
Getting to Graduation

Data Tools for
Supporting Students
Experiencing
Homelessness

National Center for Homeless
Education

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT GREENSBORO

National Center for Homeless Education

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With funding from the U.S. Department of Education, the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro provides critical information to those who seek to remove educational barriers and improve educational opportunities and outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

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Foreword

When this guide for using local educational agency (LEA) level data in our program was first issued in February 2016, we announced a phase of “accelerated and comprehensive performance management.” This process has taken many years of planning and it is now taking root among our State Coordinators, for whom this guide is intended as a coaching tool. Although the U. S. Department of Education (ED) has received state level data on students served by the program for many years, in 2011 we learned that through *EDFacts*, states were submitting data on the number of homeless students enrolled in and served by LEAs, as well as on achievement in state assessments down to the school level. The LEA level data enable us to advise State Coordinators on conducting needs assessments for children and youth experiencing homelessness in their states, as well as to plan improvements in statewide performance. At the same time, ED had also commissioned a national study on the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program; one of the recommendations was that more technical assistance be provided on reporting and using data on homeless students that states submit to ED every year. The EHCY program office joined ED’s data quality initiative and contracted experts began analyzing the quality of our LEA level data and homeless student performance by LEA.

In 2014, ED began planning new data collections and analyses of data that were more central to the purposes of the program and the homeless students we serve. The EHCY program office participated in a facilitated process of developing a logic model and leading indicators that could be predictive of improving outcomes for the EHCY program and students experiencing homelessness. As a result of that process, four important means of improving program performance and outcome measures were identified:

- 1) asking State Coordinators to analyze LEA level data to target their monitoring and technical assistance;
- 2) asking State Coordinators to create annual workplans with goals to improve performance on at least one measure of their choosing;
- 3) collecting and analyzing data on chronic absenteeism for all homeless students; and
- 4) collecting four-year cohort graduation rates for students who experienced homelessness at any time during high school.

The EHCY program office is now on the cusp of receiving all these data from states and providing our State Coordinators with analytic tools such as maps based on LEA data, data dashboards and school-level achievement gap analyses.

The first edition of this manual was issued to accompany the LEA level data workbooks that the National Center for Homeless Education developed in 2014, using 2012-13 School Year (SY) data. Conducting further analyses of these demographic and performance data were deemed important, as the greatest risks of the EHCY program appeared not to be the fiscal risk of fraud, waste or abuse of funds, but rather the risk that children and youth were not being identified or served by programs for which they are eligible. They and their parents or guardians are often not even aware of their rights under the McKinney-Vento Act. Amendments to the EHCY program under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 highlight, in several places, the need for state educational agencies (SEAs) and LEAs to conduct more outreach to and identification of homeless children and youth. ESSA also requires SEAs to report on homeless student achievement and graduation rates in SEA report cards from the 2017-18 SY. Some of the analyses explained in this revised manual can help State Coordinators and local liaisons figure out where more attention and effort may be needed, including in the identification of homeless students who are unaccompanied, have disabilities, or are English learners. New examples will also help State Coordinators identify gaps in service delivery or achievement, resulting in more resources and effort targeted to improving educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness.

Over the past few years of monitoring EHCY state programs, ED has piloted questions for a new performance management indicator that expects all SEAs to check their LEA data quality and use these data to implement the first two program leading indicators. The newly added Sections 5 and 6 in this manual provide hypothetical examples of the kind of data analyses ED would like to see EHCY State Coordinators conduct. A third and final update to this manual will be provided in 2019, including sections on analyzing data on graduation rates, numbers of dropouts, and chronically absent students experiencing homelessness.

Data collected and used for the EHCY program have evolved a great deal over the past several years to include leading indicators and outcome measures of greatest consequence and influence for both our programs and the homeless children and youth we serve or should be serving. In the midst of our many competing demands and priorities, this kind of data analysis can help states proactively prioritize and target their attention where it may be most needed and have the most impact.

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Introduction

The purpose of the McKinney-Vento Act is to ensure that students experiencing homelessness have access to the education and other services they need in order to meet state academic achievement standards, and ultimately, to graduate prepared for college and career. Most homeless educators work one-on-one with homeless children, youth, their parents and guardians. Undoubtedly, their care in supporting students to enroll, attend and succeed in school is critical to the success of homeless students and the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program. However, most state and local educational agencies lack the capacity required to provide intensive case management to all homeless students. The demands and stresses of serving homeless students often put stakeholders in the position of constantly reacting to overwhelming, immediate needs. To turn the tide of overwhelming student needs and program responsibilities to a more proactive course of action, State Coordinators and their partners need to determine where local educational agencies (LEAs) and homeless education programs underperform, under identify, or under serve children and youth experiencing homelessness.

In order to help states identify areas for improvement, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) commissioned the creation of a set of LEA workbooks and this manual to support the use of data by State Coordinators and other key stakeholders in the education of homeless students. Primarily, this manual will assist states in creating or adjusting measurable goals and related targets, as well as evaluating the overall effectiveness of activities conducted on the part of both school districts and the state homeless education program. These goals and measures can then be used to inform the development of state plans and annual workplans for state activities.

Before Delving Into the Data

Before delving into program data and charting a new course for program evaluation, reviewing information on the current priorities set by ED and federal law will help State Coordinators create high quality annual workplans and needs assessments. In addition to monitoring activities already a part of McKinney-Vento program implementation, relatively recent changes to the Uniform Guidance outlined in federal regulations impact the type of risk assessments that states must now conduct. While many states have

used a risk assessment to evaluate subgrantee and nongrant performance for some time, the updated Uniform Guidance now requires states to assess the fiscal and performance risk of subgrantees when awarding funds.

For more on the Uniform Guidance, [click here](#).

The resources on risk & subgrant management may be especially helpful; they are available [here](#).

ED further reinforced the need for states to evaluate the effectiveness of strategies used in the education of homeless students by including measures of data-informed practice in its leading indicators for program quality. The leading indicators, along with other data collected by ED, will be used to inform ED about progress made by states and LEAs in implementing the McKinney-Vento Act. They will also assist with the identification of states most in need of monitoring or technical assistance.

More information on the priority goals and leading indicators set by ED for the EHCY program are provided in Appendix A.

LEA Workbooks

An Excel workbook has been developed for each state, reflecting LEA data submitted by the states to ED on topics related to the education of homeless children and youth. The workbooks are comprised of data points from the ED*Facts* Repository, starting with School Year (SY) 2012-13. State Coordinators can use these to complete needs assessments, target monitoring to LEAs identified as most at-risk, evaluate program outcomes, and foster collaboration with other programs.

A preliminary set of LEA workbooks were produced in 2014 and have continued to evolve in the years since then. The LEA workbooks are updated annually to include recent data, as well as other updates based on requests from State Coordinators, current trends in program development, and new program requirements. While the workbooks include basic information about homeless students to help with planning activities, they are meant to be working documents that State Coordinators use by either manipulating data to address specific concerns or by incorporating additional data to reflect the unique program goals of the state. For example, discipline data and information about the reasons students have individualized educational programs are not submitted to ED for homeless students, and are therefore not included in the workbooks, but could have correlations to the dropout, graduation, and academic performance data in the workbooks.

While adjustments are made based on available data, the LEA workbooks regularly include:

- information indicating which LEAs received a McKinney-Vento subgrant;

- the number of homeless students enrolled in each grade;
- the number of enrolled, homeless students by type of primary nighttime residence;
- the number of enrolled, homeless students by subgroup;
- academic participation and performance data for reading/language arts, mathematics, and science;
- the number of students who participated in Title I Schoolwide and Targeted Assistance programs; and
- the number of homeless students who dropped out of school.

In addition to containing raw data for each LEA that can be used by State Coordinators to analyze various aspects of their homeless education programs, the workbooks also contain brief highlights of the state’s aggregated data.

Data Sources

Information contained in the LEA workbooks comes from data collected for the ED*Facts* Initiative and stored in the ED*Facts* Repository. ED*Facts* facilitates the use of data to inform policy, management, and budget decisions for public education programs. In addition to storing data on academic performance, ED*Facts* includes information about funding, data related to civil rights issues, and school, staff, and student demographic information.

NCHE provides an annual Guide to Collecting and Reporting Federal Data to help State Coordinators understand and navigate the collection and submission of high quality data.

ED*Facts* file specifications govern the submission of data submitted to ED and outline the format and type of data to be reported. The data is provided by states to ED primarily through the EDEN Submission System (ESS), but may also be submitted through an online survey of civil rights information, or the ED*Facts* Metadata and Process System (EMAPS). Information about the ED*Facts* Initiative, the files specifications, and who must submit data can be accessed [online](#). Homeless education data included in ED*Facts* includes two data sets: a duplicated data set from LEAs and an unduplicated data set from the state educational agency (SEA). Once submitted, the data prepopulates the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR) for each state; however, the data contained in the LEA workbooks contains more ED*Facts* information than just that contained in the homeless education sections of the CSPR.

Accessing the LEA Workbooks and a Note on Confidentiality

Due to the data contained in the LEA workbooks, a username and password are required to access them. State Coordinators will be given credentials to access the workbook for their state. If a state would like additional EHCY personnel to have direct access to the workbooks, they must submit a request for additional credentials to the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE). This request must be made in writing by the State Coordinator and include the name, title, and contact information of the person for whom access is being requested. It is also incumbent on the Office of the State Coordinator for Homeless Education to inform NCHE of any personnel changes that require the removal of access rights.

Federal laws that govern data and confidentiality:

- *The Privacy Act*
- *The E-Government Act*
- *The Education Sciences Reform Act*
- *The U.S. Patriot Act*
- *The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act*

As student data, all information contained in the LEA workbooks is protected under federal law. In addition to protecting information about students that directly identifies them, federal privacy laws also consider information to be personally identifiable, and therefore protected, if the identity of a student could be reasonably inferred by either direct or indirect means. As a result, even aggregated data for an LEA may be considered protected information due to the small population of students reported by some LEAs.

While none of the data contained in the workbooks includes information that directly identifies students, many cells in the workbooks do fall below the threshold for public release, and are therefore considered confidential information. Each state is required to develop policies for securely handling student data; state policies on protecting data are often more restrictive than federal law and policy. Prior to releasing any data contained in the LEA workbooks, State Coordinators and authorized personnel must confirm the information release is allowed under mandated state policies. It is the responsibility of State Coordinators and authorized personnel to safeguard the security of the LEA workbooks and their contents.

Using the LEA Data Workbooks

“If the statistics are boring, you’ve got the wrong numbers.” Edward Tufte

As noted earlier, the LEA workbooks contain data submitted to *EDFacts* by school districts in each state. The workbooks include raw data and a tab that contains aggregated data for the state as a whole. This data is duplicated due to the inability of LEAs to determine which of their students also attended other districts in the state, and therefore will not match some of the other public reports on homeless students in the state.

Each workbook includes the following:

- Blue tabs designed to help you navigate the workbook, including the user guide and the codebook, which describe the labels and variables included in the workbook.
- A green tab for summary data, which presents descriptive aggregates of the LEA data for a statewide picture.
- A red tab that includes all of the raw data submitted by each LEA in the state and matched data from the Common Core of Data.¹
- Yellow tabs that include the raw data grouped by topic areas, such as enrollment, assessment, or student subgroups.

In keeping with the idea that the McKinney-Vento Act requires collaboration on the part of State Coordinators and liaisons with other programs and services, the data included in the workbooks is not limited to data on homeless students collected in Section 1.9 of the CSPR. Other important data, such as homeless students served by Title I and the number of students who dropped out of school are also included.

¹ Examples of data from the Common Core of Data found in the workbooks include LEA addresses and the counties where the LEAs are located.

It is the hope and expectation that the workbooks will be useful for State Coordinators as they plan activities for the year. While the summary data is available to provide a quick dashboard of the state overall, the raw data allows State Coordinators to run their own analyses. As State Coordinators know their states and programs better than anyone else, they may want to use additional rankings or comparisons to inform which LEAs are chosen for monitoring, technical assistance, or grant funding based on need and strength of programming. LEAs with a subgrant are also marked in the workbooks to allow for easy sorting by funding status.

Q: *Are education service centers, state operated agencies, and supervisory unions considered LEAs?*

A: *YES! The definition of an LEA includes these agencies and more, as they are administrative units that operate schools or contract for educational services. For more information about the definition of an LEA, see the Guide to Collecting and Reporting Federal Data and consult the file specifications to determine which LEAs must be included in the data collection.*

Due to the fact that the workbooks are provided in Excel format, no additional statistical analytics software is required. By using simple functions incorporated into the Excel software, percent change or average enrollment calculations can easily be run, LEAs can be sorted by demographics like number of students enrolled, or charts and graphs can be created. State Coordinators can also easily add additional data, such as funding information, into the spreadsheets to enhance an analysis or use the calculations in the spreadsheets to create publications or awareness documents in word processing or presentation software.

With a basic understanding of the LEA workbook content in hand, the next section will begin tying the data to the daily activities of State Coordinators and help identify priority areas for program development.

If you are not used to working with Excel, many tutorials are available online at no cost. Microsoft offers a number of tutorial videos on various topics through their Office Support website.

Identifying Data Informed Priorities

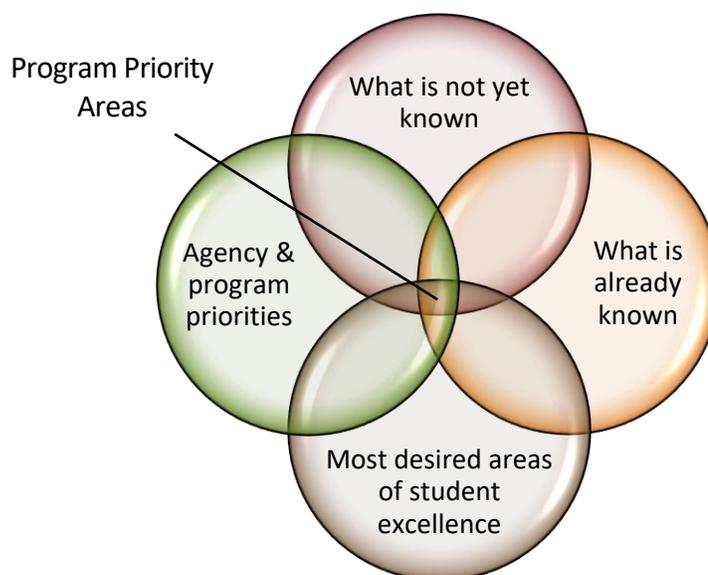
"It is not necessary to change. Survival is not mandatory." W. Edwards Deming

Given the number of things State Coordinators are tasked with completing each day, it is no surprise that many struggle to complete a needs assessment for their programs. While requirements found in the law and information provided by ED can help State Coordinators identify important areas to target, each state has unique strengths and weaknesses. By using data to then identify those strengths and weaknesses, State Coordinators can create goals with measures that develop the program and avoid simple checklists of activities.



Using data to build programs that create change for students does not have to be overwhelming or convoluted. By breaking things down into smaller steps, data can be incorporated into the daily work of State Coordinators.

1. Identify what information would be most helpful for the EHCY program but is currently unknown. Is it most important to know the number of children that districts potentially fail to identify during the school year? Maybe information on how a homeless student's special education status impacts their education is the most pressing information needed right now. Brainstorm a list of items and consider recruiting someone else to help generate ideas. Also, try keeping a running list of ideas that can be consulted later for those times when an idea strikes, but cannot be immediately developed due to other tasks or meetings.
2. Look at what is already known about students. This information can come from *EDFacts* data not contained in the LEA workbooks, the data in LEA workbooks, unduplicated data for the state, the state's academic report card, or information from other programs like the state's Head Start needs assessment. It can also come from records that track requests for assistance from LEAs or parents. Identify sources that can be tapped to fill in the gaps if not enough data is available to inform concerns about the program.
3. Identify the most desired areas of student and program excellence. Imagine being in a meeting with other agency staff or State Coordinators. When discussing student and program outcomes, which outcome would it be the most satisfying to share information about with colleagues? Is it most important to have the highest graduation rate or the lowest numbers of expulsions? What are the other areas in particular that the SEA has prioritized for improvement?
4. Compare the list of information that is unknown but desired, the information that is already known, and the list of most desired areas of excellence. The places they overlap with each other and with program or agency requirements are the EHCY priority areas for program development.



Of course, wanting something does not make it happen. An EHCY program could set a goal for all homeless students to pass the reading/language arts exam in two years, but if only 20% of students are currently passing the test, the goal will need to be adjusted. Review the wish list put together as a result of item four above. Which of the things on the list are

- specific,
- measurable,
- attainable,
- reasonable, and
- timely?

Once items that do not meet the description of specific, measurable, attainable, reasonable, and timely are crossed off the list, the program goals that are most meaningful to the EHCY program and are most likely to be achieved will remain.

Do not be discouraged if the program does not affect the targeted level of change after activities are implemented to support chosen goals. It could be that the activities are not as effective as first thought, the students and schools have evolved in some way that has reduced the activity's effectiveness, or that new trends and practices have emerged that would serve the program and students better. In that case, just repeat this process to make the adjustments needed to achieve improvement.

Needs Assessments

“Sense and deal with problems in their smallest state, before they grow bigger and become fatal.” Pearl Zhu

One of ED’s leading indicators examines the percentage of SEAs that use data to design technical assistance and conduct monitoring activities based on LEA needs. State Coordinators are also responsible for gathering and making available reliable, valid, and comprehensive information on the number of students experiencing homelessness, the difficulties they face, and the success EHCY programs have in addressing those difficulties.² While states have the ability to design needs assessments based on state priority areas identified as part of Section 3, this section will provide some basic information about needs assessments, then explore examples using ED’s current focus areas related to the identification of students, Title I participation among homeless students, and academic performance.³

What is a Needs Assessment

A needs assessment is a systematic way to evaluate the gap between current outcomes and desired outcomes. Needs assessments allow State Coordinators to compare multiple program measures to determine the greatest areas of need. Based on the size of the gap, needs can then be prioritized for technical assistance and monitoring activities; larger gaps represent greater needs. Needs assessments also go beyond basic compliance; an SEA or LEA could be compliant with the McKinney-Vento Act and still have poor student outcomes. For this reason, once needs are identified, potential reasons why a gap exists or does not exist should be considered to ensure workplans are effective at addressing identified gaps.

Needs Assessments in Action

Mr. Washington has been a State Coordinator for three years. He has completed training offered by NCHE and participated in national

² See Section 722(f)(1) of the McKinney-Vento Act for a full list of State Coordinator duties with regard to gathering data.

³ A template needs assessment is available on NCHE’s website at <https://nche.ed.gov/pr/needs-assess.php>. Standards and indicators for quality LEA programs are also available at <https://nche.ed.gov/pr/st-ind.php>.

conferences on education for homeless students. He reviewed all the policies set by his SEA and, at his recommendation, the state made adjustments to enrollment and attendance policies to ensure compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act. Mr. Washington conducts training each fall with LEA liaisons, attendance officers, registrar staff, school principals, and bus drivers. He provides updates for the LEAs throughout the school year and regularly conducts monitoring visits to determine if LEAs ensure families and unaccompanied youth know their rights under the law. During a recent monitoring visit by ED, Mr. Washington's state was not only found to be in compliance with the law, but a couple of practices implemented by his state were considered exemplary. However, when Mr. Washington completed his planning for the next school year, he discovered the state fell far below goals included in the state's annual workplan in the areas of attendance and reading/language arts performance.

By looking at the gap between his goal targets and the outcomes measured by student data, Mr. Washington was able to identify attendance and reading/language arts performance as priority areas for the next year. However, to successfully make progress toward program goals, Mr. Washington also needed to identify the reasons why students did not meet the goals. He brought together a group of stakeholders including liaisons, social workers, guidance counselors, special education staff, and assistant principals from a few schools with the highest rates of homelessness. Mr. Washington shared the program data he had for students experiencing homelessness and asked the group for feedback.

In their discussions, they discovered two key issues for the program goals. One of the assistant principals offered that her school and two others in her district with high rates of poverty also had high rates of English Learners. Mr. Washington was able to check the data and confirm that not only did English Learners make up a large percentage of the homeless student population in the assistant principal's LEA, but it was a consistent trend across the state. The students in those LEAs also did notably worse on reading/language arts assessments. The school counselors and social workers started to discuss the types of requests they regularly received from teachers. While many requests had to do with basic needs of the students, many more had to do with behavior issues and emotional outbursts in the classrooms and hallways. The assistant principals agreed that they were receiving more disciplinary referrals for the same issues. As the director of special education listened to the discussion, she realized that many of the behaviors being discussed were related to reasons students commonly qualify for special education services. Mr. Washington compared data on homeless students with individualized education programs (IEPs) to discipline data and discovered that many of the students who received suspensions in the last year also had IEPs related to emotional disabilities.

Focus Areas

The key to a good needs assessment is designing something that provides ample information about program outcomes without providing so much information that the needs assessment becomes overwhelming or impractical. Fortunately, several pieces of data are available in the LEA workbooks that can help State Coordinators quickly access key data points. As mentioned previously, the LEA workbooks include:

- the number of students enrolled,
- subgroups of students enrolled,
- numbers of students served by Title I schoolwide and targeted assistance programs, and
- academic performance of students.

Once data for graduation rates and chronic absenteeism become available, they will also be included in the LEA workbooks, but they may be available from SEA data divisions sooner.

Other potential data sources are available to State Coordinators, in addition to the data in the LEA workbooks. For example, considering the liaison turnover rate for districts or the number of complaint calls received about a district can yield critical information about LEAs and their need for technical assistance. Considering the unemployment rate of a community or other major community changes, like local job loss and natural disasters, can also help parse out the districts that are in most need of help.

The remaining subsections of this chapter look at a hypothetical needs assessment using a few of the focus areas currently identified by ED. The examples provided were selected to support State Coordinators in reducing the risk of potential under identification, under serving, or underachieving of homeless students. Examples of data quality indicators are also included. All of the examples included in Section 5 illustrate ways State Coordinators can use data provided in their LEA workbooks to develop measures and goals that can then be included in annual workplans.

Identification

Identifying students is a fundamental activity of liaisons; as such, it provides an easy starting point for a needs assessment. To get a sense of perspective about the numbers of homeless students identified by LEAs, it is useful to compare the number of homeless students enrolled in the LEAs to both the overall enrollment and the enrollment of economically disadvantaged (ECD) students. An example is provided below, showing a

truncated data set filtered to show districts with the largest percentage of ECD students who are homeless at the top:⁴

| LEA Name | HCY Enrolled | ECD Students | HCY/ECD |
|-------------|-----------------|-----------------|---------|
| District BW | 18 | 16 | 113% |
| District CP | 445 | 454 | 98% |
| District AT | 102 | 110 | 93% |
| District EE | 75 | 82 | 91% |

LEAs doing well implementing the McKinney-Vento Act would be expected to have higher numbers of homeless students when they have high numbers of ECD students. Past research estimates that about 10% of persons living in poverty will experience homelessness,⁵ while student data for SY 2015-16 indicate that approximately 2.5% of all students experience homelessness.⁶ Therefore, on the surface, it would seem to be a good thing that the rate of homeless students among economically disadvantaged students would be high, but the data included in the example most likely represents errors on the part of the districts. For example, District BW actually has more students identified as homeless than it does students who are economically disadvantaged. Since all students who are homeless should qualify as economically disadvantaged, this should only very rarely or never happen.⁷ Even the rate of 91% seen in District EE far exceeds the normal rates of homeless students in the economically disadvantaged category, indicating that these districts could likely benefit from some technical assistance related to data collection and quality controls.

Re-filtering the data by the percentage of all students who are economically disadvantaged can also elicit useful information. The table below provides another example:

⁴ Data used in this document do not reflect data of actual districts and are for demonstration purposes only.

⁵ Burt, M. (2001) *What will it take to end homelessness?* Urban Institute Press. Washington, D.C.

⁶ Data retrieved from <https://eddataexpress.ed.gov>.

⁷ States that use eligibility for free school meals as their definition of economically disadvantaged should never have LEAs with more students experiencing homelessness than are economically disadvantaged, due to the categorical eligibility of homeless students for free school meals. States that use other definitions of economically disadvantaged based on income could rarely have students who are not considered economically disadvantaged but are homeless due to high costs of living and housing in those states or due to circumstances such as natural disasters.

| LEA Name | Grantee | HCY Enrolled | ECD Students | All Students | ECD/All Students | HCY/ECD |
|-------------|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|---------|
| District CT | No | 18 | 2,411 | 2,412 | 100% | 1% |
| District BR | No | 33 | 4,254 | 4,256 | 100% | 1% |
| District WW | No | 39 | 3,952 | 3,989 | 99% | 1% |
| District AO | No | 31 | 1,109 | 1,125 | 99% | 3% |
| District DC | No | 0 | 143 | 150 | 95% | 0% |
| District DM | No | 4 | 726 | 780 | 93% | 1% |
| District L | No | 6 | 1,588 | 1,882 | 84% | 0% |
| District AR | No | 97 | 1,272 | 1,540 | 83% | 8% |
| District AF | No | 42 | 3,109 | 3,782 | 82% | 1% |
| District CY | No | 0 | 1,726 | 2,102 | 82% | 0% |

Two things become immediately evident: the LEAs have extremely high rates of poverty but, with the exception of one district, they have very low homeless student counts. Another thing that stands out is the fact that none of these districts have McKinney-Vento subgrants. Based on these findings, an examination of data from just the subgrantees is warranted. This results in the following:

| LEA Name | Grantee | HCY Students | ECD Students | All Students | ECD/All Students | HCY/ECD |
|-------------|---------|--------------|--------------|--------------|------------------|---------|
| District CV | Yes | 645 | 91,570 | 114,489 | 80% | 1% |
| District EE | Yes | 725 | 5,480 | 7,536 | 73% | 13% |
| District BJ | Yes | 325 | 9,182 | 12,922 | 71% | 4% |
| District FF | Yes | 2,864 | 60,351 | 85,602 | 71% | 5% |
| District CM | Yes | 72 | 3,022 | 4,432 | 68% | 2% |
| District AC | Yes | 735 | 6,800 | 10,375 | 66% | 11% |
| District I | Yes | 126 | 5,665 | 8,656 | 65% | 2% |
| District CZ | Yes | 284 | 5,685 | 10,215 | 56% | 5% |
| District AV | Yes | 273 | 3,990 | 7,412 | 54% | 7% |
| District NN | Yes | 82 | 1,370 | 2,559 | 54% | 6% |
| District BX | Yes | 437 | 16,451 | 32,625 | 50% | 3% |
| District AT | Yes | 535 | 3,872 | 8,009 | 48% | 14% |
| District AW | Yes | 565 | 27,494 | 60,306 | 46% | 2% |
| District CR | Yes | 1,261 | 17,722 | 43,085 | 41% | 7% |
| District DA | Yes | 216 | 10,630 | 29,196 | 36% | 2% |
| District DV | Yes | 25 | 5,805 | 17,555 | 33% | 0% |
| District DU | Yes | 172 | 3,927 | 36,874 | 11% | 4% |
| District CP | Yes | 103 | 454 | 11,404 | 4% | 23% |

Again, some important trends become noticeable. Six of the 18, or one-third of the LEAs that receive a subgrant, identified 2% or less of the students living in poverty as homeless. One subgrantee only identified 25 homeless students. If, based on historical

data or monitoring, these numbers appear inaccurate, then the issue is likely related to data collection and quality measures. Otherwise, the districts probably need technical assistance related to identifying homeless students and may even need their awards reduced.

In looking at the data examples again, including both subgrantee and nongrantee LEAs, it is apparent that the LEAs with the highest poverty rates are not subgrantees. Only one of the LEAs that make up the 20 districts with the highest poverty rates is a subgrantee. This may indicate that outreach to liaisons in high poverty districts, as well as a re-examination of the subgrant application process, are warranted to ensure that subgrants reflect those LEAs with both high need and high-quality applications.

Title I Participation

Homeless students are categorically eligible for Title I services; LEAs are also required to submit *EDFacts* data on the number of homeless students served by targeted assistance (TAS) and schoolwide programs (SWPs) operated by Title I. As a result, reviewing data related to the number or percentage of homeless students served by these Title I programs can provide important information related to identification and, potentially, about the academic performance of homeless students. To explore this focus area, set up a spreadsheet with the following information:

| LEA Name | Grantee | HCY Enrolled | All Students | HCY Served by Title I | All Title I Served | HCY Served by Title I/All Title I | HCY served by Title I/HCY Enrolled |
|----------|---------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| | | | | | | | |

A sample data set, partially displayed below, indicates almost half of the LEAs reported that the percentage of Title I students who are homeless is 0%. None of the subgrantees fall into that group, but 86% of the districts reported they have at least one homeless student. This means the percentage of homeless students that make up the Title I student body should probably be higher.

| LEA Name | Grantee | HCY Enrolled | All Students | HCY Served by Title I | All Title I Served | HCY Served by Title I/All Title I | HCY served by Title I/HCY Enrolled |
|-------------|---------|--------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| District AB | No | 0 | 543 | 0 | 551 | 0% | 0% |
| District CY | No | 0 | 1,544 | 0 | 1,210 | 0% | 0% |
| District AD | No | 0 | 987 | 0 | 1,037 | 0% | 0% |
| District BC | No | 0 | 3,451 | 0 | 991 | 0% | 0% |

In addition to looking at the percentage of Title I students who are homeless, it can be helpful to look at the percentage of homeless students who are served by Title I. The first can indicate how well LEAs are identifying homeless students for services, but the

latter indicates how well LEAs are actually connecting students to services. When sorting the sample data by the HCY Served by Title I/HCY Enrolled column, you get the following:

| LEA Name | Grantee | HCY Enrolled | Total Students (All Grades) | HCY Served by Title I | All Title I Served | HCY Served by Title I/All Title I | HCY served by Title I/HCY Enrolled |
|-------------|---------|--------------|-----------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| District AR | No | 6 | 7,449 | 68 | 4,319 | 2% | 1133% |
| District BH | No | 2 | 3,803 | 4 | 3,985 | 0% | 200% |
| District DJ | No | 14 | 3,655 | 18 | 3,124 | 1% | 129% |
| District C | No | 15 | 1,969 | 17 | 1,484 | 1% | 113% |
| District NN | No | 8 | 385 | 9 | 404 | 2% | 113% |
| District HH | No | 13 | 1,691 | 14 | 1,726 | 1% | 108% |
| District OO | No | 30 | 3,517 | 32 | 3,575 | 1% | 107% |
| District CR | No | 20 | 2,312 | 21 | 2,445 | 1% | 105% |
| District DL | No | 159 | 6,630 | 163 | 4,667 | 3% | 103% |
| District AE | No | 40 | 3,785 | 41 | 3,813 | 1% | 103% |
| District Q | No | 281 | 5,692 | 288 | 5,983 | 5% | 102% |
| District T | No | 46 | 5,498 | 47 | 5,640 | 1% | 102% |
| District B | No | 8 | 651 | 8 | 613 | 1% | 100% |

Reviewing the list of districts at the top of the list, it is immediately apparent that 12 districts are serving more homeless students with Title I than there are homeless students enrolled in the schools! This represents a data error, but the question remains: did the Title I team identify students that the liaisons missed or is Title I deeming students homeless that are not actually homeless because they failed to consult with the liaison? This is an important question because it speaks to the level of coordination between the programs in the LEAs.

Moving past the data errors identified above, the data set shows that about one-quarter of the LEAs are serving 90% or more of their homeless students with Title I and well over a third of the districts are serving 75% or more of their homeless students with Title I. While those are both good outcomes, the sample data set also showed that 17 of the districts which reported homeless students are serving less than 25% of them with Title I. The 17 LEAs represent a significant chunk of the LEAs in the data set, indicating that homeless students are potentially underserved by Title I.

Academic Achievement

In addition to ensuring that homeless students are enrolled in school, the purpose of the McKinney-Vento Act is to ensure they succeed academically, once enrolled. As a result, it is important to review data on academic performance of homeless students. An example using a truncated sample data set for reading/language arts (RLA) is provided below.

| LEA Name | HCY Enrolled | HCY with Valid RLA Scores | HCY Proficient RLA | % Proficient |
|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| District JJ | 3 | 5 | 3 | 60% |
| District BM | 5 | 4 | 2 | 50% |
| District CW | 2 | 2 | 1 | 50% |
| District O | 4 | 4 | 2 | 50% |
| District DT | 40 | 40 | 18 | 45% |
| District AW | 10 | 9 | 4 | 44% |
| District AP | 28 | 28 | 10 | 36% |
| District BH | 30 | 29 | 10 | 34% |
| District CD | 38 | 38 | 13 | 34% |
| District AM | 27 | 27 | 9 | 33% |

Based on information published in the Federal Data Summary,⁸ 31% of students experiencing homelessness were proficient in RLA. Consequently, a district with a passing rate of 60% would be very positive, but the LEA’s data contains an error. The LEA indicated that the district has more homeless students receiving a valid score than were enrolled in the LEA. Fortunately, in this scenario only one LEA had this issue, making it an anomaly.

However, the data error raises the point that the number of students who received valid scores is as important as the passing rates. Very small numbers of students could skew the results, as a district that only had three students with valid scores would automatically drop to 67% passing if one student failed, while a district with 100 students could have 33 students fail before its passing rate dropped that low. For the purposes of the samples in this section, an N size of 15 will be assumed for accountability purposes. That is, a group in our sample has to have at least 15 students before the group’s assessment results are considered statistically significant.⁹ Sorting out those LEAs with less than 15 homeless students provides an analysis that could be roughly compared to accountability outcomes.

⁸ <https://nche.ed.gov/downloads/data-comp-1314-1516.pdf>

⁹ Each state sets its own N size based the state’s student population. More information about an individual state’s N size can be found in the state’s accountability plan.

| LEA Name | HCY Enrolled | HCY with Valid RLA Scores | HCY Proficient RLA | % Proficient |
|-------------|--------------|---------------------------|--------------------|--------------|
| District DT | 40 | 40 | 18 | 45% |
| District AP | 28 | 28 | 10 | 36% |
| District BH | 30 | 29 | 10 | 34% |
| District CD | 38 | 38 | 13 | 34% |
| District AM | 27 | 27 | 9 | 33% |
| District DB | 22 | 22 | 7 | 32% |
| District L | 148 | 148 | 47 | 32% |
| District H | 20 | 20 | 6 | 30% |
| District CC | 34 | 34 | 10 | 29% |
| District NN | 28 | 28 | 8 | 29% |

After sorting the LEAs based on the N size, only eight of the LEAs scored 30% or higher in RLA. Since each state creates its own academic standards and assessments, comparison to how other states are doing is fundamentally flawed. Instead, the State Coordinator might calculate the passing rate for all students in the state. When done for the sample, it was discovered that 18% of homeless students in the sample passed RLA. Only one-half of the districts had a passing rate that high for its homeless students. Based on the sample data in this needs assessment, RLA would be a clear area for improvement and intervention.

As education administrators who are not in the classroom, these findings can leave State Coordinators feeling unsure of how to advise districts. An instinctive response is to question how many homeless students were served by Schoolwide and Targeted Assistance Title I programs to gain more insight into the results. The sample spreadsheet is reformatted with the information below, with conditional formatting used to highlight LEAs that have at least 75% of their identified homeless students receiving Title I:

| LEA Name | HCY with Valid Score RLA | HCY Proficient RLA | % Proficient | HCY Served by Title I | HCY Enrolled | % HCY Served by Title I |
|-------------|--------------------------|--------------------|--------------|-----------------------|--------------|-------------------------|
| District DT | 40 | 18 | 45% | 79 | 106 | 75% |
| District AP | 28 | 10 | 36% | 30 | 102 | 29% |
| District BH | 29 | 10 | 34% | 24 | 88 | 27% |
| District CD | 38 | 13 | 34% | 74 | 111 | 67% |
| District AM | 27 | 9 | 33% | 76 | 90 | 84% |
| District DB | 22 | 7 | 32% | 59 | 73 | 81% |
| District L | 148 | 47 | 32% | 31 | 369 | 8% |
| District H | 20 | 6 | 30% | 6 | 44 | 14% |
| District CC | 34 | 10 | 29% | 69 | 78 | 88% |
| District NN | 28 | 8 | 29% | 51 | 76 | 67% |

In the full sample data set, among the 25 highest performing LEAs, i.e., the LEAs with the highest percentage of homeless students passing the RLA assessment, only nine LEAs have a large percentage of homeless students who are served by Title I. Conversely, when looking at the 25 lowest performing LEAs, 23 LEAs have a large percentage of homeless students served by Title I in Schoolwide or Targeted Assistance programs. This scenario raises the following questions: What is it that the homeless students need to succeed that they are not receiving in the Schoolwide or Targeted Assistance programs? How can State Coordinators work with Title I to change these outcomes? What other school programs should State Coordinators work with? How can State Coordinators identify and target threats to the success of homeless students in a way that changes these outcomes?

In addition to the RLA example provided in this section, data for mathematics and science assessments can be incorporated into a state's needs assessment. It may be helpful to aggregate the data by combining grade levels into Grades 3-5, Grades 6-8, and High School to determine if technical assistance should be targeted to a particular age group. Looking at the achievement gaps between homeless students, all students, and economically disadvantaged students can provide perspective on student needs as well. Helping LEAs understand the implications of this type of analysis could lead to stronger subgrant applications, as districts can use this type of analysis to demonstrate need for subgrant funds.

Next Steps

While not meant to prescribe an exact format for a state needs assessment, hopefully the examples in this section provide State Coordinators with ideas about how to design needs assessments for their own states. Additional considerations that can impact the design of state needs assessments include the size of the state and its student population, the amount of time a State Coordinator has to assign to homeless education activities, and the resources available in the state. Once states have completed their needs assessments, State Coordinators can develop the workplans discussed in Section 5.

Workplans

*“All you need is the plan- the roadmap- and the courage to press on to your destination.”
Earl Nightingale*

Another of ED’s leading indicators for the EHCY program focuses on the number of states that have updated annual workplans with measurable goals that are based on information gained from a needs assessment. Creating a workplan and related goals can help State Coordinators stay focused; this can be especially beneficial during particularly busy times, such as the start of the school year. Despite the fact that this discussion is focused on an annual workplan, including multiyear goals that look at short-term and long-term outcomes can simplify the planning process and make it more cohesive from year to year.

Of course, annual workplans must include all the duties of a State Coordinator and SEA. Needs assessment findings can be woven into those duties and be used to create

McKinney-Vento Act Responsibilities for State Coordinators and SEAs:

- *Gather and make available reliable, valid, and comprehensive information*
- *Develop and carry out the state plan*
- *Collect data related to the needs of homeless students*
- *Coordinate and collaborate with educators, service providers, liaisons, and community organizations representing homeless students*
- *Provide technical assistance to and monitor LEAs*
- *Provide professional development*
- *Respond to inquiries from parents, guardians, and unaccompanied youth*
- *Provide written explanation to parents, guardians, or unaccompanied youth regarding decisions made during a dispute resolution*
- *Review and revise policies*
- *Make subgrants to LEAs*

measurable goals related to the duties. For example, one of the responsibilities of the SEA, and therefore of the State Coordinator, is to award subgrants to LEAs based on need and the quality of applications received by the SEA. However, in the sample needs assessment from Section 5, it was discovered that the districts with the highest levels of need, as measured by the percentage of their students who qualified as economically disadvantaged, were not necessarily the LEAs that received subgrants. As a result, developing a goal to increase the number of subgrantees with high levels of poverty could be an effective way to improve the homeless education program.

Striking a Balance

Take a moment to review the findings from the needs assessment examples described in Section 4. They included the following:

1. Some districts had unusually high rates of homeless students among economically disadvantaged students.
2. Districts had very high levels of poverty, but low numbers of homeless students.
3. Grantee districts had lower rates of poverty vs. nongrant districts. The grantee districts also frequently had low rates of homeless students among economically disadvantaged students.
4. The majority of the LEAs have at least one homeless student, but almost half of the LEAs report the percentage of HCY served by Title I to be 0%.
5. Over a third of the LEAs served 75% or more of their homeless students with Title I.
6. A large number of districts (17) are serving less than 25% of their homeless students with Title I.
7. Only 18% of homeless students are passing RLA assessments; eight LEAs had statistically significant homeless student populations and a passing rate of at least 30%.
8. Among the 25 highest performing LEAs, i.e., the LEAs with the highest percentage of homeless students passing the RLA assessment, only nine LEAs have a large percentage of homeless students who are served by Title I. Conversely, when looking at the 25 lowest performing LEAs, 23 LEAs have a large percentage of homeless students served by Title I in Schoolwide or Targeted Assistance programs.
9. Districts identified more students as homeless than economically disadvantaged.
10. Districts identified more homeless students receiving a score on assessments than were enrolled in the district.
11. Districts identified more homeless students as being served by Title I than were enrolled in the district (12 LEAs).

At first glance, the list seems overwhelming and creating a goal for each item seems unrealistic. However, the list can be broken down into topical groups. For example, Indicators 1, 9, 10, and 11 have to do with data quality. Indicators 2 and 3 have to do with identification of students, while Indicators 4, 5, 6, and 8 have to do with Title I coordination. Number 3 is also related to the subgrant process. Academic achievement is the clear focus of Indicators 7 and 8. As a result, the 11 separate findings can be sorted into five topical areas that will fit into both the duties of a State Coordinator and an annual workplan.

Creating Goals

One of the greatest challenges to writing goals is ensuring clarity of intent and alignment with the identified areas for improvement. A good way to test whether goals and objectives do this is to have others read the workplan. If readers can accurately describe what the State Coordinator hopes to achieve both this year and in three to five years, the roadmap is clear. If there are questions about how or why some activities are important, the goals may need revision to clarify the plan's intent.

Depending on the need the State Coordinator is trying to address, some objectives and activities may include specific products, while others are research or process oriented. This often has to do with the complexity of the need being addressed and the potential threats to desired outcomes. For example, issues related to the identification of students are often fairly straightforward and greatly impacted by professional development and awareness raising activities. On the other hand, improving the academic outcomes of students typically requires more research and may require differentiated interventions with districts or even schools as more is learned about why the schools and students are struggling.

Be sure to evaluate goals and related objectives to verify that they are specific, measurable, attainable, and reasonable.¹⁰ Failing to do this could lead to frustration at the end of the year when accomplishments are reviewed and need assessments are updated. For example, overly ambitious goals with unattainable objectives may result in a sense of failure. In contrast, a goal with an over-simplified target may not be reasonable as it may not have enough impact on district or student outcomes.

Sample Workplan

Target area: Student Identification

Needs assessment findings:

- Districts had very high levels of poverty, but low numbers of homeless students.

¹⁰ Please see Section 3 for more on this topic.

- Subgrantee districts frequently had low rates of homeless students among economically disadvantaged students or a low number of identified students.

Goals and Objectives:

- Long term: The number of identified homeless students will increase by 10% in all districts with a poverty rate (based on economically disadvantaged students) greater than 60%.
- Short term:
 - The number of identified homeless students will increase by 10% in half of the districts with a poverty rate (based on economically disadvantaged students) greater than 60%.
 - Identified homeless students in subgrantee districts will increase by a minimum of 15%.

Related Activities:

- Provide targeted technical assistance for liaisons in districts identifying fewer than 5% of economically disadvantaged students as homeless.
- Update and distribute a tip sheet for identifying homeless students to liaisons, school counselors, school social workers, and other school personnel.
- Provide the Continuum of Care chairpersons, food bank directors, and other social service providers with a link to the liaison directory.
- Review monitoring rubric questions to ensure they assess district efforts to identify students in a meaningful way. Include a review of past findings for districts.
- Provide a recorded webinar or video on the SEA website that focuses on identifying homeless students.
- Include a breakout session with a panel of liaisons from districts effectively identifying homeless students at the state conference.

Target Area: Title I Coordination

Needs Assessment Findings:

- The majority of LEAs have at least one homeless student, but almost half of the LEAs report the percentage of HCY served by Title I to be 0%.
- Over a third of LEAs served 75% or more of their homeless students with Title I.
- A large number of districts (17) are serving less than 25% of their homeless students with Title I.
- Among the 25 highest performing LEAs, i.e., the LEAs with the highest percentage of homeless students passing the RLA assessment, only nine LEAs have a large

percentage of homeless students who are served by Title I. Conversely, when looking at the 25 lowest performing LEAs, 23 LEAs have a large percentage of homeless students served by Title I in Schoolwide or Targeted Assistance programs.

- LEAs identified more homeless students as being served by Title I than were enrolled in the district (12 LEAs).

Goals and Objectives:

- Long term: Ninety percent of LEAs will serve at least 75% of homeless students in Title I programs.
- Short term: Sixty percent of LEAs will serve at least 10% of their homeless student populations with Title I programs.

Related Activities:

- Explain and discuss needs assessment findings to the SEA's Title I staff. Include a copy of needs assessment findings for Title I and homeless students.
- Lead a breakout session during the federal programs/Title I statewide conference related to working with homeless liaisons. Include information about identification of students.
- Review monitoring rubric questions to ensure they assess district efforts to coordinate the two programs in a meaningful way. Include a review of past findings for districts as a part of this, along with a review of set-asides for homeless students.

Target Area: Academic Achievement

Needs Assessment Findings:

- Only 18% of homeless students are passing RLA assessments; eight LEAs had statistically significant homeless student populations and a passing rate of at least 30%.
- Among the 25 highest performing LEAs, i.e., the LEAs with the highest percentage of homeless students passing the RLA assessment, only nine LEAs have a large percentage of homeless students who are served by Title I. Conversely, when looking at the 25 lowest performing LEAs, 23 LEAs have a large percentage of homeless students served by Title I in Schoolwide or Targeted Assistance programs.

Goals and Objectives:

- Long term: All homeless students will be proficient, as measured on RLA assessments.
- Short term:

- Common reasons homeless students specifically are failing RLA assessments will be identified.
- All districts with an achievement gap of 10% points or more between students experiencing homelessness and economically disadvantaged students will participate in technical assistance.

Related Activities:

- The State Coordinator will present these findings to key stakeholder groups (liaisons, Title I administrators, school counselors, school social workers, other student services personnel, assistant principals, select teachers, special education personnel, and shelter child advocates, etc.)
 - Responses will be solicited as to possible reasons homeless students specifically are struggling academically.
 - Solicited responses may be obtained during statewide meetings, trainings, regional meetings, or electronically.
 - An additional analysis of characteristics of districts will be performed, focusing on what makes high and low performing districts alike or dissimilar.
 - Overall findings will be shared with a smaller taskforce, to identify common themes and trends.
 - Districts will be targeted for technical assistance based on common themes and trends.
- The eight higher achieving districts will present on academic supports at both the federal programs/Title I statewide conference and the annual homeless education conference.

Target Area: Subgrant Process

Needs Assessment Findings:

- Grantee districts had lower rates of poverty vs. nongrantee districts. The grantee districts also frequently had low rates of homeless students among economically disadvantaged students. Some also had low numbers of identified homeless students.

Goals and Objectives:

- Long term: 50% of subgrantees will be in the top 25 LEAs based on overall poverty rates. (Poverty rate will be defined as the number of economically disadvantaged students divided by the total number of students in the LEA.)
- Short Term:
 - More districts with high poverty levels will apply for subgrants.

Related Activities:

- Conduct informal survey of LEAs with high poverty rates to determine why they did not apply for funds.
- Review and revise subgrant application:
 - Identify and remove potential barriers for districts.
 - Identify and incorporate reasonable minimum student thresholds for districts to apply for funding.
- Provide additional technical assistance for LEAs on submitting quality applications.

Target Area: Data Quality**Needs Assessment Findings:**

- LEAs identified more students as homeless than economically disadvantaged.
- LEAs identified more homeless students receiving a score on assessments than were enrolled in the district.
- LEAs identified more homeless students as being served by Title I than were enrolled in the district (12 LEAs).

Goals and Objectives:

Short term: Identified data errors will be eliminated.

Related Activities:

- Discuss needs assessment findings with the SEA's Title I staff. Include a copy of needs assessment findings for Title I and homeless students.
- Lead a breakout session during the federal programs/Title I statewide conference related to working with homeless liaisons. Include information about identification of students.
- Provide information about data errors to homeless liaisons.
- Use the checklist provided in the *Guide to Collecting and Reporting Federal Data* (pgs. 9-10) to create an LEA checklist for data quality review. Disseminate to homeless liaisons and LEA data stewards.
- Use the checklist provided in the *Guide to Collecting and Reporting Federal Data* (pgs. 9-10) to review data prior to submission to ED*Facts*.

Limitations and Use

“Torture the data, and it will confess to anything.” Ronald Coase

While working with data, needs assessments, and workplans, remember: data can answer many questions, but there are limits to what it can say or do. For example, high expulsion rates among homeless students could mean the students had problems getting to school and were expelled for poor attendance, that the expulsion hearing officer was not aware that the McKinney-Vento Act requires schools to help homeless students get to school, or that the students displayed poor behavior unrelated to their homelessness. As a result, it is important to evaluate assumptions and the reasons workplan activities were chosen based on the data. Bias is unavoidable, but it can be limited.

The following guidelines can help with accuracy in analyzing data.

- Correlations represent relationships and connections between variables. They can be observed, but the fact that a relationship exists between the variables does not prove that one caused the other. For example, when school districts provide school supplies to students, their National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores may increase. It would be easy to conclude that providing school supplies increases the academic outcomes of students. However, the real cause for the increase in NAEP scores may be that the schools also instituted a new curriculum. Be careful to avoid assigning causation before proving something to be true.
- Running a calculation on data or manipulating it in some way will not necessarily provide the desired information. A State Coordinator may want to know the percentage of students who passed the reading/language arts assessment at the end of Third Grade, but if the data available includes the number of students who were enrolled on the day of the assessment and the number of students who were promoted to the next grade, no amount of statistical analysis will result in the number of students who passed the assessment. In this instance, more information is needed, not advanced statistics.
- Group size matters. For example, an LEA increased the number of students it identified by 75 this school year. If last year the same district identified one

student as homeless, that would represent a 100 percent increase in the number of identified students. On the other hand, if last year the LEA identified 1,000 students as homeless, that would only represent a 7.5 percent increase.

- Not all change is significant. What may initially appear to be a very large change may actually be more easily explained by chance or be a smaller change than it first appears. Depending on the data, the change being measured, and any growth models implemented by the SEA or districts, statistics can help discern between changes that only present as noteworthy vs. changes that actually are noteworthy.
- Looking at multiple data sources can help State Coordinators avoid bias. For example, in comparison to the number of homeless students passing statewide assessments reported by other states, students in the state may be doing exceptionally well on measures of mathematics and language arts skills. On the other hand, in comparison to other students within the state, the same homeless students may be far behind their peers in skill attainment measured by the assessments.
- Question anomalies in the data. They may indicate that something is going very well or very poorly, but they may also indicate that the data is corrupted and better collection practices need to be implemented.
- Similarly, it is important to establish checks and balances in collecting data and reviewing it. For example, State Coordinators may want to question districts that show a 10% or more change from the number of students reported as homeless the year before. Procedures such as the use of assurances about the collection methods and accuracy of the data can also help to avoid errors in data quality. It is extremely unlikely that the liaison is the person actually submitting data to your state agency. As a result, procedural safeguards can help to ensure that the data steward for the district submits accurate data received from the liaison instead of automatically filling in a zero under the category for homeless students.

Putting It All Together

The information contained in this manual is meant to give State Coordinators a foundation that allows them to review data for their states and use it to develop technical assistance and program monitoring based on data driven needs assessments and workplans. To help State Coordinators put it all together, several appendices are included.

- Appendix B provides a table of risk indicators and related data. While Sections 4 and 5 explored some specific indicators in a sample needs assessment and workplan, this table provides additional examples of data

elements that can be used to evaluate the performance of LEAs in a needs assessment.

- Appendix C examines additional focus areas related to the academic success of students experiencing homelessness. Specifically, the appendix expands on information provided in Sections 4 and 5 by examining new data points, chronic absenteeism and the adjusted cohort graduation rate.
- Appendix D contains an awareness raising template aimed at debunking common myths about homeless students that create barriers to their education. By inserting the state's name and relevant data in the spaces noted in the Word document, State Coordinators will have a handout they can easily put to use during training events.
- Appendix E provides State Coordinators an Excel spreadsheet that can be used to check Title I participation and funds set aside by LEAs. Depending on the needs of the state, it can be incorporated into the needs assessment process or be used as a standalone monitoring activity.

As ED's technical assistance provider for the EHCY program, NCHE is also available to assist State Coordinators who need further assistance with collecting and analyzing data, developing needs assessments, or implementing workplans.