

## Housing Access

Director Khari M. Garvin: Hi, I'm Khari Garvin, the Director of the Office of Head Start. I'd like to use my Home at Head Start time today to talk with you about housing instability. Before we do that, a word about the meaning of "Home at Head Start." We think that the services uniquely provided by Head Start and Early Head Start provide a feeling of home. Indeed, and thanks to you, we often hear families describe their experience with us as 'home' and 'family.' Sadly, we know that without these additional supports for families with unstable living situations, there are negative impacts on child and family well-being.

In this country, we have been facing a housing crisis for a long time. Homelessness is rising. Affordable housing and housing vouchers are available to too few folks who need them. We started collecting program information about the number of families we have helped to find housing over a decade ago. On average, we help about 30% of families identified as experiencing homelessness. It's important to keep in mind that Head Start alone is not going to solve the housing crisis. And while you should do all you can to help families access housing supports in your communities, this lack of resources is a bigger problem. Be assured that the Office of Head Start understands that this is a challenging area in which to make progress. And yet, never let it be a reason not to enroll as many unhoused families as we can.

Even a stable program environment; a cot and cubby space assigned to a child; and the familiarity of daily routines can provide tremendous security in the life of a child that can, otherwise, be unstable and unpredictable. The benefits even apply to those families that might remain enrolled for short periods, like 60 days, who will still have the opportunity to receive screenings and health supports that may be critical to a child's life. For families experiencing homelessness, all of these efforts you make, count. If you tune in regularly, you know that I like to end by letting you know where to go for more information. Check out our FAQs About Serving Families Experiencing Homelessness. You may find some helpful information on this topic in the Family Partnerships Section of the FAQs.

Narrator: For more information about caring conversations about McKinney-Vento eligibility, please visit <https://bit.ly/3J8NOUK>. Produced by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.