



Supporting Younger Children Experiencing Homelessness:

Requirements and Best Practices



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Infant and Toddler Homelessness Across 50 States: 2021-2022

April 30th, 2024

About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection
works to overcome
homelessness through
education.



We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

WEBSITE:

schoolhouseconnection.org

NEWSLETTER:

schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up

- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships

Overview

Homelessness Defined

Children and youth who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.**



Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons.



Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.



Living in emergency or transitional shelters.



Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.



A Couch Is Not a Home

"Life Without a Home:" Voices from the Tents, Shelters, Cars, Motels, and Couches of America
New York Times
February 20, 2024

Families often stay with others temporarily because of lack of shelter availability, and the fear of having children removed from their custody.

Staying with others puts families, infants, and toddlers in vulnerable, harmful situations, and, conditions that may contribute to developmental delays. Parents may stay with abusive/exploitive people, or trade sex in order to have a place to stay.



Homelessness Has Serious Consequences for Young Children



Homelessness in infancy has been found to be associated with delays in language, literacy, and social-emotional development, putting children at risk for later academic problems.



The younger and longer a child experiences homelessness, the greater the cumulative toll of negative health outcomes.



The impacts of homelessness on young children are long-lasting, even once families are housed, including on children's school readiness.

Homelessness Also Has Long- Term Consequences



The high school graduation rate for students experiencing homelessness is 68% compared to 85% for all students. This is the lowest graduation rate of any student sub-group, including economically disadvantaged.



High school students who experience homelessness are 10x more likely to become pregnant or get someone pregnant.



In addition to the academic impacts, homelessness in the early years can cause developmental delays, social-emotional challenges, and long-term trauma.

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND HOMELESSNESS

EARLY HEAD START	EARLY INTERVENTION/ CHILD FIND	CHILD CARE	HUD HOMELESS ASSISTANCE	MATERNAL, INFANT, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD HOME VISITING (MIECHV)
<p>Homeless families are categorically eligible. Also requires proactive outreach, grace periods for immunizations, and prioritized enrollment. Allows programs to reserve slots for homeless infants and toddlers</p>	<p>States must make early intervention services available to homeless infants/toddlers; LEAs must identify and evaluate children with disabilities experiencing homelessness.</p>	<p>Requires lead agencies to prioritize children experiencing homelessness and use funds for outreach and enrollment of homeless families and expedited enrollment. Lead agencies also must use some grants/contracts to expand the supply of child care for all infants and toddlers.</p>	<p>Requires programs serving families experiencing homelessness to designate a staff person to ensure that young children (including infants and toddlers) are enrolled in early childhood programs.</p>	<p>Some data collection on homelessness is required by the Health Resource and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services</p>

Every local educational agency (LEA) must Designate a McKinney-Vento Liaison

The liaison must be able to carry out the **ten duties** outlined in the law, including:

- **Identify** McKinney-Vento students
- Post **public notice** of McKinney-Vento rights to parents and youth
- Provide **professional development** and support on McKinney-Vento to school staff
- Ensure children and youths have **access to and receive educational services including services through Head Start programs** (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.), early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.), and other preschool programs administered by the local educational agency

Homelessness Creates Barriers to Accessing Early Childhood Programs

- **High Mobility** of families moving in and out of motels, staying with others, living in cars, etc.
- **Lack of documentation** and other enrollment barriers, including child immunization and parent work requirements
- **Lack of transportation** to and from programs
- **Lack of awareness** among early care providers of both the definition of homelessness and the best ways to reach families

Data

Homelessness among Families with Children is on the Rise



16%

Increase in families staying in homeless shelters or visibility unsheltered in 2023, according to HUD

Babies

Are the age group at **greatest risk of eviction**, followed by children under the age of five, according to [research from Eviction Lab](#). About a quarter of Black babies and toddlers in rental households face the threat of eviction in a typical year

Infants, Toddlers, & Families Experiencing Homelessness

15.2%

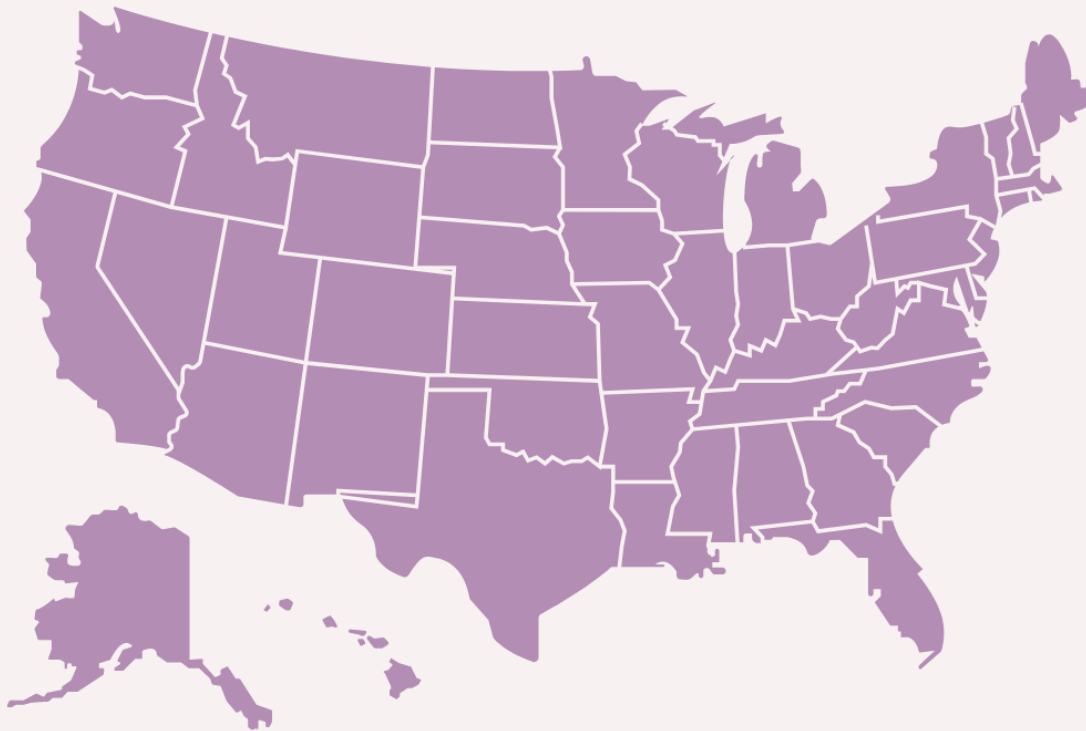
Of infants and toddlers live in crowded housing, which is known to jeopardize child development. 2.9% of babies and toddlers have moved three or more times since birth.

[State of Babies Yearbook 2023 \(Zero to Three\)](#)

Pregnancy and parenthood may increase the risk of youth homelessness

Young parents—especially those unmarried—had three times the risk of experiencing homelessness compared to non-parenting peers. This is **the second highest risk factor for young adult homelessness**, second only to lacking a high school diploma or GED

Young Children Experiencing Homelessness



Across 50 states, an estimated **600,000** children under age six experiencing homelessness.



21.5% of children under age six experiencing homelessness are currently identified and served by an early childhood program (EHS/HS, Home Visiting, LEA).



In California, **84,639** children under age six are experiencing homelessness, and only **29%** are served by an early childhood program.

Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness



Across 50 states, an estimated 364,390 infants and toddlers ages birth through three are experiencing homelessness.



Only 11% of infants/toddlers are currently identified and served by an early childhood program (EHS, Home Visiting, LEA).



That means 89% of infants, toddlers, and young children experiencing homelessness are not identified and/or enrolled in an early childhood program

California

The period of life from prenatal through age three is critical for physical and social-emotional development, but the experience of homelessness jeopardizes healthy growth and can have long-term consequences. Early childhood development programs can mitigate the impacts of homelessness on child development, and connect families to housing and services. These data profiles are intended to create greater awareness of the prevalence of infant and toddler homelessness, and gaps in access to early childhood development programs.

Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness in California



Total Population Birth Through Age Three: **1,685,996**



Estimated Total Population Birth Through Age Three Experiencing Homelessness: **55,187, or 3.27% of all infants and toddlers**

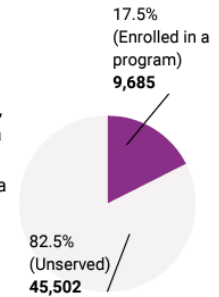


Total population Birth Through Age Three experiencing homelessness enrolled in a program: **9,685**

Only 1 in 6 infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness is enrolled in a program.



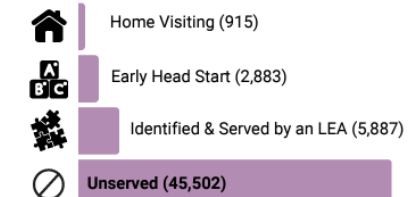
Among the 55,187 infants and toddlers identified, only 9,685, which accounts for a mere 17.5%, are currently enrolled in a program.



Prioritizing Children Experiencing Homelessness through State Policies

Automatic or streamlined eligibility for children experiencing homelessness?	YES
Priority for children experiencing homelessness to receive child care subsidies?	YES
Exemptions from work requirements for parents experiencing homelessness?	YES
Co-payments waived for parents experiencing homelessness?	NO
Exemption or grace period for children experiencing homelessness to submit eligibility/enrollment documentation?	30 Days
Grace period for children experiencing homelessness to meet immunization requirements?	30 Days
State laws to prioritize children experiencing homelessness for preschool?	NO

Estimated Total Population of Children Birth Through Age Three Experiencing Homelessness Enrolled in an Early Childhood Program:



Contact Information



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TONY THURMOND
State Superintendent
of Public Instruction

Homeless Education and Early Education

Karmina Barrales,
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California Department of Education



Early Education Programs (1)

- There are different names and types of public preschool programs. Here are some that are administered in California:
 - California State Preschool Programs
 - State-funded Early Education Programs
 - Federal Head Start
 - Federal Early Head Start



Early Education Programs (2)

- American Indian Early Childhood Education Programs
- State and Tribal Quality Improvement System
- Federal Title I Preschools
- State Alternative Payment Programs



The Law: McKinney-Vento (1)

- Originally passed in 1987
- Reauthorized in 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) which went into effect on October 1, 2016- definition
- Provides stability, access, and support for academic success for homeless children and youth, including preschool-aged children

The Law: McKinney-Vento (2)

- Under the 42 United States Code (U.S.C.) Section 11432(g)(6)(A), it states that homeless liaisons should identify preschool aged children experiencing homelessness through outreach and coordination activities with outside agencies.
- Coordinate with social service agencies, child development programs, early intervention programs, and other preschool programs (such as Head Start, State-funded preschool, etc.)



The Law: McKinney-Vento (3)

- Preschool programs are required to:
 - Enroll homeless children in their programs, even if the parent or guardian cannot provide the paperwork normally required such as immunizations, proof of residence, etc.
 - Offer comparable services, including transportation, to preschoolers who are homeless and collaborate these services with LEAs and other service providers



The Law: McKinney-Vento (4)

- Under ESSA, school of origin now includes preschool and school of origin refers to the school in which the homeless child was last enrolled.
- LEAs and preschool programs are required to continue the child's education in the school of origin for the duration of their homelessness.

Homeless Liaisons (1)

- All LEAs must designate a homeless liaison to assist homeless children and youth with identification, enrollment, accessibility, and success in school.
 - A list of all homeless liaisons can be found on the CDE Homeless Education web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>.

Homeless Liaisons (2)

- LEA liaisons must ensure that:
 - Homeless children and youth are identified including infants, toddlers, and preschool age children.
 - Access is provided for enrollment and retention
 - Families are informed of and receive educational opportunities and services
 - Children and youth who do not have immunizations are assisted

Homeless Liaisons (3)

- Ensure that educational rights are at each “parent area” within each early education program
- Public notice of educational rights should be posted in locations frequented by parents and guardians of such children and youth, including schools, shelters, libraries, and soup kitchens, in a form understandable to the parents and guardians.

Homeless Education Poster (1)



You can ENROLL in school!

Even if you have:

- Uncertain housing
- A temporary address
- No permanent physical address

You are guaranteed enrollment in school by the federal McKinney-Vento Act and California state law if you live:

- In a house or apartment with more than one family due to loss of housing or economic hardship
- With friends or family because you are a runaway or an unaccompanied youth
- In substandard housing (without electricity, water, or heat)
- In a shelter (family, domestic violence, or youth shelter or transitional living program)
- In a motel, hotel, or weekly rate housing
- In an abandoned building, in a car, at a campground, or on the streets

You can enroll in school immediately even without the documents normally required for enrollment, such as:

- Proof of residency
- Immunization records or other required health records
- School records
- Legal guardianship papers

Your child may:

- Participate fully in all school activities and programs for which he/she is eligible.
- Receive transportation to and from the school of origin if you request it.
- Continue to attend the school in which he/she was last enrolled even if you have moved away from that school's attendance area.
- Qualify automatically for school nutrition programs.

Your responsibilities are to:

- Make sure your child gets to school on time and ready to learn.
- Stay informed of school rules, regulations, and activities.
- Contact the homeless liaison for assistance in removing barriers to your child's education.
- Attend parent/teacher conferences, Back-to-School Nights, and other school-related activities.

- Posters must be posted in areas frequented by parents, guardians, and unaccompanied homeless youth, in a manner and form understandable to them and include the Homeless Liaison contact information.
- To find the homeless education poster visit our website at the link provided. <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/>

Homeless Education Poster (2)



Even if you have:

- Uncertain housing
- A temporary address
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You are guaranteed enrollment in school by the federal McKinney-Vento Act and California state law if you live:

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You can ENROLL in school!

- You can obtain free Spanish and English posters that will be mailed to you or use this as an opportunity to coordinate and collaborate!
- Visit the CDE Homeless Education Program page or contact us directly by email at HomelessED@cde.ca.gov.

Outreach Strategies (1)

These outreach strategies can be applied to staff members from both the LEA and the early education program. Working together would be beneficial to homeless children and youth and the implementation of this law.

- Initiate interagency communication and collaboration, together
- Build awareness by training family advocates



Outreach Strategies (2)

- Post notice of rights under EHCY in places that homeless families with young children frequent and in a manner that they can understand
 - One simple way to ensure that these posters are at each “parent area” within each early education program

Outreach Strategies (3)

- Incorporate questions on housing status on enrollment applications. Housing Questionnaire can be accessed at the CDE Resources for Homeless Children and Youths web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/>.
- Immediately enroll a child in an SEA- or LEA-run program, even if documentation is lacking
- Train early intervention staff, regional centers, and LEAs about homeless rights and provisions



Outreach Strategies (4)

- Ensure that families receive information about preschool programs such as, Head Start, Early Head Start, and state-funded preschool programs
- Identify all infant/toddler programs, both public and private, within the community
- Continuously connect with homeless families prior to enrollment to build the relationship

Outreach Strategies (5)

- Work with school personnel, including registrars, enrollment coordinators and liaisons, in identifying children under five years of age in the community
- Visit homeless shelters in your community to better gain awareness and reach out to the community
- Adjust program schedules to accommodate homeless families, particularly parents who work



Outreach Strategies (6)

- Coordinate and collaborate with the homeless liaison
- Make sure that the preschool programs are part of kindergarten transition and enrollment activities
- Be flexible with policies that may serve as a barrier such as enrollment, attendance, and parent participation
- Participate in various “events” such health fairs, job fairs, parent activities, etc.

Outreach Strategies (7)

- Include the homeless liaison's contact information on preschool applications as a resource for families without proof of address
- Work with
 - Shelters to refer families with young children
 - Medical outreach programs, especially in rural areas
 - Programs serving parenting homeless youth



Outreach Strategies (8)

- Be familiar and a part of the California Child Care Resource & Referral (R&R) Network.
- This is a coordinating entity that provides support, technical assistance, training, and a unified voice to the local R&Rs. For more information, please visit their web site at <https://rrnetwork.org/>

California Child Care Resource & Referral

N | E | T | W | O | R | K



Management Bulletin 18-04 (1)

- The Early Learning and Care Division released Management Bulletin (MB) 18-04 in July 2018 which can be accessed on the CDE web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/mb1804.asp>.
- It provided the changes to the definition of homeless children and youth.
- These directives are in alignment with the Child Care and Development Block Grant regulations.

Management Bulletin

18-04 (2)

- The MB also provided detailed information regarding the requirements for the determination of both need and eligibility for homeless children and youth.
- Families may be enrolled before all documentation of need and eligibility is received, including immunization records.

Reflections and Next Steps

1. Improve identification and access through intentional outreach
2. Identify and address barriers
3. Provide professional development and resources



Collaboration is key!

- Identify who you can collaborate with locally - including early childhood programs and community partners.
- Bring partners together to connect, raise awareness, and share resources.
- Learn about how your programs can work together to increase outreach.

BUILDING BRIDGES Supporting Children Experiencing Homelessness

Target Audience: Early Childhood Administrators, Program Directors, TK, and Early Learning Programs/Providers.

Connecting Early Childhood & TK-12 Systems

Hosted by CPIN Region 4 and California Homeless Education Technical Assistance Center (HETAC)

CPIN Symposium
March 22, 2024
8:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Pleasant Hill, CA

Attendees will learn about:

- The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and education rights for children experiencing homelessness.
- Hidden trends of homelessness and the developmental impact on infants and toddlers.
- Removing barriers for children experiencing homelessness to increase enrollment in early childhood programs.
- Ways to collaborate and services to support families.

For more information about this NO COST event, contact cpin@cccocoe.k12.ca.us.

Register at bit.ly/3HefVFQ

Logos: CPIN, HETAC, LPC, Contra Costa County Office of Education



Diving Deep Into Implementation

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Start the Conversation



[Event Padlet with Resources](#)

Who we collaborated with:

- County Office of Education Early Education Programs (CPIN and ECE)
- Local Childcare and Development Planning Council

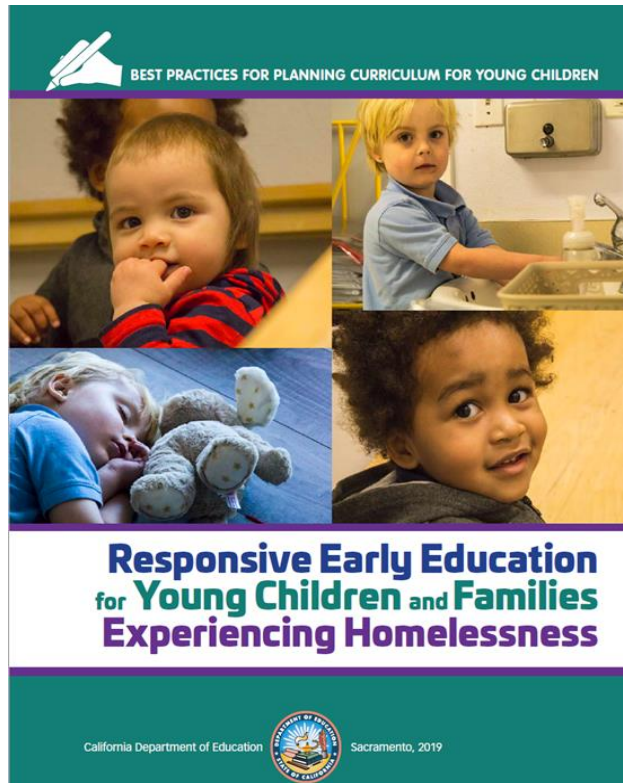
Who we invited:

- LEA Homeless Education Liaisons
- District early childhood program administrators and staff

Who else attended:

- First 5
- Homeless service providers
- Head Start
- Child care providers

Connecting to Early Childhood



[Download this resource](#)

Chapter 1: Definitions and Policies Related to Homelessness

Chapter 2: Learning about the Families with Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

Chapter 3: The Impact of Homelessness on Young Children's Development and Learning

Chapter 4: The Important Role of Early Childhood Programs in Supporting Children Experiencing Homelessness

Chapter 5: Responsive Relationships and Partnership with Families

The final sections of the book include a conclusion, glossary, references, and a list of recommended children's books.



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HETAC Resources

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[HOME](#) > [RESOURCES](#) > [EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION](#)

www.hetac.org

EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION FOR YOUNG CHILDREN EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

HETAC RESOURCES

[California Early Care and Education Resource Guide](#) ([in English](#) | [en español](#))

This HETAC resource outlines key California early care and education (ECE) programs and shares information with California homeless liaisons and service providers on how to connect families experiencing homelessness to needed ECE supports.

[Local Early Care and Education Programs: A Resource for Families in Transition](#) ([in English](#) | [en español](#))

This resource outlines key California early care and education (ECE) programs and shares information with parents and caregivers about how to help their children access needed ECE supports. This resource is customizable to the local community context and is intended to serve as a companion resource to the HETAC's California Early Care and Education Resource Guide (above).

[Supporting Young Children Experiencing Homelessness: Identification and Access to Early Childhood Programs](#) (archived webinar)

This February 2023 HETAC webinar, offered in partnership with SchoolHouse Connection, provides an overview of early childhood programs and access strategies for families with young children experiencing homelessness. Panelists also share best practices for identifying young children at the district and county levels and establishing local partnerships to better support California's earliest learners.

OTHER RESOURCES

[Head Start California: County Office of Education Homeless Liaison and Head Start Agency Contact List](#)



Diving Deep Into Implementation

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HETAC – Outreach Resource



Local Early Care and Education Programs: A Resource for Families in Transition

Early care and education (ECE) programs in California help provide care, education and food for young children. Learn more below about what ECE programs may be available in your area and how to access them.

What ECE Programs Are Available?

There are many kinds of ECE Programs.

- **Locations:** Programs can be offered in different settings, like schools, preschools, child care centers, and family child care homes.
- **Ages:** Programs in California serve children birth to age 12. Some programs serve youth over age 12 if they have special needs.
- **Special needs:** Some programs help children who have unique or special needs.
- **Cost:** Many programs in California are available to families at low or no cost.

How Can My Family Get Connected to ECE Programs?

Learn more about ECE programs in your area and how to enroll your child:

- **Child Care Resource & Referral agencies (CCR&Rs)** help families find child care according to their needs based on things like language spoken by the family and program hours of operation, location, and price range. Many families may be eligible for low- or no-cost child care. The name of the CCR&R for <<name of city or county>> is <<insert name of local CCR&R>>. You can contact them at <<insert contact information (phone, email, web address, etc.)>>. You also can call 1-800-543-7793 to start your search.

- **Head Start and Early Head Start programs** are free and help children learn so they are ready to start school. These programs serve families with children birth through five years old. Visit <https://bit.ly/hs-ehs> and enter your zip code or visit <https://bit.ly/hs-contacts> and look for your county to find a program near you. You also can contact your CCR&R above for help finding a local Head Start or Early Head Start program.
- **Early Start programs** help infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Visit <https://bit.ly/early-family> to find the Early Start center near you or contact the Early Start Baby Line at 800-515-2229 or earlystart@dds.ca.gov.
- **Other helpful local ECE contacts** include <<add information here, as appropriate>>.

Where Can I Learn More?

- Learn about the different kinds of ECE program settings (child care center, school, home, etc.) and getting help with child care costs at <https://bit.ly/program-types>.
- Learn about what to look for when choosing child care and other helpful topics at <https://bit.ly/care-vids>.
- Learn about the free Text4Baby service that sends helpful texts about your baby's development at <https://www.text4baby.org/>.
- Learn about how to support your child's growth and learning in their first five years at <https://www.first5california.com/>.

Every school district in California also has a local liaison who helps families who are in unstable housing. You can contact the local liaison for the <<name of LEA>> to ask for help with the needs of your infants, toddlers, and school-age children.

	<<Add local liaison contact information here Local liaison name Local educational agency (LEA) name Local liaison phone number Local liaison email address Homeless education program webpage address>>
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For More Information and Resources

- California Department of Education, Homeless Education website: <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>
- SchoolHouse Connection (Early Childhood Resources): <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/earlychildhood/>
- National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), Preschool and Early Childhood: <https://nche.ed.gov/preschool-early-childhood/>
- NCHE brief: Early Care and Education for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Early-Care-and-Education-for-Young-Children-Experiencing-Homelessness.pdf>
- The Head Start Early Childhood Learning and Knowledge Center <https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/>





Questions?



Contact the Presenters

- CDE Homeless Education web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>
- CDE Homeless Education Program's Toll-free Number is 1-866-856-8214 and the general email is HomelessED@cde.ca.gov
- Sarah Vrabic, SchoolHouse Connection, sarah@schoolhouseconnection.org

