



BrainGain@PEC

Brought to you by the PEC Policy Department

For more information, email Policy Department.



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BrainGain@PEC provides brief summaries of research or publications on family homelessness and related issues. Previous issues of BrainGain@PEC can be found at <http://bit.ly/2iaczvQ>.

Origins for the BELL project:
“Access to Early Childhood Programs for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness: A Survey Report”

Background: PEC is looking back at how it developed its role as an advocate for young children who experience homelessness by reviewing key publications that motivated action.

Dr. Staci Perlman, PEC’s first Visiting Scholar, published her findings of a national survey by the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) Early Childhood Committee in [Access to Early Childhood Programs for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness: A Survey Report](#). This report offered information on the barriers and facilitators of accessing early childhood services among young children and families experiencing homelessness and identifying recommendations to reduce these barriers.

The report’s objective was **to understand barriers** families with young children experiencing homelessness face when trying to access early childhood services. It also sought to identify successful strategies for addressing those barriers and to assess the degree of collaboration among early care and education programs. The data was collected from the NAEHCY survey administered to **school district liaisons, homeless housing providers, and early care/education providers** (including Early Head Start/Head Start (EHS/HS), child care, preschool, Early Intervention (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part C), and Pre- school Special Education providers (Individuals with Disabilities Education Act Part B).

Readers are encouraged to read the full report at <http://bit.ly/2K8W4wS> to understand the data and various methodologies.

PEC summarized the report for the Philadelphia emergency housing system.

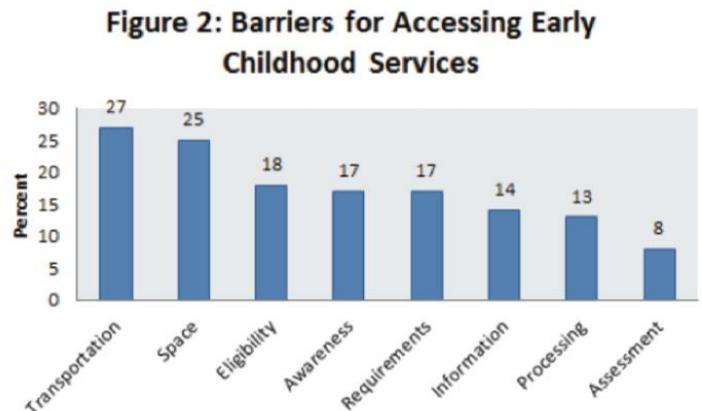
Key findings of the survey:

- **Knowledge of Programs and Laws**
 - Most respondents were familiar with programs/laws addressing the needs of young children experiencing homelessness.
 - A small percentage reported that there were programs/laws that they were not familiar with at all.
 - 10% of respondents said that they were not at all familiar with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, IDEA Part C, or IDEA Part B.

- **Barriers for Accessing Early Childhood Services**

- **Mobility/communication**

- Transportation for early childhood programs was not offered or covered by McKinney-Vento
- Families lacked phone or phone coverage in rural areas thus, making it impossible to disseminate information regarding programs to families living in such areas



- **Funding**

- **Limited** funding on a systems level influenced the availability of services and families being able to access funding and child care subsidies

- **Competing demands on families**

- Families experiencing homelessness, often deal with other issues, and don't often prioritize their child's education when they're concerned about housing, feeding and clothing, and finding a job
- A disconnect between parents' work schedules and the schedules/ hours of child care/early childhood programs

Recommendations

- **Increase** awareness of the **impact** of homelessness on young children among early childhood providers, homeless service providers, and the general public.

- **Provide** regular **training** for McKinney-Vento Liaisons, homeless service providers, and early childhood providers to support their ability to collaborate to meet the needs of young children experiencing homelessness.
- **Implement** strategies to **increase connections** to families experiencing homelessness and support effective cross-sector collaboration.
- **Increase representation** of young children who experience homelessness in local and state homelessness and early education planning efforts.

About PEC:

People's Emergency Center's mission is to nurture families, strengthen neighborhoods and drive change. PEC offers more than 235 affordable housing units, job training, parenting and early childhood education, financial education and planning, life skills and technology coursework for families, children and youth who experience homelessness. This BrainGain@PEC was developed by Ornella Pitah and Joe Willard. For more information, email at policy@pec-cares.org.