Section H. Connections to Collaborations: Yours, Mine, and Ours

Section H. Connections to Collaboration: Yours, Mine, and Ours

Children and youth experiencing homelessness often face a vast array of challenges. To meet the needs of these young people requires a complex network of support. State coordinators may find themselves at meetings for infants and toddlers with development delays and disabilities one day and a summit on increasing the on-time graduation rate and transition to college the next. In addition to other education programs, state coordinators must work with health agencies, child welfare, and housing agencies. If you enjoy learning about new issues, being a state coordinator for the education of homeless children and youth may be an ideal assignment. Homeless education can be a great vehicle for ongoing professional development and relationship building.

This section of the state coordinators' handbook identifies the many players with whom state coordinators must interact and offers suggestions for how to make these relationships work effectively. Examples of successful collaborations shared by fellow state coordinators are included to provide practical examples of the difference these efforts make in the lives of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Given the statutory requirements to bridge many programs and agencies and the expansive needs of families and children experiencing homelessness, SC could as easily be an abbreviation for "state collaborator" as "state coordinator." This section of the handbook will offer some basics to hone your skills in collaboration as well as highlight the many programs and people with whom state coordinators must interact.

A Short Course in Human Relations[1]

The six most important words: "I admit I made a mistake."

The five most important words: "You did a good job."

The four most important words: "What is your opinion?"

The three most important words: "If you please."

The two most important words: "Thank you!"

The one most important word: "We"

The least most important word: "I"

[1] Retrieved from: http://www.peterstark.com/2009/human-relations/

H.1 How can state coordinators look at the variety of teaming and partnering efforts that are possible?

The six functions of the office of the coordinator found in Section 722(f) cannot be fulfilled without a variety of partnerships, coordination, and collaboration. In fact, half of the six functions use the terms coordination and collaboration. While state coordinators sometimes feel isolated as the only person in their state who fulfills these responsibilities, often they may long for a little "alone time" without the demands of multiple meetings, agency priorities, and diverse personalities.

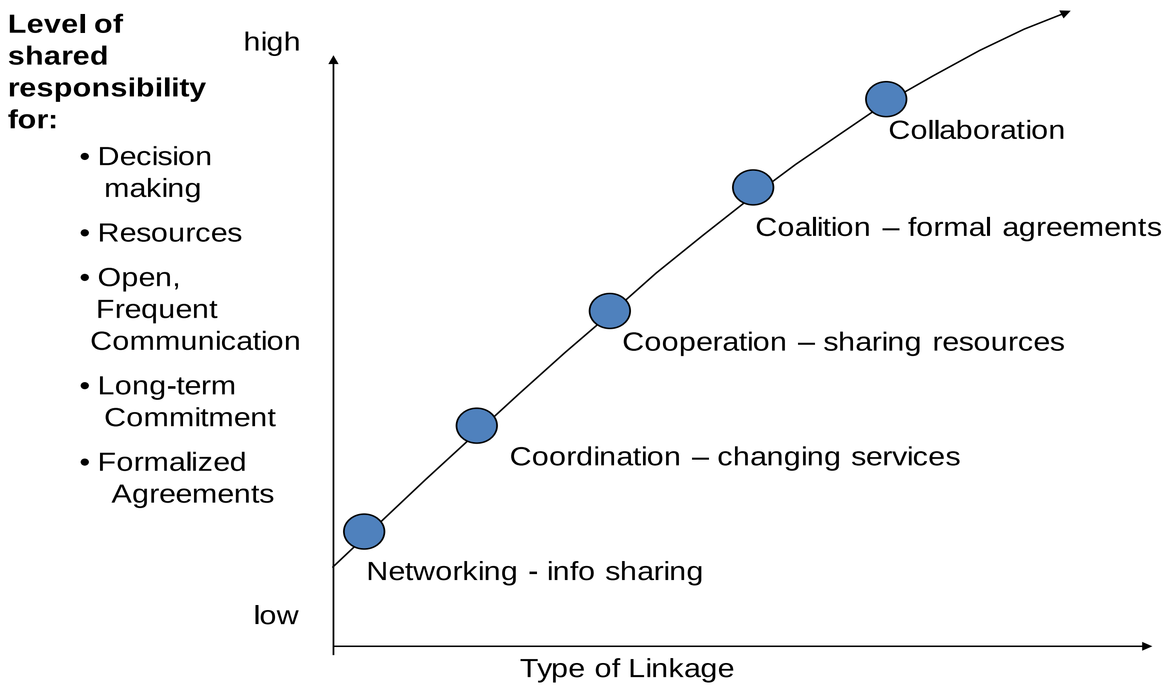
Frequently we use the term collaboration to describe a wide variety of partnerships and teaming efforts. Connections exist along a continuum from very loosely-structured relationships to highly structured and formalized ones. State coordinators will find the full continuum of structures in day-to-day work. Recognizing the possible connections and selecting the most appropriate level of involvement allows programs to be tailored to meet unique needs, resources, expertise, and interests. In the literature, the word "collaboration" suggests a highly developed, formalized system of sharing resources and responsibilities. The term "connections"" has been selected throughout this section in an effort to avoid identifying a particular level of involvement. There are a variety of levels of interaction that can be adopted when forging links with needed partners. Hogue (1994) suggested six levels of connections can be identified ranging from loosely connected arrangements through highly formalized structures. Figure H-1 provides a graphic representation of the continuum. The following is a summary of these five levels:

- *Networking* offers opportunities for informal dialogue across different organizations to develop common understanding. Networking acts as a clearinghouse for information and requires low levels of leadership and minimal decision making.
- *Cooperation* or *Alliance* requires semi-formal links with the beginning of role definition. The purpose is to match needs and limit duplication of services while ensuring tasks are met. Leaders at the cooperation level should be facilitative due to the need for complex decision making in which some conflict may occur as needs and duplication are identified.
- *Coordination or partnership* requires formalized links with a central body of decision makers with defined roles. At this level, resources are shared to address common issues and to create

new resources. At this level, joint budgeting, frequent and clear communication, and group decision making are necessary.

- In a *coalition*, roles and timelines are defined and links have been formalized with a written agreement. All members should be involved in the decision making as ideas are shared and resources are reassigned from existing systems and well as generated by the group. A coalition generally calls for a commitment of at least three years with shared leadership and communication considered a priority.
- *Collaboration* requires a high level of trust, leadership, and productivity to realize a shared vision through the building of an interdependent system. Consensus in decision making, formalized work assignments, highly developed communication, and equal sharing of ideas characterize a collaborative relationship.

Figure H-1. A Continuum of Connections



Another way to look at connections is by the expectations for how people will work together. Bailey, Ross, Bailey, and Lumley suggest the following structures[2]:

- Committees have formal structures, with a chairperson and printed agenda that follows Roberts' Rules of Order including voting to make decisions. Examples would include the Special Education Advisory Council (SEAC) and Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC) found in the Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Groups share information, have limited common purpose, and are directed by a supervisor or outside leader to achieve specific tasks. Examples would be a group of stakeholders brought together to participate in strategic planning around a statewide grant, or a group brought together to review the state's special education benchmarks for its state improvement plan. A state coordinator may be asked to participate in strategic planning for the state's family life education grant from the Center for Disease Control, or to be a stakeholder in the creation of the state's performance plan for its early childhood special education program.
- Teams have members that share considerable information, have clearer sense of purpose and goals, share leadership roles and are committed to operating over a long period of time. The Florida Homeless Education program conducted a comprehensive needs assessment of their statewide program over a number of months in 2007. Some attendees at meetings changed, depending upon the purpose of the meeting, but a core committee held ownership for identifying needs and creating a plan that could be realistically implemented. The Keeping Maine's Children Connected initiative discussed in Section B is an example of long-term commitment. With greater sophistication, teams can be categorized as high performance teams or technology-based teams. (For more information on these specialized team structures, see Bailey, Ross, Bailey, & Lumley[3]).

---

[2] Bailey, G.D., Ross, T., Bailey, G. L., & Lumley, D. (1998). *101 tips, traps, and to-dos for creating teams: A guidebook for school leaders.* National Educational Service.

[3] Ibid.

H.2 What are the elements of successful connections?

As state coordinators, legislative mandates must be considered. Appendix H-1 summarizes partners with whom state coordinators must work. However, the level of interaction can be shaped to keep the work manageable. When deciding which connections to pursue, expand, discontinue, or limit, think about the following conditions. Successful connections require dissimilarity among the participants. ***What are the unique skills, knowledge, and resources that each partner brings to the table that the other partners need?*** This dissimilarity gives you a reason for working together and can help shape your goals. Related to this condition is the likelihood of mutual satisfaction. ***Will all the participants benefit from the effort to work together?*** Without mutual satisfaction, some participants will be less likely to remain involved. Some required partnerships are with programs for which homelessness or education are very tangential issues. You are likely to find sitting through multiple education meetings that never mention the word homeless or housing meetings that never use the word education very discouraging.

Furthermore, bring these questions to the meetings. If this conversation has not occurred, you are probably not the only one who will benefit from the discussion.

Success is also dependent upon the qualities of the participants. It often comes down to the personalities of individuals. Qualities that should be present include selflessness, commitment to the goals of the partnership, mutual trust and respect, flexibility as goals are clarified, and willingness to take risks. These may be natural qualities among some individuals, but trust, respect, commitment, etc. need intentional time to nurture.

H.3 What are some tools to enhance connections?

People skills and organizational skills both come into play when we need to work with others. Some tricks of the trade follow.

H.3.1 What are some critical communication skills to practice?

Effective communication is critical to successful teams. Three key skills are **constructive assertiveness**, **empathic responding**, and **problem solving**[4]. Often we jump to problem solving without clearly articulating the issues at hand and ensuring understanding of the different perspectives that exist. Therefore, it is important to use constructive assertiveness and empathic responding techniques before trying to solve the problem.

With constructive assertiveness the individual makes his/her wants/needs known. This is done by clearly stating the problem: identifying the behavior or issue in question and describing its effect. Being assertive means finding the middle ground being neither passive nor aggressive. This is accomplished by using "I" messages, avoiding labeling, and using body language with proper eye contact, posture and body orientation, and congruent facial expressions. Remember that nonverbal communication accounts for 60% of the message you communicate.

Empathic responding solicits and affirms the viewpoint of another person. This is done with the use of listening skills and processing skills. Listening skills acknowledge the feelings and ideas of the other person through nonverbal behaviors such as nodding, eye contact, and posture and through verbal remarks such as, "I see, go on, that's interesting." These behaviors communicate that your care about the other person and his/her ideas. Processing skills allow you to confirm or clarify your perceptions. This is done by repeat or summarizing what has been said. Again, this demonstrates that you were really paying attention to the other's words. It also gives the other person an opportunity to correct any misconceptions by re-explaining if the original explanation was not clear. If the issue is an emotional one, it may give the other person a first glimpse at a more objective view of the issue.

The order of these two techniques can vary based on the situation. If you have an issue you feel needs to be addressed, constructive assertiveness would be first; if you sense another's concern and want to unpack that issue, empathic responding may be a more appropriate starting point. To see these skills in action, you may enjoy a video clip found at: here.

---

[4] Evertson, C. M., Emmer, E. T. (2009). *Classroom management for elementary teachers* (8^{th} ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Pearson/Allyn & Bacon. See especially Chapter 8.

A few word tips:

Avoid "but" – use "and."

I heard a rumor that the conference was being canceled ***but*** no one told me what was going on. This conference really requires us to stay in touch ***and*** if there is a possible change, let's make sure everyone hears about it.

Replace "should" with "next time," "in the future," "from now on."

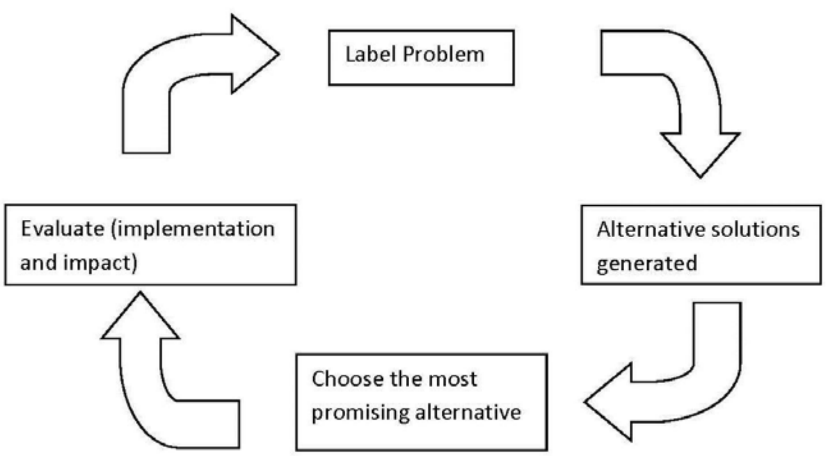
Everyone ***should*** print their agendas and bring them to the meeting.

In the future, please print your agenda. We won't make copies to avoid wasting paper.

There are a variety of problem solving processes. All involve clearly identifying the problem, brainstorming and evaluating possible solutions and selecting one or more to be implemented. Figure H-2 describes one example, LACE. Readers are encouraged to visit the Mind Tools website which has a rich variety of tools for problem solving, leadership, time management, decision making, etc.

Figure H-2. A Problem Solving Process – LACE

L – Label the problem (and decide what success would look like)
A – Alternatives are generated to resolve the issue
C– Choose the alternative that seems most promising
E – Evaluate the effectiveness of the alternative chose (Did you implement it faithfully? If so, did it work?)
The process is not linear. You can cycle through the steps until the evaluation shows the goals have been met. If the evaluation was not positive, go back to "L": Did you frame the problem clearly or do you need to refine it? Are there other alternatives that might work you did not think of before? What alternative should be tried next? Did it work?



H.3.2 What should state coordinators know about the stages of group formation?

It is helpful to recognize that that there are stages in the creation, development, and possible dissolution of teams. Table H-1 lists the stages of group formation and offers activities to assist leaders in nurturing effective teaming.

Table H-1: Leadership Activities at Different Group Formation Stages[5]

Stage	Activity
Forming	Direct the team clearly. Establish objectives clearly (perhaps with a team charter ([on line you can click on] an article on Team Diagnostics, which gives more information on these.)
Storming	Establish process and structure, and work to smooth conflict and build good relationships between team members. Generally provide support, especially to those team members who are less secure. Remain positive and firm in the face of challenges to your leadership or the team's goal. Perhaps explain the "forming, storming, norming and performing" idea so that people understand why conflict's occurring, and understand that things will get better in the future.
Norming	Step back and help the team take responsibility for progress towards the goal. This is a good time to arrange a social or team-building event
Performing	Delegate as far as you sensibly can. Once the team has achieved high performance, you should aim to have as "light a touch" as you can. You will now be able to start focusing on other goals and areas of work
Adjourning	When breaking up a team, take the time to celebrate its achievements. After all, you may work with some of these people again, and this will be much easier if people view past experiences positively.

H.3.3 What can state coordinators do to conduct effective meetings that enhance team building?

Disorganized meetings not only waste time, they can dampen the commitment and energy of even the most avid supporter of an issue and zap the willingness of participants to remain

[5] Reproduced with permission from: http://www.mindtools.com/pages/article/newLDR_86.htm.

involved. Bailey, Ross, Bailey and Lumley[6] propose the following steps be a part of all meetings that require true teaming to meet their goals.

1. **Set an agenda.** Set clear expectations for the goals of a meeting and estimate time to be allocated to avoid spending too much or too little time on items.
2. **Assume team roles.** Rotating responsibilities among members enhances the sense of shared leadership.
3. **Initiate whip activities.** Use a brief exercise to build relationship and set the stage for team productivity. Ice breakers would fit in this category.
4. **Monitor verbal and nonverbal behaviors.** Hold each other accountable for identifying, controlling, and modifying behaviors that affect team communication.
5. **Initiate fishbowling.** Having a closure activity to analyze the team's performance, celebrate successes, and identify challenges sets the state for continued growth at future meetings.

For an example of these steps in action, go to Appendix H-2 Early Childhood Priority Project Agenda and Minutes Template.

H.3.4. How can state coordinators evaluate the effectiveness of their partnerships?

When there are clear goals and teams will continue to work together, taking the time to openly discuss the effectiveness of the participants' efforts and the processes being used is a common characteristic of high functioning teams. If the meeting steps listed above are followed, evaluation will be a part of every meeting. A targeted assessment of team effectiveness may be used when there is a shift in team membership, new projects are being introduced, or you have the luxury to conduct a retreat with greater time for participants to reflect on their work. The evaluation may be as simple as asking participants to identify what you do well together and what could be done better. Another example of an evaluation tool can be found at this team effective assessment. If you are working with an outside facilitator, the consultant should be able to offer a variety of tools to gain participant insight.

[6] Bailey, G.D., Ross, T., Bailey, G. L., & Lumley, D. (1998).

Choose your battles wisely…

(Is it better to be right or in relationship?)

1. Is it trivial?
2. Is it a persistent concern?
3. Is the behavior innocent or intentional?
4. What's the history or context of the situation?
5. Can or will their behavior change?
6. Is this good timing?
7. Ask yourself, "How am I contributing to this?" In response to complaints… ask yourself, "Is what they are saying at least partly true?" Begin your response with, "You're right about …"
8. Would confronting this person result in a short-term win and a long-term loss?

H.3.5 How do state coordinators decide which partners and to what level?

Appendix H-3 is a planning tool to look at current partnerships in place in your state. If participation is mandated, reviewing the legal requirements will help you determine what needs to occur. (You may wish to use Appendix H-1 as a starting point for this activity.) Conduct an environmental scan by answering the following questions that provide data to decide which partners and to what level you can/must participate. While the first question addresses legal requirements, the remaining questions can be used for any efforts that require you to work with other partners.

- What does the law require?
- How will I participate? How much time is required? (for e.g., face-to-face meetings, conference calls, email correspondence)
- What level of interaction during and between meetings is required? (information sharing, sharing resources, leading initiatives, extensive participation in planning and executing initiatives)
- What level of participation is likely to be most effective based on identified goals for the state's EHCY program?
- What is my organization's level of commitment to this partnership?

- Can I delegate my representation?

In addition to these questions, consider:

- What additional tables need a homeless education voice?
- Are there “tables” where I serve under a different role that would benefit from a homeless education voice?”
- Do additional “tables” need to be created? Be sure to look carefully at your existing “tables” before considering a new endeavor. With limited time, using existing structures that are working can produce more immediate results.

Coordinator-to-Coordinator

Good leaders are good story tellers, and state coordinators love to share their stories! Read about three colleagues and their ventures into collaborations that made a difference for students experiencing homelessness by:

- Developing a state advisory board (Appendix H-4)
- Establishing a close working relationship with Head Start (Appendix H-5), and
- Creating links to higher education (Appendix H-6)

H.4 How can state coordinators encourage local liaisons to develop collaborations?

Developing cross-program and cross-agency collaborations require significant time along with knowledge of specific strategies to make collaborations productive and sustainable. Local homeless liaisons who are new, who have very little time allocated to homeless education duties, who do not see the value of collaboration, or who are unfamiliar with collaborative strategies will need the support and guidance of the state coordinator to initiate both LEA program collaborations and community collaborations.

There are five main reasons that state coordinators may provide to their local liaisons to urge them to collaborate:

1. Collaboration is one of the responsibilities outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act. Section 722(g)(5) states: “(A) Each local educational agency serving homeless children and youths that receive assistance under this subtitle shall coordinate (i) the provision of services under this subtitle with local social services agencies and other agencies or programs providing services to homeless children and youths and their families, including services and programs funded

under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act; and (ii) with other local educational agencies on interdistrict issues, such as transportation or transfer of school records." Moreover, the law requires coordination and collaboration with Title I in determining the amount and use of the Title IA reservation of funds for homeless students.

2. Federal monitoring requires that states oversee the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act in all LEAs, including those without subgrants. Therefore, state coordinators should include monitoring indicators specific to LEA collaboration. If an LEA interviewed does not have any collaborations in place, ED will bring it to the attention of the SEA and it may receive findings or recommendations to improve.
3. Collaboration makes the work of the local liaison more effective to the extent that he or she can call on community collaborations to provide services to homeless families. Such collaborations also assist identification efforts.
4. Collaboration is a means of obtaining resources and funding for homeless children and youth. One of the most critical collaborations is between the McKinney-Vento and Title I programs. Local homeless liaisons should work closely with the local Title I coordinator to determine the amount of the homeless set aside and ways in which the set aside should be spent.
5. Collaboration can result in policies and procedures that clarify the roles and responsibilities of each agency. For example, LEAs should work with their child welfare agencies to develop an understanding of the phrase in the McKinney-Vento definition "awaiting foster care placement" because processes by which children come into care vary greatly from locale to locale. Also, interdistrict issues can be resolved before conflicts arise, such as determining how two LEAs will share responsibilities for transporting homeless children and youth to and from their school of origin.

H.5 How can state coordinators assist LEAs with collaborations?

State coordinators must model collaboration at the state level ("walk the walk") as well as nurture local collaboration ("talk the talk").

1. State coordinators can expand state-level collaborations to provide support for similar collaborations between the LEA and other local-level agencies. For example, state-level

collaborations in the area of Head Start can result in joint policies or MOUs that assist both Head Start programs and local homeless programs in coordinating their work. Similarly, cross-program collaborations within the SEA (such as Title I, Part A, migrant education, IDEA, and transportation) can develop state policies or guidance memos that clarify how these programs should collaborate at the LEA level.

2. State-level collaborations can facilitate joint training opportunities in which state-level staff in both the homeless education program and other programs can train each of their local staffs to familiarize them with one another's programs as well as bring them face to face to begin conversations.
3. State coordinators can include requirements for collaboration in their McKinney-Vento subgrant applications so that LEAs that have active collaborations are more competitive for funding. Many states require that subgrant applicants include information on the coordination between Title I and homeless programs in assessing needs of homeless students and determining the amount of the Title I, Part A reservation of funds.
4. State coordinators can provide training to local liaisons on ways that they can initiate and sustain collaborations. Appendix H in the LEA Toolkit provides some worksheets that could be utilized at a training of local liaisons to help them identify potential collaborators and develop an action plan. In addition, the NCHE website includes a variety of documents to assist with collaboration in its Information by topic section.

H.6 How do state coordinators collaborate with each other?

Even though such collaborations are not mandated, state coordinators find regional collaborations with their colleagues are an important example of collaboration and working smarter. Here are some thoughts from regional collaborations.

- Northwest (OR, WA, ID): Partnership began as a conversation between the state coordinators in OR and WA. WA was already doing collaborative work with Idaho regarding cross-borders issues. OR and WA worked together to form the local arrangements committee for the 2007 NAEHCY Conference.

- South (LA, AR, TX, MS, AL, TN): Originally, the LA state coordinator invited the TX coordinator to get together. The coordinators thought similar issues would allow learning from each other. A formal seminar is held every spring and a training every fall. The location changes annually from state-to-state and subgrantees are required to attend.
- New England (ME, NH, VT, RI, CT, MA, NY): The team began when CT called the Education Development Center (EDC). EDC facilitated the collaboration and structured the early meetings. The collaboration has become a think tank for issues shared among the states. They feel a collaborative approach gives strength in numbers. They have created a joint publication and devised a toolkit for training. These states will give other states training if necessary. They also review each other's subgrant proposals.
- West (AZ, CA, CO, HI, NM): Opportunities to meet regionally are offered during state coordinator meetings held in DC and at the annual NAEHCY conference. The western states found this time exciting and meaningful and maintain regular conference calls to discuss common challenges, cross state issues, and to share resources.

Key benefits of state coordinator collaboration:

- Sharing different perspectives and approaches can help with disputes and crises that arise.
- Supporting local liaisons: if one state coordinator is unavailable for assistance, local liaisons can call another state coordinator within the regional partnership.
- Establishing new relationships: local liaisons often establish collaborative relationships through meeting at regional trainings.
- Addressing inter-state issues.

Suggestions for building interstate collaboration:

- Attend other states' training sessions to get ideas.
- Start small and add other states when the interest arises. Distance limits who can participate, but conference calls and distance meeting technologies may change these limitations.
- Invite new state coordinators who have many questions to strengthen collaborations.

H.7 Links to helpful documents

Additional NCHE publications on collaboration:

Collaborations of Schools and Social Service Agencies

Housing Agency and School District Collaborations to Serve Homeless and Highly Mobile Students

Increasing School Stability: Overcoming Challenges to Providing Transportation to the School of Origin

Navigating the Intersections of IDEA and McKinney-Vento: A Problem-Solving Process

When Working Together Works: Academic Success for Children in Out-of-Home Care

Appendix H-1. Connections to Consider

Required			
Partner	**Vehicle for Participation**	**Legal Citation**	**Type of Structure**
Title I, Part A	Unspecified	MV, and Title I	Unspecified (however, there should be documented evidence of coordination)
Special Education	State Special Education Advisory Committee	Individuals With Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Part B	Committee
Early Intervention	Interagency Coordinating Council	IDEA, Part C	Committee
Head Start	Head Start Collaboration Project	MV and Head Start	Unspecified
School Nutrition	State policy and procedures must be in place to ensure categorical eligibility for free meals to homeless students	Child Nutrition Act	Unspecified
EDFacts/CSPR Coordinators (Data Stewards)	State structure for completion of the CSPR	MV (in order to fulfill data request, this coordination is needed)	Unspecified
HUD	Interagency Coalition on Homelessness	Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act	Committee

Common		
Partner	**Activity**	**State Examples**
Title I, Part A	Joint trainings, state coordinator reviews reservation and plan for coordinating with MV in Title I application; shared monitoring of LEAs	New Hampshire Oregon
State Homeless Coalitions	Homeless Education can be a strand at a broader statewide conference on homelessness. If your state coalition has a newsletter, include education articles and distribute to educators rather than creating a separate newsletter. State coordinator is part of ten year plan to end homelessness	Florida Texas Homeless Education Office (THEO) Kentucky
Shelters	Have a point of contact for educational issues at family and UHY shelters. Include these contacts in	Virginia's Child Services Coordinators

	communications and trainings. Offer homeless education trainings at shelter sites that have such capacity so educators have an opportunity to visit such sites.	were model for changes in HEARTH
Pupil Transportation	Funding was available to provide school of origin transportation and conduct a study of impact.	Washington State
Regional State Coordinator Teams	Hosting regional/national conferences; liaison trainings, sharing policies and procedures, addressing border issues; reviewing each other's subgrant proposals, mentoring new coordinators	Northeast West South (see Section H.6)
Less Common/Emerging		
Partner	**Activity**	**Examples**
Higher Education	Outsourcing of state M-V administration	THEO – University of Texas-Austin Project HOPE-Virginia – The College of William and Mary University of North Carolina-Greensboro
Higher Education	Contracting data collection Contracting training Contracting external evaluations or research projects	South Carolina Vermont
Financial Aid Administrators in higher education	Collaborative training, strategic planning led to the identification of liaisons on college campuses to assist with the transition from K-12 to higher education.	Colorado
Student Assistance Programs (SAP)	Joint training for McKinney-Vento Liaisons and SAP teams to introduce SAP teams to McKinney-Vento and explore the application of SAP to supporting students experiencing homelessness.	Virginia

Appendix H-2. Meeting Template

The following meeting agenda and minute templates are used by the Virginia Early Childhood Priority Project (ECPP). A yearly schedule of meetings and rotating role assignments is prepared for members. In addition to pre-identified agenda items, members brainstorm additional items that need to be addressed and estimate the amount of time required to complete each item. The members always begin with celebrations (personal and professional) and announcements and often revisit their effectiveness as a team as part of the closure[1].

Meeting Agenda

Date

Facilitator: assign **Recorder:** assign **Timekeeper:** assign

Item or Issue	Action	Time	Person Responsible
Celebrations			
Announcements			
Review past meeting notes, process observations			
Item			
Item			
Item			
Item			
Meeting Debrief or "check out"			
Prioritize Issues			
Total Amount of Time Needed:			

[1] Reprinted with permission o the ECPP.

Team Meeting Notes

Location:____________________ Time:________ Date:_______

Team members present:

Via phone:

*Who will give handouts to and update each absent team member?*________________________

Team roles: (the specific roles used may vary by team needs; roles are rotated among members)

Facilitator_______________ Co-facilitator__________ Timekeeper__________________
Encourager______________ Recorder______________ Process observer (for fishbowling)
Other____________________________________

Celebrations: (whip activity)

Announcements:

Review of past meeting minutes, process observations: (Record responses, comments, corrections.)

Current agenda items: (List here.)

Carryover items and other agenda items for next meeting:

______________________________________ ____

______________________________________ ____

______________________________________ ____

Next meeting: Location: _________________________ **Time:** __________ **Date:**____________

____

Agenda item:

Discussion:

Task:

Persons responsible:

When needed:

Appendix H-3. Evaluating Current Arrangements

At what tables am I expected to participate?	How effective is the current arrangement? • What do I bring to the table that other participants need? • What do I need from the other participants? • How will the time I spend with these programs enhance the lives of children and youth experiencing homeless?	What should happen next? • Maintain? • Refine? (expand, limit, change) • Dismiss	Looking at outstanding needs, who needs to be added to these current tables?

Appendix H-4. Creating a Statewide Advisory Board

Brenda Myers, South Carolina State Coordinator

I became the state coordinator shortly after the last reauthorization of ESEA in 2002, so I inherited an approved state plan. One of the items proposed in the state plan was the creation of a statewide advisory board. Since I wasn't in the role when the plan was written, I'm not sure where the idea for the board originated. One of the first steps we took was to develop a comprehensive list of all the agency heads that might need to be included. An invitation was sent to the agency heads as an official request from our state superintendent which gave it more clout than just coming from me. People accepted, declined, or provided an alternate person to participate. We had about 22 agencies involved with 30-34 people at the table. We had representation from the University of South Carolina, Department of Health and Environmental Control, South Carolina Housing Authority, the United Way, faith-based organizations, the Red Cross, Department of Juvenile Justice, HUD Continuum of Care, Veterans Administration, Department of Mental Health, Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Social Services, early childhood and Head Start, Hispanics Connections, Pupil Transportation, Title I, Special Education and School Nutrition. Later, we added law enforcement. I also had six homeless liaisons – two with subgrants and four without grants. Since I worked more closely with my subgrantees, I had a pretty good idea about what they would say. I wanted more nongrantees to add a voice I didn't know as well.

I never had less than 25 people at a meeting. We met quarterly, and our meetings were a full day with lunch provided. We met at a building that had no food, so I could justify providing a nice lunch, not just a box lunch. At the first meeting, I provided an overview of McKinney-Vento and set the purpose of the board. We identified the big needs at that time which were immediate enrollment, school selection, Title I, transportation, and development of our dispute resolution. (Now the foci would be different; it would probably be unaccompanied homeless youth, Title I, transportation, and early childhood.) We divided into subcommittees for each of the initiatives, and I included a liaison on each. I facilitated the meetings but I didn't chair any of the subcommittees. There was a chair and vice chair for each, and they took ownership for their charge. We would start each meeting as a whole group and update everyone, and then we would break out into the committees to do the actual work.

It really was not hard to start this initiative. It did save time because it brought all the players to me. Before having the board, I always had to invite myself to the table. After starting the board, things changed. There was more awareness, the Coalition president and our HUD staff knows who I am and they know I'll come, so they recommend me to be at other tables. Some great relationships came from this. For example, the Department of Juvenile Justice recognized that one of their problems was figuring out what to do when a youth was ready to leave but couldn't go home. I was able to help them connect with the shelters and group homes, so they got their needs met, too.

One of the hardest parts was deciding which agencies to include and how to involve key folks without having such a large group that it wouldn't work. Another major challenge was getting agency folks who had such a strong policy focus to see CHILDREN FIRST and keep the human focus. That was necessary to break down barriers and look outside the box for solutions.

We developed a state manual that offered guidance to our school districts and drafted forms that could be used across the state. When Hurricanes Katrina and Rita hit, we put the board on hold. By the time we were ready to reconvene, reauthorization was already being discussed. We've decided to wait for reauthorization to bring everyone back together.

Yes, it was worth it. I enjoyed listening to outside groups and how they saw the issue of homelessness. I was opening eyes!

Appendix H-5. Collaborating With Head Start

Louis Tallarita, Connecticut State Coordinator

The job of state coordinator is a challenge when you consider the range of children and youth who are homeless and the variation of needs associated. Similarly, serving in the role of state coordinator, specifically within a respective state education agency, it can seem somewhat isolating being the sole entity advocating for the diverse needs of children, youth and families experiencing homelessness. When the opportunity arises to involve other professionals in beneficial collaboration to expand both the awareness and the delivery of needed services, you grab it. A working collaboration between Head Start and McKinney-Vento was a clear fit considering the cross-over that exists in the target populations that each program is intending to serve.

Shortly after assuming the role of coordinator and soon after the reauthorization of ESEA, I was asked to serve on the statewide homeless advisory council that included the Head Start State Collaboration director. During our service to the council we met and began sharing information about our program efforts and finding ways to include each other in the planning and development of services to address t he educational needs of young homeless children in Connecticut. Our collaboration began with offers to read one another's plans and proposals and developing cross-training events. Over the years, it has remained a stable collaborative effort and grown to include working together to fund and conduct a statewide needs assessment and developing small grant programs to improve local partnerships and increase enrollment of young children living in shelters into Head Start and other programs that meet their health and learning needs.

As a "part-time" state coordinator, collaboration items are likely to be some of the more difficult ones to accomplish. You are largely focused upon the more immediate concerns and less on long term goals and objectives that can ultimately improve systems; however, developing these important partnerships is instrumental to this work, so the time somehow seems to fit into your schedule when you plan accordingly, share responsibilities, and value the efforts that are being combined. I'd have to say that no specific challenges come to mind in the way this partnership evolved, although I would have to point back to the "time" issue with competing priorities and a challenging workload.

It has absolutely been worth it. Not only I have I gained a partner, but also a friend and ally. We remain committed to a goal that all young children who experience homelessness arrive at the schoolhouse door, side by side with their housed peers, eager and ready to succeed. Even our small steps forward have led the way to stronger and more meaningful partnerships to assist families experiencing homelessness.

Appendix H-6. Collaborating With Higher Education

Dana Scott, Colorado State Coordinator

When The College Cost Reduction and Access Act passed in 2007, my liaisons began asking questions and saying things like, “What is a FAFSA? What do we do? Who do we contact in higher education and what do we say?” At the same time, I got a call from Misti Ruthven who works with College Invest, a division of the Colorado Department of Higher Education. Misti called because she was getting questions from higher education financial aid officers who wanted to know what this new “McKinney-Vento” requirement was about following the first Application and Verification Guide (AVG). It was something like, “You have your chocolate in my peanut butter; you have your peanut butter in my chocolate.” We had something special when we put our skills together. I invited Misti to talk at subgrant meetings and Misti invited me to her higher education meetings so we could give each group an introduction to the other’s work.

We started discussing how we could expand upon the partnership to bring these stakeholders together statewide and create a systemic way of helping to support successful transitions into higher education for unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY). We decided to invite McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons, representatives from higher education (in financial aid, admissions and student services), K-12 counselors, scholarship providers and homeless service providers to join the CO Taskforce on Higher Education for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth. During our first meeting with the group, one of the greatest challenges was helping the higher education folks get comfortable with being verifiers and understanding that they could do it. They were OK with using the other verifiers for independent student status listed in the legislation (homeless liaisons, shelter providers, and HUD or RHYA staff) but preparing them to make the determination when none of these people were involved with the student took a lot of work. We had to address jargon differences and provide sensitivity training to make sure the verification would be handled respectfully with youth. They needed to understand how really vulnerable some of these young people are. We realized we needed at least one person on each higher education campus who understood McKinney-Vento and would be willing to do the outreach for UHY. Now we have a single point of contact at every college and university in Colorado, which we have informally nicknamed our SPOCs (for Single Points of Contact) and more formally refer to as our

McKinney-Vento Higher Education Liaisons. SPOCs could be in admissions, student services, or financial aid. They not only take care of verification, but they help with the whole transition into college, as well as offer support throughout the college experience. It's amazing! We have teams of folks at the colleges and universities that have taken this work and run with it. They put together welcome baskets that have coupons for haircuts and movie tickets, along with basic necessities. SPOCs not only connect students with financial aid and admissions, but they also connect our students with housing services, tutoring, and FAFSA assistance for the next year.

Another challenge had to do with scheduling. Financial aid typically has days they meet with students, and students have to schedule an appointment on those days. If one of our students came by without an appointment or on the wrong day, they would be turned away. We have been able to help staff in these offices understand how difficult it could be for some of our youth to return and now they make an extra effort to try and assist the day the student comes to the office.

We developed a standardized process and form using the NAEHCY template which we modified a bit. It is used by liaisons, financial aid administrators, service providers and is recognized by all our SPOCs. Under FERPA, our liaisons are allowed to communicate with higher education; however, since service providers are bound by HIPPAA, we added a signature line for youth to approve the communication between the provider and the college. Interestingly, the form actually became a barrier for a while. The financial aid folks were telling students they had to get the form completed, which actually put more work on the student. We added financial aid as a verifier on the form to reinforce the fact that they did not need anyone else to verify.

I don't know how we found the time; we just found it. I do have more gray hairs! We did 80 presentations/trainings across the state in 18 months. It does align with our work as state coordinators – it's about successful transition for our students and helping to further build the asset of education. While the collaboration may not save time, it certainly makes our work far more effective. Misti and I have received great participation. We both have strong relationships with our folks and saying "You really need to come!" has been enough to get involvement. I could not have done this work without my higher education partner. Public K-12 education and higher education have different cultures and ways of doing things, and this can, at times, cause tension, and the jargon differences can lead to miscommunication. Misti and I helped each other understand when the differences surfaced and this allowed us to bridge and address those different cultures. Getting the liaisons and high school counselors to talk with each is another part of the collaboration. Now we highly recommend that our liaisons complete the form automatically whenever they identify an UHY. They keep a copy, give one to the student, and fax one to the high school counselor who is more likely to be in communication with colleges. It really has filled communication gaps and sped up time for successful FAFSA verifications.

The collaboration has created many new and exciting initiatives. Our SPOCs have given us feedback that has led to incorporating “tips from higher education” in our trainings. For example, they recommend that K-12 liaisons or counselors help youth set up email accounts and make sure the students always have their name written the same way on all forms. Sometimes our students have street names which may not match their vital documents; this has posed a big barrier to approving the FAFSA in the past. Access to vital documents was another barrier for our youth. Now we have a partnership with College Invest so there is a free web space where our youth can scan and store their documents, making it a lot easier to have what is needed in a convenient place.

We are starting annual trainings for our SPOCs and will be asking them what we can do to make the process better. For example, they have asked for a tip sheet to help them with asking the right questions in an interview to use for verification.

Was it worth it? Absolutely! It seems daunting looking back – we were flying the airplane while building it. Now we have food banks on campuses, dorms that are open on breaks so our students have a place to stay, welcome baskets, and a sincere message to our youth that, “We’re glad you’re here!” Peers are talking to each other and spreading the word about this work. Now there is at least one person on each campus. Early on, I got a call at 3:45p.m. about a college student who was going to be evicted from her residence hall at 5:00 p.m. because her financial aid was delayed due to lack of parent signature. Everyone knew that going to a shelter would not be good for her. I told the liaison to contact the SPOC at her university. Once they connected, they were able to postpone the eviction and work out a process so the student could sign the FAFSA for herself. Events like this make it all worthwhile. Two years ago, I had a college student transferring from a Colorado college to Texas A&M. She was having a hard time getting the new school to work with her (the law was just starting to be implemented). I was able to share the AVG with school and explain the process, and I copied our Texas state coordinator, Barbara James, to keep her in the loop. The school took the information and ran with it. The student was SO appreciative, and I did very little – she was the self-advocate. That was one of my best days on the job!

This collaboration was one of the best things that has happened! Having a passionate partner in higher education is a vital component. The extra time all of us put in made it work. One Colorado school district has had a greater percentage of their UHY graduating and go on to college than the overall district's percentage – and their overall rate is strong! Liaisons and SPOCs can really be champions for UHY in a tangible realistic way and show that college can be a reality. They can be the "caring, supportive adults" that our students talk about who make all the difference in opening up doors and helping to navigate systems that can be daunting for all of us.