

# SINGLE POINT-OF-CONTACT MODEL

**NCEHCY** NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION  
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH



## CONTENT CONTRIBUTORS

### **Cyekeia Lee**

Homeless Education Consultant

### **Shirley Fan-Chan**

At-Large Board Member/Higher Education  
Committee Member  
National Association of Education  
for Homeless Children and Youth

### **Tori Nuccio**

West Chester University  
The Schock Financial Aid Office  
Assistant Director  
wcupa.edu/\_services/fin\_aid

### **Mary Giggy**

Aims Community College  
Single Point of Contact for Independent  
Students  
aims.edu/student/finaid/index.php

### **Marcy Stidum**

Kennesaw State University  
CARE Services, Founding Director  
care.kennesaw.edu

### **Carrie Olsen**

Kennesaw State University  
CARE Services, Lead Clinical Case Manager  
care.kennesaw.edu

### **Lori Tiller**

University of Georgia  
J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership  
Development  
Public Service Faculty  
embarkgeorgia.org

### **Tadarrayl M. Starke**

Florida State University  
Center for Academic Retention and  
Enhancement, Director  
care.fsu.edu

## CONTENT EDITORS

### **Milya Maxfield**

Kennesaw State University  
Writing Center, Coordinator  
writingcenter.kennesaw.edu

### **Lori Tiller**

University of Georgia  
J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development  
Public Service Faculty  
embarkgeorgia.org

### **Sarah Catherine Roux**

Kennesaw State University  
CARE Services, Graduate Assistant  
care.kennesaw.edu

### **Marcy Stidum**

Kennesaw State University  
CARE Services, Founding Director  
care.kennesaw.edu

### **Jamie Rife**

Purposity, Co-Founder  
At-Large Board Member  
National Association of Education  
for Homeless Children and Youth

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Dear Colleagues,

In 2007, I met a young woman who was living at Covenant House California, a shelter for youth experiencing homelessness. She was incredibly focused on finishing a college degree during the time she had in transitional housing, but she was experiencing tiresome roadblocks on her college campus. She had to fight for her financial aid because she still appeared to be a “dependent student,” though she had no contact with her parents. She had difficulty navigating the programs and services on and off campus that would have made her journey much easier. As a part of the team that was helping her, I searched for research and services to support college students experiencing homelessness and found the options limited.

In 2009, I decided to make collegiate homelessness the focus of my research and found The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAECHY) leading the way in breaking down barriers for students. NAECHY was engaging college and university staff, faculty, and administrators in this important movement to develop awareness and support for students who were homeless. This toolkit is another example of this critical work.

Your efforts create conditions to ensure the success of students. The toolkit you are about to read by NAECHY is an excellent overview of the single point of contact (SPOC) model and an exploration of collegiate homelessness. It provides important recommendations on how to build campus and state-wide initiatives. As the first of its kind, this toolkit is a must have for campuses that choose to enhance and facilitate student success for those who experience housing instability and homelessness. This toolkit draws upon a solid base of research and practice, as well as the perspectives of students who are moving through housing insecurity. It only makes a difference if you are able to make use of it. I hope you find value in the collective thinking represented in this toolkit, and share what you learn so that this conversation continues and strengthens the safety net for the students who need it the most.

Sincerely,



Rashida Crutchfield, EdD, MSW  
Assistant Professor  
School of Social Work  
California State University, Long Beach

“Homeless youth are human beings with most of their lives still ahead of them..., they have boundless promise. Or rather, they have promise that is bounded only by our ability to help them find their way.”

**Impatient Optimists**, January 16, 2013

## WHY SPOCs ARE NEEDED

*Jacob is secretly coping with the reality that he has nowhere to lay his head tonight. Although it's his first year of college and his focus should be on the next leg of his academic journey, newfound freedom, and campus life, his mind is stuck on trying to meet his basic needs. This situation is not new to him. He faced this same scenario in high school after fleeing abuse in his home. However, he never told his teachers, and he didn't know that his school district had a McKinney-Vento liaison designated to help students experiencing homelessness. He was too ashamed and embarrassed to confide in his friends, and he's still afraid that he won't be accepted if he tells them now. With no shelter for young adults near his campus, he's always bounced from various family members' homes, abruptly leaving, never wanting to wear out his welcome. Now, he is once again faced with the challenge of finding a safe, stable place to sleep tonight. Homelessness is not his only concern; he is also dealing with food insecurity and doesn't know when he will have his next meal. Jacob is unsure just who on his campus can help him.*

Where would Jacob start? Who should he tell that he is experiencing homelessness? What resources will he receive?

Unfortunately, Jacob is not alone. Each year, over 1 million students experience homelessness in the K-12 education system, and while there are provisions under the McKinney-Vento Act to support these students, less support is provided for students experiencing homelessness as they access post-secondary education programs. College campuses have many resources already in place to help these students, but the students in the most need may not know they

exist. Many university campuses have already identified and responded to this need and taken the lead by implementing a Single Point-of-Contact (SPOC) Model for this growing population of students. A SPOC Model is one of the best practices because it helps homeless post-secondary students adjust and succeed in the post-secondary education environment after transiting from secondary education. This toolkit will help campuses assess how to best provide services and support to students experiencing homelessness. For those campuses with a SPOC program already in place, this toolkit will serve as a resource for how to further or enhance current services and advocacy efforts.

## SPOC DEFINED

The *Single Point-of-Contact* (SPOC) Model is based on the belief that designated safe and supportive college administrators committed to helping homeless students successfully navigate the college admission process and continually connect students to campus-based support systems and resources during the academic year can foster positive retention and graduation rates for this population. The SPOC Model encourages the implementation of a streamlined process on college campuses equipped with staff or a team to assist and/or advocate on behalf of homeless students. The SPOC Model could be implemented by designating an individual to serve as the Campus SPOC, intermingled within the current functionality of an established office or department, or established as a separate department solely dedicated to implementing the SPOC Model at their college or university. The methodology chosen will be based on the resources and needs of the individual campus.

SPOC programs are encouraged not only to provide services to currently enrolled students on campus, but also to extend their resources to homeless youth who are matriculating to their college from high school. It is recommended that the program connects with the Homeless Liaisons in their state and/or targeted recruitment area(s). Facilitating these relationships through outreach efforts such as attending high school college days or presentations to the school districts' supportive services will strengthen the bridge from high school to higher education.

## A SIDE NOTE...

*McKinney-Vento* is not a term common in higher education.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act authorizes the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program and is the primary piece of federal legislation related to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

As a result of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001, all public K-12 schools are funded for a district program that serves their homeless students. As a result, most school districts have a Homeless Liaison tasked with serving all homeless students within their district. Homeless Liaisons are responsible for coordinating resources and guaranteeing access to education for the students they serve.

## AREAS OF CONSIDERATION

As colleges determine how to proceed with implementing the SPOC Model, staff should consider the following:

- How will the SPOC Model be implemented?
  - Solo administrator?
  - Incorporate into current on-campus program?
  - New department/office?
- What kind of program will the SPOC be?
  - Service-based?
  - Cohort-based?
- Will an office be designated for the program's use?
- How will the program be funded?
  - State funds?
  - Foundation funds?
  - Mixture of both?
- What are the risk management concerns on campus?
- How will the staff locate and outreach to homeless students on campus?
- How will outreaches to other campus department and academic units be conducted?
- How will confidentiality be maintained?
- What resources will the program offer?
  - Advocacy?
  - Referrals?
  - Case management?
  - Financial assistance?
  - Food pantry?
  - Clothing?
  - Others?
- What criteria will be used to assess eligibility?
- Is a Release of Information warranted to share student information regarding a student's homeless siltation?
- Who will handle press inquiries?
- Who are your campus and community partners/assets?
- What is your sustainability plan?

*Adapted from CUFBA*

# FROM OUR STUDENTS

the most powerful voice is their voice



## MACHELLA

“Be a support system for those students who may not necessarily have it. They may not have the family network or the financial stability. And just having one person in their life may really make a difference.”

## JAMIE

“Continue to encourage students to finish college and remind them of what they will be after they get through. And also...to remind them that they are not alone.”



## GORDINA

“I would have never thought I would have such an amazing support system and connection. She has helped me by guiding me when I need help both with school and personal concerns. She has provided me with a safe haven during summer and winter breaks when I did not have a place to go.”

“What’s needed to address these inequities and change this dynamic — and what is already working on many campuses — is a broader, more holistic, more nuanced approach.”

**Beyond Financial Aid**, June 2015

## PROGRAMMATIC ELEMENTS

COHORT-BASED APPROACH vs. SERVICE-BASED APPROACH

When determining where to begin, first it must be determined if a Cohort- or Service-Based Approach best integrates within the university or college campus culture. Neither approach is better; which approach to select will depend on the best fit for the campus.

A Cohort Approach can begin as early as middle and high school.

Through targeted work with middle and high school partners, a Cohort-Based Approach connects with homeless youth and provides support and resources that motivate and promote their acceptance, enrollment, and completion of a post-secondary education. If available, offer a Summer Bridge Program to provide transition services and support as youth are accepted into your college or university. Programs of this type help students familiarize themselves with the campus, assist students with developing the academic habits vital for their success, and provide a chance to connect with others of similar backgrounds who are entering or are already enrolled on campus. This type of approach does well to identify those who face homelessness in high school at the point of admissions, or as early in the college enrollment process as possible.

## A SIDE NOTE...

SPOC programs may have to first address the issue of finances before connecting or advocating for a student to obtain campus housing. Often times the SPOC program will need to help a student secure employment as well as teach budgeting strategies before they can afford housing.

SPOC programs could consider partnering with Financial Aid to hold discussions about various student loan options, debt, and what happens after graduation with student loans (e.g. making payments, bankruptcy, etc.)

Below are a few helpful budgeting options to help students start the process of learning how to save:

- [www.consumercredit.com/financial-education/budgeting](http://www.consumercredit.com/financial-education/budgeting)
- [www.cashcourse.org](http://www.cashcourse.org)

The Service-Based Approach is more fluid in its program design than the Cohort Approach. In a Service-Based Approach, the campus SPOC program is unaware of students' needs unless they self-identify. Even when there is a support group or meetup incorporated into the SPOC program, it will be up to the individual student to divulge their homeless status. Services are offered as a menu of options based on what the SPOC program is able to offer and provided based on the student's individual needs. Lastly, admission into the program is sporadic and highly based on episodic homelessness, which occurs with situationally homeless students.

Regardless of the approach chosen, the focus of the SPOC program should be to continually connect students to campus-based support systems and resources to aid students' potential for persistence and timely graduation.

#### HOUSING INSECURITY

According to the *American Journal of Public Health* (August 2011), "The Department of Health and Human Services has defined housing insecurity as high housing costs in proportion to income, poor housing quality, unstable neighborhoods, overcrowding, or homelessness." In 2017, the Wisconsin Hope Lab "released a study that surveyed students at 70 community colleges in 24 states. It found that 14 percent were homeless. Those findings build on a study released last year by California State University that estimated that 8 percent to 12 percent of its students were homeless." (Harris, April 2017)

With this said, many homeless college students demonstrate a degree of resourcefulness when dealing with their lack of shelter. They tend to locate temporary housing arrangements; however, these arrangements are short-term and unreliable. Instead, SPOC programs need a plan in place for the homeless student once they have been identified. SPOC programs should serve as advocates for homeless students and work together with these students to identify long- and/or short-term housing arrangements until they graduate.

A one-on-one needs assessment conducted by SPOC program staff should be done to identify alternative living arrangements that will allow students to stabilize their financial situations, such as family, friends, etc. The longer they can stay at an alternative living arrangement, the better! If students do not have any alternative to homelessness, SPOC programs can help them explore options, such as homeless shelters, local hotels, a homestay program, etc.

An action plan to assist students in locating permanent living arrangement includes, but is not limited to:

- Determining living situation and possible alternative housing options, such as
  - Offering minimal/reduced contribution toward a family/friend's household expenses
  - Local shelter programs for ages 18-24
  - General adult shelter programs for students over age 24
  - Area independent or transitional living programs
- Potential on- and off-campus resource options

- Current financial means
- Needed financial supports (e.g. job, scholarships, etc.)
- Transportation needs

Many campuses now have year-round housing. Year-round housing is an on-campus housing option in which residents can live continuously throughout the academic year and not have to move out during campus breaks, such as winter break, spring break, and summer, even if the campus is closed or the student is not registered for the summer session. Also, many year-round housing programs operate within a private-style model, meaning students pay rent each month versus the traditional room and board methodology in which it is incorporated into a

## Housing Ideas...

- **Y2Y Harvard Square** (<https://www.y2yharvardsquare.org>) provides a 30-night stay; guests enter a lottery. No drugs or alcohol are allowed in the space and all guests are screened with a security check at the door. Single-night stays are available on a call-in basis. Y2Y can accommodate 27 people overnight, and provides showers, laundry facilities, clothing, computer access, breakfast, and dinner. Beyond basics, Y2Y offers help with finding housing, jobs, legal services, medical care, and provider referrals. Perhaps most importantly, Y2Y creates a personalized, nurturing atmosphere for its guests.
- **Tacoma Community College and Tacoma Housing Authority** (<https://www.tacomacc.edu/resourcesandservices/housing/>) formed a partnership called College Housing Assistance Program to provide rental assistance to TCC students who are homeless or at risk of being homeless.
- **DePaul University Host Home Program** (<https://us.depaulcharity.org/depaul-home/our-work/programs/dax-host-home-program-chicago>) provides DePaul University students who are facing homelessness short-term housing with families in the community. Individuals in the program can seek counseling, access resources, and receive the support they need to reach graduation.
- **CARE Services Apartment** ([care.kennesaw.edu/campus-apartment.php](http://care.kennesaw.edu/campus-apartment.php)) provides emergency/temporary housing for up to 14 days while the student works with CARE to locate and secure a long-term housing solution. In cases where the room is occupied, the CARE case management team works with students to locate shelter options and/or determine the feasibility of CARE securing a local hotel room temporarily on their behalf.
- **Southern Scholarship Foundation** (<https://www.southern scholarship.org>) helps qualified students attending Flagler College - Tallahassee, Florida A&M University, Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida State University, Santa Fe College, Tallahassee Community College, and University of Florida by awarding scholarships in the form of rent-free housing to live in one of 27, furnished scholarship houses that are adjacent to their college campus.

student's campus fees. It is recommended that campuses with this model establish a liaison relationship with Campus Housing.

For campuses with a room and board methodology where students must move out during semester or quarter breaks, the SPOC program may need to work with campus partners to determine if students can be allowed to pay an additional per diem to remain in housing during breaks. In the case this is not an option, SPOC staff may need to look into the aforementioned possible alternative housing options.

Lastly, if students are required to be enrolled in classes during the summer session and campus housing is not available, it would be helpful to coordinate with academic advisors in order to work this into the student's academic plan. Also, inquire of the financial aid department of any possibility for the student's award to be stretched out over summer session to help with additional costs.

#### FOOD INSECURITY

The USDA defines food insecurity as "limited or uncertain availability of nutritionally adequate and safe foods or limited or uncertain ability to acquire acceptable foods in socially acceptable ways." (USDA) According to *Feed America's Hunger in America 2014 National Report*, "1 in 10 adults served by Feed America are students; 2 million are full-time status, and 1 million are part-time status." (Weinfield, 2014) Many colleges and universities are addressing this growing need by starting campus food pantries.

The College and University Food Bank Alliance (CUFBA) is the leading organization committed to supporting existing and emerging campus food banks. On its site are a number of links to resources, ranging from intake interview guidelines to new client forms, as well as links to many campus food bank websites around the country. SPOC programs interested in being a part of a larger network of campus pantries are encouraged to reach out to CUFBA at <http://www.cufba.org> for information and resources.

A campus partner that could assist with helping food insecure students is campus culinary/dining services. SPOC programs could partner to develop a swipe donation or coupon/voucher program for food insecure students from culinary/dining services. Another option would be to set up a system where faculty, staff, and the community could directly donate money to the program with funds strictly used to purchase coupons, vouchers, or meal plans for students.

## A SIDE NOTE...

According to the Hunger in America Report (2014), 25.6 percent of the households served by Feeding America have at least one child, which means SPOC programs should also consider students as part of families.

With that consideration, SPOC programs connected to campus or community pantries should also connect to programs that offer K-12 school pantry programs (Feeding America). If SPOC programs are not aware of programs in their area, visit Feeding America's Food Bank Locator:

<http://www.feedingamerica.org/find-your-local-foodbank/>

Lastly, a SPOC program could look to governmental resources to help students. Full-time students who are working in the federal work-study program do not have the same hourly work requirements as other students in order to be eligible for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) programs. In addition to SNAP benefits, SPOC programs could work with their campus to determine the feasibility of accepting SNAP at an on-campus grocery store, as it is at Oregon State University and Humboldt State Universities. (Inside Higher Ed, 2016)

## CASE MANAGEMENT

According to the Higher Education Case Managers Association (HECMA) case management on a college campus is defined as serving “university and individual students by coordinating prevention, intervention, and support efforts across campus and community systems to assist at-risk students and students facing crises, life traumas, and other barriers that impede success.” (HECMA, 2013) Using HECMA’s definition of case management, SPOC staff would periodically meet for 30-60-minute appointments with the student in order to assess their needs and review ongoing progress. Models used for higher education case management can include a Strengths-Based Case Management Model for assessing the student’s resources, Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs for assessing the student’s needs, and the Intensive Case Management Model when providing services for students requiring long-term and ongoing support.

Initially, the goal of case management is to establish and maintain basic stabilization. Case managers may meet with students on a weekly or biweekly basis during this period depending on the needs of the student. Once basic needs for the student are met (safe, permanent housing is secured, adequate food resources attained, etc.), case managers may help students create a plan for self-sufficiency and assist students in identifying and obtaining the life skills needed to achieve that plan. Life skills may include searching for jobs, financial literacy, time management, problem solving, and short-term/long-term planning.

Additionally, case managers may advocate for the student regarding their needs and situation. This may involve reaching out to university staff or departments to inform them of the student’s current situation or contacting an agency or organization to inform them of the student’s needs. As mentioned earlier, it is recommended that campuses determine the need to obtain Releases of Information to communicate about a student’s homelessness situation.

## MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS

SPOC programs not already directly affiliated with the Campus Counseling Center should consider fostering a liaison relationship to ensure they are not overlooking any underlying issues their students are facing such as anxiety, depression, family of origin issues, and self-harming behaviors or gestures. Often these services are provided as a part of the student’s tuition, so incurred financial stressors should not be an additional burden. If services are not

included as part of the tuition, SPOC programs could work to facilitate deferred or reduced fees for their students. This service would not be mandatory for students involved in the SPOC program, but viewed as a vital resource when needed.

#### EMPLOYMENT

Another area of support SPOC programs could offer is assisting students with finding jobs to supplement their income and provide financial security. Campuses have an array of on-campus employment options, such as Federal Work Study (FWS), student assistantships, tutoring positions, teaching assistantships, and/or traditional on-campus employment options. Partnerships with on-campus businesses contracted to provide campus services, such as culinary services, postal services, campus parking, etc. are great opportunities to locate part-time and full-time employment opportunities that are typically more student-focused than off-campus employers. In addition to traditional online job search engines, SPOC programs can partner with local temporary employment agencies, businesses, and/or factories in proximity to the campus. Through a partnership with the campus Career Services department, homeless college students can obtain assistance with applying for jobs and developing their resumes and cover letters.

SPOC programs could investigate the possibility of developing a collaborative partnership with the campus Federal Work Study (FWS) program. For instance, at Kennesaw State University, the FWS program set aside \$10,000 in funding toward a temporary on-campus job placement program for recipients of the campus SPOC program, CARE Services. Using FWS funding, CARE provides a model for implementing a temporary work program that engages students through employment while addressing their current financial situation and giving them additional experience to succeed after college. (NSEA Journal, Summer 2017)

#### A SIDE NOTE...

Graduation is a special day, and SPOC programs can be a part of the process of making it special! Collaborate with the campus bookstore or the program/college students are graduating from to obtain the needed cords and regalia. Campus bookstores may be willing to set up a loaner system or donate all the items for the student. The campus public relations or events department may be willing to take pictures and/or provide special seating for the family and/or friends of the graduate.

## Additional Food Resources...

### **Swipe Out Hunger** (<http://www.swipehunger.org>)

Works to end hunger by engaging college students, who donate unused meal points to feed their peers and community members in need. By using resources and funds that already exist (meal points) to solve a global problem (hunger), Swipe Out Hunger promotes innovative solutions to a wasteful system. As of May 2016, the organization has approximately 23 chapters across the country.

### **Food Recovery Network** (<https://www.foodrecoverynetwork.org>)

Unites students on college campuses to fight food waste and hunger by recovering perishable food that would otherwise go to waste from their campuses and communities and donating it to people in need. Students work with the dining hall on campus to package surplus food and transport it to partner agencies serving those in need.

### **Campus Kitchens Project** (<https://www.campuskitchens.org>)

Partners with high schools, colleges, and universities to share on-campus kitchen space, recover food from cafeterias, and engage students as volunteers who prepare and deliver meals to the community.

“Helping students succeed, and fulfilling the promises of our educational system, requires listening and learning from them.”

**The Chronicle of Higher Education**, August 28, 2016

## CAMPUS ENGAGEMENT

Campus partnerships are vital to the success and outreach of a campus-based SPOC program. The challenge of the SPOC Model is to develop a campus culture of caring by taking on W.E. Deming’s (1991) perspective of optimizing the whole system. Programs using the SPOC Model are tasked with assessing their campus’s systematic make-up and focusing on optimizing the whole system.

## CAMPUS NEEDS ASSESSMENT

Assessing the campus is the first step toward engagement. Without an awareness of students’ needs, implementation of the SPOC Model will be insufficient as it will not address the service gaps nor maximize opportunities to partner with assets that may currently exist on campus. According to the Wisconsin HOPE Lab’s publication, *Guide to Assessing Basic Needs Insecurity in Higher Education*, an assessment could “support fundraising efforts, guide campus decision-making about key investments, and generate new ideas for how to improve degree completion rates. They can also help inform conversations about student well-being. Once the need for more support is established and programs developed, evaluations of those efforts should occur in order to ensure that they are effective.” (May 2017) Moreover, a needs assessment will likely inform how a program can begin to identify then serve homeless students.

## ADMINISTRATION

The first step to optimizing the campus system is learning the process for speaking with the governing bodies that exist on campus, such as Faculty Senate, Staff Senate, and, if possible, the President’s Cabinet. This step allows those in administrative positions to ask how a SPOC

## A SIDE NOTE...

Homelessness and Hunger Week (HAHW) is a high impact practice/experience where the campus is immersed in awareness activities surrounding the impact of homelessness and hunger. SPOC programs could bring this event to their campuses or partner with the current campus sponsor to ensure the voices of the students they serve are heard as well as highlighting the plight of homelessness in the surrounding communities, state, nation, and globally. These activities offer opportunities for service learning projects, partnerships with learning communities, etc.

For more information on HAHW go to: <https://hhweek.org>

program may impact the campus community as well as give campus-wide directives to collaborate with the SPOC program in support of its mission and goals. SPOC staff should utilize the qualitative and quantitative data obtained from the campus needs assessment to inform the conversation with campus leadership.

#### FACULTY AND STAFF

Almost simultaneously, target specific departments that clearly support the determined mission, such as admissions, financial aid, campus housing, scholarships, campus bookstore, registrar's office, campus police, and culinary services, to name a few. Partnerships with these departments can help to support how SPOC accesses and supports its target population as well as provide an additional resource option for the department when working with a distressed student. The staff of the SPOC program should identify points of contact to collaborate with in each department who can help troubleshoot issues and remove obstacles that may arise within their area.

#### CAMPUS OFFICES/DEPARTMENTS

Establish a faculty/staff-based Student Support Committee. Once the SPOC program is defined, the SPOC staff or team should pull together a committee of representatives from various campus offices, including financial aid, academic affairs, student housing, admissions, student support services, student health, dining, and athletics. Representatives should be invited to take an inventory of ways their office may be able to support students experiencing homelessness. The committee should meet regularly to plan and implement a network of support and address new challenges and barriers as they arise. The Student Support Committee could conduct outreach efforts within the broader community, inviting interested agencies and organizations to be included in a list of places to which students in need may be referred, such as hosting resource fairs, Homelessness and Hunger Awareness Week, Campus Pop-up Pantry days, articles in the campus newsletter/newspaper, etc.

These individuals could also engage the campus department individually to broker opportunities where they could support the efforts of the SPOC program:

- Admissions: Provide students with information on campus services, including how to contact their campus SPOC representative and address barriers that exist for obtaining application waivers and/or the need for targeted recruitment efforts focused on homeless youth in high school
- Counseling: Offer crisis intervention or regular consultations, as needed
- Housing: Help with room assignments over breaks and if there is a range of prices associated with housing, help prioritize affordable housing for homeless students
- Career Center: Help find students part time jobs on or near campus as well as help with career preparation
- Advising/Mentors: Offer advising/mentor services that go beyond building a schedule
- Financial Aid: Provide assistance in completing Dependency Override or Special Circumstances process, identifying emergency funding, and possibly help with financial literacy education

- Federal Work Study: Assist with finding part-time on campus employment
- Advancement/Development Office: Work with donors to help sponsor holiday events, emergency funding for books, medical, and other needs.
- Scholarship: Assist with finding funds to fill “gap” between financial aid and actual cost of attendance
- Bursar’s Office: Assist with holding a student’s schedule while payment issues are resolved

#### STUDENT BODY

The SPOC program can reach out to the Student Government Association, Greek Life, student volunteers, and individual classes (for example, service-learning classes, those within the human services/nonprofit programs, etc.) for collaboration. Student volunteers can promote services, facilitate campus awareness of the plight of homeless college students, and/or, for those connected to a pantry, restock the pantry. Student awareness and knowledge of the program can foster referrals; students are aware of friends who are homeless and in need of supportive services and/or advocates.

“We must never accept homelessness as a part of American life. If we all do our part, we won’t have to.”

**The Official Blog of the National Alliance to End Homelessness**, February 23, 2015

## NETWORKING AND STEWARDSHIP

The measure of a successful SPOC program lies in how it leverages existing campus resources to streamline the process by which homeless students can access campus resources. (NCHE, 2014) However, in an effort to expand the services and/or meet the growing demands of homeless students, SPOC programs may also need to consider fundraising.

Through private donations and grants designed to assist homeless students with housing and food insecurity-related expenses, SPOC programs can cover the expense of an on-campus housing deposit, an apartment application fee, a portion of rent, or a full semester’s meal plan. Also, SPOC programs can use their fundraising efforts to fulfill identified service gaps resulting from campus rules, policies, and/or practices; they can work with a private donor and/or a community foundation to fund year-round emergency/ temporary on-campus housing options for homeless students or create need-based scholarships for the program to oversee the awarding of the scholarships.

To raise funds, SPOC programs should request to be assigned to a departmental development officer. The development officer can explain the process for fundraising on campus, such as establishing an account with the campus foundation office that accepts donations, determining whether there is a campus database of donors, and demonstrating the process for accessing the database. SPOC programs should inquire about the process for applying for foundation grants. According to GrantSpace, “A foundation is a non-governmental entity that is established as a nonprofit corporation or a charitable trust, with a principal purpose of making grants to unrelated organizations...” Foundation grants are typically broader in their scope and involve a more simplified process than governmental grants. Lastly, SPOC programs can identify current fundraising efforts through the campus Office of Annual Giving/Development that would be beneficial to the campaign efforts, such as campus phone-a-thons, established capital campaign efforts to support first generation and/or need-based scholarships, or the annual contribution campaign for faculty/staff using payroll deduction.

When it comes to fundraising, SPOC programs must be prepared to participate in stewardship activities. According to the Council for Advancement and Support of Education (CASE),

stewardship covers the administration of gifts and the overseeing, protection, and care of relationships with donors to strengthen and preserve that relationship over time. SPOC program managers are responsible for developing and maintaining a relationship with donors, which involves constant communication to deepen the relationship with the program. This stewardship ensures donors have a positive giving experience that will influence both future giving behavior and what donors will say about the institution and program to other prospective donors. (CASE, Fundraising Fundamentals, Section 7.10)



“An end to homelessness means that every community will have a comprehensive response in place that ensures homelessness is prevented whenever possible, or if it can’t be prevented, it is a rare, brief, and non-recurring experience.”

**Opening Doors**, September 7, 2017

## STATEWIDE SPOC-MODELED NETWORK

Based on a growing awareness of the needs of college students experiencing homelessness, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) encourages states to create State Higher Education Networks. These networks consist of stakeholders from K-12 education, higher education, the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) shelters, community agencies, and college access programs. Network members collaborate to identify and address barriers to higher education access, retention, and success for students experiencing homelessness.

NAEHCY supports State Higher Education Networks by providing technical assistance, training, and facilitation to help develop a statewide higher education strategy for homeless students. Strategies focus on raising awareness of the needs of homeless students, increasing access to higher education for these students, and identifying and providing basic needs and educational supports during the transition into higher education and while the student is enrolled in post-secondary education.

While it may take some time to identify key stakeholders to collaborate with your statewide network for students experiencing homelessness, several states have already created a framework that can be replicated or expanded upon. Three states to research when building a program are Colorado, Georgia, and Pennsylvania.

Colorado was the first state to create a statewide network for students experiencing homelessness. They have been able to identify a SPOC at every college and university in the state and have ongoing training and support for SPOCs. Both students and secondary education staff can reach out to SPOC programs through Colorado’s online SPOC listing at [http://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/highered\\_spocs](http://www.cde.state.co.us/dropoutprevention/highered_spocs).

The Georgia statewide network, The Embark Network, based at the J.W. Fanning Institute for Leadership Development at the University of Georgia, has a mission to serve post-secondary professionals and institutions to ensure connectivity, share best practices, and provide information exchange among students, community-based stakeholders, and K-12 educators in support of former foster and homeless youth. The Embark Network is distinctive due to having an online interactive map allowing youth and liaisons from anywhere to readily identify the SPOC program contact at their technical school, college or university <https://embarkgeorgia.org/statewide-network/campuses>.

Pennsylvania launched its statewide network to support homeless students through the Financial Aid Department at Westchester University. Ongoing training and support has been provided at many campuses in the state, resulting in more SPOC programs on campuses for students experiencing homelessness. To find out more about their statewide network visit [https://www.wcupa.edu/services/fin\\_aid/unaccompaniedHomelessYouth.aspx](https://www.wcupa.edu/services/fin_aid/unaccompaniedHomelessYouth.aspx)

There is no one-size fits all approach to forming a statewide higher education network for students expending homelessness; however, we have identified steps to begin the process of collectively working with other SPOCs:

- Connect with other SPOC programs from nearby colleges and universities and McKinney-Vento liaisons from surrounding K-12 school districts.
- Meet routinely to establish relationships, exchange ideas, identify barriers, discuss steps to streamline processes and, when possible, find ways to align documentation to facilitate smooth transitions between K-12, community colleges, and universities in the area.
- Host collaborative events for homeless youth in K-12 interested in college to complete the process for FSA IDs, FAFSA and/or college applications.
- Set up a user-friendly process to access contact information of K-12 Homeless Liaisons and college and university SPOC contacts.
- Advocate with state officials or governing bodies for K-12 and colleges to support the effort of establishing a State Higher Education Network.
- Register your State Higher Education Network with NAEHCY by emailing [highered@naehcy.org](mailto:highered@naehcy.org).

## Here to help...

NAEHCY is a national membership association dedicated to educational excellence for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Through state and federal policy and technical assistance to our members, students, and the public, we change systems so all children and youth can learn, succeed academically, and achieve their dreams.

Since higher education offers one of the surest pathways out of poverty and homelessness, the Higher Education Committee of NAEHCY is charged to support our college and university partners in their effort to assist homeless youth on their campuses.

For questions or assistance, reach out to our Higher Education Helpline at (855) 446-2673 or [highered@naehcy.org](mailto:highered@naehcy.org).



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