



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

SPOC USER GUIDE

A SINGLE-POINT-OF-CONTACT RESOURCE

For Professionals Who Support Housing-Insecure
College-Bound Youth and Postsecondary Students

2nd Edition | April 2024

Stacey A. Havlik, Ph.D | Villanova University | SPOC Program Consultant, NAEHCY



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

SPOC USER GUIDE

CONTENTS

Introduction	2
Section 1: Background.....	4
Section 2: Single-Point-of-Contact (SPOC) Programs	9
Section 3: Components of a SPOC Program.....	16
Section 4: SPOC Program Management.....	21
Section 5: SPOC Program Funding	32
Section 6: Housing and Food Support & Best Practices.....	40
Section 7: Secondary Settings: SPOC Collaboration.....	46
Section 8: Statewide Networks	53
Section 9: Resources for Students Experiencing Homelessness	
Planning for College.....	58
Section 10: Forms	67
Section 11: References	84
Contributors.....	87



INTRODUCTION

THE SINGLE-POINT-OF-CONTACT (SPOC) MODEL WAS DESIGNED TO PROVIDE A FRAMEWORK FOR PROFESSIONALS WORKING IN HIGHER EDUCATION TO CREATE A SYSTEM OF SUPPORT FOR YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AS THEY ENTER COLLEGE.

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) introduced the original version of the Single-Point-of-Contact (SPOC) Model in 2018.

The purpose of a SPOC program is to designate a point of contact at the university/college level who is knowledgeable on homelessness and who can connect students to resources and remove barriers for youth experiencing homelessness that may hinder their ability to succeed in college. The targeted student group for this model are those youth in recent and current homeless situations who are likely to continue from high school into college.

Since its publication, the original SPOC Model has been presented by NAEHCY to countless stakeholders across the country at the local, state, and national levels, both in person and virtually. As the model was rolled out and presented to those working in both secondary and postsecondary settings, NAEHCY gathered feedback from individuals in the field to determine what was missing and how the model could be further enhanced.

While the main concepts and components behind the original model remain the foundation for this user guide, this latest edition has been enhanced with tools, resources, and document templates that programs need to work effectively to support youth with unstable housing.

Further, while the original SPOC Model focused solely on developing programs at the postsecondary level, this updated version includes the critical role of secondary settings in the transition process for youth experiencing homelessness going to college.

Thus, the purpose of this updated SPOC user guide is to build upon the foundational components of the original SPOC Model by providing a user-friendly guide that is designed for a wide range of professionals across secondary, postsecondary, and community settings. The original model and this updated user guide were designed by consulting with diverse professionals across settings who are working to support youth experiencing homelessness.

At the secondary level this includes state coordinators, local liaisons, social workers, and school counselors, as well as those working in student services and community settings. At the postsecondary level, stakeholders include college students, professors, college and university points of contact for homeless youth, and other professionals supporting youth experiencing homelessness going to college. This updated user guide includes a description of the major components of SPOC programs, real-life examples of best practices, ideas for supporting the transition to college for high school youth experiencing homelessness, resources for students, and templates that can be tailored for use by secondary and postsecondary institutions.



INTRODUCTION

RATHER THAN AIM TO SUGGEST THAT COLLEGE IS THE BEST OPTION, THIS GUIDE PROVIDES A MODEL OF SUPPORT AND A WEALTH OF RESOURCES TO ENSURE THAT THOSE WHO WANT TO ATTEND COLLEGE AND THOSE WHO ARE ALREADY THERE WILL BE WELL SUPPORTED ALONG THEIR JOURNEY.

Throughout the text, the guide provides links to multiple agencies, organizations, and groups with excellent resources for youth experiencing homelessness.

It is important to note that while college-going is the focus of this user guide, college is not always the best option for students experiencing homelessness (or any graduating student, for that matter). Plenty of viable and meaningful postsecondary options do not require attending a four-year institution.

For example, pursuing technical or trade schools, trade apprenticeship programs, military paths, two-year associate degree programs, and community colleges can lead students toward financial independence and successful careers. Thus, when supporting youth, all options should be considered and individualized career support should be provided so that students are empowered to decide whether or not college is the best next step for them.

This guide does not aim to suggest that college is the best option, but rather to provide a model of support and a wealth of resources to ensure that those who want to attend college and those who are already there will be well supported along their journey.

SPOC programs are an important approach to supporting students who are homeless. They help students adjust to and succeed in postsecondary education. This user guide helps campuses determine how to develop a system of services and supports to ensure the success of students experiencing homelessness.

For those campuses with a SPOC program already in place, this guide will serve as a resource for how to enhance current services and advocacy efforts. Secondary counselors, liaisons, and students alike will all benefit from this user guide.



1 BACKGROUND

TO START, IT IS CRITICAL THAT EDUCATORS AND STAKEHOLDERS SUPPORTING YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS UNDERSTAND THE MAGNITUDE OF HOMELESSNESS AND THE DEFINITIONS.

Across the United States, high numbers of students experiencing homelessness or housing instability are enrolled in high school or college. This includes 2.5% of all students in public schools who are identified as experiencing homelessness (National Center for Homeless Education, 2021). Homelessness does not end when students enter college. In fact, the results of one survey found that 12% of community college students and 9% of 4-year university students experienced homelessness (SchoolHouse Connection, 2018). Thus, there is an urgent need to provide high school students experiencing homelessness the support necessary to ensure they can graduate and attend college, and to assist them in identifying the resources they need once in college.

This section provides essential background information including definitions of homelessness and food insecurity, and an overview of homelessness and education.

12% **OF COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS**
SCHOOLHOUSE CONNECTION, 2018

DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS*

* U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, 2016

Students can be identified as experiencing homelessness if they fall under one of the following:

- Sharing housing with others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
- Staying in:
 - hotels, motels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to a lack of alternative, adequate housing
 - emergency or transitional shelters;
 - public or private places not designed for humans to live
 - cars, parks, bus or train stations, abandoned buildings, or substandard housing

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ([U.S. Department of Education, 2016](#)) – Title X, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act – defines homelessness as those individuals who lack a “fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”

The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law passed in 1987, reauthorized in 2015 by Title IX, Part A of Every Student Succeeds Act (42 U.S.C. § 11431 et seq.; hereafter “the McKinney-Vento Act”).

It guarantees educational rights and supports for students experiencing homelessness. This law places requirements upon pre-K-12 schools to remove barriers to the access and success of children in school who are experiencing homelessness. Main themes of the law include school stability, school access, support for academic success, and child-centered/best interest decision making. The law carries the full weight of Federal consequences for compliance, as do other such programs in the schools.

The definition also includes migratory students who are living in a situation that meets the homeless definition criteria (42 U.S.C. § 11434(a)(2)).

9% OF FOUR-YEAR
UNIVERSITY STUDENTS
EXPERIENCE
HOMELESSNESS
SCHOOLHOUSE CONNECTION, 2018

DEFINITION OF HOMELESSNESS

CONT.

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD, 2013), under the final rule in defining “homelessness” found in Notice PIH 2013-15 (HA), defines homelessness to include four categories. The HUD definition, below, provides further clarification on which students in colleges and universities qualify as experiencing homelessness.

THESE CATEGORIES ARE:

- 1. Individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence, including any individual who is exiting an institution where they resided for 90 days or less and who resided in an emergency shelter or a place not meant for human habitation immediately before entering that institution;**
- 2. Individuals and families who will imminently lose their primary nighttime residence;**
- 3. Unaccompanied youth, families with children, and youth who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes and do not otherwise qualify as homeless under this definition; or**
- 4. Individuals and families who are fleeing, or are attempting to flee, domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, stalking, or other dangerous or life-threatening conditions that relate to violence against the individual or a family member (76 FR 75994).**

Because no standard federal definition is specifically designated for college students, universities can use state guidelines or one or both of the definitions above to make homelessness determinations.


Both McKinney-Vento and HUD definitions of homelessness use the phrase, “individuals and families who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” This terminology helps to guide housing determinations for students across both high school and college settings.

FOOD INSECURITY

Students experiencing homelessness often suffer from food insecurity as an additional barrier to meeting their basic needs. The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA, 2021) defines food insecurity as including both low food security and very low food security. Individuals with low food security include those who experience a “reduced quality, variety, or desirability of diet;” however, they continue to have food to consume. Those individuals experiencing very low food security experience reduced food consumption and disruptions in their meals.

A 2021 USDA report (Coleman-Jensen et al., 2021) found that 10.5% of households across the United States experienced food insecurity. Although the exact number of high school students experiencing food insecurity is difficult to determine and numbers are likely higher than what is reported, one sample of nearly 1500 high school students found that 27% experienced moderate to high food insecurity (Niemeier & Fitzpatrick, 2019).

Food insecurity in high school students has been found to be related to social factors such as depression, student social stressors, and neighborhood safety. Recent research suggests that food insecurity also remains high among college students. The Hope Lab’s 2020 #realcollege survey found that 39% of the large sample of college students surveyed had experienced food insecurity in the previous 30 days (Hope Lab, 2020). Thus, colleges must be mindful of ensuring that their students have access to both food and housing for the time they are enrolled.



27% OF HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS EXPERIENCE MODERATE TO HIGH FOOD INSECURITY
NIEMEIER & FITZPATRICK, 2019

HOMELESSNESS & EDUCATION

Students experiencing homelessness who desire to attend college after high school may face countless barriers before they can graduate from high school and successfully enter college. With the transient nature of homelessness, students experiencing housing loss often have gaps on their academic records due to switching schools and not having transcripts always follow them to each school.

Further challenges may include lack of a support system to help them transition to college, mental health issues, financial instability, and unmet basic needs ([National Center for Homeless Education \[NCHE\], 2015](#)).

During the 2019–2020 school year, more than 1.27 million students enrolled in pre-K–12 public schools were identified as homeless ([NCHE, 2022](#)). Within this group, more than 112,000 students were also identified as unaccompanied, or not living with a parent or guardian.

The National Center for Education Statistics ([NCES, 2019](#)) reported that, in the 2016–2017 school year, more than 360,000 students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in high school. Thus, a large number of students experiencing homelessness are in high school and getting ready to plan for and transition to their postsecondary endeavors. The vast majority of these students reported living doubled-up with others, with the next largest group residing in shelters.

Homelessness remains a salient issue when students transition from high school to college. According to the #realcollege Survey, administered in 2019 across 227 colleges (the majority of which were community college settings), of the 167,000 surveyed, 46% experienced housing insecurity and 17% reported facing homelessness ([Hope Lab, 2020](#)).

These alarming numbers suggest that all colleges must be prepared to address homelessness on campus and that secondary settings have a role in ensuring that students are entering postsecondary environments where they have the support and resources available to meet their basic needs.

Many homeless college students demonstrate resourcefulness and resilience when dealing with their lack of shelter. They tend to locate temporary housing arrangements; however, these are often short-term, unreliable, and potentially unsafe. Examples include staying on the couch at a friend or significant other's house or sleeping in their car or in the library or gym.

Because many students experiencing homelessness are not identified as such, for fear of repercussions or because of lack of understanding, knowing the true number of students facing housing insecurity in college and/or recognizing how to intervene can be challenging. Many institutions of higher education across the country likely have students experiencing homelessness on their campuses. Although they may find a place to sleep temporarily, longer term solutions are needed to ensure consistency. Thus, universities must have systems in place to ensure students experiencing homelessness are identified and provided with permanent solutions to meet their basic shelter needs.

1.27 MILLION
STUDENTS ENROLLED IN
PRE-K-12 PUBLIC SCHOOLS
WERE IDENTIFIED AS HOMELESS
NCHE, 2022

A photograph of three men in a library setting, looking at a laptop. The man on the right is pointing at the screen. The man in the middle is wearing a baseball cap and glasses. The man on the left is also wearing a baseball cap. The background shows bookshelves filled with books. A large white number '2' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

2

SINGLE-POINT-OF-CONTACT (SPOC) PROGRAMS

NAEHCY DEFINES SINGLE-POINT-OF-CONTACT (SPOC) PROGRAMS AS designated safe and supportive college offices and/or staff members committed to helping students experiencing homelessness to successfully navigate the college admissions and enrollment process and succeed while in college by providing supportive services and connecting them to on- and off-campus resources.

WHAT ARE SINGLE-POINT-OF-CONTACT PROGRAMS?

The NAEHCY SPOC Model is based on the belief that all colleges and universities have designated safe and supportive college offices and/or administrators and staff committed to helping homeless students successfully navigate the college admission and enrollment process. These offices must continually connect students to campus-based support systems and resources that can foster positive retention and graduation rates for this population.

The SPOC Model encourages the implementation of a streamlined process on college campuses, whereby staff or a team are equipped to assist and/or advocate on behalf of students experiencing homelessness.

The SPOC Model can be implemented by:

1. designating an individual to serve as the Campus SPOC,
2. identifying a staff member at an established office or department where SPOC duties can be intermingled within the current functionality, or
3. establishing a separate department or office solely dedicated to implementing the SPOC Model at the college or university.

WHAT ARE SINGLE-POINT-OF-CONTACT PROGRAMS? CONT.

The chosen approach is based on the resources and needs of each individual campus. There is not one best approach; rather, the SPOC program structure should be based on the unique needs of students experiencing homelessness on that particular campus. For example, at a university with a small homeless student population, adding the SPOC responsibility onto an individual's current work duties may be sufficient, such as a financial aid officer who is also designated the SPOC. Other universities with higher numbers may require an entire dedicated office to manage the SPOC program.

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 college from high school. The campus SPOC can build a bridge between the high school and university setting as a way to ensure a smooth transition.

To facilitate this process, the SPOC can build partnerships with stakeholders at the secondary level including homeless liaisons, school counselors, school social workers, and/or other school personnel who support youth experiencing homelessness through the college preparation process. The SPOC can work with these individuals to identify the student's specific needs coming to college and connect the student with resources to meet those needs prior to starting.

The SPOC also works with admissions officers to target recruitment areas from which students experiencing homelessness often matriculate. Facilitating these relationships through outreach efforts strengthens the bridge from high school to higher education, ensuring that students experiencing homelessness are supported prior to the onset of their postsecondary studies.

WHY DO COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES NEED SPOC PROGRAMS?

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act authorizes the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program and is the primary federal legislation related to the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Under McKinney-Vento, all public pre-K-12 schools or local educational agencies (LEAs) are funded under Title I to serve disadvantaged students. Homeless students are categorically eligible for Title I. The districts largely absorb the costs related to McKinney-Vento in terms of funding a liaison for each student and other costs, such as transportation expenses. As a result, all school districts or LEAs have a local homeless liaison (required by federal law) tasked with serving all students experiencing homelessness within their district. Liaisons are responsible for coordinating resources and guaranteeing access to education for the students they serve.

Students experiencing homelessness often become close to their liaison and rely on them as a source of knowledge and comfort during high school, although this can vary between districts and schools. Larger school districts may also utilize specialized or additionally trained support staff, such as school social workers, to provide more individualized services and management of cases for students experiencing homelessness.

With the liaison's role designed to support students through 12th grade and through graduation, students experiencing homelessness often become accustomed to working with the liaison. It can be difficult to transition to college without this type of continued support. Having a SPOC in higher education therefore extends the experience of working with a liaison and gives students support through the transition to college and toward sustainable stability in life as an adult.

Although college campuses have many resources already in place that can help students address their social/emotional and basic needs, students experiencing homelessness may not be aware of these resources or know how to access them. Further, students experiencing homelessness who are also first-generation college students (i.e., neither parent earned a bachelor's degree) and/or who are unaccompanied may not have family members or guardians with past college experiences who can help them understand the complexities of a university system.

Thus, universities across the country have recognized the need to identify a person or program on campus who can guide students who are homeless to identify their needs and access the services they need to be successful in college.

TERMINOLOGY

SPOC is one of several different terms that can be used to define this type of program. Institutions may choose to use the term single point of contact or they may call the position something else that is more fitting for the institution.

For example, the position could be named any of the following, or another title:

- designated support personnel
- point of contact
- college liaison
- student success coordinator

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS OF A SPOC

Many college and university campuses have already identified and responded to the need to support homeless youth and taken the lead by implementing a SPOC program for this growing population of students. Because each university and college system is unique, every SPOC program will look different depending on various institutional factors, such as setting, student demographics, number of students experiencing homelessness, resources available on and off campus, type of institution, funding available, etc.

NAEHCY SINGLE-POINT-OF-CONTACT MODEL

Below is NAEHCY's SPOC Model, which describes SPOC program essential elements. This model can be tailored to each institution's individual resources and structure. Universities can use this model as a guide to design their SPOC program and ensure that they have all of the necessary systems in place.

STUDENT SERVICES		
Direct student services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Intake • Connection to resources • Advisement • Basic needs provision and support (including food, clothing, shelter) 	Indirect student services <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnerships and referrals to on- and off-campus resources • Partnerships for basic need support: food and housing • Consultation and training for university faculty and staff 	Student outreach <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program marketing • Case management • Record keeping • Student identification

FOUNDATION		
Program evaluation and needs assessments <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual program evaluation • Needs assessments 	Program development <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program funding (e.g., university, grant funding, endowment, fundraising efforts, or other internal and outside support) 	Administrative structure <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office space • Professional leadership (e.g., program director) • Staff (e.g., full- or part-time employees, student employees, or volunteers)

The specific services provided and how they are rendered to students will look different based on the setting. Community partners and resources will vary greatly depending on where a university is located. For example, to address student housing, some communities may have voucher programs, transitional housing, or other housing programs available in the community and/or supported by the state. Universities may or may not be able to provide on-campus housing for their students year-round, including gaps between academic terms. Students attending universities situated in cities will have transportation needs that differ greatly from those living in rural or suburban areas.



SECTION 2 | SPOC PROGRAMS

STUDENT STORY: WORKING WITH A SPOC

To illustrate how a SPOC program can support students, we share a real-life case example that describes the experience of a student facing housing insecurity while transitioning to college. Amie's story demonstrates the importance of having a supportive team available for students from high school to college. Amie's resilience as an individual, alongside the additional support of housing staff and college administrators ensured her success in college, in spite of the challenges she faced.

The name and some details are changed to protect the anonymity of the student.

Amie relocated to a new state in order to enroll in a community college as an out-of-state student. She had selected this institution because she knew she would have access to a single-point-of-contact program on campus—an individual at the institution prepared to work with youth experiencing homelessness—and the housing support she would need.

Prior to entering college, Amie lived in transitional housing where she was supported by staff to identify resources to prepare for college. The staff in the transitional living program supported Amie in identifying financial aid and other resources, which assisted her through her postsecondary planning and preparation process. The community college was located in a state where students with certain grade point averages can transfer immediately from a 2-year to a 4-year institution.

Although Amie had support selecting a college that met her needs, she still struggled. When she first entered college, she lived in transitional housing, which was temporary (9 months); thus, she experienced stress when she considered her future plans.

To identify more secure housing, she worked with the campus SPOC to apply for a housing voucher program. When Amie finally received a housing voucher, the campus SPOC taught her how it worked.

Transportation was also a struggle for Amie. She had to rely on buses, which took considerably longer than travel by car. While Amie had to put considerable time into meeting her basic needs such as housing and transportation, she also had to focus on her school work, which was certainly affected by these outside stressors. Through working with the SPOC program on campus, Amie was able to get her questions an-

swered and to better understand and feel supported in knowing her options. The SPOC connected Amie to campus resources to meet her basic needs. For example, they helped her obtain her driver's license and receive access to a car.

The SPOC also helped Amie recognize the value of co-curricular activities while in college. They assisted her in finding a team sport that helped her get involved and feel more connected socially at the college. She also joined a science, technology, engineering, and math (STEM) academy through which she connected with other female scholars. These activities ensured that Amie got the social/emotional support she needed. The SPOC helped her recognize the need for having a strong support system, including relationships with case workers and other staff. With the complexities of Amie's housing situation, having SPOC staff to assist her navigate the system helped her succeed in college.



COMPONENTS OF A SPOC PROGRAM

The purpose of a SPOC program is to designate an individual or office on campus who will provide services and support, advocate for youth experiencing homelessness, and guide them to on- and off-campus resources to address their needs.

Since colleges and universities are all different and have unique settings and students, there is no one-size-fits-all SPOC program. Thus, this section is intended to guide colleges and universities to design and develop a SPOC program that fits within their institutional structure and needs. The table below describes key elements of the NAEHCY SPOC Model, with guiding questions that can be used to design a SPOC program to meet students' needs.

SPOC PROGRAM DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT - GUIDED DISCUSSION AND PLANNING WORKSHEET

SPOC ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION & CONSIDERATIONS	GUIDING QUESTIONS
FOUNDATION		
The critical elements to maintaining an effective and organized SPOC program	NEEDS ASSESSMENT AND PROGRAM EVALUATION Data collection is an integral part of the SPOC program. This includes an annual needs assessment of campus climate and the general experience and numbers of students experiencing homelessness. For program evaluation purposes, data should be collected annually to demonstrate how the program is serving students and to determine how to enhance the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there a state or local legislative mandate regarding SPOC programs? • What is the institutional buy-in and support for the SPOC program from the university administration? • What data is available or needed to gain (or continue to receive) buy-in from administration? • How will the program be evaluated each year? * How will data be collected, analyzed, and stored? • How will reports be shared with stakeholders?
	PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT SPOC programs need various levels of funding. The amount and source of funding is dependent upon the institution resources. Thus, program financial development is a critical consideration. SPOC programs should work closely with other university offices, such as development, housing, admissions, accounting, and others who can support the financial aspects of the program.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What aspects of the SPOC program need funding? • How will the SPOC program be funded? • What institutional funds will be available? What can they support? • What governmental funds (local or federal) are available? What will they cover? • What private grants or foundation funds are available to cover program costs? • Who will be responsible for grant writing? • Who will be responsible for program accounting?
	ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE A well-organized SPOC program has clear administrative structures with well-defined rules and expectations for all individuals involved. SPOC programs may be an independent office or program or integrated into a current program or office on campus.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where will the SPOC program be located? Will it be a single administrator, a separate program, or integrated into an existing campus program? • Will the program need a name? What will it be? • Who will direct or lead to the program? • How will the roles and duties of the SPOC program be written into job descriptions? • How will records be maintained within the program? • How will student privacy be protected (FERPA considerations)? • What office space is available for the program? Will the office provide privacy for students seeking services? Does the office have space for certain services (e.g., a food pantry, private space for tutoring or counseling, etc.)? • How do students qualify for the program and what is the intake process for incoming students?

SPOC PROGRAM DESIGN & DEVELOPMENT - GUIDED DISCUSSION AND PLANNING WORKSHEET

SPOC ELEMENT	DESCRIPTION & CONSIDERATIONS	GUIDING QUESTIONS
STUDENT SERVICES		
The direct and indirect services provided to students, including student outreach and continued connection and support.	DIRECT SERVICES SPOC programs provide various forms of direct support to students experiencing homelessness. This may include a wide variety of services related to supporting students' basic, social/emotional, and academic needs. This includes counseling, advising, financial literacy training, mentorship, and other supportive services. SPOC program offices may also house direct services such as food pantries or clothing closets that qualified students can access.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Which student development theory or practices will inform program services? What direct services will the program provide? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Examples: advocacy, advising, case management, mentorship, counseling, basic need supplies (food/toiletry pantry), clothing closet, financial assistance/counseling, and other important programs based on specific student needs. Who will provide each of the services?
	INDIRECT SERVICES Indirect services include collaborative partnerships and referrals. SPOC programs must develop a network of allies. The campus SPOC must identify campus departments and academic units willing to serve as student allies—this can be helpful with resource development and advocacy efforts.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What services are needed that the SPOC program cannot provide on its own (e.g., mental health services)? Who are community partners on campus with whom the SPOC program can collaborate? How can the SPOC connect with partners across campus and outside to facilitate a “warm hand-off” vs. cold calling? What resources are needed in the community? Who can the SPOC program partner with to fulfill those needs?
	STUDENT OUTREACH The most important element of a SPOC program is the students they serve. Thus, a critical component is determining criteria to assess student eligibility to be served by a SPOC and determining ways to recruit identified students for programs and services. SPOC programs must be proactive by working with admissions and financial aid (e.g., adding a checkbox to the admission application for early identification and outreach efforts to students experiencing homelessness). Ideally, students are identified prior to entering the institution by coordinating with local liaisons and school counselors at the secondary level.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How will students be identified? What documentation of homelessness will be required to be served by the program, if any? How will current and incoming students be informed about the program (i.e., program marketing and advertising)? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Can campus communications promote the program across campus and to local media? How can flyers be printed and posted? Where can the program be advertised electronically? How easily can information be found for homeless students on the university website? For states with tuition and fee waivers, how will the SPOC program work with the Office of Financial Aid to identify students who receive this support to ensure they are provided services through the SPOC program? What outreach efforts will be included in the program to connect eligible students with the SPOC program? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Will FAFSA data be accessible to the SPOC program to identify unaccompanied students? How will the program collaborate with financial aid for this or other information such as Pell Grant recipients? How will the SPOC program connect with high schools to identify students before they enter the program?

STARTING & MAINTAINING A SPOC PROGRAM

When first developing a SPOC program, the first step is determining a timeline for program launch. Although making services available quickly is critical, launching the program in waves or phases may make sense in some settings, with some services available initially and more added over time.

For example, the SPOC may be able to quickly pull together campus resources and provide training for housing and financial aid administrators to be alerted to the unique issues of homeless students. The SPOC can act as a means to direct students who are experiencing homelessness to resources on campus.

They may also be able to quickly bring together a clothing closet by holding a clothing drive for a few weeks during one semester. Other services may take more time to set up, such as a food pantry, financial counseling, long-term housing options, etc.

SPOC programs must incorporate a sustainability plan to account for program growth and consider how it will evolve 2, 5, and 10 years from the onset of the program. This will rely on goal setting, program evaluation, and program funding. Further, the SPOC program staff should consider how it will transition over time if it grows to bring on new staff and/or leadership, and how it will adjust to influxes in student populations. This underscores the importance of a well-organized administrative structure so that any transition in leadership or staff will be seamless.



SPOC PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

UNCONQUERED SCHOLARS PROGRAM AT FLORIDA STATE UNIVERSITY

One example of an active SPOC program is the Unconquered Scholars Program at Florida State University (FSU). FSU has a comprehensive program that is designed to support enrolled college students who are experiencing homelessness, in foster care, in relative care, or have a ward of the state status.

Within FSU's strategic plan, the state of Florida has committed to building a pipeline for foster youth and homeless college students to attend the university. Through this effort, students experiencing homelessness receive tuition to attend Florida's state institutions. The Unconquered Scholars Program at FSU supports these youth through an array of services, providing a place for students to turn when they have questions or are in need of help.

FOUNDATION

The mission of the Unconquered Scholars Program at FSU is to "provide qualified Florida State University students guidance, continual mentorship, advocacy, security, and a voice to further ensure their personal academic success and long-term independence." For students experiencing homelessness, this means that while they are enrolled at FSU, they can receive individualized support from the moment they step on campus. The administrative structure for the program includes a senior program director and a program coordinator who provide direct and indirect services.

STUDENT SERVICES

The Unconquered Scholars Program offers individualized direct and indirect student services to ensure that students who need additional support will receive it. Tailored services for students experiencing homelessness often include "one-on-one advising, a summer bridge program, college life coaching, and financial aid assistance. The program's staff also support students in the program directly and indirectly through facilitating or providing referrals to mental health services, academic and skills workshops, and volunteer opportunities.

In terms of student outreach, FSU takes a proactive approach by contacting incoming students who might qualify for the program. Unconquered Scholars Program staff members reach out to independent living coordinators and homeless school district liaisons across the state of Florida to encourage youth to apply to FSU.

A multi-step intake process to enter the program ensures that the educational institution has an accurate and detailed understanding of each student's situation. Students complete several assessments so that staff have a strong understanding of their background and needs. They also engage in a get-to-know-you chat with a strengths-based trained staff member specializing in working with youth experiencing homelessness and former foster youth.



4

SPOC PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

SPOC programs are composed of myriad moving parts, thus, integrating a solid program management system with a clear leadership structure enables a program to run smoothly and effectively.

Whether the leadership structure includes one director who coordinates all elements of the program single-handedly or a team of staff who facilitate services, how the program will be managed must be clearly defined.

ELEMENTS OF SPOC PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

SPOC program management is a complex process, involving program staff and students. The following roles should be considered when determining how best to manage the SPOC program (adapted from [Moore, 2000](#)):

- Managing partnerships between the SPOC program and other constituent programs on and off campus
- Communicating with students and other stakeholders to inform them about programming
- Maintaining communication pathways across programs and between SPOC resources
- Evaluating the program to identify issues, risks, and benefits
- Resolving presenting issues and barriers
- Maintaining sponsor support and alignment with university objectives
- Advocating for program resources
- Planning budget and resource management
- Managing program goals and tracking progress toward those goals
- Collecting program and student records

PROGRAM LEADERSHIP

The designated SPOC leader directs all aspects of the program.

Direct responsibilities may include the following (adapted from Moore, 2000):

- Establish buy-in from the institution
- Ensure timeliness of services
- Maintain program budget
- Ensure program is aligned with mission and established goals through annual or bi-annual review
- Coordinate and identify partnerships on and off campus
- Identify funding sources
- Establish, coordinate, and lead a Student Support Committee (described in detail below)
- Oversee data collection processes and record management
- Oversee marketing and student recruitment
- Provide program status updates

Individuals best suited for the SPOC position will be comfortable with building partnerships across the institution, have a deep understanding of the university's resources, know how to identify funding resources, and have knowledge about financial aid and housing on campus.



SPOC PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT:

THE THRIVE CENTER AT HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

One SPOC program, the Thrive Center at Holyoke Community College (HCC), was able to transition from a program solely funded by outside resources to one that received financial support from the institution itself. To gain the buy-in necessary for this transition, the SPOC staff provided university administrators with data to confirm the need for a SPOC program on campus.

They used Pell Grant data as one data point. For instance, if a student's estimated family contribution is so low that they are eligible for a Pell Grant, then the student is likely to also be eligible for Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) and other benefits (U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, 2021).

The SPOC staff identified a gap between the number of students at the college who qualified for a Pell Grant and those who were actually enrolled in SNAP benefits. This suggested that either students did not know they were eligible or were struggling to complete the SNAP application.

By using these data to show that there was, in fact, a gap at their college, HCC staff demonstrated that a SPOC program was necessary so that students who were facing food insecurity (and homelessness) had a contact on campus to answer questions and educate them on what was available for basic need support.

ESTABLISHING UNIVERSITY BUY-IN

To optimize the resources of the SPOC program, buy-in (i.e., belief in and support of the program) is necessary from university administration, such as the dean, president, etc. Establishing buy-in and maintaining support from the university requires the SPOC to collect data and continually promote program accomplishments. Further, a needs assessment on university students' housing and food needs is an important first step to providing justification for the SPOC program. SPOC can be proactive and connect with state Homeless Children and Youth coordinators to access state and local data on homeless children and youth to keep abreast of trends in numbers of homeless students who may be matriculating into their institutions. SPOC may also partner with LEA homeless liaisons, especially for those districts who send significant numbers of students to the university or community college, as another source of data and need. This may provide an opportunity to recruit these students or prepare for higher numbers of homeless students potentially entering the institution.

WITHOUT BUY-IN FROM THE LARGER COMMUNITY, GETTING THE PROGRAM OFF THE GROUND WILL BE DIFFICULT. THOSE WHO ALREADY HAVE BUY-IN MUST CONSIDER HOW TO MAINTAIN IT AND CONTINUALLY PROMOTE THE VALUE OF THE SPOC PROGRAM.

Establishing buy-in also requires building relationships with leaders across the institution. This involves SPOC program staff regularly connecting with and presenting to institution constituents through faculty congress/ senate, staff senate, and, if possible, the president's cabinet to increase awareness of housing and food insecurity on campus and to promote the role of the SPOC program.

Such connection allows those in administrative positions the opportunity to understand the needs of youth who are food and/or housing insecure and their prevalence on campus. SPOC staff should utilize the qualitative and quantitative data obtained from the campus needs assessment to inform the conversation with campus leadership.

STUDENT SUPPORT COMMITTEE

Once the SPOC program is established, the SPOC staff or team can identify a committee of representatives from various campus offices, including financial aid, academic affairs, student housing, admissions, student support services, student health, dining, and athletics. These folks all interact with students in different ways and can promote available resources and provide direct support for youth experiencing homelessness. At least one university student must be included on the committee to provide essential student voice in the program development. The committee should meet regularly (once per semester at minimum) and be available for meetings as issues arise.

Establishing a Student Support Committee aids in program development and evaluation, maintains buy-in from the university, serves to trouble-shoot program barriers, and allows constituent voices to enhance the program. The Student Support Committee is encouraged to 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. The SPOC program staff should provide or coordinate professional development on housing and food insecurity for the committee members, who can, in turn, spread awareness to their own offices. For example, they might attend a meeting with all department heads and discuss the unique issues facing students who are experiencing homelessness and how this might present in a classroom setting, and suggest strategies to support students.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATING SERVICES

Building partnerships between the SPOC program and institutional and community resources to ensure the program has support and students can receive the services they need is an important component of the program. Such partnerships create awareness for the SPOC program while providing direct and indirect support to students. Because the types of resources available will vary depending on each university's setting, SPOC programs should rely on program evaluation and needs assessment to determine specific needs, and then identify which on-campus resources could fill those needs and what further resources are required. With positions in higher education seeing regular turnover as staff members move to different departments or leave the institution, building partnerships is an ongoing commitment.

Thus, establishing a relationship with one office is not a one-time event, but demands, at minimum, annual connection. This can consist of a phone call, drop-by, coffee, or lunch explaining SPOC services offered and learning about what the office provides, in effort to foster relationships, understand changing department roles, and connect with new staff members each year.

The SPOC program staff should target specific departments that clearly support the program's determined mission, such as admissions, financial aid, campus housing, scholarships, campus bookstore, registrar's office, campus police, counseling, parking/transportation, and food services, to name a few.

Further, working with campus public relations offices may help to promote and advertise the program. Partnerships with these departments help the SPOC program to support the academic, social/emotional, and basic needs of students experiencing homelessness and provide a point of contact at various offices for the SPOC when working with a distressed student.

BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS AND COORDINATING SERVICES CONT.

To connect with faculty and staff within each academic department, SPOC program staff should identify points of contact to help troubleshoot issues and remove obstacles that may arise within their area.

Ideas for connecting with faculty and staff include:

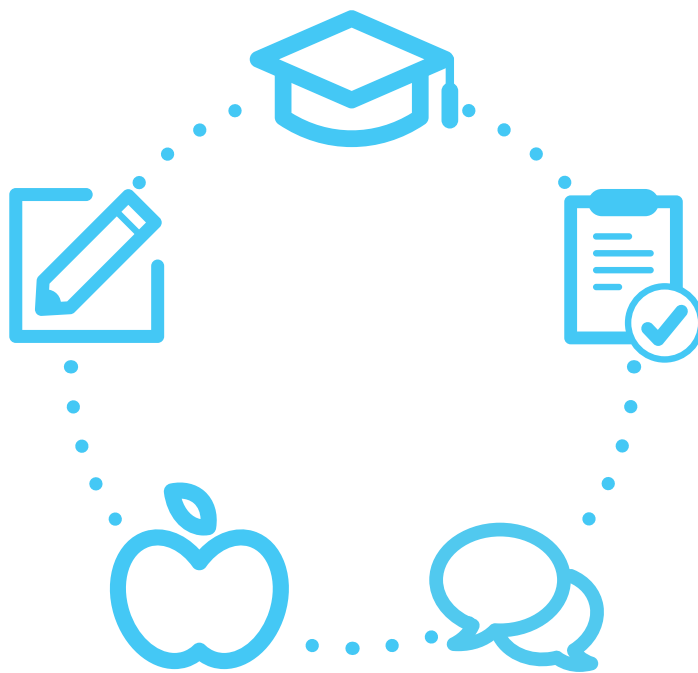
- Host annual professional development opportunities for faculty and staff on homelessness and food insecurity (e.g., a lunch and learn or a virtual training about the challenges of homelessness on campus, how to support students experiencing homelessness, and signs to look for in their classrooms).
- Send an annual email to all academic departments about how to identify students who are housing and food insecure.
- Post information about the definition of homelessness and how to support homeless youth on the university's email list or e-newsletter.
- Attend a faculty meeting once a year to disseminate information on housing and food insecurity and answer questions.
- Connect with new incoming faculty by presenting during faculty on-boarding and/or orientation programs.
- Present on homelessness and food insecurity at a faculty congress/senate meeting.
- Present at a board of trustees meeting.
- Invite staff and faculty members to be on the Student Support Committee.

CAMPUS CONNECTIONS

Because most resources on college campuses are free to enrolled students, identifying partners on campus and leveraging available resources is critical for the SPOC program.

On the following page is a general list of university resources that are commonly available on campuses and that represent potential core partnerships for any SPOC program. SPOC programs must reach out to each department/office individually to determine what they can offer to students experiencing homelessness and housing insecurity—and to discuss how the SPOC office can support their work. During meetings, they can discuss a referral plan and identify the best points of contact in each office.

The SPOC must also provide these partners with information on the basic, educational, and social/emotional needs of students experiencing homelessness so that they can better work with and advocate for these students.



CAMPUS CONNECTIONS CONT.



ACADEMIC SUPPORT

- Office of Admissions
- Disability and Learning Support Services
- Financial Aid
- Bursar's Office
- Instructional Technology
- Writing Center
- Library



BASIC NEEDS SUPPORT

- Housing
- Food Services
- Campus Food Pantry
- Health Center
- Parking and Transportation



CAREER SUPPORT

- Career Center
- Business Attire Closet



SPOC PROGRAM SUPPORT

- Advancement and Development Office
- Alumni Services
- University Marketing and Human Resources



SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL SUPPORT

- Title IX Office
- Counseling Services
- Bridge Programs
- Office of Student Involvement
- Study Abroad Programs
- Office of Multicultural/Intercultural Affairs
- Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

CASE AND RECORDS MANAGEMENT

In light of each student's unique circumstances and background, having a system in place for case management is imperative for SPOC programs to track student needs and services provided. 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" (University of California at Davis Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs, 2019). Using HECMA's definition of case management, SPOC staff would periodically meet with each student for 20- to 60-minute appointments to assess their needs and review ongoing progress.

SPOC programs may elect to use available software that can maintain students' confidentiality to manage this information. Incoming students can be identified during the university registration process through questionnaires that ask them to report their current or most recent residency and access to food as recommended above. Further, current students should be invited to complete questionnaires throughout their enrollment to provide updates on their housing status.

This would allow the university to know who is experiencing food and/or housing insecurity from when they first enroll, and to continue to track them once they enter. An enrollment item might simply ask students to check a box if they do not have a fixed and regular nighttime residence. A "yes" answer to this item could trigger a referral to the SPOC for a more intensive assessment of the student. See "FORM 4: Homelessness Determination Form" on page 71 for more specific items that can be tailored for enrollment forms.

EFFECTIVE SPOC PROGRAMS HAVE A CONFIDENTIAL PROCESS IN PLACE FOR RECORDS MANAGEMENT.

This includes:

- Using a confidential system to maintain records related to housing and food insecurity for each student.
- Ensuring that the records are only available to those who need the information, such as key staff within the program.
- Tracking students' use of services within the SPOC program, including attendance at appointments, use of food pantry, meeting with case managers, etc.
- Maintaining records of referrals provided to students across the university.
- Tracking the location of students' housing each semester.
- Tracking students' use of emergency funds.



SPOC PROGRAM FUNDING

Funding is necessary to support SPOC goals and cover program-related expenses; however, funding needs and sources vary from institution to institution. A needs assessment (i.e., assessment of the food and housing needs of all enrolled students) and funding evaluation (i.e., assessment of available funding vs. funding needed) is the first essential step in determining what is needed by students experiencing homelessness across the institution and how those elements will be covered through the SPOC program.

FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS

The elements of the SPOC program that need to be funded and the amount of funding available depend upon available resources at the institution and the needs of that particular student body. For instance, a university with higher numbers of students experiencing housing insecurity will certainly need more funding and resources than a school where only a small number of students lack consistent housing.

Considering university resources is important before developing new programs or requesting funding. Some programs may need very little funding if students already have access to ample resources on campus, such as counseling services and/or intensive academic support with staff who are knowledgeable about homelessness. Other SPOC programs may need substantial funding if they are stand-alone programs that cover staff and deliver a wide range of services in-house. SPOC programs may be able to rely on partnerships with outside agencies and donations and/or receive funding from the institution.

Using the SPOC model as a guide, the table on the following page describes essential elements of SPOC programs that must be considered when assessing funding needs. This table can be used to audit how each area is funded through the university and where further support may be necessary.



FUNDING CONSIDERATIONS CONT.

STUDENT SERVICES

Resources necessary to support enrolled students experiencing food and housing insecurity

Direct student services

- Record-keeping software to track services provided
- Outside resources that may require additional funding (e.g., outside financial or legal advisors or mental health counselors)
- In-house staff to provide direct services, such as advising
- Basic needs provisions, on site or through a partner (e.g., food pantry, clothing closet, etc.)
- Emergency funds to cover an array of basic and academic needs
- Supplies that make the office more inviting for students (e.g., coffee, tea, water, snacks, etc.)

Indirect student services

- Student housing (e.g., year-round housing; off-campus housing support; emergency rent; rental application fees)
- Meal plan coverage (could be covered by the university or through meal swipe donation programs)
- Professional development fees for staff training

Student outreach

- Software for case management and student recordkeeping
- Marketing materials for promoting the SPOC program (e.g., flyers, banners, signs, etc.)

FOUNDATION

Resources necessary to support the core foundation of the SPOC program and ensure its effective implementation

Program evaluation and needs assessments

- Software to host and maintain needs assessment and program evaluation records
- Survey software, such as Qualtrics, Survey Monkey, to conduct assessments
- Secure software to maintain confidential records

Administrative structure and staffing

- Office space to host the staff and program; this may need to accommodate a clothing closet and/or food pantry and should have a private space for student meetings
- Staff funding: Program director and necessary support staff salary

BASIC NEEDS AND EMERGENCY FUNDS

Every SPOC program must have access to readily available funds to cover immediate basic needs and emergencies that arise for students. This might include providing funds to support an on or off-campus housing deposit, an apartment application fee, a portion of rent, or a full semester's meal plan.

Other more immediate needs might include a tank of gas, the cost of a dental emergency, or an annual car inspection. Emergency funds may also be used to cover year-round emergency housing or temporary on-campus housing for students experiencing homelessness or to create need-based scholarships.

SPOC programs can also provide emergency funding to fulfill identified service gaps resulting from costly campus rules, policies, and/or practices. For example, if a student gets a parking ticket and they do not have money to pay for it, they may not be able to register for class. Thus, emergency funds could cover the fee to assist the student to get into their classes. These funds could also cover activity fees for membership in a club or activity.

To determine who is eligible for such funding and how to distribute the funds, SPOC programs must create policies and procedures regarding emergency funds such as documentation for distribution and prioritization of emergencies and have a process to determine how many times students can request funds and how much each time. Programs should clarify when and whether exceptions are allowed. It is recommended that programs form a small committee to review requests and make decisions about SPOC emergency funds on a case-by-case basis. Decisions should not be made by one individual, because such determinations can be complicated. The process must have a clear, step-by-step process for students to apply for funding and get approved quickly ([SchoolHouse Connection, 2019](#)).



EMERGENCY FUNDS REAL-LIFE EXAMPLE:

HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE HOLYOKE, MA

The SPOC program at Holyoke Community College offers emergency funds that can be used to cover critical needs such as dental work, medical insurance, car repairs, or housing application fees. Emergency funds have to be doled out carefully; receiving too much can potentially affect a student's financial aid.

To determine who receives emergency funds, Holyoke's SPOC program, the Thrive program, has an internal committee that reviews specific requests for emergency funds case-by-case and grants approval.

This process safeguards the SPOC program from having to make decisions on emergency funding on their own. The foundation that holds the emergency funds then provides the funds directly to the designee.

For example, they may provide a check to the landlord or mechanic and not directly to the student.

FUNDING SOURCES

SPOC programs can identify a variety of funding sources to cover program expenses, including grants or direct university funding. Successful SPOC programs leverage existing campus resources and services currently available to streamline the process and only seek funding to cover needed resources beyond what is already provided. With universities providing extensive resources to cover many of the basic needs for their students (e.g., counseling services, dining services, academic support/tutoring, etc.), SPOC staff must thoughtfully determine how to best leverage existing resources so as to minimize what needs to be funded beyond those services.

Some states fund point-of-contact programs and even cover tuition for students experiencing homelessness, while others have unfunded mandates. Funded mandates require that state institutions of higher education have a point of contact or liaison for students experiencing homelessness. In these cases, the state reimburses the institution for various elements of the program. For those states with unfunded mandates, the state may require or recommend that institutions have a point of contact but relies primarily on the individual institution to provide funding for the position and programming. Secondary and postsecondary stakeholders providing college support for youth experiencing homelessness must familiarize themselves with the applicable state laws.

GRANTS & FUNDRAISING

To expand the services that are not covered by state or university funding and meet the growing demands of students experiencing homelessness, SPOC programs may need to fundraise and/or apply for external grants. Through private donations and grants designed to assist students experiencing homelessness with housing and food insecurity related expenses, SPOC programs can more comprehensively address student basic needs.

To raise funds, SPOC programs should first connect with a university development officer. Partnering with the Office of Advancement or College Development (sometimes referred to as institutional advancement) at their institution allows these offices to help process gifts and donations. They can also work closely with the SPOC to identify funding needs and build and maintain relationships with funders. Advancement offices may also be a great source of support in identifying funding sources and individual donors. This often happens through the university's alumni network.

The development officer can explain the process for fundraising on campus, such as establishing an account with the campus foundation office that accepts donations, using a campus database of donors if one exists, and accessing the database. SPOC programs can work with the advancement office to identify how to benefit from current fundraising and annual giving efforts, such as campus phone-a-thons (i.e., phone campaign to elicit donations), online donation days, established capital campaign efforts for first generation/need-based scholarships, or annual contribution campaigns for faculty/staff using payroll deduction.

To obtain other funding, SPOC programs can apply for foundation and/or corporate grants, which typically work with nonprofit organizations and are often broader in their scope and involve a more simplified process than governmental grants. This type of private funding is considered a financial donation to the university or the program, and can fund specific activities within the SPOC program or general resources for the SPOC program as a whole.

The SPOC program can work directly with their institution's advancement office to identify these types of grants and receive support and training to apply for them. SPOC staff members and volunteers also may be responsible for identifying, writing, and submitting grant proposals. Thus, having SPOC team members with grantwriting experience is a plus.

STEWARDSHIP

When it comes to fundraising, SPOC programs must participate in stewardship activities. Stewardship goes beyond simply creating a relationship with a funder and extends to maintaining and growing that relationship. Stewardship requires the SPOC program to acknowledge the contributions of their donors by demonstrating responsibility and using the funds as they were intended, establishing a clear process for reporting how the funds were used and managed, and engaging in a continued effort to nurture the relationship with the funder (Kelly, 2004). SPOC programs can foster long-term relationships with donors, demonstrating gratitude for their support and ensuring a sustainable SPOC program that benefits students.

Ideas for enhancing stewardship through the SPOC program include:

- Assign the SPOC program director responsibility for coordinating efforts to engage in stewardship.
- Maintain a spreadsheet with donor information and points of contact.
- Assign SPOC staff or volunteers to be involved with writing thank-you letters (hand-written is ideal) after receiving awards to maintain connection with funding agencies.
- Be creative—have staff personalize their contacts with funders by sending video acknowledgments thanking them for their support.
- Ask students involved with the SPOC program to volunteer to write thank-you letters and share the impact the funding had on their college experience (of course, availability and willingness to do such work should be an invitation with no pressure placed on students).
- Invite donors to a lunch on campus and show them in person the services provided by the SPOC program.
- Personalize the process by building bridges and connections with staff at funding agencies.



6

HOUSING AND FOOD SUPPORT AND BEST PRACTICES

The most pressing need for college students experiencing homelessness, not surprisingly, is housing and food support. This section provides details regarding these areas and spotlights two real-life SPOC programs that are enhancing the lives of students experiencing homelessness at their respective institutions.

HOUSING SUPPORT

The institution's approach to providing housing support varies greatly depending upon the university structure, setting, and resources available. For example, the majority of 4-year colleges and universities offer dormitories on campus, but many do not offer the option of year-round housing. On the other hand, community colleges may offer no college-supported housing at all. Thus, ensuring that students have housing throughout their enrollment at their institution can require resourcefulness. Further, many high school students in homeless situations do not fully understand housing and dorm options in college. Particularly if they are first-generation students and have had little prior exposure to college, dorm life may be a brand-new concept.

Students may see dormitory options as only being temporary and even a burden because they may need to find short-term housing during breaks and over the summer when dorms are typically closed. This can cause undue stress for students who are always in transition. Thus, an important task for colleges is to work with incoming students and establish policies and procedures to allow stays over these breaks for special circumstances. When this is not possible, universities should consider providing alternative housing options during breaks and educate prospective and incoming students about all of their options. SPOC staff must be very knowledgeable about on and off-campus long- and short-term housing options, or have a university contact who has this information.

A common model offered by universities is to have housing or funding available for emergency situations, such as if a student is in an abusive situation and loses housing, is kicked out of their house, or loses a job and has fallen behind in paying rent. Through providing housing for a few weeks or a month, the SPOC program can couple the housing support with supportive advising to get the student into a more stable situation where they have a consistent and reliable nighttime residence. This may include assisting students to apply for a housing voucher— helping them gather the documents they need, apply for vouchers, identify where they can live using the voucher, and find housing while they wait.

HOUSING SUPPORT CONT.

BELOW ARE EXAMPLES OF HOUSING PROGRAMS ACROSS THE UNITED STATES:

UC Berkeley Basic Needs Center

Provides short-term emergency housing for students who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Y2Y Harvard Square

Y2Y Harvard Square in Cambridge, MA, is a student-run overnight shelter for young adults experiencing homelessness.

Tacoma Community College (TCC) and Tacoma Housing Authority (THA)

THA provides rental assistance to TCC students who are enrolled in at least six credits and experiencing homelessness. The rental assistance program includes a housing subsidy to assist with rent.

DePaul University Dax House Program

The Dax Program provides DePaul University (Chicago, IL) students who are facing homelessness with short-term housing with families in the community. The program also has two Dax Houses to house students in immediate housing crisis situations.

CARE Services Campus Apartments

Kennesaw State University in Kennesaw, GA, 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 future room is currently 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.

Florida State University Places Spaces Program

This program provides short- and long-term housing options to enrolled students who are experiencing homelessness. According to the program, its goal “is to create an accessible structure with access and entry points to obtain safe and reliable housing for currently enrolled FSU students, understanding that students’ living situations can fluctuate throughout any given term.”

Sacramento State Student Emergency Housing Fund

This crisis assistance program for housing, managed under Sacramento State’s (CA) Division of Student Affairs, supports short-term emergency housing and meal support.

Southern Scholarship Foundation (SSF)

SSF offers rent-free housing and cooperative living for students who lack financial means, while demonstrating excellence in academics and good character. Students can qualify if they attend Flagler College Tallahassee, Florida A&M University, Florida Gulf Coast University, Florida State University, Santa Fe College, Tallahassee Community College, or University of Florida.

Thrive Program at Holyoke Community College

The Thrive program partners with Holyoke Housing Authority to provide five Section 8 vouchers, which are good for 3 years. They also partner with a 4-year institution, Westfield University, in a program in which students from the community college can stay in on-campus housing at Westfield. The program provides free room and board through the Massachusetts Department of Higher Education and the university funds an unlimited meal plan. The goal is that students graduate with no financial burdens.

FOOD SUPPORT

With colleges and universities recognizing the critical need to address student hunger, institutions of higher education are finding ways to meet students' nutritional needs on campus. Campus food pantries are becoming more common, where students in need can pick up food at no cost. These sites provide food and toiletries for students in a private environment. Other support programs, like Swipe Out Hunger, that are based on student meal plan donations are gaining popularity as a low-cost way to ensure students have access to food on campus from resources that might not otherwise be used. Some universities hire students to work in food services and provide them with free meals as part of their income.

Since 2021, the benefits of the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), a federal program that provides financial assistance to low-income individuals and families, have been expanded to allow SNAP Electronic Benefits Transfer (EBT) to be used for food purchases on campus, removing food accessibility issues for many students. Regardless of the approach, addressing food insecurity on campus is of utmost priority because lack of access to regular, nutritious meals will impede students' ability to focus on their learning.

FOOD SUPPORT CONT.

Below is a list of campus programs and resources that address food insecurity. SPOC staff must be aware of these programs and understand how students can benefit from them.

SWIPE OUT HUNGER

Swipe Out Hunger is an organization serving colleges nationwide to improve access to meals on campus. The program promotes innovative solutions to an often wasteful system by allowing students with extra meals to donate them to students in need. The Swipe Out Hunger organization assists universities in designing and implementing programs to address hunger on campus by coordinating meal donation programs, supporting the development of campus pantries, and providing guidance to students about SNAP enrollment. Swipe Out Hunger programs are in over 400 colleges and universities across the United States.

CAMPUS FOOD PANTRIES

Many universities across the country have established food pantry programs. These programs often rely on donations and provide food and toiletries for students in need.

A few examples are:

- [Food Pantry at Holyoke Community College](#)
- [Food for Thought Pantry at Florida State University](#)
- [Nova Nook food pantry at Villanova University](#)

SNAP PROGRAM ENROLLMENT SUPPORT (SUPPLEMENTAL NUTRITION ASSISTANCE PROGRAM)

The Consolidated Appropriations Act of 2021 expanded SNAP benefits to include students who are enrolled at least half time in an institution of higher education and are eligible for state or federally financed work study or have an Expected Family Contribution (EFC) of \$0 in the current academic year.

Examples include:

- In California, many state campuses allow EBT for food purchases; see <https://collegesnapproject.org/california/>
- Holyoke Community College in Massachusetts collaborated with a market that would accept EBT and were eligible to take SNAP benefits.

FOOD RECOVERY NETWORK

SPOC programs can work with campus partners to unite 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. By developing a chapter of the Food Recovery Network on campus, students can work with the dining hall(s) to package surplus food and transport it to partner agencies serving those in need.



SPOC PROGRAM SPOTLIGHT

THE THRIVE CENTER AT HOLYOKE COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Holyoke Community College (HCC) is a 2-year college in Holyoke, MA, designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution, where students can pursue more than 100 degree and certificate programs. To support HCC students experiencing food and housing insecurity, the Thrive Center at Holyoke Community College was established to address critical basic needs. The Thrive program meets enrolled students' housing, food, and non-academic needs via a food pantry on campus and by providing direct support to students through advising, counseling, and referrals. Thrive makes it easy to set up an appointment with a staff member and helps students to get the individualized support they need. For resources the center cannot provide directly to students, the staff at Thrive offers an array of referral sources (e.g., referral to legal aid).

The Thrive Center was initially fully grant funded, relying on outside funding to support the director position. After a year of gathering data and demonstrating support for the program, the college recognized the value of having a SPOC program on campus and decided to fund the position itself. HCC provides funding for staff and programs while continuing to rely on donations and grants to fund other aspects. To support the grant application process, Thrive works closely with the college's office of advancement to write and submit grants for the program.

FOOD SUPPORT

The Thrive Center staff works with students in several ways to access food support. First, the knowledgeable staff are trained to assist students in submitting an application for SNAP benefits and support them in the processes to access benefits. Next, a major initiative of the center is a food pantry located directly in the Thrive office. Funded primarily through donations, the food pantry offers free groceries and toiletries (e.g., school supplies, body wash, soap, diapers, etc.) for students to pick up as needed. Students use their college ID card to access the pantry, allowing the center to track usage. The program has procured multiple grants, including one from a foundation to address food insecurity by providing \$25 swipe cards for students to use at the campus food market. Swipe cards are issued without any identifying information so as to not stigmatize the user as food insecure. The Thrive Center also offers complimentary coffee, tea, and snacks to encourage students to drop in and feel comfortable when they arrive.

HOUSING SUPPORT AND OTHER SERVICES

The Thrive program also provides important services that support students in gaining consistent and reliable housing. The program makes emergency funds available to students to cover costs such as rent, application fees (i.e., the first and last month's rent that is often required to sign a lease agreement). The staff assist students in applying for housing vouchers and provide financial coaching to help students understand their personal finances. Finally, they help students with credit repair to enhance their ability to be approved for an apartment, and financial literacy (e.g., how to create a personal budget).

A photograph of a person with dark hair tied back, seen from the side, looking at a whiteboard. The whiteboard is covered with numerous yellow sticky notes organized into columns. Some sticky notes are labeled 'Q1', 'Q3', and 'Q4'. The person's hand is visible, holding a small white object. The background is a light blue wall.

SECONDARY SETTINGS: SPOC COLLABORATIONS

Students who are accustomed to working with homeless liaisons and other support staff (e.g., social workers, school counselors, teachers, psychologists) may struggle in college without similar support to help them navigate the complexities of the university environment. Thus, a successful SPOC program recognizes the necessity of creating a bridge between secondary and postsecondary institutions. Collaborating across settings allows students experiencing housing instability to transition seamlessly into college with supportive personnel available to help guide them throughout admissions, enrollment, and graduation.

To establish partnerships with high schools from which matriculating students will graduate, SPOC staff must first identify the key stakeholders to contact. The Education for Homeless Children and Youths (EHCY) Program under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (Section 722(g)(6)(A)(x)(III)) suggests that liaisons and school counselors have important roles in supporting the college preparation for youth experiencing homelessness (U.S. Department of Education, 2016).

School counselors, liaisons, and other LEA-designated staff such as social workers, school psychologists, and career and college counselors address students' basic needs, connect them to resources, provide social/emotional and academic support, and work closely with parents and guardians to ensure students are being supported. When working in high school settings, these adults are responsible for ensuring that students graduate high school with clear postsecondary plans that will lead to financial stability and a career path that is sustainable and stable. Although this is important for all students, it is particularly critical for students experiencing homelessness who may not have family financial support to fall back on.

SECTION 7 | SECONDARY SETTINGS: SPOC COLLABORATIONS CONT.

Local liaisons are also tasked with providing verification of students' housing status; they must verify whether a student is either unaccompanied and homeless or self-supporting and at risk of homelessness (Section 722(g)(6) (A)(x)(III)). Liaisons, school counselors, and social workers (among other important secondary staff members) often have to seek out college administrators in admissions, housing, or financial aid to support students experiencing homelessness.

Consequently, the presence of a SPOC at all universities would result in a smoother verification process because the liaison can reach out as the student is applying to ensure they have the proper paperwork (e.g., homeless verification letter) prior to enrollment. At that point, services can continue with the SPOC, who can help the student with the verification process moving forward.

After students experiencing homelessness graduate, they often have to reach back out with questions to staff from their high school if they do not have a SPOC available. Thus, colleges and universities must work in tandem with secondary settings to create a clear hand-off or transition procedure by which students experiencing housing and food insecurity can smoothly enroll in college and readily access the information and resources they need at the postsecondary level. Establishing this type of partnership can be complicated because multiple stakeholders are involved. Thus, both secondary and postsecondary settings must have contact information readily accessible on their websites for students who are looking for support and information. More often than not, the individual who supports high school students experiencing homelessness will be the liaison and/or the school or college counselor, because they are designated under McKinney-Vento to specifically support the college preparation of students experiencing homelessness and the counselors, in particular, are trained in college counseling.

A brief overview of secondary roles that support homeless students is provided below to better familiarize university administrators with these positions so that they may identify potential linking contacts.

SCHOOL COUNSELORS' ROLES

School counselors are excellent partners in the school district who support the academic, social/emotional, and career/college development of K-12th-grade students ([American School Counselor Association, n.d.](#)). They work hand-in-hand with liaisons and social workers to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness by providing direct services and connecting students to resources. High school counselors are often students' primary go-to resource for college planning. They provide individual and group counseling and classroom lessons that support the career and college readiness of all students. They help students identify goals, create college/career plans, and manage the admissions process. They are highly trained and knowledgeable about the college admissions process and often build relationships with financial aid and admissions officers to work collaboratively to support students' college-readiness.

Homeless students can connect with school counselors early in high school to seek out their guidance on creating an academic plan toward college. School counselors can ensure that students are enrolled in the appropriate courses to be prepared for college, prepare and register for admissions tests (e.g., PSAT, SAT, and/or ACT), engage in career and college exploration, and create a postsecondary plan to ensure their success. High school counselors are particularly skilled at navigating the college admissions process and can assist students and their families with identifying scholarships and financial aid, and with receiving fee waivers. They can also connect students with help completing the FAFSA forms and identifying the best financial aid packages.

LOCAL HOMELESS LIAISONS' ROLES

Homeless liaisons have important responsibilities in K-12 settings (NCHE, 2018). They coordinate an array of services and partner with stakeholders to ensure that students are identified and supported under the EHCY program in their state. Under McKinney-Vento (42 U.S.C. § 11432(g)(6)(A)), liaisons notify students and families of their rights, provide referrals for services (e.g., dental care, mental health, substance abuse, housing), help students receive transportation, remove barriers to enrollment, provide and/or coordinate training for other staff/personnel, and engage in other related services. Because their role is multifaceted and they are involved in all aspects of a students' school and home life, they often support college readiness for students experiencing homelessness. This typically involves them collaborating with a wide range of stakeholders (Havlik & Duckhorn, 2020).

Liaisons report that students experiencing homelessness often do not believe they can go to college because of finances or limited prior exposure to college. Thus, liaisons find ways to connect and expose students to higher learning institutions. Liaisons are responsible for ensuring that unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness are identified as such before going to college so that they are able to receive financial aid under McKinney-Vento as an independent unaccompanied youth. They also provide individualized college support by connecting students with college resources and working with universities.

QUICK TIPS FOR SECONDARY STAFF

These important tips for school and district staff can help ensure homeless students prepare and transition successfully to college.

- Arrange transportation for college visits: Identify universities that include fly-in programs in which they fund students to visit campuses or provide virtual student visits aimed at recruiting underrepresented students ([College Transitions, 2024](#)).
- Ensure that students are aware of fee waivers and scholarships, and notify them of requirements for eligibility.
- Bring college to the students: When inviting admissions counselors and financial aid representatives to your school to meet with students, meet first with youth experiencing homelessness and coach them on questions to ask and what to expect when meeting with a university representative.
- Establish relationships with staff in financial aid and admissions at universities that your high school alumni commonly attend.
- Make phone calls to advocate for enhanced financial aid packages and or admissions decisions. With the permission of the student, share their background with the appropriate university staff to help them understand the circumstances and hardships faced in order to positively influence support decisions. Research has found that this type of personal contact can result in more funding for students and influence admissions decisions ([Havlik et al., 2021](#)).
- Provide individualized financial aid and admissions counseling for students experiencing homelessness: Advise students to select schools that will offer the supportive services they need. Considerations include child care, year-round housing, housing vouchers, food pantry on campus, work study opportunities, etc. Find a setting where the student will be most successful. Encourage the student to explore admissions in both private and public schools because private schools may have scholarships or funding available that make them affordable.

Know state laws and identify which states have the best support for students experiencing homelessness. For example, some states allow for free tuition for in-state students in foster care or who are experiencing homelessness.

For counselors who have large caseloads and do not have the capacity to provide such individualized services, connect with a community-based college preparation organization, university service learning program, or school counselor training program to bring in additional individuals who can meet individually with students and provide more tailored support.
- Create a clear verification process in collaboration with local colleges and universities where students often attend nearby the school's district. Create an action plan for students once they have made a decision about college.
- Help students identify university staff and departments they can contact if they need assistance when they enter college. Hold small psychoeducational groups for first-generation college students that teach students about college and help them understand how to best seek help and support ([Malott et al., 2020](#)).
- Create a dedicated webpage directed at first-generation college students that includes information for housing and food insecure students applying for college. Make sure all paperwork that is to be completed by students experiencing homelessness is in one accessible place, not across different departments.
- Host online sessions about college preparation for parents who may not have access to transportation, or who may be working so that they can attend and learn. Record these sessions and post them online so that parents and students can access them as needed.
- Work with students early on in middle and high school to enhance their belief in their ability to go to college.
- Hold parent meeting or groups to better inform caregivers of homeless students about what to expect for their student, map out timelines for applications and admissions, and address reluctancies and barriers.

QUICK TIPS FOR POSTSECONDARY STAFF

CREATING A SEAMLESS TRANSITION PROCESS FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS REQUIRES INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION AND SECONDARY SETTINGS TO BE PROACTIVE AND CREATE COLLABORATIVE PARTNERSHIPS.

THEY CAN WORK TOGETHER TO ESTABLISH SHARED PROCESSES FOR VERIFICATION AND HAND-OFF PROCEDURES FOR STUDENTS TO GET THE SUPPORT THEY NEED FROM THE MINUTE THEY STEP ON CAMPUS.

These tips for postsecondary staff can help ensure homeless students transition and succeed in college.

- Create a transition process for students experiencing homelessness entering your institution (e.g., include a summer bridge program).
- Include items about food and housing insecurity on enrollment forms so that students are identified early and connected with resources prior to entering campus.
- Assist students experiencing homelessness proactively with financial aid and housing.
- Connect with students who indicate that they are homeless or at risk of homelessness on their FAFSA form to get them set with the resources they will need.
- Identify common feeder schools and connect with school counselors and liaisons at those schools to share information specific to students experiencing food and housing insecurity.
- Provide links to resources about housing and food insecurity on web pages for prospective and current students (see [Colorado Department of Education, n.d.](#), for a template).
- Consider including stakeholders from local high schools such as school counselors or liaisons on a Student Support Committee to further ensure that a strong transition process plan is in place for students who will need the SPOC program.
- Attend state-level administrator and/or school counselor conferences to build partnerships and develop a bridge between settings.
- Encourage liaisons and school counselors to reach out to SPOC when students are applying to a college.
- Allow students facing housing insecurity to have first choice of dormitories and year-round housing.
- Create an in-house verification process that can be conducted at the university level and does not require students to reach back out to secondary settings after they have enrolled.
- Encourage school counselors to direct students experiencing homelessness to summer bridge programs to help them adjust to college prior to enrolling. If no summer bridge program is already in place, consider creating one focused on first-generation college students.
- Work with secondary contacts who support homeless youth to create a tour especially for homeless youth as part of community outreach.

UNDOCUMENTED STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Undocumented students need additional individualized services to ensure they can smoothly transition to college. Liaisons, school counselors, and other designated staff should work together with the SPOC to develop a resource bank for undocumented youth to access resources and the information they need to be college ready. The College Board provides a list of resources for undocumented youth (Rincón, 2012) that may be helpful for school counselors. Counselors can build on these resources by also including specific in-state and out-of-state options. This may include information about fee waivers and scholarships, and general rights of undocumented youth in that state. Further, school and college counselors who assist students to identify universities should guide them to institutions that are supportive of undocumented youth and those that may offer scholarships or additional financial assistance.

Although no federal or state law prohibits the admission of undocumented immigrants to U.S. colleges, public or private (College Board, n.d.), those working with undocumented youth should note these further considerations:

- Some states do not allow undocumented students to receive in-state tuition, regardless of how long they have resided in the state. Thus, counselors and liaisons must be aware of financial aid implications.
- Federal laws do not require universities to ask for proof of citizenship, although some universities may elect to request it. School counselors and liaisons who are engaging in college counseling with homeless and undocumented youth should reach out to the college SPOC or admissions representatives to determine whether this is required.
- School counselors and liaisons should contact financial aid offices at universities to ask about any private funds that might be available specific to undocumented youth. Although undocumented youth cannot receive “any federally funded student financial aid, including loans, grants, scholarships, or work-study money” (College Board, n.d.), colleges may set aside funds that can support these students.



Statewide SPOC networks are a valuable tool, in which each college or university provides contact information for a designated SPOC in an online directory of all colleges and universities across the state. This practice is required by law in public K-12 settings, where state and local level homeless liaison contact information is readily available online, typically within the Department of Education's website.

THE HIGHER EDUCATION SPOC DIRECTORY, THOUGH NOT REQUIRED BY LAW, IS A BEST PRACTICE THAT ALLOWS STUDENTS, PARENTS, COUNSELORS, LIAISONS, AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS WORKING WITH YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS TO READILY ACCESS A LIST OF CONTACTS AT THE COLLEGE LEVEL ACROSS THE STATE WITH WHOM THEY CAN CONNECT ABOUT COLLEGE ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT.

The network directory may be housed under the state's Department of Higher Education or other higher education non-profit web page.

NAEHCY recommends that states create such networks not merely as a contact list, but as a collaborative network of support. Network members can collaborate to identify and address barriers to higher education access, retention, and success for students experiencing homelessness. This network can also serve as a tool for professional development, resources, and exchange of practices. Strategies focus on raising awareness of the needs of students experiencing homelessness, increasing access to higher education for these students, and identifying and providing basic needs and educational supports while the student is entering and enrolled in postsecondary education.

STATEWIDE SPOC NETWORK PRACTICES

An array of SPOC networks are already in place across the country. Below is a list highlighting select states that have established SPOC networks and their unique practices.

CALIFORNIA

In California, under AB 801 ([California Legislative Information, n.d.](#)), public colleges including all community colleges are required to have a homeless liaison ([Hyatt et al., 2019](#)). This legislation specifies that youth experiencing homelessness receive an application fee waiver, priority enrollment and registration, and a designated staff member in financial aid or another department to serve as their homeless and foster student liaison. The role of the liaisons is to assist students in receiving appropriate services and accessing financial aid.

COLORADO

Colorado was the first state to create a statewide network for students experiencing homelessness. Every college and university in the state has identified a SPOC and the state provides ongoing training and support for SPOCs. Both students and secondary education staff can reach out to SPOC programs through Colorado's online SPOC listing. Under the Department of Education, the state of Colorado offers information specific to students experiencing homelessness with the name and contact information for the SPOC at public and private two- and four-year colleges across the state ([Colorado Department of Education, n.d.](#)). These individuals can answer questions related to homelessness at each institution and most are housed in the college's Financial Aid office on campus; a few are located across other campus offices (e.g., Registrar, Distance Learning, DEI, Student Services).

FLORIDA

Students in Florida who are experiencing homelessness can qualify for free college tuition. Florida has the [Positive Pathways \(n.d.\)](#) program to support youth experiencing homelessness on college campuses. The program is designed to connect students to resources on campuses and have supportive staff at the university to support students experiencing homelessness and in foster care while in college.

STATEWIDE SPOC NETWORK PRACTICES CONT.

GEORGIA

Since 2014, the Georgia statewide network, [Embark Georgia \(n.d.\)](#), has provided designated points of contact (DPOC), including at institutions within the University System of Georgia (USG) and the Technical College System of Georgia (TCSG). The DPOC network in Georgia is distinctive for its online interactive map allowing youth, families, counselors, and liaisons from any location to readily identify the program contact at their technical school, college or university. The DPOC is a designee who can answer questions for students experiencing homelessness and those in foster care. Some of the DPOCs also offer scholarships and other forms of support for students.

NORTH CAROLINA

North Carolina's [College Foundation of North Carolina \(CFNC, n.d.\)](#) is a free service that "assists students with education planning, career planning, and applying and paying for college." North Carolina colleges have a SPOC on campus for students who are facing temporary housing issues or homelessness. Financial aid administrators are trained to make housing determinations.

MASSACHUSETTS

The [Massachusetts Department of Higher Education \(n.d.\)](#) designated a Basic Needs Advisory Committee to develop a strategic plan to address hunger and homelessness across state campuses. In a housing pilot established in 2019, four-year institutions partner with local community colleges across the state to provide beds for youth experiencing housing insecurity. While the state reimburses the institutions for the cost of the dorm room year round, the university must cover food.

CREATING STATEWIDE HIGHER EDUCATION NETWORKS

Statewide higher education networks include K-12 education stakeholders, institutions of higher education, 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. Networks provide technical assistance, training, and facilitation support to develop a statewide higher education strategy for students experiencing homelessness.

There is no one-size-fits-all approach to forming a statewide higher education network to support youth experiencing homelessness; however, NAEHCY has identified several recommendations to consider when beginning the process of collectively working with other SPOCs.

- Identify a state coordinator for higher education, similar to the coordinator role for secondary settings under McKinney-Vento. This individual can be in charge of updating the SPOC contact list and providing technical assistance, training, and support. Ideally, they work hand-in-hand with the state K-12 state coordinator.
- Identify leaders in the state to be part of a statewide committee to meet regularly to develop, evaluate, and support the maintenance of a network.
- Identify the best online location (easily searchable, most accessible) to host contact information for SPOCs.
- Reach out annually to all universities within the state to determine the best contact at each college and university for supporting youth experiencing homelessness.
- Create a spreadsheet listing contact information (name, location, role, email, phone, etc.). Determine how to best disseminate the contact information.
- Create an email listserv to connect and share information related to SPOC programs from colleges and universities and K-12 McKinney-Vento liaisons.
- Meet annually (virtually or in person) with network members 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 schools, community colleges, and universities in the area.
- Offer professional development for those working with homeless youth going to college.
- Host events for youth experiencing homelessness in K-12 settings interested in college to complete the process for FSA IDs, FAFSA, and/or college applications.
- Advocate with state officials or governing bodies for K-12 and colleges to support the effort of establishing a statewide higher education network.

CHALLENGES OF STATEWIDE NETWORKS

Although statewide SPOC networks are invaluable in ensuring that students experiencing homelessness receive the support they need, inherent challenges come with the practice. First, although several states presently mandate that each institution of higher education has a SPOC, many are unfunded ([School-house Connection, 2022](#)). States may recognize the need for and importance of the role, but not have the funding to maintain and evaluate SPOC programs.

Thus, the SPOC role is often added on top of a current staff member's responsibilities. This can make it difficult to ensure the individual has the appropriate background, training, and knowledge to successfully serve students experiencing homelessness. Further, because individuals working in higher education often get promoted, change roles, or leave the institution, turnover in offices across colleges and universities can be frequent. Ensuring that there is one person responsible to manage the SPOC program and that their contact information and training is current can be even more difficult. Developing a clear statewide network that is regularly updated can alleviate many of the stated challenges.

Establishing a statewide network takes time. Consider breaking up the tasks over a multi-year plan. Starting small, perhaps establish a regional network first, then build on it over time. This allows for time to troubleshoot, evaluate, and improve the network as it grows. With time, commitment, and passionate leaders, an effective network can be established.





9

RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Asking for help and seeking support is a sign of strength; it demonstrates a strong sense of self-awareness and resourcefulness in a student. Being able to recognize a personal need and identify how to get support, mentorship, counseling, and/or advice is an important skill for establishing success in high school and college. Below is a quote from a college student who experienced homelessness that highlights the value in reaching out for support:

“When I eventually failed a class, I stayed in my room for an entire week. I finally mustered up the courage to ask for help. Embarrassed of my failure, I almost gave up until I spoke with staff who truly had my best interest at heart. They let me know that they understood my struggle but were here to help me find my way.

You have to speak to someone if things get tough. Whether it is the Dean of Students, counselors, advisors, or professors, there are people at the college who will be there for you and help you through anything you’re going through. Being able to talk to someone about your struggles goes a long way to help you succeed in college.”

This section lists resources and recommendations for students experiencing homelessness to secure support to ensure their college success. This is not an exhaustive resource guide by any means but provides a starting point for students.

APPLYING FOR COLLEGE

The first step for high school students experiencing housing insecurity who are interested in going to college is to seek out support staff at their local high school and determine what services are available. School and college counselors are available at most educational institutions to help students develop academic plans that will keep them on track to pursue college as an option, and to explore other postsecondary tracks aside from college.

Although this user guide focuses on college preparation, students can pursue many viable postsecondary paths, including military, trade and technical schools, and well-planned gap years. Regardless of the plan, high school students must start exploring their options early in high school so that they can ensure they are taking the right courses and know how to navigate the college application process. High school students must, at minimum, meet with their school or college counselor once per year starting in ninth grade for career, academic, and social/emotional support, goal setting, and academic planning.

Students preparing for college should meet with admissions representatives from an array of colleges and universities, who often conduct high school visits to share information about their institutions. Admissions representatives (or admissions counselors) are responsible for recruitment for the university. They travel all over the country to meet with prospective students and also meet on campus when students visit. Students can work with school counselors at their high school to identify which representatives to contact. During meetings with admissions representatives, students can learn more about the college or university and determine whether it would be a good fit (e.g., will the university have the funding and resources needed?).

To guide these meetings, below are some recommended questions that students can consider asking when meeting with a school counselor and/or an admissions representative. Depending on a student's needs and interests, they can choose which questions are relevant for their individual circumstances. Students should be encouraged to take notes during meetings and not hesitate to ask any questions related to college. The questions below are simply suggestions—and many others can be asked depending on what the student wants to know.

Before meeting with an admissions representative, the student should first compile a list of questions and search for the answers in the institution's website, then narrow down their most important questions.

QUESTIONS TO ASK A HIGH SCHOOL OR COLLEGE COUNSELOR

RELATED TO BASIC NEEDS SUPPORT:

- What colleges or universities offer the reliable and consistent on-campus or off-campus support for housing and/or food insecure students?
- What colleges/universities offer year-round housing options?
- What scholarships and/or grants are available for my particular background and situation (e.g., military family, first-generation college student, immigrant family, international student, etc.)?
- Is there funding or transportation available to support college visits?
- What colleges offer an on-campus point of contact for students experiencing homelessness or food insecurity?
- When should I start my college preparation?
- How do I find a college or university that is the best fit for me?
- What is the right high school schedule for me?
- Should I take the ACT or SAT (if so, when? How do I access fee waivers)?
- How do admissions officers view extracurriculars on an application?
- What should I be involved in now that would enhance my high school experience and look good on a college application?
- What do admissions officers look for in an application essay?
- Who can I get to read my essays and help me write them?
- Who should I ask to write my letters of recommendation?
When should I ask them?
- What is Early Decision or Early Action and can it help me get into college?
- What should I do on college visits?

QUESTIONS TO ASK AN ADMISSIONS OFFICER

RELATED TO BASIC NEEDS SUPPORT ON CAMPUS:

- Is year-round housing available on campus?
- How many years is on-campus housing guaranteed?
- Do students experiencing homelessness get priority housing on campus?
- Is a food pantry available on campus?
- How do meal plans work when the university is closed over breaks?
- What is the verification process for housing status?
- What resources are available for academic support?
- What resources are available for social/emotional support (e.g., counseling, mental health)?
- What is the average amount of financial aid that is received by students?

RELATED TO THE APPLICATION (BEST COLLEGES, 2019):

- What are the most important admissions factors at your school?
- What weight do you put on essays vs. other admissions factors?
- What weight do you put on extracurriculars vs. other admissions factors?
- What are the most desirable qualities you look for in an applicant?
- What advice would you give to a student applying to your university to enhance their chances of admission?

CHECKLISTS FOR COLLEGE PREPARATION

Checklists help students get a broader idea of the requirements, steps, and timeline for applying to college.

Students, school counselors, and college counselors can use the websites below to create checklists and prioritize items for bestfit applications and admissions:

[Studentaid.gov](https://studentaid.gov) provides a checklist for students' preparation for college that starts as early as elementary school.

The [Florida Shines](https://www.floridashines.org) webpage has a checklist for each year of high school.

The [National Association for College Admissions Counseling \(NACAC\)](https://www.nacac.org) provides resources for each step of the college admissions and enrollment process.

FINANCIAL AID INFORMATION

Students experiencing homelessness may disregard college as an option in the first place because they assume that they will be unable to afford it. Although pursuing higher education can cost a great deal of money, resources and options are available to help make the cost of college reasonable and affordable. School counselors and college financial aid officers are the best points of contact to learn more about financial aid options. The information below will help guide students to make decisions and complete paperwork for financial aid.

To research how financial aid works, visit the Federal Student Aid web page, <https://studentaid.gov/h/understand-aid/how-aid-works>. To apply for federal student aid and to stay eligible for aid, students must complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) form each year (see <https://studentaid.gov/h/apply-for-aid>). In general, financial aid includes grants, scholarships, work-study programs, and loans.

Grants are funds that do not need to be repaid. They can come in many different forms, including federal or private grants. Students experiencing homelessness are typically eligible for Pell Grants, which are designed for students with “exceptional financial need.” In 2024-2025 the maximum Pell Grant amount covered is \$7,395.

Scholarships are available at most institutions. Scholarships, like grants, typically do not need to be repaid. They are often merit based or based on financial need. Scholarships include those based at institutions and those from private organizations.

Work-study programs provide students with opportunities to work at the college/university part time and earn money toward college. When possible, these opportunities are designed to relate to the student’s course of study. The number of these opportunities may be limited, so students should consider applying early.

Loans are a form of financial assistance that must be repaid, typically with interest. Undergraduate students can borrow between \$5,500 and \$12,500 in federal student loans each year. Private student loans are another option, but these often come with higher interest rates.

Additional aid is also available for military families and international students.

Financial aid is a complex process. Students should be encouraged to meet and communicate frequently with counselors and financial aid representatives to ensure they make important decisions and receive the most funding they can without accruing significant debt. Before applying, students should understand that application forms ask for a lot of personal information, including the students’ income and that of parents or guardians (parent/guardian information is not needed for independent students). Students should be advised to plan ahead to obtain this information far in advance of the deadlines.

Students experiencing homelessness will need to have a reliable mailing address when they apply to college and complete the FAFSA. NAEHCY (2017) recommends that options for a student’s mailing address may include the home of a reliable family member or close friend. If that is not possible, students should speak to the school counselor or principal about getting permission to use the high school’s address.

UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH

Specific to students experiencing homelessness, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA, 20 U.S.C. § 1001 et seq.) allows for unaccompanied students experiencing homelessness to be identified as having independent student status on the FAFSA, thus allowing for increased financial aid eligibility.

This also permits students to omit the requirement of entering parental financial information. Thus, students who are considered homeless and unaccompanied must connect with their counselors, liaisons, and college representatives to ensure that their homeless status is noted on the FAFSA form.

HELPFUL RESOURCES FOR STUDENTS

Students can use these websites to learn more about the college process. Many of these resources provide information specific to students experiencing homelessness.

- [College Board Scholarship Search Tool](#)
- [College Board Website](#) – general helpful resources for preparing for college
- [Fast Web Scholarship Search Tool](#)
- [Free Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\)](#) – form and information
- [Fee waiver for SAT](#)
- [Horatio Alger Association Scholarships](#) – for college and career and technical schools for students with significant financial need
- NCHE: [Guide for going to college for youth experiencing homelessness](#)
- NCHE: [Scholarships](#)
- [NAEHCY Higher Education Resources](#)
- [Better Make Room](#) – college-readiness resources including financial aid calculator, college calculator, college finder, and college scorecard
- [Resources for undocumented students by state](#)
- [Tip Sheet for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Applying for College](#) – an excellent resource for unaccompanied youth to use when completing the FAFSA form

ON-CAMPUS RESOURCES

Most colleges and universities provide some level of support, resources, and services for their students at no cost.

Prospective and current college students should research relevant resources on the university website and communicate with the applicable office that may benefit their current or likely future situation in college. College resources typically include:

- Academic advising and coaching
- Banking for students
- Book store
- Campus safety
- Career services
- Child care services
- Counseling and mental health services
- Computer lab
- Clubs for an array of interests
- Crisis centers/hotlines
- Dining services
- Disability support services
- Financial aid support
- Fitness center
- Greek life
- Health center
- Housing support (on- and off-campus)
- Information technology (IT) department (computer support)
- International student support
- Intramural sports
- Leadership development
- Library services
- Mail services
- On-campus events and attractions (e.g., free pizza, ice cream, movie nights, art exhibits, etc.)
- Private study spaces
- Professional clothing closet
- Professors and walk-in office hours
- Public safety services (e.g., escort to walk home late at night)
- Recreational services
- Software, computer, and hardware discount programs
- Student center
- Student government
- Student lounge
- Student organizations
- Transportation services (e.g., campus shuttles, transportation passes, car share programs)
- Wireless access

Although entering college can be a stressful process due to all of the unknowns, building a network of support from the beginning is important. Find friends, mentors, and advisors. Don't be afraid to ask them for help or referrals. With the right supportive system in place, the college experience can be rewarding and ultimately lead to a meaningful degree and career.



10

FORMS & TEMPLATES

- FORM 1: Unaccompanied Homeless Youth Verification
- FORM 2: Emergency Housing Verification
- FORM 3: Letter of Hardship
- FORM 4: Determination of Homelessness
- FORM 5: Emergency Fund Request
- FORM 6: Sample Consent/Release of Information
- FORM 7: Homelessness Identification
- FORM 8: Referral Form for SPOC Services
- FORM 9: Syllabus Statement
- FORM 10: Thank-You Letter Template for Donors
- FORM 11: Welcome Letter
- FORM 12: SPOC Program Annual Self-Evaluation
- FORM 13: SPOC Program Participant Survey
- FORM 14: SPOC Program Advising

FORM 1**UNACCOMPANIED HOMELESS YOUTH VERIFICATION**

Student Name: _____

Student Parent / Guardian (if applicable): _____

Date of Birth: _____

Social Security Number: _____

Current Mailing Address of Student: _____

Telephone Number: _____

Email: _____

I AM PROVIDING THIS LETTER OF VERIFICATION AS A (CHECK ONE):

- ☐ McKinney-Vento School District Liaison
- ☐ Director or designee of a HUD-funded shelter: _____
- ☐ Director or designee of a RHYA-funded shelter: _____
- ☐ Financial aid administrator: _____
- ☐ College access program (e.g. TRIO or GEAR UP) _____
- ☐ Other: _____

As per the College Cost Reduction and Access Act (Public Law 110-84), I am authorized to verify this student's living situation. No further verification by the Financial Aid Administrator is necessary. Should you have additional questions or need more information about this student, please contact me at the number listed below.

This letter is to confirm that [student name] was (check one):

- ☐ An unaccompanied homeless youth after July 1, 20XX.
This means that, after July 1, 20XX, [student name] was living in a homeless situation, as defined by Section 725 of the McKinney-Vento Act, and was not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
- ☐ An unaccompanied, self-supporting youth at risk of homelessness after July 1, 20XX. This means that, after July 1, 20XX, [student name] was not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian, provides for his/her own living expenses entirely on his/her own, and is at risk of losing his/her housing.

Authorized Signature: _____

Print Name: _____

Date: _____

McKinney-Vento Liaison or SPOC contact information here:

¹ Form adapted with permission from author: Tandra Chamberlain

FORM 2

EMERGENCY HOUSING VERIFICATION

Letterhead of shelter or transitional home for UHY

To: [college contact information]

From: [name of shelter or transitional home contact]

Re: [student name] | [student ID]

Dear Financial Aid Office,

[student name] is currently a full-time resident of [name of shelter or transitional home]. [student name] is residing in a shelter/transitional home for homelessness. If you have any questions or need additional information about this student's homeless status, please contact me at [insert contact phone and email].

Sincerely,
[name of shelter or transitional home contact]

² Form adapted with permission from author: Tandra Chamberlain

FORM 3 LETTER OF HARDSHIP

Note: This form can be used to provide reason behind a lapse in FAFSA funding, or advocate for a policy change or academic support based on hardship (e.g., if a student dropped a course after the deadline and could not get money refunded). This form would be shared with community stakeholders for them to complete and send to college.

Date

Statement of Hardship

RE: [student name and ID]

Dear [name of university office],

On behalf of [name of shelter, transitional housing, or other residence], a safe haven for youth experiencing homelessness, I'm writing a letter of hardship to verify our resident [student name] as being an unaccompanied youth living at [location]. [student name] has been a resident of [location] since [date student began living at site]. [student name] entered due to [circumstances leading to homelessness—only include what the youth is comfortable disclosing].

[Discuss briefly resident's recommendation for higher education and why a financial hardship and/or a lapse in financial aid may have occurred.]

[student name] is working on goals to continue their education. Dropping courses was due to [insert details].

If you need any further verification of hardship, please feel free to contact me at [phone number] or [emailaddress]. Thank you for any assistance you are able to provide.

Sincerely,

Director or Case Manager of Shelter

³ Form adapted with permission from author: Tandra Chamberlain

FORM 4

DETERMINATION OF HOMELESSNESS

To be completed by the SPOC

HOUSING DETERMINATION

Student ID: _____

To be identified as homeless, a student must meet one of the three conditions below.
Please check all that apply and describe the circumstances in writing in the space below.

- ☐ No fixed residence – a residence that is not stationary or permanent and is susceptible to change
- ☐ No regular residence – a residence that is not used on a regular nightly basis
- ☐ No adequate residence – a residence that does not meet the physical and psychological needs of a typical home environment

In the space below, please describe the student's housing situation and how it fits into the definition above:

⁴ Language adopted & modified from web resource: The College Foundation of North Carolina

FORM 5

EMERGENCY FUND REQUEST

Emergency funds are to be used to cover academic and related expenses that are hindering a students' ability to meet their basic needs. Unexpected financial emergencies may arise at any time during a students' university enrollment. This form should be completed with the assistance of a campus SPOC.

Limit to emergency funds is \$ _____ per student, per academic year.

Emergencies may include, but are not limited to [tailor these items to specific areas covered by the institution]:

- ☐ Housing expenses (e.g., application fees, electric bills, etc.)
- ☐ Course materials beyond required textbooks
- ☐ Medical bills (e.g., primary care physician, dental, etc.)
- ☐ Transportation costs to attend doctor's appointments, travel home to attend to family emergencies, or gasoline expenses
- ☐ Technological assistance or repair (e.g., laptop, laptop charger, phone repair, Wi-Fi fees, etc.)

Please describe the financial need in the space below (be specific about circumstances):

Funding amount requested: _____

Date funding is needed: _____

Student Name: _____

Date: _____

Application Review by:

(preferably a committee, with more than one person making the final decision)

University Official Signature: _____

Funding received on: _____

FORM 6**SAMPLE CONSENT/RELEASE OF INFORMATION**

Students' permission is necessary prior to sharing or seeking information regarding their work with the campus SPOC. This form provides recommended language and a sample form, but prior to using a consent form, universities must consult with legal counsel.

To whom it may concern:

This is a consent for release of information about:

Student Name: _____

University ID: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I authorize [name of the SPOC program director or staff] to release or obtain the following specific information:

This information may be used only for the purpose of: _____

This information may be shared with: [Name or office, e.g., faculty member, writing center, counseling center, financial aid, etc.] _____

I understand that I have the right to see this information at any time. I understand that I can revoke this consent in writing to both the person giving and the person receiving the information. Any information already released may be used as stated on the consent. I understand the requested or provided information is needed to determine eligibility for housing and/or social services.

This consent is valid only until: [date consent expires]: _____

This consent is not automatically renewable. It expires automatically at the end of the period specified unless revoked in writing sooner. By my signature below, I affirm that I have read this release or it has been read to me, and I understand its content.

Signature of Applicant/Tenant (circle one) _____

Date: _____

Applicant/Tenant's current, mailing or former address: _____

Consent witnessed by: _____

Staff signature if different from witness: _____

Prohibition on re-disclosure: This information has been disclosed to you from records whose confidentiality is protected by federal law. Federal regulations prohibit further disclosure without specific written consent from the person to whom it pertains.

⁵ Language adopted & modified from Corporation for Supportive Housing (n.d.), https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/ROIConsent_T.pdf

FORM 7

HOMELESSNESS IDENTIFICATION

Student Name: _____

Student University ID: _____

University Email: _____

Phone Number: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Are you living on your own without stable housing (i.e., fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence)?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe / I don't know

Do you live in any of the following situations? Please check all that apply.

- ☐ In a shelter, motel, vehicle, or campground
- ☐ On the street, in an abandoned building, or in another inadequate space
- ☐ Doubled-up temporarily with other people because you have nowhere else to stay
- ☐ In the dorm, but with nowhere else to stay when the dorms close
- ☐ Supporting yourself, but on the verge of losing housing

If needed, please provide more details below:

Will you need on-campus housing between semesters?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Maybe / I don't know

Do you live in any of the situations listed above and are apart from your parents/guardians with no financial support from them?

- ☐ Yes ☐ No

If so, you may qualify as an independent student on the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). This means you don't have to include your parents' information on your FAFSA. To discuss your eligibility, speak to:

[Insert SPOC contact information here]

⁶ Language adopted & modified from Corporation for Supportive Housing (n.d.), https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/ROIConsent_T.pdf

FORM 8

REFERRAL FORM FOR SPOC SERVICES

Form completed by (referral source name): _____

☐ I would prefer to remain anonymous (option)

Role:

- ☐ Faculty
- ☐ Staff: [include office and title]
- ☐ School counselor
- ☐ Liaison
- ☐ Parent
- ☐ Student/peer
- ☐ Other: [please describe]

Referral Source Contact Information: _____

Student Name: _____

UID (if known): _____

Student Email Address (if known): _____

Reason for Referral:

- ☐ Suspected or identified unstable or unsafe housing
- ☐ Suspected or identified food insecurity
- ☐ Other (please indicate):

Was this referral discussed with the student?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

FORM 9

SYLLABUS STATEMENT

The SPOC should send a university-specific version of this statement out to all faculty at the beginning of each semester for inclusion in their syllabi. Faculty can use this statement to make students aware of SPOC services on campus.”

Support is available on campus for students who are experiencing food or housing insecurity. If you find that you are facing loss of housing or unstable housing, or are experiencing a lack of sufficient regular food or struggle having other basic needs met, please contact the SPOC on campus: [Insert SPOC contact information]

The SPOC program supports college students in need through a variety of supportive services [insert specific examples]. Students facing financial crises can also apply to and access emergency funds.

FORM 10

THANK-YOU LETTER TEMPLATE FOR DONORS

Dear [donor's name],

On behalf of [name of university], we thank you for your contribution to [name of SPOC program]. We have recently received your generous donation of [donation amount] and extend our personal gratitude. Your donation was greatly appreciated and went directly to serving students in need at our institution. You are truly making a difference in the lives of our college students at [university name].

[Insert paragraph that describes specific use of funds and the services provided by the SPOC program]

Your help makes this program possible. We value your support.

Please retain this letter as a receipt of your donation.

Sincerely,

[name and signature of recipient]

FORM 11

WELCOME LETTER

Dear [student name],

We personally welcome you to the [name] program. Through this program, you will have access to supportive services, resources, and programs to enhance your success as a college student. Our supportive and knowledgeable staff is available to you to answer questions, facilitate important services, connect you to resources, and help problem solve when needed.

Below is a list of specific services we provide throughout your enrollment at the university [tailor this list to specific program offerings]:

- Academic advising
- Emergency funds
- Financial aid counseling
- Food pantry
- Housing support
- Professional clothing closet
- Referrals and connections to a variety of services on and off campus

Please visit our website for valuable information about each of the above programs: [insert URL link here].

[Name of staff member] will be reaching out to you soon to set up an initial meeting. In the meantime, please do not hesitate to contact us with questions at [phone number and email address].

We look forward to working with you this year.

FORM 12**SPOC PROGRAM ANNUAL SELF-EVALUATION**

Each year, program staff should first review the previous year's report before beginning the self-evaluation. This is an opportunity to bring together a committee annually to complete this report, assess the previous year's goals, and identify new goals for the upcoming year.

Academic year: _____

Name(s) of individual(s) completing report: _____

PROGRAM INFORMATION**NUMBER OF STUDENTS SERVED**

Summer: _____ Fall: _____ Spring: _____ TOTAL: _____

BREAKDOWN OF DEMOGRAPHICS OF STUDENTS SERVED

Race: _____

Ethnicity: _____

Gender: _____

Age: _____

First-generation college status: _____

Number of college credits earned: _____

College majors represented: _____

EMERGENCY FUNDS

Total emergency funds used for the _____ academic year: _____

Breakdown of use of emergency funds: [describe how the funds were used]

FORM 12

SPOC PROGRAM ANNUAL SELF-EVALUATION

EVALUATION AND REFLECTION QUESTIONS

(responses should be discussed and documented):

1. What is the mission of the program?
2. What were the program's goals for the [insert year] school year?
Under each goal, discuss how well that goal was met for this past academic year.
3. What services did the program provide in this past academic year?
4. What are the three greatest strengths of the program?
5. List any notable program enhancements or innovations over the past year.
6. List marketing efforts for the program over the past year and comment on how effective those efforts were.
7. List specific needs of the program for the upcoming year.
8. List three weaknesses (i.e., areas for growth) of the program.
9. What challenges did your program face this past year? How were these challenges addressed?
10. Comment on program enrollment trends over the past 3–5 years.
11. What goals does the program have for the upcoming academic year?
12. What support does the program need from the institution?
13. Name community partners with which the program has interacted this year.
For each, describe the nature and purpose of the partnership, and its strengths and weaknesses.

FORM 13

SPOC PROGRAM PARTICIPANT SURVEY

Participant's Name (optional): _____

Thank you for completing this evaluation. We appreciate your feedback on the [name of program] program to help us to ensure that our services are supporting students in the best way possible.

Please indicate your rating of the program services in the categories below by circling the appropriate number, using a scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

	Circle the number to indicate your level of agreement/disagreement with each aspect of the program: 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree)				
Staff members were able to answer my questions, and/or were willing to seek answers if they did not know.	1	2	3	4	5
Program services met my needs.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff members were responsive to my needs.	1	2	3	4	5
Staff members were caring and nonjudgmental.	1	2	3	4	5
The facility was comfortable.	1	2	3	4	5
When discussing personal matters, I had enough privacy.	1	2	3	4	5
The hours and days of program services are convenient for my schedule.	1	2	3	4	5

FORM 13

SPOC PROGRAM PARTICIPANT SURVEY CONT.

Overall rating of the program (check one):

- ☐ Excellent
- ☐ Good
- ☐ Fair
- ☐ Needs improvement
- ☐ Poor

How did you hear about the program?

- ☐ Word of mouth
- ☐ Campus newsletter
- ☐ Admissions office
- ☐ Financial aid officer
- ☐ High school counselor
- ☐ Advisor
- ☐ Other: _____

Please provide some written comments:

How can the program be improved?

What do you like about the program?

In what ways has the program impacted your experience as a student?

FORM 14

SPOC PROGRAM ADVISING

Student Name: _____

Student ID: _____

Session Date: _____

Services Rendered:

- ☐ Intake meeting
- ☐ Academic advising
- ☐ Financial advising
- ☐ Emergency funds request meeting
- ☐ Housing support
- ☐ Food pantry
- ☐ Other: [please provide details]

Referrals Provided:

Follow-up Required:

- ☐ Yes – Action plan (describe next steps needed) and timeline for follow-up (please write in details)
- ☐ No

Comments / Notes: (i.e., observations, concerns, strengths of student, follow-up details):



REFERENCES

SECTION 11 | REFERENCES

- American School Counselor Association. (n.d.). School counselor roles & ratios.
<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/About-School-Counseling/School-Counselor-Roles-Ratios>
- Best Colleges. (2019). How to get into college: Ask an admissions counselor.
<https://www.bestcolleges.com/blog/interview-with-college-admissions-counselor/>
- Coleman-Jensen, A., Rabbitt, M., Gregory, C., & Singh, A. (2021). Household food security in the United States in 2020.
https://www.ers.usda.gov/webdocs/publications/102076/err-298_summary.pdf?v=5583.6
- College Board. (n.d.a). Advising undocumented students.
<https://counselors.collegeboard.org/financial-aid/undocumented-students>
- College Cost Reduction and Access Act, Public Law 110-84 (2007).
<https://www.govinfo.gov/content/pkg/PLAW-110publ84/pdf/PLAW-110publ84.pdf>
- College Foundation of North Carolina. (2024).
<https://www.cfnc.org/>
- College Transitions. (2024) Colleges with fly-in programs - A complete list.
<https://www.collegetransitions.com/blog/colleges-with-fly-in-programs/>
- Colorado Department of Education. (n.d.). Homeless higher education – students.
https://www.cde.state.co.us/studentsupport/homeless_highered-students
- Corporation for Supportive Housing. (n.d.). Sample consent to release or obtain information form.
https://www.csh.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/ROIConsent_T.pdf
- Embark Georgia. (n.d.). Designated points of contact.
<https://embarkgeorgia.org/>
- Franek, R. (n.d.). Top 12 questions to ask your college counselor. Princeton Review.
<https://www.princetonreview.com/college-advice/questions-to-ask-your-college-counselor>
- Havlik, S. A., & Duckhorn, M. (2020). Supporting high students experiencing homelessness going to college: Perspectives of local liaisons. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory, and Practice*.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025120980371>
- Havlik, S., Duckhorn, M., Rohrer, S., & Rowley, P. (2021). From homeless to student housing: School counselor roles and experiences in preparing students experiencing homelessness for college. *Professional School Counseling*, 25(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X211050412>
- Hope Lab. (2020). #realcollege survey 2020. Portland Community College.
<https://www.pcc.edu/institutional-effectiveness/survey/realcollege-survey-fall-2020/>
- Hyatt, S., LePage, N., & Piazza, A. (2019). Supporting students experiencing homelessness. California Homeless Youth Project and the ACLU Foundations of California.
<https://www.library.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/08/SupportingStudentsExperiencingHomelessness.pdf>
- Kelly, K. S. (2004). Stewardship: The fifth step in the public relations process. In R. L. Heath (Ed.), *Handbook of public relations*. Sage.
<https://sk.sagepub.com/reference/handbook-of-public-relations/n21.xml>
- Malott, K., Havlik, S., Gosai, S., & Diaz Davila, J. (2020). A group intervention for prospective first-generation college students: Application with an urban, African American population. *Professional School Counseling*, 24(1).
<https://doi.org/10.1177/2156759X20957297>
- Massachusetts Department of Higher Education. (n.d.) Student basic needs security.
<https://www.mass.edu/strategic/studenthunger.asp>

SECTION 11 | REFERENCES

- Moore, T. J. (2000). An evolving program management maturity model: integrating program and project management. Paper presented at Project Management Institute Annual Seminars & Symposium, Houston, TX.
<https://www.pmi.org/learning/library/evolving-program-management-maturity-model-1903>
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. (n.d.). Higher education.
<https://naehcy.org/higher-education/>
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. (2017). FAFSA tips for unaccompanied youth without stable housing.
<https://secureservercdn.net/198.71.233.26/Ova.b42.myftpupload.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/12/fafsa-tips-uhy2017-18.Dec2017.pdf>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2019). Digest of education statistics, 2019.
https://nces.ed.gov/programs/digest/d19/tables/dt19_204.75a.asp
- National Center for Homeless Education. (2015). Supporting college completion for students experiencing homelessness.
<https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/he-success.pdf>
- National Center for Homeless Education. (2018) Local homeless education liaisons: Understanding their role.
<https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2018/10/liaisons.pdf>
- National Center for Homeless Education. (2021). Student homelessness in America (NCHE).
<https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Student-Homelessness-in-America-2021.pdf>
- National Center for Homeless Education. (2022). National overview.
<https://profiles.nche.seiservices.com/ConsolidatedStateProfile.aspx>
- Niemeier, J., & Fitzpatrick, K. M. (2019). Examining food insecurity among high school students: A risks and resources model. *Appetite*, 135(1), 20–27.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.appet.2018.12.028>
- Office of the Federal Register, National Archives and Records Administration. (2011). 76 FR 75994.
<https://www.federalregister.gov/citation/76-FR-75994>
- Positive Pathways. (n.d.) Welcome to positive pathways.
<https://www.positivepathwaysflorida.org/>
- Rincón, A. (2012). Repository of resources for undocumented students. College Board.
https://secure-media.collegeboard.org/digitalServices/pdf/diversity/Repository-Resources-Undocumented-Students_2012.pdf
- SchoolHouse Connection. (2018). Youth homelessness and higher education: An analysis of FAFSA data.
<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/An-Analysis-of-FAFSA-Data.pdf>
- SchoolHouse Connection (2019). How emergency aid can prevent homelessness among college students.
<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/how-emergency-aid-can-prevent-homelessness-among-college-students/>
- SchoolHouse Connection. (2022) State laws supporting college students experiencing homelessness.
<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/state-laws-supporting-college-students-experiencing-homelessness/>
- University of California at Davis Office of Student Support and Judicial Affairs. (2019). Case management (student support).
<https://ossja.ucdavis.edu/case-management-student-support>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture. (2021, September 8). USDA ERS - Definitions of food security.
<https://www.ers.usda.gov/topics/food-nutrition-assistance/food-security-in-the-u-s/definitions-of-food-security/>
- U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2021). Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP).
<https://www.fns.usda.gov/snap/students>
- U.S. Department of Education. (2016). Education for homeless children and youths' program: Non-regulatory guidance. Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act.
<https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716.pdf>
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development Office of Public and Indian Housing. (2013). NOTICE PIH 2013-15 (HA).
<https://www.hudexchange.info/resource/4048/notice-pih-2013-15-ha-guidance-on-housing-individuals-and-families/>



CONTRIBUTORS

This updated SPOC user guide was created with the expertise and contributions of the NAEHCY Higher Education Committee.

In particular, we recognize as contributors to this guide:

SHIRLEY FAN-CHAN

Homeless Education State Coordinator,
MA Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
Chair, NAEHCY Post-Secondary Education Committee

LISA PHILLIPS

State Coordinator for Education of Homeless Children and Youth,
Office of the Deputy State Superintendent, NC Department of Public Instruction

LISA JACKSON

Senior Program Director, Academic Support & Engagement,
Center for Academic Retention and Enhancement, Florida State University

ROSEMARY FIEDLER

Former Single Point of Contact, Holyoke Community College

TAMBRA CHAMBERLAIN

Lead McKinney-Vento liaison, Moore County Schools, NC

We also extend our gratitude to the students who volunteered to share their personal experiences with homelessness and college going that are included anonymously in this guide.

Further, NAEHCY staff provided feedback and consultation throughout the process.

**WE THANK YOU ALL FOR YOUR INSIGHT
AND ARE HONORED TO HAVE LEARNED FROM YOU.**



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE EDUCATION
OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH

SPOC USER GUIDE
A Single-Point-of-Contact Resource

**For Professionals Who Support Housing-Insecure
College-Bound Youth and Postsecondary Students**

2nd Edition | April 2024

Stacey A. Havlik, Ph.D | Villanova University | SPOC Program Consultant, NAEHCY