



## Deprived Backgrounds

### Pupils coming from homeless families



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### Classroom-based tips (focus on instructional methods)

1. **Establish a Code of Conduct** (if the school does not provide one) and zero tolerance policy in your classroom to safeguard against discriminatory or racist incidents towards pupils from homeless families because of their living conditions.
2. **Provide activities that challenge stereotypes and racism** related to social class and material wealth, and that promote respect for diversity.
3. **Maintain a relationship when the pupil leaves home**, by providing self-addressed stamped envelopes and stationary.
4. **Avoid TV-related assignments**, as pupils living in shelters may not have access to TV.
5. **Ensure pupils of homeless families feel welcomed and supported in your classroom** as they transition to a new environment.
6. **Provide school supplies if necessary** (pencil, paper, etc.) that may be shared with pupils of homeless families discreetly to avoid drawing negative the attention of the other pupils in the class.
7. **Make sure pupils of homeless families have equal opportunities** for classroom jobs and roles.
8. **Avoid the removal of pupils' possessions as a disciplinary measure** when dealing with pupils coming from homeless families.
9. **Maintain the privacy of the pupil**; avoiding disclosure of their living conditions to other pupils or their families.
10. Do not ask pupils with insecure housing to bring food items or treats, photographs or favourite toys to school. Pupils who are homeless are often embarrassed to admit that they do not have these things. If the teacher is aware of such pupils in the classroom, it is best to avoid such practices for all pupils, in order to avoid causing feelings of isolation to those not able to contribute.

#### [Reference:

Barbara Driver, Paula Spady, What Educators Can Do: Homeless Children and Youth, 2013: <https://education.wm.edu/centers/hope/publications/infobriefs/documents/whateducatorscando2013.pdf>]



## School-based practical tips (focus on instructional methods)

### Class Divisions / Arrangements

Include pupils of homeless families in events and activities by differentiating their role and contribution, **for example by assigning roles they are comfortable with.**

### Community

**Organise educational visits and school excursions.** Trips are essential for every pupil's development and interaction with the surrounding environment. Take advantage of grants and funding that can help a whole classroom of pupils visit unexpected places.

### Curricular Adaptations

1. Include pupils of homeless families in events and activities by differentiating their role and contribution, **for example by assigning roles they are comfortable with.**
2. **Organise educational visits and school excursions.** Trips are essential for every pupil's development and interaction with the surrounding environment. Take advantage of grants and funding that can help a whole classroom of pupils visit unexpected places.

### Educational Visits / Field Trips / Camps / School Exchanges / Trips Abroad

1. Organise educational visits and school excursions. Trips are essential for every pupil's development and interaction with the surrounding environment. Take advantage of grants and funding that can help a whole classroom of pupils visit unexpected places.
2. When organising school trips, provide gratuity or reductions for pupils from families with financial challenges. These should be provided discreetly.

### Food (canteen, visits, camps, trips)

1. **Provide school canteen discounts** for pupils coming from low-income families. These should be provided discreetly.
2. **Stabilise the pupil's basic needs.** Work to ensure food, clothing, shelter, medical care, basic hygiene, and transportation needs are resolved. Provide a community resource list to the family or youth. If necessary, find a place for pupils to shower (Evers, 2011).

## Other (Social Welfare)

**Stabilise the pupil's basic needs.** Work to ensure food, clothing, shelter, medical care, basic hygiene, and transportation needs are resolved. Provide a community resource list to the family or youth. If necessary, find a place for pupils to shower (Evers, 2011).

## Parents / Parents' Associations

1. Build relationships; provide a supportive relationship with pupils and their families, irrespective of their financial and educational background.
2. Arrange meetings between the parents and the staff to discuss pupils' progress, and to enhance the collaboration between home and school. This will help to monitor progress and to discuss issues that might be related to pupils' social life such as marginalisation, social interactions with peers, behaviour at home and self-esteem.

## School Celebrations / Events / Activities

Include pupils of homeless families in events and activities by differentiating their role and contribution, **for example by assigning roles they are comfortable with.**

## School Uniform

1. Stabilise the pupil's basic needs. Work to ensure food, clothing, shelter, medical care, basic hygiene, and transportation needs are resolved. Provide a community resource list to the family or youth. If necessary, find a place for pupils to shower (Evers, 2011).

## Pupil Support

1. **Build relationships;** provide a supportive relationship with pupils and their families, irrespective of their financial and educational background.
2. **Provide school canteen discounts** for pupils coming from low-income families. These should be provided discreetly.
3. **Ensure that pupils in homeless situations have easy access to assistance and support** in case of personal difficulties (e.g., counsellors). Allow pupils to express fears and frustrations through various means such as through drawing and building activities.
4. **Arrange meetings between the parents and the staff to discuss pupils' progress,** and to enhance the collaboration between home and school. This will help to monitor progress and to discuss issues that might be related to pupils' social life such as marginalisation, social interactions with peers, behaviour at home and self-esteem.

5. **Stabilise the pupil's basic needs.** Work to ensure food, clothing, shelter, medical care, basic hygiene, and transportation needs are resolved. Provide a community resource list to the family or youth. If necessary, find a place for pupils to shower (Evers, 2011).
6. **When organising school trips, provide gratuity or reductions** for pupils from families with financial challenges. These should be provided discreetly.

## School Purchases

**Equip classrooms with computers for each pupil** so as to include those who do not have access to one outside of school, and provide books or other material resources needed during classes.

## Technology

**Equip classrooms with computers for each pupil** so as to include those who do not have access to one outside of school, and provide books or other material resources needed during classes.

## Supportive Literature

**Definition:** Homeless pupils are not only those who live in shelters or on the street, but also those living in motels, vehicles or who are forced to temporarily “double-up” with family members or friends. The effect of homelessness on pupils’ schooling experiences varies by age, setting, and duration of the period of homelessness. (Miller / Pavlakis / Samartino / Bourgeois, 2014-15, 10).

Research shows that homeless pupils may face twice as many learning disabilities as other schoolchildren.

Recognising who is homeless remains a difficult task. Some families choose not to describe themselves as homeless. Families may be reluctant to share their homeless condition due to discomfort with their current living situation. They may fear that their children will be moved to another school or stigmatised by discriminatory remarks (Driver / Spady, 2013).

There are two types of homeless pupils: those who are homeless when entering school and those who become homeless while already in attendance.

Homeless pupils:

- come from varied backgrounds and for varied reasons
- have difficulty in establishing and maintaining relationships
- have difficulty in accessing education-related resources , such as getting a library card
- are unfamiliar with finding and accessing resources available through the school itself
- are ashamed of where they live
- feel ashamed when teased by other pupils, for example about homelessness and hygiene
- are misunderstood by parents
- have difficulty adjusting to a new school
- are more likely to develop feelings of failure

## Useful Websites

[www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc312b.pdf](http://www.irp.wisc.edu/publications/focus/pdfs/foc312b.pdf) (educational opportunity for homeless pupils)

National Centre for Homeless Education at SERVE (NCHE), <http://www.serve.org/nche>  
Virginia Department of Education, Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program (Project HOPE-Virginia), <http://www.wm.edu/hope>

[http://wamu.org/programs/metro\\_connection/14/05/30/dc\\_public\\_schools\\_scramble\\_to\\_serve\\_growing\\_numbers\\_of\\_homeless\\_students](http://wamu.org/programs/metro_connection/14/05/30/dc_public_schools_scramble_to_serve_growing_numbers_of_homeless_students)

[https://www.nlchp.org/youth\\_resources](https://www.nlchp.org/youth_resources)

<http://www.naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/toolkit.pdf> (College Access and Success for Students Experiencing Homelessness)

## References

National Center for Homeless Education, "Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Data Collection Summary," U.S. Department of Education, June 2011.

D. H. Rubin, C. J. Erikson, M. San Agustin, S. D. Cleary, J. K. Allen, and P. Cohen, "Cognitive and Academic Functioning of Homeless Children Compared With Housed Children," *Pediatrics* 97, No. 3 (1996): 289–294

Evers, Tony, 2011, How Teachers Can Help Students Who Are Homeless, [https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/homeless/pdf/teach\\_help\\_hmls\\_stud.pdf](https://dpi.wi.gov/sites/default/files/imce/homeless/pdf/teach_help_hmls_stud.pdf)

<http://www.onlinecolleges.net/for-students/homeless-student-guide>

Peter Miller, Alexandra Pavlakis, Lea Samartino, Alexis Bourgeois, Educational opportunity for homeless students, in *Focus*, Vol. 31, No. 2, Fall/Winter 2014–15

Barbara Driver, Paula Spady, *What Educators Can Do: Homeless Children and Youth*, 2013,

<https://education.wm.edu/centers/hope/publications/infobriefs/documents/whateducatorscando2013.pdf>