

YOUTH, FAMILY, AND COMMUNITY

Training Local Homeless Education Liaisons in Washington State

Partner Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)

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Washington state's Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) partnered with Education Northwest to develop a training series to help school personnel in the state understand the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness and the federally mandated responsibilities of a local homeless education liaison. These rights and responsibilities were established in the 1987 Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act—most recently reauthorized in 2015 as the McKinney-Vento Act—the first federal legislation aimed at helping children and youth experiencing homelessness enroll in school without barriers.

The McKinney-Vento Act requires every local education agency in the United States to have a local homeless education liaison. These liaisons need an expert understanding of how to implement the law's provisions and a wide range of skills, including the ability to work with students and families who are experiencing homelessness, to collaborate with school personnel and community service providers, and to connect students to the supports to which they are legally entitled. School staff members and administrators who collaborate with local liaisons must also understand the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act.

Essential knowledge and skills in a compact package

Working closely with the OSPI team as well as staff members from the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), who are experts in the provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act, we conducted an audience assessment and content review to identify the essential knowledge and skills needed to be successful as a local liaison. This included interviews with OSPI and NCHE staff

members and review of numerous NCHE research briefs. We also learned about OSPI's goals for tracking learner attendance at and completion of the training and discussed possible strategies to assess learner comprehension of key content.

Knowing that our audience is busy working adults, we designed a 45-minute training, "The Responsibilities of a Local Homeless Liaison," that is divided into three short, self-directed online modules. To support this audience being able to apply their learning in practice, each module is paired with on-the-job resources that learners can revisit if needed. This training was authored using Articulate Storyline 360 and includes professional voiceover narration, custom graphics, engaging activities that meet Section 508 accessibility standards, and built-in assessments.

Training delivery and assessment

OSPI will offer this training through its learning management system as a concise, on-demand way to teach staff members about the requirements of The McKinney-Vento Act and the role of a local homeless education liaison. This training will help more school personnel in Washington state learn about the Act's requirements and how to implement them to support students experiencing homelessness. Over time, the agency will be able to track completion data and review assessment scores from individual modules, allowing it to assess staff members' understanding of the role of a local homeless education liaison.

Looking ahead to the future, OSPI wants to expand its on-demand training opportunities to further support local liaisons in decision making and understanding how best to fulfil their role in different situations. To help, we proposed a curriculum of future modules offering targeted training for specific school and district roles and tasks related to McKinney-Vento implementation.