

# North Carolina Homeless Education Program

## Connecting with Homeless Students & Families: Homeless Liaison Strategies During COVID-19 to Connect Children to School & Support Their Needs

The following list of strategies has been conducted by homeless liaisons in LEAs and charter schools throughout the state of NC to support children and youth experiencing homelessness to be safe, obtain needed services/resources, and be connected to their schools during the COVID-19 pandemic.

- Communication with families through email, phone, texting, postcards, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Zoom, Google Docs, Google Voice, Google classroom, Seesaw, GroupMe, Class Dojo, Blackboard, Connect Ed, and home visits
- Weekly check-ins with unaccompanied homeless youth
- Hotline set up for homeless unaccompanied youth to call for assistance with any needs
- Webpage with resources and food distribution sites for homeless students and their families
- Development of a resource list that provides housing, food, and medical supply links and is included in assignment packets, available at food distribution sites and located on the district website
- Development of a parent page to address the learning needs of students while living in unique locations
- Delivering food, learning packets and other needed resources with district vehicles
- Established a school-based needy children's fund
- Launched a homeless family needy fund
- Virtual meetings conducted with community service providers, after-school programs and faith-based organizations
- Providing McKinney-Vento posters to community partners through email for posting in the community
- Utilizing the "Say Something" anonymous reporting system to assist families and unaccompanied homeless youth in need
- Serving students unable to enroll in the district with resources and food until enrollment can occur
- Providing students from other LEAs or states that are in our county with academic and food sources
- Work with IT to open up wi-fi on all school property and identify locations in the community for accessing service at no cost
- Working with IT for providing homeless students with connectivity devices such as hot-spots, laptops/chrome books, and refurbished computers
- Work with school nurses on the medical as well as the medication needs of homeless students
- Communicating with classroom teachers on meeting student needs and adjusting learning expectations

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- Communicating with EC staff regarding the unique needs of homeless students and identify ways to provide academic assistance
- Meeting regularly with school counselors and school psychologist to discuss the emotional needs of students experiencing homelessness and identify strategies for how to provide support to those in need
- Working with Title I Directors to support the allocation of resources to remove educational barriers for students
- Discussing with curriculum staff the unique needs of homeless students and strategizing together to support virtual learning
- Working with the transportation department and the child nutrition staff on the distribution locations for homeless students that are in shelters, hotels, and parks
- Conducting/participating in all-department daily meeting to provide updates of services provided as well as to reduce duplication of services
- Working with neighboring LEAs to meet the educational needs of students and to assist in providing meals to students outside of attendance zones
- Participating in national partner calls to learn more about the impact the Coronavirus is having on our children experiencing homelessness and how to best support students
- Providing local legislators updates on homeless student needs
- Using Backpack Pals, Backpack Friends, and Backpack Buddies to give food to families as well as unaccompanied youth during weekends, Spring break, etc.
- Working with food banks and pantries to help families in need
- Working with faith-based organizations to provide specific hygiene products to unaccompanied homeless youth, assist with food distributions, and assist with transportation needs that families or students may have to access resources
- Regularly communicating with the local Department of Social Services and Health Department for updates on accessing services
- Talking with local law enforcement agencies to discuss unaccompanied homeless youth needs and where they may be staying at during the day and at night
- Working with local laundry mats to offer no-cost washing to homeless families
- Working with fast-food restaurants to provide information, posters, and resources to homeless students and families

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- Collaborating with:
  - Hunger Fighters to provide mid-week meals/dinner boxes to families
  - COVID-19 Relief Fund to support families with hotel and shelter needs
  - Noon Day Kitchen is assisting with meals and bags of groceries
  - Boys & Girls Club for pick up site of hygiene items, educational supplies, and medical supplies
  - CoCs to locate housing or shelter for homeless families
- Durham FEAST in partnership with FIG provides full meals to families and individuals in need
- Worked with the local Marriott Hotel offering 250 rooms to those families with school-age children who are unsheltered
- Developed an email group that we blind copy our homeless families on to provide information to
- The central office has a walk-in freezer to hold surplus food that community vendors and businesses in the area can donate
- Utilizing “Purposity” to access resources and supplies for students
- Google classroom set-up by school social workers and the homeless liaison to communicate and check on families
- Worked with churches in the area to provide “meal-tickets” to families for meals not offered by the district, includes food on weekends
- Worked with the State Coordinator to access Legal Aid and the Justice Department when hotels are telling families to leave
- Collaborating with the local police department to be familiar with our program and distribute contact information to families they meet
- Established a non-emergency helpline for families to leave questions on
- Have set hours in the evening for families to be able to call school social workers and the homeless liaison
- Mapped out the most vulnerable areas and flooded those communities with resources and services
- Provided every senior with an employee who will provide postcard, small graduation gift, and other supports before, during and after the virtual graduation
- Assigned mentors from the buildings to our unaccompanied homeless students who conduct weekly check-ins to discuss needs, assignments and provide positive accolades to keep students motivated and connected to the school