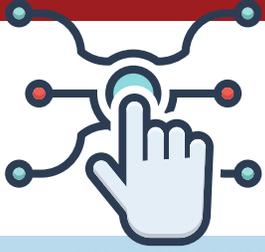


FAMILY HOMELESS SHELTER TECHNOLOGY GRANTS



The Pennsylvania Early Childhood Homelessness Task Force, formed in February 2018, examines opportunities across the state to increase the number of young children living in shelters connected to quality early learning programs, and provides support to both the early learning and family shelter communities.

THE CHALLENGE

In early 2020, while discussing impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on family homeless shelters in Pennsylvania, the Task Force brought the lack of access to technology to the attention of the Pennsylvania Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO).

Internet access for adults in family shelters is even more critical during the COVID-19 closures, as it was the only way to access all these life-sustaining benefits. Lack of technology in homeless shelters can result in adult resident's inability to search for and find permanent housing, apply for jobs, find medical care and access tele-health services, access other benefits such as unemployment, Supplemental Security Income, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP), Medicaid, and access to email.* During the pandemic, many residents of family shelters were moved to hotels and motels to relieve the over-crowding of shelters, which often proved more isolating, as most temporary living arrangements do not offer internet access.

Children living in shelter have a critical need for internet access during the COVID-19 school closures and will need access as schools reopen with a possible hybrid model of learning. Without access to the internet, school age children are unable to connect to teachers, support staff, on-line learning and college applications.

The parents of early learners in Head Start, Early Head Start, PA Pre-K Counts or other educational programs, are unable to connect to their children's teachers, receive information and resources and keep up to date with opportunities for early learning.

ADDRESSING THE CHALLENGE

HSSCO received approval to utilize Federal Preschool Development Grant Birth through 5 (PDG) funding in lieu of projects halted due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

HSSCO was approved to repurpose PDG funding to offer grants up to \$10,000 to family homeless shelters serving families with children under 5-years-old.

Grants were specifically funded to support the purchase of or improvements to internet and wireless access, computer equipment and supplies, and family engagement materials and activities for parents and children to use while in shelter.

GRANT SUMMARY

\$420,375 AWARDED ACROSS THE COMMONWEALTH → \$7,125 AVERAGE AWARD

59 FAMILY HOMELESS SHELTERS AWARDED GRANTS OF UP TO \$10,000

29 Family Homeless Shelters

10 Women's Shelters

1 Serving Veterans

1 Serving Expectant & New Mothers with an infant up to 6-months-old

17 Domestic Violence Shelters

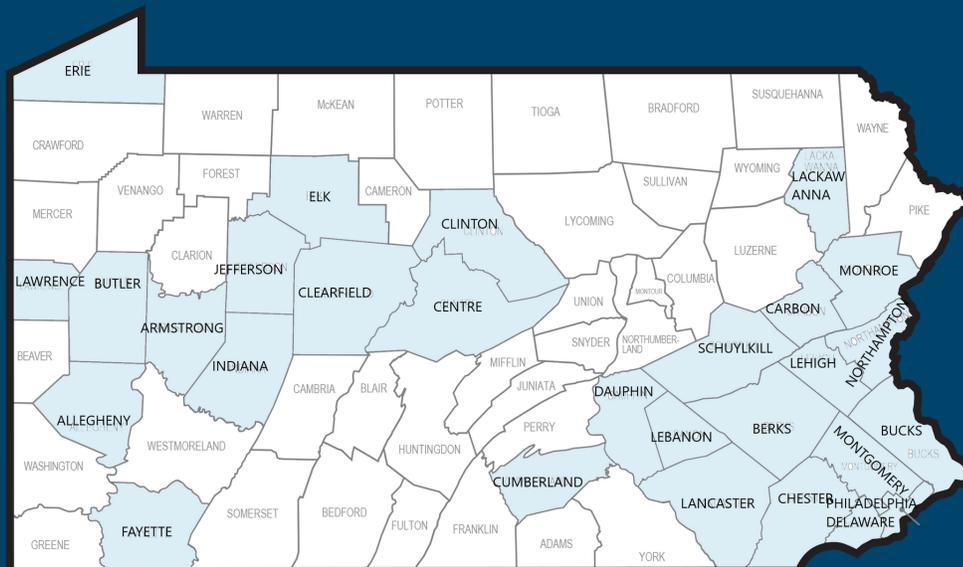
3 Residential Substance Abuse facilities for women & children

28 COUNTIES IMPACTED

3,500+ Families

2,000+ Children under 5-years-old

3,500+ Children school aged (6-18 years)



FUNDING USED FOR:

- Network infrastructure, Wi-Fi access and range extenders
- Wi-Fi hotspots, data plans and trac phones
- Webcams
- Desktop computers, laptops and tablets for adults
- Computer workstations, printers, desks and chairs
- Tablets and early learning software for children
- Subscriptions to ZOOM
- Access to counseling and therapy
- Parent and child engagement activities such as puzzles, games, manipulatives, crafts and books
- Fencing for two domestic violence shelters to provide a private, safe outdoor space for mothers and children to play outside.
- Outdoor family engagement activities such as raised gardens, balls, and other outdoor toys

The PA Early Childhood Homelessness Task Force is co-chaired by Tracy Duarte, Director of Pennsylvania Head Start State Collaboration Office (HSSCO) and Joe Willard, VP of Policy at People's Emergency Center in Philadelphia. For more information, contact Tracy Duarte at tradua@pakeys.org