ECEAP Families Experiencing Homelessness

Families experiencing homelessness are some of the most highly prioritized families to be enrolled in ECEAP. This guidance brief is intended to answer some of the most common questions asked of DCYF ECEAP on this topic.

ECEAP defines families experiencing homelessness according to the federal **McKinney-Vento Education of Homeless Children and Youth Assistance Act.**

Throughout the ECEAP Performance Standards, there are multiple regulations on how ECEAP Contractors must support and prioritize children and families experiencing homelessness.

Recruitment, Prioritization, and Enrollment

A child and family experiencing homelessness is prioritized for ECEAP services, and has potential for specific exceptions during the enrollment phase.

- Recruitment: Contractors must focus recruitment efforts on locating children and families who are homeless (PAO-37). Some ideas on focused recruitment for homeless families are:
    - Every school district has an **Education of Homeless Children and Youth contact list** for the local liaison. It is helpful to reach out to this person and set up a referral system to early learning, if not already in place.
    - Every ESA office has Housing Referral Program – good to connect with the **local CSO office** and provide information about EL and application/contact information
    - DSHS Housing and Essential Needs (HEN) have county contacts – they work with people experiencing homelessness and are great contacts for recruitment – here is the list of **Coordinated Entry Sites** across Washington State.

- Prioritization: Contractors must prioritize children and families who are homeless for enrollment into ECEAP (**RCW 43.216.512**, **WAC 110-425-0085**). The Early Learning Management System (ELMS) calculates priority points automatically as an enrollment staff member indicates that the family is homeless. For more information on homelessness and other priority points, please see DCYF ECEAP's **Priority Point Chart** on our website.

- Enrollment: Contractors may delay verification of eligibility for *some* homeless families in order to ensure their prioritized and speedy enrollment. Contractors may take up to 90 days to verify eligibility for children when documents are not immediately available due to homelessness (PAO-41).

Attendance

Supporting regular attendance of families experiencing homelessness is expected of ECEAP Contractors. At the same time, DCYF ECEAP also expects that ECEAP sites do not move to dis-enroll families experiencing homelessness due to a lower attendance rate.

- What supports are expected from ECEAP Contractors?
  - Address transportation needs (PAO-8). Transportation is often a barrier for families experiencing homelessness. The Performance Standard offers some examples of strategies to be explored for connecting ECEAP families with reliable transportation to the ECEAP site. This is not a required list, but a list of ideas for strategies to begin. DCYF understands that every community is different, and DCYF ECEAP does not expect every site to have the same resources available for transportation of homeless families. And best practice includes exploring options for the family as it is reasonable to do so.
  - Check in regularly with the family and connect them with resources (PAO-8, FEP-1, FEP-4, FEP-13). Contractors must work with parents to address barriers to attendance. This is an individualized approach for each family. Some families may respond well to text messages or phone calls, while for others, a home visit may be the best way to connect. Navigating systems of services can be particularly difficult for families experiencing homelessness, so additional, individualized family support time may be needed in circumstances where families are experiencing difficulty in attending regularly.
  - Implement an alternative attendance plan. **Alternative attendance plans** are meant to be a temporary method of support for families who cannot attend ECEAP regularly due to specific circumstances. If a family experiencing homelessness cannot attend regularly due to transportation or other barriers, implementing an alternative attendance plan is an option to continue the enrollment and participation of the child and family. ECEAP Contractors must:
    - Get prior approval for an alternative attendance plan from the DCYF ECEAP office, and
    - Include plans on how the ECEAP Contractor staff will provide continued

education, health, and family support services to the family while the child is not attending class in person.

- What are attendance requirements for homeless families?
    - There are no individual attendance requirements for families experiencing homelessness. Contractors must work with families to develop a plan for continued attendance after multiple unexplained absences.
    - Attendance requirements for contractors are:
        - Tracking average daily attendance and analyzing causes and patterns of absenteeism
        - Developing a plan to improve attendance if the average daily attendance falls below 85%

- How do ECEAP sites, subcontractors, and contractors balance support for families with the need to maintain 85% overall attendance rate and full enrollment?
    - Tracking and planning around absenteeism. When ECEAP Contractors are analyzing attendance rates, plans made from that analysis can include differentiated supports for families experiencing homelessness. While DCYF will monitor ECEAP Contractors for daily average attendance rates, CQI Specialists will also be looking for evidence of increased support to families who need it.
    - Try out multiple different avenues of support for families. Families experiencing homelessness may require more time and effort from family support, enrollment staff, and teaching staff. DCYF CQI Specialists will look for ways in which ECEAP Contractors demonstrate increased or differentiated services for families who are experiencing homelessness.
    - Use your best judgment as to when to dis-enroll a family. ECEAP Contractors are experts in family support and partnership, and often have in-depth discussions with staff on when to dis-enroll a family from ECEAP. DCYF encourages ECEAP Contractors to reach out to the DCYF ECEAP team for technical assistance and support if there is a difficult attendance situation and all options have been exhausted. Anyone can contact the DCYF ECEAP team by emailing us at **eceap@dcyf.wa.gov**
    - Request a forgiveness of slot open for longer than 30 days. DCYF ECEAP may forgive a slot vacancy that was open for over 30 days in certain circumstances. Working to bring a child experiencing homelessness back into regular attendance would likely qualify for

a vacancy forgiveness if the contractor staff shows detailed attempts to work with the family. To request a vacancy forgiveness, ECEAP contractors contact the ECEAP CQI Specialist who is assigned to support them. Please follow this link for a listing and contact information of ECEAP CQI Specialists and the contractors they support.

Related Resources

Resources in this section include ECEAP partners, such as OSPI and Head Start. Please note that any reference to regulations for school-aged public school children, or for children enrolled in Head Start may not match ECEAP requirements.

- **ECEAP Performance Standards**
- OSPI's Homeless Education Website: **https://www.k12.wa.us/student-success/access-opportunity-education/homeless-education**
- National Center for Homeless Education: **https://nche.ed.gov/**
- Head Start Early Childhood Learning & Knowledge Center (ECLKC), Supporting Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness: **https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/family-support-well-being/article/supporting-children-families-experiencing-homelessness**
- ECLKC Homelessness Resources: **https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/browse/keyword/homelessness**