Using the Best That We Know:
Supporting Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

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Eager to Learn!

> Children come into the world eager to learn. The first five years of life are a time of enormous growth of linguistic, conceptual, social, emotional, and motor competence…. There can be no question that the environment in which a child grows up has a powerful impact on how the child develops and what the child learns.[1]

Early intervention programs are designed to enhance young children's learning and development. These programs create environments that build children's competence. Effective programs work with families and involve various services to address children's individual circumstances. By supporting children's eagerness to learn, early education can improve outcomes for children who experience poverty, biological risks, and specific disabilities.

Key factors in program effectiveness are:

- highly qualified staff,
- well-designed curricula,
- individualized interventions, and
- family-centered services.[1]

In addition, effective early intervention services require teamwork across disciplines and agencies to address a wide array of developmental influences on young children within the context of their families and communities.[2]

Developmental Concerns & Homelessness

Young children who experience homelessness also are eager to learn, but their living situation can dampen their enthusiasm, prevent their participation in early education, and isolate their families from important support services. When comparing the risks associated with early developmental delays and with homelessness, the overlapping concerns are very clear (see Table 1). This overlap demonstrates the increased risk of developmental problems for young children experiencing homelessness. Although their families may be homeless for many different reasons (e.g., affordable housing, domestic violence or prolonged unemployment), high stress, limited resources and social support are common experiences that may compromise the emotional, physical, and cognitive development of young children. While some children develop typically despite these risk factors, children experiencing homelessness are much

Table 1. Early Childhood & Homelessness: Potential Risks to Healthy Development

Risks Associated With Developmental Problems	Risks Associated With Experiencing Homelessness
- Poor maternal health care - Poor prenatal health care - Maternal age (adolescent or over 40) - Premature birth or low birth weight - Exposure to toxic substances - Difficult parent-child relationships (high conflict or low engagement) - Limited physical, emotional, or social stimulation - Family or neighborhood violence	- Inconsistent or inadequate health care - Adolescent mothers - Inadequate nutrition - Inadequate or unstable housing - Disrupted or limited family support - Lack of social support network - Emotional stress or depression - Poor financial resources - Limited maternal education and reduced employment options - Domestic violence - Substance abuse - Unsafe dwellings

more likely to be identified as having developmental delays than children with stable housing.[3]

Research on the resilience of children experiencing difficult circumstances, such as homelessness, identifies many protective influences that can make the difference in long term outcomes for children.[4] These protective influences include the supports or support structures and opportunities that promote healthy coping, growth, and overall development. These are key principles of early intervention[2] and homeless education.[5]

Great Opportunities

Early childhood programs are designed to address many of the developmental and support issues that challenge young children and families experiencing homelessness. Through a combination of local, state, and federal funds, many communities have an array of programs for children, from birth to five years, and their families. Although each is shaped by different laws, funding sources, and policies, all of these programs focus on early development and represent important opportunities and protective influences for young children and families without stable housing and related support systems. These opportunities:

- offer children positive experiences with peers and other nurturing adults;
- bolster parental efficacy with their children; and
- provide families with meaningful connections to schools, agencies, and essential resources.

Special Education

Under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part C (infants and toddlers), and Part B (preschoolers), programs are available for young children with developmental delays and disabilities. Both of these early childhood programs emphasize individualized services to enhance development, coordination across disciplines and agencies, and education in the context of everyday routines and settings. In addition, family caregivers are important team members in these programs, and collaboration among team members is a high priority.

Other Early Childhood Education Programs

- Through *Early Head Start* and *Head Start*, integrated educational, physical and mental health, and social services are provided for infants, young children, and their families who are economically disadvantaged. Head Start programs also include young children with developmental delays and disabilities. The programs actively involve family caregivers in decision making and support services.
- *Even Start* and *Title I Preschool Programs* focus on early education, family literacy, and family development, which are essential supports for many families with young children experiencing homelessness.
- The *Virginia Preschool Initiative* also provides additional early education services in some communities.
- Other important early education options are high quality private preschools programs in local communities that implement inclusive practices for children with developmental delays. These programs offer scholarships for children in economic need.

Across these dynamic early childhood programs, there are great opportunities for helping young children develop positively, in spite of the stressors of homelessness and the challenges of developmental delays.

Homeless Education

The *McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act* provides broad assurances for free, appropriate public education for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Each school division has a local homeless education liaison to support educational access, attendance, and success (see Project HOPE-Virginia information, page 12). Coordinated efforts among early childhood programs, liaisons, and local shelter providers show great promise for supporting the youngest and most vulnerable children – those who experience homelessness and developmental delays.

Virginia Perspectives

Project HOPE-Virginia surveyed 638 early childhood educators, homeless education liaisons, and shelter providers to understand their perspectives about the primary challenges in serving young children with developmental concerns who are also experiencing homelessness.[6] The survey respondents reported that 18,878 young children were being served in their varied programs. Of these, approximately 400-500 were identified as experiencing homelessness. Table 2 provides a summary of respondents' concerns regarding meeting the needs of young children with disabilities who experience homelessness. These responses illuminate the importance of planning at the child, family, and community level to address the complex issues associated with homelessness.

Table 2. Staff Concerns across Virginia Communities

Concerns	Early Intervention & Early Childhood Educators	Homeless Education Liaisons	Shelter Providers
Child Find	Lack of awareness about children's homelessness	Identification of children for services	Lack of parental awareness about developmental delays
Evaluations for special education eligibility	Incomplete evaluations	Slow process	Wait time for services
Impact of homelessness on child & family functioning	• Emotional and physical needs of child and family • Frequent absences • Interrupted services and instruction	• Family physical and emotional needs • Inconsistent attendance	Domestic violence trauma
Links with families	• Need for communication strategies with families • Need for developing family trust • Language barriers	• Communication • Family participation • Support for child's developmental needs	• Lack of continuity due to families' short shelter stay • Low cooperation • Language barriers
Administrative issues	• Difficulty tracking child and family • No medical history and other records • Transportation	• Immunization policies • Transportation	• Paperwork burden • Transportation
Interagency coordination & community resources	• Inadequate resources • Fragmented services • Lack of affordable housing	• Need for interagency collaboration • Need for stable employment and housing	• Confusion regarding appropriate contacts • Inadequate resources • High costs • Limited accessibility • Need for medical insurance • Lack of long-term housing solutions

Promising Practices

How can early childhood programs increase the access, participation, and success of young children experiencing homelessness and developmental concerns? Recommended practices from early intervention, early childhood education, and homeless education provide helpful guidance, particularly with respect to Child Find, evaluations, support interventions, family connections, streamlined procedures, and interagency collaboration.

Child Find

Outreach. Early identification of young children with developmental delays whose families are homeless is the first step in providing early intervention. Effective Child Find programs increase coordination among a wide variety of agencies that serve homeless families. These agencies provide assistance with the following services to families struggling with the diverse stressors associated with homelessness:

- health care,
- financial support,
- temporary and transitional housing,
- family counseling,
- service coordination,
- child care, and
- other essential support systems.

Interagency collaboration can result in more effective Child Find by increasing the awareness of professionals and families about early developmental concerns, referral procedures, and available services.

Resources. Family-friendly awareness materials such as brochures, videotapes, and checklists are readily available from national, state, and local agencies (see *Resources* on pages 8, 11 and 12). By providing these tools to social service offices, health clinics, shelters, subsidized child care, and other community programs, greater numbers of families and professionals can recognize early signs of developmental concerns and learn about early intervention programs that are designed to support children's developmental progress.

Screening Tools. Early childhood professionals can conduct ongoing screening in coordination with other agencies. Developmental screening can be provided at shelters, health departments, and social services on a regularly scheduled basis by early childhood educators or by community agency professionals.

Several developmental screening tools, such as *Ages & Stages Questionnaire*[7] and *Parents' Evalua-tion of Developmental Status,*[8] are designed for use by diverse professionals as a part of ongoing service delivery. Although these measures take only about 10-20 minutes to complete, they are reliable and valid tools for early identification of developmental problems and ongoing monitoring. Efficient and consistent developmental monitoring is one of the best ways to increase referrals for children in need of further evaluation.

To increase use of such measures by other agencies, early intervention professionals can clarify administration and interpretation procedures, provide the screening materials, identify referral contacts, and follow up periodically.

Shelters and other agencies that serve families experiencing homelessness can also help early childhood programs determine effective methods of contacting families and enhancing awareness about the availability and importance of early intervention. Effective Child Find programs involve strong partnerships among programs that devise creative methods to reach children, such as canvassing motels, shelters, and other housing situations of transient families.

Evaluations

Expedited Evaluations. To meet the urgent needs of children experiencing homelessness and developmental delays, expedited evaluations are essential to provide quicker access to services for eligible children. Usual timelines for evaluations become significant barriers to education for children whose families are moving frequently. Expediting evaluations can be accomplished through accessing and using reports from other agencies and schools, using interdisciplinary team approaches, and determining eligibility as quickly as possible so that appropriate service can be provided right away. Completing this link in accessing services helps families understand that early intervention and early childhood programs are important resources for their children and for them. If evaluation procedures become one more stressor, early childhood education may become a low priority for families struggling to find housing, economic stability, and social support.

Play-Based Assessment. Using recommended assessment practices is especially important for young children and families experiencing complex problems, such as domestic violence, poor health, and poverty. While all young children benefit from play-based approaches to assessment and significant family involvement, these practices are invaluable for young children

experiencing homelessness who may be wary of strangers and new environments, be unaccustomed to structured tasks in standardized assessments, or behave atypically because of recent illness or trauma.

Play-based assessment methods allow family members or familiar adults to facilitate the child's play with engaging toys while the interdisciplinary team observes the child's developmental skills in various new play activities. As outlined in the *Transdisciplinary Play-Based Assessment,*[9] all team members can be fully included in play-based assessment by interviewing family members first, and then carefully planning the play session to address all areas of development and specific questions raised by professionals from different disciplines. By videotaping the play session, the full assessment team can review and discuss their observations, while confirming with the parent whether this is typical behavior for the child and clarifying any concerns or priorities regarding the child's development.

Family-Focused Assessment. High quality assessment tools are available that focus on the child's development within the broader family context, with attention to the family's concerns and priorities, as well as the child's responses to their current situation. Family interviews can be conducted using assessment tools appropriate for specific situations.

- The *HELP Family-Centered Interview*[10] provides a process for learning more about a child's functioning during daily activities, such as meals, dressing, and play. While many families' daily routines are disrupted by frequent moving, discussing how a child is eating, sleeping, and playing can provide valuable insight into the child's and family's strengths and needs for additional support.
- The *AEPS Family Interest Survey*[11] is another tool that gives professionals a systematic way to ask families about their priorities for information regarding their child's development, family supports, and community resources.
- The *Infant-Toddler and Family Instrument*[12] uses an ecological approach (i.e., observing children in their natural environments), by interviewing the family caregiver, observing the infant, and evaluating child and environmental factors affecting development, health, and safety. This assessment tool focuses on some of the difficult circumstances that may be associated with homelessness, such as domestic violence, adequate nutrition, and safe housing, which should be considered by the assessment team.

- The *Devereux Early Childhood Assessment*[13] focuses on preschoolers' resilience by having family caregivers and early educators rate three protective factors (initiative, self-control, and attachment) as well as behavioral concerns. Parent and teacher ratings provide a useful picture of how children are coping across different settings, and focus attention on children's needs for additional support.

Close coordination among early childhood programs, homeless education liaisons, and shelter providers can help families access the best early childhood program(s) for their children. If infants are not eligible for Part C services, they may be eligible for Early Head Start or qualify for a scholarship in a high quality infant care setting. Likewise, referral and coordination services are needed for preschoolers dually-qualified for programs, such as early childhood special education and Head Start. Speedy referrals and shared evaluation results among programs (with family permission) can accelerate children's and families' participation in a wide array of early childhood services. Overall, the best standard for judging evaluation procedures is the parental guidance that, "developmental assessment should feel like help."[14]

Support Interventions

Meeting Basic Needs. Although many early interventionists and early childhood educators are experienced in working with young children and families facing difficult situations, professionals may be concerned about effectively meeting the complex needs of children exposed to domestic violence, frequent moving, and disrupted relationships. Reaching out to these young children and their families requires that professionals deal with the physical and emotional stressors associated with homelessness. Children who are hungry, afraid, or sleepy must have their basic needs met to benefit from the learning and social opportunities of early childhood settings.[15]

In one study,[16] preschool teachers experienced in working with young children in homeless situations reported that these preschoolers:

- were often hypervigilant,
- had low frustration tolerance,
- had difficulty listening and following through on activities,
- had trouble sitting still, and
- were more likely to be :
    - □ hungry,
    - □ tired,
    - □ depressed,
    - □ aggressive,
    - □ advanced in self-care,
    - □ delayed in language, and
    - □ unenthusiastic about typical developmental accomplishments.

Given the diverse reasons for families' homelessness (e.g., domestic violence, low parental education, or recent financial crisis), each child's responses should be carefully reviewed so that supports are designed to be appropriate for the child's specific situation.

Satisfying children's basic physical needs could involve providing:

- meals and snacks,
- clean and appropriate clothing,
- opportunities for more rest, or
- grooming assistance.

Volunteer groups can help secure resources for these basic needs, and staff can plan ahead to make sure there is a private and safe place for children who need extra care, rest, or attention. Children also may come to school in need of medical attention or sustained emotional support. In school settings, the school nurse, social worker, counselor, and school psychologist can be invaluable resources to early childhood educators, through direct assistance to children and families, as well as consultation to classroom staff.

Emphasizing Coping Skills. Nurturing young children's adjustment is a hallmark of early childhood programs, and there are curricula that focus on helping children understand and regulate their feelings and interactions with other children.

It is worth remembering that high quality preschool programs already provide many supports beneficial to young children experiencing stress. Well-organized learning environments, consistent routines, caring support, and opportunities for creative expression are very important in helping children feel valued, safe, and competent.[18]

Family Connections

Early childhood educators know the benefits of connecting with families and promoting the importance of caregivers' influence on young children's development. Effectively involving families in gathering information, expressing concerns, identifying priorities, securing resources, and making decisions can lead to effective partnerships that foster children's growth and caregivers'

Examples of Preschool Curricula

Al's Pals[17] is focused on helping children cope effectively with difficult situations, such as exposure to substance abuse and violence. Using puppets, music, photographs, and other visuals, early educators promote children's resilience by helping them explore their own ideas, understand their feelings, show respect, learn about healthy choices, solve problems, and choose self-control. A family guide, *Here, Now and Down the Road...Tips for Loving Parents*, accompanies this curriculum with a focus on guiding children toward healthy, drug-free, non-violent lifestyles.

In a therapeutic preschool,[16] familiar early childhood activities are used to help young children deal with significant emotional concerns. For example, *Go Away – Come Back* helps children dealing with separation anxiety, through songs ("Where is Thumpkin"), stories ("Will You Come Back for Me?"), games (pop-up toys, hide-and-seek), and art (making peek-a-boo books). Other units focus on ownership/sharing (which can be difficult for children who have little for themselves), food-related problems, identity, medical or abuse problems, and feelings. Through these activities, children's development in physical, cognitive, and communication domains are also encouraged.

sense of efficacy.[19] Family caregivers who are struggling with the problems that led to their unstable housing might seem disinterested or uninvolved at times. For example, family members fleeing domestic violence are necessarily focused on safety and dealing with the trauma of threatening relationships.[20]

What can you do to build family connections when homelessness occurs? Talking with shelter providers, social workers, and others who are familiar with family situations can help early educators understand particular challenges that families are facing and provide opportunities for building greater understanding about effective ways to connect with families.

- Visiting the shelter or the family's current residence is an important way to learn about the realities of a family's living circumstances, demonstrate commitment to including caregivers, and develop collaborative activities with shelter providers.
- Creating partnerships with community mental health, adult education, the local library, or volunteer groups, fosters connections so that early education programs can organize family literacy activities, picnics, developmental play groups, and other family-focused activities in shelters or nearby community centers. These family-focused activities can enhance child-caregiver interactions and promote children's learning across many developmental domains.
- Traditional methods of staying in touch (such as home-school notebooks, or learning kits loaned for home use) also could be used, although storing and returning materials may be difficult when families are "doubled up" with others or personal space in the shelter is limited.
- Other familiar strategies (sending home children's photos and work, classroom newsletters, etc.) are still helpful ways to communicate with families about their children's accomplishments and current learning activities in the classroom.
  - □ If the family has telephone access in the shelter, phone calls are another way to reach out to families and communicate that their involvement is valued.
  - □ Considerate, caring, and frequent communication with families may be the most important goal for early educators. As one grandparent commented about her welcome in a program attuned to concerns of homeless families, "People actually smiled at you and asked if they

could be of assistance…. I felt so relieved….I thought, finally there is someone there to help me get help."[21]

Streamlined Procedures

Typical enrollment and transportation policies need to be modified to meet the legal requirements for educating children who are experiencing homelessness. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvement Act of 2001 clarifies the importance of enrolling students immediately so that they do not miss valuable learning time. Transporting children to their previous school, when feasible, to maintain educational continuity is one requirement aimed at stability in educational settings. Administrators, early childhood educators, transportation coordinators, and program secretaries need to be aware of these legal protections and design more flexible and responsive ways to ensure that young children attend and benefit from a free and appropriate education. *Unlocking Potential*[22] outlines specific strategies to streamline administrative procedures so that children may benefit from educational services, despite the difficulties of accessing school or medical records, or arranging transportation.

Interagency Collaboration

Given the wide variety of concerns related to homelessness, teaming with colleagues across disciplines and agencies is essential in the creation of comprehensive and well-integrated supports for young children and families experiencing homelessness. Without agency coordination, gaps and overlaps in services become one more challenge for families that are already stressed by their circumstances. Effective collaboration grows by opening lines of communication and creatively coordinating services so that families can access resources.[2] Interagency agreements can be developed to define services provided, clarify referral procedures, and detail communication methods to ensure smooth transitions and effective coordination of services.[23]

While potential community partners[24] are numerous, early childhood educators can begin with their closest contacts to strengthen working relationships that will help families negotiate various eligibility and access procedures. For example, is there an interagency written agreement among local early childhood programs, including early intervention (Part C), Early Head Start, early childhood special education, Title I preschools, Head Start, community preschools, and others in the community? While there may be "phantom" or

non-written agreements between specific staff members across programs, clarifying these agreements in writing is important to assure broader agency support so that these coordination efforts don't disappear when staff members move to other jobs or communities.[25]

Including local shelters in these agreements helps clarify coordination concerns (such as enrollment, transportation, records transfer) that are particularly important for young children experiencing homelessness. Interagency agreements can help staff members make referrals to the right person and help families understand the services provided by each program. Starting with agreements about these specific issues can increase access and reduce frustration for families who need appropriate early educational services for their children.

With these agreements in place, programs can explore creative ways to pool their resources and enhance the quality of services that they can provide together. As described in previous sections, effective child find, evaluation, intervention, and family-focused services are enriched by the contributions of many disciplines and agencies.

Early childhood programs can also look within for professional contacts to other community programs, including:

- social services,
- shelters,
- health department,
- community services board,
- emergency food networks,
- mental health clinics,
- adult education,
- job training and housing support programs,
- faith-based organizations,
- businesses, and
- civic groups.

Social workers, health professionals, counselors, psychologists, administrators, and others can lead the way to strengthen the network of supports that can be available for children and families. This broader network also can provide opportunities, such as workshops, conferences, demonstrations, and resource materials that sustain professional development across disciplines and agencies. Working together, colleagues can enrich their own understandings and create new solutions to meet the complex challenges that homelessness can present to young children and their families.

Additional Resources on Early Childhood & Homeless Education

The following resources include assessment tools, curricula, websites, and other publications that address key concerns of early educators and shelter providers.

Child Find

National Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center website: http://www.nectac.org/topics/earlyid

Reed-Victor, E., & Myers, M. (2004). *Helping young children grow and learn: A guide for families and shelter provider*s. Project HOPE-VA: Williamsburg. Website: http://www.wm.edu/HOPE

Evaluations

Ostrosky, M.M., & Horn, E. (Eds.). (2002). *Assessment: Gathering Meaningful Information:Young Exceptional Children Monograph 4.* Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Interventions

Sandall, S., & Ostrosky, M. (Eds.). (1999). *Practical Ideas for Adressing Challenging Behaviors: Young Exceptional Children Monograph 1.* Longmont, CO: Sopris West.

Interagency collaboration

Virginia Department of Education. (2003) *Smoothing the way for transition from early intervention (Part C) to early childhood special education (Part B).* Available at www.pen.k12.va.us/VDOE/sped/earlychildhoodtransitiondoc.pdf

Share Your Reactions to Books You are Reading

Project HOPE-Virginia, Education for Virginia's Homeless Children and Youth
http://www.wm.edu/hope   (757)221-4002 Toll-free: (877)455-3412

Keep Books Handy

Project HOPE-Virginia, Education for Virginia's Homeless Children and Youth
http://www.wm.edu/hope   (757)221-4002 Toll-free: (877)455-3412

Choose Good Books Your Child Will Like

Project HOPE-Virginia, Education for Virginia's Homeless Children and Youth
http://www.wm.edu/hope   (757)221-4002 Toll-free: (877)455-3412
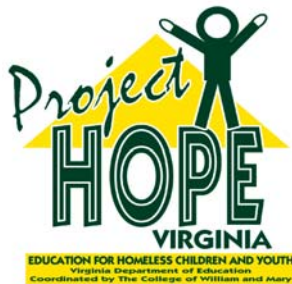
Set a Special Time for Reading

Project HOPE-Virginia, Education for Virginia's Homeless Children and Youth
http://www.wm.edu/hope   (757)221-4002 Toll-free: (877)455-3412

If you are reading a good novel, tell the child how much you're enjoying it: "I just can't wait to see what happens," or "This is such a good book. I just learned that whales sing songs to each other, hundreds of miles away in the ocean." Paraphrase a particularly good passage from your book for the child: "In my book, the writer says a tree is like a fountain of leaves. I've never thought of it that way before."

A stack of old favorites in a basket beside a big easy chair makes them convenient to grab at those moments when a new activity is needed. A home library need not be expensive. With the low cost of paperbacks, you can have several for less than you pay for one breakable toy.

You will pay no more money for a really good book that the child will want to read time and time again than you will pay for an uninteresting book that doesn't hold the child's attention.

Pick a time that works for you; even better would be three or four times a day!

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Also see: Reed-Victor, E., & Pelco, L.E. (1999). Helping homeless students build resilience: What the school community can do. *Journal for a Just and Caring Education, 5*(1), 51-71.

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[6] The summer timing of the survey had an impact on the return rate that totaled 187; however, respondents from all three groups participated:

- 99 early childhood educators from Part C programs for infants and toddlers, preschool special education, Head Start programs, and Title I preschools,
- 55 shelter providers, and
- 33 homeless education liaisons.

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[14] Zero to Three National Center for Infants Toddlers, and Families website: http://www.zerotothree.org/ztt_professionals.html

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[24] Tucker, P. D. (2000). Enhancing collaboration on behalf of homeless students: Strategies for local and state educational agencies. In J. H. Stronge & E. Reed-Victor (Eds.), *Educating Homeless Students: Promising Practices,* pp. 225-245. Larchmont, NY: Eye on Education.

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Virginia Resources

Parent Educational Advocacy Training Center (PEATC)
http://www.peatc.org
Northern VA   **703-923-0010** (Voice/TTY)
Richmond VA   **804-819-1999** (Voice/TTY)
Spanish   **703-569-6200**

Virginia Interagency Action Council for the Homeless (VIACH)
http://www.viach.state.va.us/index.html
804-371-7175
Organization of federal and state agencies, local continuums of care, and non-profits who serve individuals experiencing homelessness.

Virginia's Regional Training and Technical Assistance Centers:

Regions 1 and 8 VCU   800-426-1595
http://www.soe.vcu.edu/ttac/
Regions 2 and 3 ODU   888-249-5529
http://www.ttac.odu.edu/
Regions 2 and 3 W&M   800-323-4489
http://www.wm.edu/ttac/
Region 4 GMU   800-333-7958
http://chd.gmu.edu/ttac/
Region 5 JMU   888-205-4824
http://ttac.cisat.jmu.edu/
Regions 6 and 7 Radford   877-544-1918
http://ru-portal.radford.edu/ttac/
Regions 6 and 7 Va Tech   800-848-2714
http://tac.elps.vt.edu/

Virginia Department of Education
http://www.pen.k12.va.us
800-292-3820

Project HOPE – Virginia
See contact information below
The office of the state coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth, Project HOPE-Virginia is part of the Virginia Department of Education and administered through The College of William and Mary. Other information briefs developed by Project HOPE-Virginia are available on our website. There is no charge in Virginia for these resources. (Some items have quantity limits.)

Family Access to Medical Insurance Security
866-873-2647
http://www.famis.org
Virginia's health insurance program for children of working families covers all the medical services growing children need to avoid getting sick, plus the services that will help them make a speedy recovery if they do become ill or get hurt. Assistance is available in English and Spanish.

Child Health Investment Partnership (CHIP) of Virginia
804-783-2667
Local offices around Virginia organize community resources for families to provide access to comprehensive care.

Project HOPE-Virginia
Virginia Department of Education
The College of William and Mary – SOE
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This and other information briefs are available on the Project HOPE-Virginia website:

http://www.wm.edu/hope

DEFINITION OF HOMELESS

Anyone who, *due to a lack of housing,* lives:
· In emergency or transitional shelters;
· In motels, hotels, trailer parks, campgrounds, abandoned in hospitals, awaiting foster care placement;
· In cars, parks, public places, bus or train stations, abandoned buildings;
· Doubled up with relatives or friends;
· In these conditions and is a migratory child or youth.
*To determine homelessness, consider the **permanence** and **adequacy** of the living situation.

Project HOPE-Virginia is Virginia's Program for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. The College of William and Mary administers the program for the Virginia Department of Education. Funding is authorized under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, Title X, Part C of the *No Child Left Behind Act* (P.L. 107-110). The purpose of Project HOPE is to ensure the enrollment, attendance, and success of homeless children and youth in school.