct! Accepting verification of homeless status by the McKinney-Vento liaison or another approved designee can enhance the children’s immediate access to school-age child care services.
Prioritizing enrollment for children experiencing homelessness	Correct! Prioritizing enrollment for children experiencing homelessness can enhance access, especially if there are waitlists for services.
Reserving slots for children experiencing homelessness	Correct! Reserving slots enhances enrollment for children experiencing homelessness. This strategy increases the likelihood there will be vacant slots available when needed.
Waiving additional eligibility requirements	Correct! Waiving the co-pay, if required in their state, would enhance participation. Since both parents are employed, unless they earn more than the state’s income limit, they may qualify for CCDF subsidy for school-age child care.
Training staff to apply strategies to enhance access	Correct! Training about how to address barriers to access can help CCDF Lead Agency (or designated entities) and subsidy eligibility staff, CCR&R case managers, and others apply these strategies to enhance access.
Ensuring continuity of care/Planned transition	Correct! Staff can help enrolled families access additional supports and support and assist with any planned transitions. Examples include school-age child care, transportation assistance, and co-pay waivers, if available in the state.

Putting It All Together

In Module 6, we explored how homelessness creates barriers to early childhood and school-age child care and often interrupts regular attendance and continuity of care.

We highlighted strategies and best practices that may be used to enhance program enrollment and participation for children in Head Start, Early Head Start, and CCDF-funded programs, including early childhood and school-age child care.

Completion Status

To complete Module 6, review all sections listed below. If a section is not checked, use the Menu tab to return to and complete that section. Once all sections are checked, select the "Next" button to continue to your Certificate of Completion.

- ✓ Introduction
- ✓ Understanding Strategies to Enhance Access and Participation
- ✓ Strategies to Enhance Access and Participation: Head Start and Early Head Start or Child Care and Development Fund
- ✓ Practice Scenarios: Head Start and Early Head Start or Child Care and Development Fund

Certificate of Completion

Congratulations! You have completed Module 6: Enhancing Program Access and Participation for Children Experiencing Homelessness.

To access your certificate, select the "Open Your Certificate" button. A PDF document will open in a separate tab. Enter your name and the date on the certificate. Print or save the certificate to your computer.

Appendix A: Federal Legislation and Regulations Related to Family Homelessness

Federal Legislation and Regulations Related to Family Homelessness	
McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act	https://nche.ed.gov/mckinney-vento-definition/
Child Care and Development Fund Reauthorization	https://www.acf.hhs.gov/occ/ccdf-reauthorization
McKinney-Vento Law Into Practice Brief Series Supporting Homeless Children and Youth with Disabilities: Legislative Provisions in the McKinney-Vento Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act	https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/idea.pdf
Head Start Program Performance Standards	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii
Program Operations, 45 CFR § 1302	
Eligibility, Recruitment, Selection, Enrollment, and Attendance, 45 CFR § 1302(A)	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-subpart-eligibility-recruitment-selection-enrollment-attendance
Determining community strengths, needs, and resources, 45 CFR § 1302.11	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-11-determining-community-strengths-needs-resources
Determining, verifying, and documenting eligibility, 45 CFR § 1302.12	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-12-determining-verifying-documenting-eligibility
Recruitment of children, 45 CFR § 1302.13	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-13-recruitment-children
Selection process, 45 CFR § 1302.14	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-14-selection-process
Enrollment, 45 CFR § 1302.15	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-15-enrollment
Attendance, 45 CFR § 1302.16	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-16-attendance
Family and Community Engagement Program Services, 45 CFR § 1302(E)	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-subpart-e-family-community-engagement-program-services
Community partnerships and coordination with other early childhood and education programs, 45 CFR § 1302.53	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-53-community-partnerships-coordination-other-early-childhood-education
Transition Services, 45 CFR § 1302 (G)	
Transitions between programs, 45 CFR § 1302.72 (a)	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1302-subpart-g-transition-services
Definitions, 45 CFR § 1305	
Terms, 45 CFR § 1305.2	https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/policy/45-cfr-chap-xiii/1305-2-terms

Appendix B: The McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless

The McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (per Title IX, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act) defines homeless as follows:

The term "homeless children and youths"--

- A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and
- B. includes--
 - (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;* (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C)); (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and (iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

*Per Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act, "awaiting foster care placement" was removed from the definition of homeless on December 10, 2016; the only exception to his removal is that "covered states" have until December 10, 2017 to remove "awaiting foster care placement" from their definition of homeless.

View the full text of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act:

<https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title42/chapter119/subchapter6/partB&edition=prelim>

Appendix C: Helpful Links and Resources

Helpful Links and Resources	
State Coordinators for Homeless Education	https://nche.ed.gov/data/
National Center for Homeless Education Helpline	Call: 1-800-308-2145 Email: homeless@serve.org
Handouts	
Best Practices in Homeless Education Brief Series: Determining Eligibility for McKinney-Vento Rights and Services	
Better Parent Communication: What Do I Say When a Parent Tells Me Something Difficult	
Conversations with Children Experiencing Homelessness	
Decision-Making Tool to Determine a Family's Homeless Situation	
Possible Warning Signs of Housing Instability or Homelessness	
Provider-Parent Relationships: 7 Keys to Good Communication	