Identifying, Verifying & Connecting students in temporary living & homeless situations: a district wide approach
WHAT ARE WE GOING TO LEARN TODAY?

- ICCSD’s systematic process for serving homeless families and youth.
- the role of the building liaison in this process.
- the centralized model for how to access available resources.
Who are we?

The Iowa City Community School District serves over 14,000 students.
5th largest school district in the state of Iowa.
covers roughly 133 square miles

18 preschool sites
21 elementary schools
3 junior high schools
3 high schools
1 alternative high school

Iowa City Community School District
Child-Centered: Future Focused
Who we are...student & family advocates

Our Mission:
To improve the quality of life for families of the Iowa City Community School District and to promote increased student achievement by supporting families, students, and school staff.
Student & family advocates:

Family/student support and advocacy
Mental Health case management and services referrals
Consultation on child mental health and behavior evaluations
Attendance supports
Mentoring for students
School supplies
Operation Back Pack
Family team and individual meetings

Home visits
Referrals to area LGBTQ resources
Applications to DHS and community programs
(Medicaid, food assistance, child care assistance, etc)
Welcome tours
Winter wear clothing
Community resources and referrals
Homeless and transitional housing situation resources
**Our Community:**

- Between 2000 and 2012, the number of households with children in Johnson County increased 14 percent, but the number of FRL participants increased 69 percent.  

- Vacancy rate in Iowa City is half of one percent which is substantially lesser than a more typical and healthy market vacancy rate of 5%.  

- Unemployment rate is below the national average and with little change since 2000. However, wages are not increasing with cost of living and “the proportion of severely cost burdened renters (paying more than 50% of their income on housing)” (p.34) has greatly increased.
History: District Response?

- Passive response - identified as “came up” via parent report or during school response to other student needs. No formalized building liaison or process.

- With re-authorization of Mc-V in ‘00, part time district liaison assigned in ‘02, and continued partnerships with community shelters and community youth agencies.

- Safe School, Healthy Students grant in ‘08- grew and strengthened social-emotional infrastructure within district alongside existing and new community partnerships. Expansion of school based staff.

- In last 10 years, Iowa has strengthened its technical support and training around Mc-V legal interpretation and implementation for district administration and departments and then district piloted, proceduralized, screening tools.
How have we improved identification and put a systematic procedures into place...

**Step 1:**
Registration in the school office. Permissions page or MCV screener if new.

**Step 2:**
Verification interview with SFA via phone or in person.

**Step 3:**
Explanation of McKinney Vento rights given by SFA.

**Step 4:**
SFA verify at a district level. And follow systematic procedures.
Improving Identification

Every family, new and returning, must fill out a number of permissions. Including our district homeless screener.

- This is part of their ‘E-Registration’ process, where they update all phone numbers and contacts.
- This generates reports at a district and building level.
- Although this has improved our identification process this has caused a number of false positives.

Presently, are you and/or your family in any of the following situations?

- Staying in shelter or transitional housing
- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason, doubled-up.
- Living in a car, park, campground, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing or similar.
- Temporarily living in a motel or hotel due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason.
- Unknown nighttime residence.

If your response is yes, our Student and Family Advocate will contact you to share information about additional ICCSD support that might be available to you.
Improving Identification

Every family that is NEW to the district fills out the following questionnaire.

- Easy for families to read.
- Explanations for temporary housing situations.
- Offers an explanation that SFAs will contact.

Helps us to make connections between other school liaisons.
Understanding Eligibility

- An SFA reaches out to EVERY family who screens or self-identifies as homeless/temporarily housed.
- Our MCV brochure guides the conversations with families to understand their eligibility and rights.
- The SFA then verifies at a district level.
Verification Steps

- Personal interview/school selection checklist
- Information on rights/brochure given
- PS demographic data entered
- Email to food service/homeless liaison
- Email SFAs at sibling schools
- Write homeless verification note below
- Resources & referrals as needed

All verification steps listed here as a gentle reminder.
**Reporting false positives: an elementary & secondary approach**

**Elementary:**

- Running report to know who all identified themselves as homeless when E-Registering.
- SFA’s reach out to each parent either via face to face or over the phone.
- If we are unable to reach the parent we can talk with the child if they are old enough to understand.

**Secondary:**

- Running report to know who all identified themselves as homeless when E-Registering.
- SFA’s reach out to each student face to face.
- If there are still questions SFA will call the parent.
Services available once deemed eligible

- Transportation
- Tutoring
- Free Lunch
- Clothing and Shoe Vouchers
- Resource and Referral
- Navigation
Centralized Model - How to Access Resources???

#1 Tip: Be prepared, organized and Knowledgeable!

#2 Tip: If you don’t know, find out! Ask Questions!

#3 Tip: Know your limits...what can you help with!?
#1 TIP: Be prepared, organized and Knowledgeable!

Resource Caddy:

Resource Binder/Shared Drive:
- Health & Student Services
- Educational Resources
- Transportation
- Social Services
- Medical
- Youth Activities

Community and SFA Collaboration:
- Monthly Community Agency Collaboration
- Rotating Small Group and Large Group SFA meetings
- SFA Mentorship/Coordinator Visits
#2 Tip: if you don’t know, Find Out! Ask Questions!

- Ask Questions...Inquire what your community has to offer! What are the family’s social supports! What has worked, what does not?!

- If you don’t know...find out...take tours...reach out...make phone calls alongside ... the more information you have the better for your students & families!

- It’s ok to say ... I’ll get back to you?
School districts and building liaisons can’t do it all ... AND we shouldn’t be doing it all!

- Examine systems approach - building, district and community levels
- Refer students/families to appropriate agencies & supports.
- Get creative!
We will surely get to our destination if we Join Hands ...

Aung San Suu Kyi
Questions?

Contact us at:

Becca Bender:
bender.becca@iowacityschools.org
Shannon Miner:
miner.shannon@iowacityschools.org
Joan VandenBerg:
vandenberg.joan@iowacityschools.org
Amy Kahle:
Kahle.amy@iowacityschools.org