

**American Rescue Plan Act
Education for Homeless Children & Youth
(ARP-HCY)**

State Plan

September 7, 2021

Submitted by:

Dr. LaTricia Townsend, Director of Federal Program Monitoring & Support
Lisa Phillips, State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring>

<https://hepnc.uncg.edu>

<https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring/homeless-program-monitoring>

Overview

Pandemic Impact on Students Experiencing Homelessness

Homeless liaisons across the state of NC have faced several issues with identifying and serving students experiencing homelessness during the pandemic. Unfortunately, due to remote and blending learning environments and students not being face to face in the building, not all students experiencing homelessness were properly identified this past school year. In turn, there is now a spike in student identification across the state as students are beginning to report back to school. Additionally, community partners and services providers at the local level are working beyond their capacity to assist those in need. With some partners, there are limited or potentially no resources to help families right now. In many communities in the state, providers have had to close their doors and will not resume operations, thus causing a gap in meeting the current needs of those experiencing homelessness.

With the rise in homelessness, coupled with the reduction of resources, the needs of our students are growing. School districts across NC are in a position to address the impact of the pandemic and find ways to help students and families beyond the classroom doors. As educators, we will need to concentrate on the loss of learning, the trauma, the social and emotional needs students now face. To successfully do this, increasing human resources at the local and state level is necessary. There will be a need for timely and relevant services as well innovative approaches for providing wrap-around services to students. We will need to expand on and make modifications to the current delivery of services to specifically deal with further challenges that have, and are evolving, from the pandemic with students and families, including how we also meet the needs of educators.

While recognizing the impact that the pandemic has had and continues to have on our students, we also need to understand that the road to recovery will expand beyond many of our students' academic careers. Children who are currently zero to five years old and have not been enrolled in an early learning program will enter our schools with a set of needs that we have not seen before. Homeless liaisons, school district personnel, parents, local partners, and the state office will all need to work together to identify, plan, and address the impacts of the pandemic. High school students will also need support to fill in the gaps of missed learning and develop the skills and knowledge necessary to prepare for transition into college, the workforce, or the military. The allocations listed below for the EHCY Program from the USDE will be critical to beginning the process for recovery and moving our students forward for academic success.

ARP - HCY I Total Allocation for NC \$5,894,156.00	ARP - HCY II Total Allocation for NC \$17,694,073.00
NC Awarded Funding: April 23, 2021	NC Application Accepted by USED: July 26, 2021
Allocations: Current Subgrant & Mini-grant Recipients USDE Recommendation Addendum Application	Allocations: Title I per-pupil formula and McKinney-Vento 2018- 2019SY Data
Recipients: 127 LEAs & Charter Schools <i>Includes one consortium of three LEAs</i>	EHCY State Plan: September 7, 2021

Input on the EHCY State Plan

Input regarding the impact of the pandemic on students, education, services, allotting ARP funding to districts and community-based organizations, and activities needed to meet the needs of students at the local and state level was requested from the following groups through meetings, consultations, and focus groups:

- NCHPEP staff and Leadership Team
- McKinney-Vento subgrantees
- Homeless liaisons without subgrant funding
- Homeless liaisons in LEAs, charters, lab, ISD, and virtual schools

- Collaborative partners at the state and national level
- State Coordinators – Ad Hoc Groups, Cohorts, Mentors
- Others

Information collected contributed to the development of the NC Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) State Plan. Questions regarding the state plan should be addressed with Mrs. Lisa Phillips, the State Coordinator for the program, and Dr. LaTricia Townsend, Director of Federal Program Monitoring Support with the NC Department of Public Instruction.

ARP Homeless I

Explain how the SEA has used or will use up to 25 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless I for State-level activities to provide training, technical assistance, capacity-building, and engagement at the State and LEA levels, including support to LEAs to increase access to summer programming in 2021. This must include how the SEA has supported LEAs to plan for and provide wrap-around services, in collaboration with State and local agencies for immediate needs this spring 2021, and how it will support LEAs for the school year 2021-2022. In addition, this should include the extent to which the SEA has or plans to build capacity in LEAs that have not received an EHCY subgrant in the past in order to ensure that these LEAs are well-prepared to utilize the funds provided in ARP Homeless II.

Technical Assistance, Training, Capacity Building & Engagement in LEAs

The SEA utilized the set-aside from the annual state allocation to provide the technical assistance, coordination with grantees, capacity-building and the engagement at the state and with LEAs, including our charter schools, rather than utilizing the SEA set-aside from ARP Homeless I funding for activities in spring and summer 2021. Since the pandemic's start, the North Carolina Homeless Education Program (NCHPEP) has collaborated at the local, state, and national levels to learn about challenges districts and programs were facing and identifying services that would support vulnerable populations in the educational setting. More recently, consultations and specific tasks have been conducted with homeless liaisons in LEAs, charters, labs, ISD, and virtual schools to help navigate the recent funding provided to the state. Through regional sessions, tier level meetings with current subgrantees, meetings with those that receive no subgrant funds, hosting weekly platforms for discussions on the ARP, and for liaisons to have dedicated time to learn from one another about what is working since the onset of the pandemic, have been conducted routinely. The identification of innovative wrap-around services in sessions has been documented, collected, then provided to homeless liaisons across the state for consideration in their programs and utilized in developing this plan. In addition, the recent consultation meetings focused on funding, NC state plan and inclusion of homelessness, and the specifics of the EHCY state plan, along with other information regarding the ARP for stakeholder input. For each session, wrap-around services and summer programming that districts have hosted on-site and virtually have also been discussed.

Capacity Building & Engagement in SEA

Across the divisions at the Department of Public Instruction (DPI) and with state partners such as the NC Coalition to End Homelessness, including the Continuum of Care and Balance of State, the Department of Health and Human Services, Department of Child Development and Early Education (DCDEE), NC Head Start, Yay Babies, the Governor's Council on Homeless Programs, the State Covid Response Committee, Higher Education Institutes, Juvenile Justice, and with national partners that included the US Department of Education (USDE), National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE), National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY), School House Connection (SHC), State Coordinators, and other stakeholder convenings have been consistently conducted and will continue to address the academic, emotional, and social needs of students experiencing homelessness. Discussing the array of wrap-around services and collaboration efforts will support NCHPEP and local programs with decision

making for program implementation and compliance with the law while reducing duplication efforts, identifying areas to leverage funding, expediting programs, and enhancing services to promote student development.

State-Level Activities (25%)

Trauma-Informed-Care, Rights & Awareness

All homeless liaisons in the state were provided materials on Trauma-Informed Care, including a study book. The resources were to be reviewed in preparation for training that will be offered in the fall. The NC educational rights posters, awareness posters, and information flashcards to increase awareness in their school community were also sent out. In addition, the NCHPEP website was updated frequently with resources that the homeless liaisons and other school officials could utilize during the pandemic.

Needs Assessments, Evaluations, Community Reviews & Collaboration

The homeless liaisons in districts that are receiving subgrant and mini-grant funding are approved for ARP-I funding. Each has been requested to conduct reviews of their current needs assessments and update them accordingly. An addendum form will be provided for liaisons to conduct community program and services reviews and include it with their need's assessments. The addendum will require all ARP funding activities, student data, including attendance, academics, and discipline concerns, and have a focus on community-based organizations and partnerships with those who are well-positioned to identify students experiencing homelessness. In addition, the addendum will need to address underserved populations and the action steps to working with them. The information will be submitted to the State Coordinator's Office for review. Feedback will be provided to liaisons along with needed technical assistance. Support for working on the addendum to the needs assessment and follow-up will occur during annual compliance forums, the Learning Institute, Program Quality Reviews (monitoring), the end-of-year reporting, and the annual funding meeting that recipients must attend.

For districts and charter schools who do not receive ARP I or other subgrant funding, they will be provided with an additional form to support their current action plans that will capture the activities they will conduct to support students impacted by the pandemic, include concerns with student data, specifically on attendance, academics, discipline, etc., and action steps to take. In addition, partnerships with community programs and service providers will be requested in their plans, including how the identification of needs and resources that the liaison and their partners feel the Office of the State Coordinator can provide support in. This additional form will be provided in work sessions with homeless liaisons who will also be required to bring to the meeting at least one partner from community-based organizations that are well-positioned to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness in historically underserved populations such as rural children and youth, Tribal children and youth, students of color, children, and youth with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students experiencing homelessness. The purpose of the meeting will be to review the additional requirements and determine how they will connect students and their families to educationally related support and wrap-around services. Additionally, at least one other partner from either the school setting or another community-based organization that focuses on early education and or higher education will be encouraged to participate in the work sessions. Those who attend the workshop will then apply for a mini-grant to support the agreed-upon projects. Funding from remaining ARP I and or II Funding will be utilized to award grants.

Tracking Documents

An additional tracking form for documenting students identified and the services provided at the local level was established by the State Coordinator. After the end of year reporting, some homeless liaisons received a comprehensive attestation document to complete. The form requested specific reasoning on significant changes in identification rates and steps for improving identification to serve students impacted by the pandemic. For subgrantees, the end-of-year reporting captured successes, challenges, and needs liaisons faced from the pandemic. For non-subgrantees, surveys were conducted to capture the equivalent information. The responses will be used in future professional development, training, monitoring, data analysis, and other technical assistance that the Office of the State Coordinator offers to liaisons for preparing to use ARP funding with or without subgrant funds, identify appropriate wrap-around services, and meeting student needs in the school year.

System Protocols

A systemwide protocol to support local homeless liaisons and their programs to ensure families and students experiencing homelessness could access nutritional food, PBT cards or apply for them, obtain school supplies, connectivity devices, and other immediate community services were established. In addition, to ensure consistency in the state and provide support, communications by email, Listservs, websites, text messages, emails, posters, community flyers, the media, home visit door tags, and in the meal-pack newsworthy notes provided from mobile meal sites included valuable resources for educators, families, and students on services, resources, and summer school programs, including extended care for young children experiencing homelessness.

House Bill & Summer Learning

North Carolina passed House Bill 82, also called the Summer Learning Choice for Families bill. This bill required all school districts to offer at least six weeks of in-person summer school for K-12 students who had fallen behind during the COVID-19 pandemic. NCHPEP provided technical assistance to district liaisons on working at the local level to ensure that identified students with academic needs were included in this summer program. Districts provided transportation to identified students to their school of origin for the summer program; ARP I funding will be utilized for the excess cost of transporting students. Some districts extended the summer program for longer than the required six weeks to their identified students. Collaboration efforts were made between districts to ensure students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in the summer program either on-site or virtually. These summer programs required social-emotional activities as well as physical activities. Districts extended social workers hours for the summer to support identified students and their families at the end of school and before the 2022SY began. Educational summer packets were provided in districts to all identified students, especially those who could not attend the summer program. There were a few districts that extended their program to PK students as well. Several districts used funds to provide additional programs outside of the House Bill 82 program. These programs offered academic enrichment activities as well as wrap-around service supports to students. As students begin a new year, extended school day services will be offered and paid for with ARP funding. This will include before and after school, during teacher workdays, holidays, and other scheduled breaks and into the summer of 2022. Collaboration and services provided have been with and will continue at local libraries, shelters, the Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, University/College Campuses, Foundations, Churches, and other community-based organizations that are well-positioned to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness with historically underserved populations such as rural children and youth, Tribal children and youth, students of color, children and youth with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students experiencing homelessness, and connect them to educationally-related support and wrap-around services.

Program Specialist for Moving Forward

To ensure compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act, the ARP I and II funding, and to be able to provide quality technical assistance to district homeless liaisons across the state, these funds will be beneficial to increasing human resources at the state level. North Carolina has over 320 homeless liaisons, with the state office only

having two full-time program specialists along with the State Coordinator implementing the McKinney-Vento Act and ensuring compliance throughout the state through trainings, professional development, monitoring, resource development, funding oversight, updating needs assessments to include action steps for working with students impacted by the pandemic, and other required tasks as prescribed in the law. The additional support in the NCHPEP would allow for there to be a more intentional focus on the highest needs across the state, focus on intensive and specific training needs, support homeless liaisons with the increase of student identification and demands from the pandemic, and conduct program quality reviews (monitoring) as required under the law. Thus, the Office of the State Coordinator will utilize no more than 25% of ARP funding to increase staffing that will support collaboration at the local and state level, provide training and professional development opportunities to homeless liaisons, and support districts in understanding the unique needs of students in transition, and how to serve them for academic success effectively. This would include services such as Social-Emotional Learning (SEL) and Trauma-Informed Care (TIC). In addition, the program needs assessments, sustainability of the local programs and services beyond funding, best practices, data analysis, and reporting of ARP will be priority areas. With funding an **additional Program Specialist of ARP**, other activities that will be conducted include:

- Expanding on **Annual Learning Institutes for LEAs and Charter Schools** for professional development to homeless liaisons and homeless support staff. Specific sessions will be provided to address pandemic needs in the school setting, with the local homeless education program, and with students. Topics and resources offered on Social and Emotional Learning, Trauma-Informed Care, and other related resources.
- Actively supporting and establishing a **state-level convening of homeless partners** to share challenges and successes, develop MOUs, identify new, efficient ways of serving all the needs of students who experience homelessness in NC due to the pandemic.
- Work with homeless state partners to provide regional round tables for homeless liaisons and their local partners, such as early education, higher education, housing, etc., to address county-specific challenges and needs. Develop MOU's, action plans, discuss pertinent topics to the region that will increase communication while also discovering innovative ways to meet the needs of students and their families that are experiencing homelessness in the region.
- Provide the new homeless liaison training sessions specific to the pandemic, including academic services and funding to ensure liaisons are effectively implementing and managing the homeless education program.
- Provide **professional development funding to homeless liaisons, including those in charter schools, that do not receive funding** to attend homeless education conferences approved by the State Coordinator for the EHCY, such as the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) Conference, Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Conference, etc. In addition, those receiving funding would be required to share relevant information learned about homelessness, the pandemic, and best practices for serving students experiencing homelessness.
- **Expansion of the NCHPEP website** to include additional resources for liaisons on ARP funding, strategies, resources, sample forms, training, and data.
- Create **safety, educational, and disaster backpacks** for children and youth affected by and that are continuing to be faced with challenges from the pandemic and future pandemics that may impact that during the school year:

- **Safety backpacks:** Cellular phones to stay connected to school staff to promote continuous attendance and full school participation. Flashlight, blanket, emergency food packet (or a food voucher), and other items identified by the liaisons would be included.
- **Educational backpacks:** Early education packets to support learning, classroom assignments, and homework during times of transition between housing locations. Items might include connectivity devices for completing assignments. Basic school supplies such as pencils, pens, and paper. Resource document with common homework help, resources.
- **Disaster backpacks:** Students affected by the pandemic and a natural disaster would be eligible to receive a bag filled with needed academic and safety supplies. Items may include hygiene items, flashlight, blanket, emergency food packets/vouchers, Cellular phone, connectivity devices, and other items identified by the local liaison.

Provide how the SEA has used or will use their funds for State-level activities to provide support to LEAs to increase access to summer programming and plan for and provide wrap-around services for summer 2021, in collaboration with State and local agencies and other community-based organizations.

State-Level Activities to Support Summer Programming

While NCHPEP provided extensive support to districts through technical assistance and coordination with grantees, it was not funded through ARP Homeless I funding. As mentioned above, North Carolina passed House Bill 82, also called the Summer Learning Choice for Families bill. This bill required all school districts to offer at least six weeks of in-person summer school for K-12 students who had fallen behind during the COVID-19 pandemic. NCHPEP guided district liaisons on working at the local level to ensure that identified students with academic needs were included in this summer program. Districts were allowed to use McKinney-Vento funds to provide transportation to identified students to their school of origin for the summer program. Some districts extended the summer program for longer than the required six weeks to their identified students. Collaboration efforts were made between districts to ensure students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in the summer program. These summer programs required social-emotional activities as well as physical activities. Districts extended social workers hours for the summer to provide support for identified students and their families. Educational summer packets were provided to all identified students in some districts, especially those who could not attend the summer program. There were a couple of districts that extended their program to PK students. Several districts used funds to provide additional programs outside of the House Bill 82 program. These programs offered academic enrichment activities as well as wrap-around service supports to students.

Planning Wrap-Around Services & Collaborations

NCHPEP provided support to districts through technical assistance and coordination with grantees however, it was not funded through ARP funding. NCHPEP supported LEAs and charter schools by providing opportunities to hear from others on summer programs and coordinating site visits (or virtual, if needed) with districts that have already successfully implemented summer programs. Homeless liaisons across the state who requested assistance with ideas regarding setting up and implementing a summer program were provided with ideas, contact information for successful districts, and offered coordination on visiting current LEA summer programs if desired. Local programs consisted of LEA and community programs, such as the YMCA and the Boys & Girls Club. All traditional LEAs in NC were required to provide summer school options for all students. Hence, liaisons worked in tandem with local LEA staff to ensure that all McKinney-Vento students could fully participate in the required state offerings of summer school.

NCHPEP provided information and referrals through Listserv, email, and conversation with liaisons on community agency offerings of assistance for items such as food, physical and mental health needs, trauma, childcare, housing, etc. NCHPEP provided technical assistance as requested in developing strategies for serving identified students, as

needed, throughout the summer with referrals for needed items such as housing, food, childcare so parents could work. Vendors on the state approval list worked with NCHPEP to provide materials to needed programs to support the unmet needs of students experiencing homelessness. Discussions are continuing for serving homeless students beyond the school day during our weekly platforms, round table discussions, small group sessions, subgrant tier meetings, and program quality reviews.

While the Charter Schools in NC were not required to provide summer school to students, any charter school student experiencing homelessness who needed summer academic assistance was allowed to participate in the summer school program offered by the neighboring LEA. In addition, multiple homeless liaisons across the state also provided a specific McKinney-Vento summer program that focused on academics, SEL, etc., that ran in tandem with the LEA required summer school program.

Share how the SEA has used or will use at least 75 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless I for distribution to LEAs in accordance with all requirements of EHCY. This must include the extent to which the SEA has or will use funds to supplement existing EHCY subgrants to allow for more rapid fund distribution to address the needs of students experiencing homelessness and the extent to which the SEA analyzed and reviewed where there are significant concentrations of students and families experiencing homelessness across the State (including in LEAs that are not existing EHCY subgrantees), and how it has or will ensure that supports from ARP Homeless I can urgently reach them.

Distribution of Funding (75%)

As recommended by the U.S. Department of Education, the funds were made available to all current subgrant recipients by means of a successful submission of an addendum application to the current subgrant funding award. The amount awarded was based on the funding amounts that LEAs currently receive, which was doubled. Prior to receiving the ARP I funds in the state, a mini-grant was developed by the State Coordinator and offered to all the LEAs and charters which were not receiving a current subgrant and wanted to develop their program (new charters in particular and or expand on their current homeless education programs. Thus, the State Coordinator included those who applied for the mini-grant, the opportunity also to receive ARP I funding. Notices were provided in a Request for an Addendum to homeless liaisons during the annual compliance meetings, posted on the NCHPEP website, included in the Office of Charter School newsletter, and sent out on the Title I the Superintendent Listserv. Emails, phone calls, and face-to-face meetings occurred when appropriate. The State Coordinator provided the addendum application to the current subgrant and mini-grant recipients. Eight weeks were provided to complete the addendum application, and weekly reminders were provided. The application process was simplified by providing drop boxes for choosing allowable activities, with an option to provide specific details on activities. All choices were consistent with the permissible activities with ARP I funding and the requirements under the McKinney-Vento Act. It was stated in the addendum application that while an emphasis on the identification, enrollment, retention and educational success of children and youth experiencing homelessness is always a priority, the additional funding needs to expand on meeting the urgent needs that have evolved from the pandemic. Activities were to include, but are not be limited to, academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs, including trauma-informed care training, increasing the capacity of the local homeless education program by hiring or increasing staff time, and other activities that support the academic success of students experiencing homelessness. The State Coordinator held information sessions with homeless liaisons on applying and using the ARP-I funds and provided technical assistance to support program decisions for the funding. In addition, the addendum applications were reviewed for allowable activities, which are listed below.

Allowable Activities Requested

- Tutorial services beyond the school day before and after school, in locations in the community like at shelters, libraries, and community centers
- Locating and contracting a safe place beyond the school day to work on class assignments, homework, and other projects
- Extend transportation services that provide access to attend educational opportunities that enhance full engagement in school, including academic enrichment activities

- Increase credit accrual opportunities to maximize academic success and graduation rates
- Prioritizing in-person learning opportunities and expand on current funding as needed
- Ensure students have access to connectivity, devices, and other technology to be connected to their schools, teachers, bus drivers, counselors, liaisons, and mentors
- Trauma-informed care, SEL, etc. for staff and the students
- For our unaccompanied homeless youth to have access to nutritional programs beyond the school day and shelter
- Increased staff time to provide training, technical assistance, support capacity-building, and engagement for the increased identification of and improve the academic success of students experiencing homelessness
- Hire a systems navigator for early education
- Hire a systems navigator for higher education
- Provide support for summer learning programs, including transportation needs
- Provide support for before and after learning programs, including transportation needs
- Contracting with community facilities to provide tutorial services, to provide space for student supplies, to complete homework or projects, receive tutoring or a quiet space with therapeutic supports
- Purchase PPE items and personal care items
- Providing wrap-around services; the services could be provided in collaboration with community-based organizations
- Contract with community-based organizations that support identify youth from historically underserved populations, including rural children and youth, Tribal children and youth, students of color, children and youth with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students, to connect them to educationally related supports and wrap-around services with local educational agencies

NCHPEP analyzed statewide data to determine areas of specific concentrations of students identified as homeless. Review with homeless liaisons, including the subgrantees, of patterns in their data for under-identification and to assess needs of students impacted by the pandemic were conducted. This resulted in a total of 125 addendum applications being submitted by LEAs, charter schools, including Lab, ISD, and the virtual schools, with one consortium making up a total of three LEAs. The addendum applications were approved for funding by the State Coordinator then by the State Board of Education. The amount of funding to be awarded is 77% of the ARP I allocation to the state impacting 82.72% of the students identified in NC schools during the 2018-2019SY.

ARP Homeless II

Provide how the SEA will use up to 25 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless II for State-level activities to provide training, technical assistance, capacity-building, and engagement at the State and LEA levels, including support to LEAs to plan for and provide wrap-around services, in collaboration with State and local agencies, for the school year 2021-2022.

State-Level Activities (25%)

Funds provided by ARP II would allow the NCHPEP to provide expansion on time and of activities that are addressed in the **Program Specialist of ARP** position mentioned in the ARP Homeless I section of this document. This includes but is not limited to providing meaningful professional development, training, technical assistance, and engagement of stakeholders at the local and state level. With the addition of an **Early Education Systems Navigator and a Higher Education Systems Navigator** in the Office of the State Coordinator, we will be able to be proactive in addressing the needs of children experiencing homelessness before the start of school as well as support students who transition to college, the military or workforce. Each position is described below. The positions will continue beyond the ARP I and II funding. They will be sustained through the annual state allocation earmarked for a state-level activity for the EHCY.

Early Education Systems Navigator (EESN)

The Office of the State Coordinator will hire an **Early Education System Navigator (EESN)**. As research has demonstrated, early childhood programs can change the trajectory of a child's life. Yet homelessness creates unique barriers to accessing and participating in early childhood programs. The US Department of Education's Early Childhood Homelessness state profiles revealed that, on average, only ten percent of young children experiencing homelessness are enrolled in Early Head Start, Head Start, or preschool programs. Increasing activities to identify and enroll families with young children will be critical to address the delays, needs, and impacts the pandemic has had on them. The EESN would be responsible for collaboration at the state level, working directly with Title I Preschool and the Head Start Office to address the needs of children impacted by homelessness. This would allow for collaboration throughout the state to share resources, provide professional development, and develop MOUs with one another. The EESN would work directly with homeless liaisons to ensure young children are identified and enrolled across the state. Professional development on making identifications and working with young children experiencing homelessness would be provided. The EESN would provide a system of resources for available services and rights of early learners experiencing homelessness. The EESN would work with district liaisons to create a local resource guide as well. The EESN would create guides to be shared with liaisons on preparing for the transition to kindergarten. A summer program template for early learners will be developed so that there is no learning loss. Additional, academic tutoring and age-appropriate packets, virtual or recorded lessons, and appropriate books for young learners will be made available for children experiencing homelessness. The EESN would use state data to assess needs, identify areas with higher identifications of early learners experiencing homelessness, and support homeless liaison's needs assessments. The program would focus on additional resources for ensuring slots are available in all Head Start, LEA preschool programs, and local childcare programs for young children experiencing homelessness. The launching of the early education and Head Start referral app will be a start to this process. Finally, the EESN would also collaborate with Migrant Education, Exceptional Children, Title I, transportation, and others to create or expand upon programs and transitions for these early learners.

Higher Education Systems Navigator (HESN)

Students experiencing homelessness face many barriers in their pursuit of higher education. The pandemic has created even more obstacles to their education, health, and safety. Postsecondary attainment is increasingly necessary to move out of poverty and homelessness and live a healthy, productive life. Yet, youth experiencing homelessness face barriers in transitioning from secondary to postsecondary education, as well as barriers to financial aid, college retention, and college completion. Adding the Higher Education Systems Navigator (HESN) position would help remove these barriers for students as they make this next step in their lives. The HESN would work with LEAs to ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth were being identified and provided a FAFSA verification letter if they are Seniors. More extensive training would be provided to school counselors on carrying out their responsibilities under the McKinney-Vento Act, which states that school counselors must advise, prepare, and improve the readiness of homeless youth for college. 20 U.S.C. §6313(c)(3)(C)(ii). The HESN would work collaboratively with Higher Education Institutes, the NC State Education Assistance Authority, the College Foundation of NC, and national partners. This collaboration would allow for training to be developed and shared at the K-12 and Higher Education levels. The development of MOUs would be a priority in work as well. Collaboration on a resource guide for the student to use as they enter college could be developed. The HESN would work with local liaisons to create end-of-year surveys for seniors to verify their college plans. This would allow for a transition plan to be implemented to remove barriers that may occur over the summer. Senior safety packets would be provided with first aid supplies, hygiene supplies, bedding, and other items deemed useful. Collaboration with Migrant Education, Exceptional Children, CTE, Title I, and others will support the new position and help expand these students' programs and transition times. Students will have the opportunity to be assigned a mentor, participate in internships with businesses to learn skills and knowledge of a trait to determine interests in advancing their education beyond high school, the workforce, or entering the military. Students who are identified and are preparing

for college will have the opportunity to visit college campuses to learn about campus life, including the process for applying to the college, the financial aid process, housing options, and the campus services and resources that will be available to them. Additionally, students who are in high school and participate in an internship opportunity that offers a certification will be assisted to obtain the certificate as part of their learning and develop the tools needed to enter that field upon graduation. Finally, unaccompanied homeless youth of school age that has dropped out of school and want to reconnect to education will be provided assistance and support in the process. This would include collaboration with school staff such as counselors, school social workers, etc.

Certification / Licensure

McKinney-Vento students are a vulnerable population with unique needs. Therefore, those serving these students should have education in the helping and educational profession to meet all the unique needs of students experiencing homelessness effectively; thus, the State Coordinator will utilize funding to explore the process of and create a certification or add-on licensure for homeless education that homeless liaisons can obtain. Since NCHPEP is housed at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro and with the National Center for Homeless Education. It is aligned with the right resources to make this project happen. Additionally, the certification would increase the knowledge and success of our homeless liaisons across the state. Our homeless liaisons hold a variety of titles in the districts, so adding the credentials to current licenses, CEUs, and other learning programs will lead to a higher standard for work and expertise of our liaisons which hold a variety of educational backgrounds and many times inherit the job, or it is an add on to other responsibilities. The establishment of a certification or licensure add-on will also support stability in homeless education. The cost for liaisons to participate in the program and receive certification will be fully covered by the ARP funding available for state-level activities.

Trauma-Informed-Care (T-I-C)

Student homelessness correlates with other problems which have increased during the pandemic. Thus, the NCHPEP will provide Trauma-Informed training for their leadership team members. The training will be comprehensive and ongoing. A certification of the T-I-C will be provided to participants to become trainers in T-I-C thus, training other district liaisons on the foundations of T-I-C and the skills needed to work successfully with identified children. In addition, this training will continue to provide the skills necessary for the homeless liaison to share with others who work with students experiencing homelessness in their LEAs. Despite immense barriers, students experiencing homelessness value education and the experience of being in school. Therefore, at the state and local levels, we will need liaisons to be well equipped with all the tools possible to provide this opportunity for them.

Pandemic & Future Disaster Readiness

North Carolina experiences natural disasters such as tornadoes, wildfires, flooding, earthquakes, and especially hurricanes. ARP II funding will be used to create a disaster plan manual for district liaisons focusing on the pandemic and when multiple disasters strike. Plans and systems of work used by districts in the Eastern part of NC during more recent hurricanes will provide a foundation for this manual. The homeless liaisons with pandemic and disaster experience will support the project as it is being developed. The manual will provide guidance on identifying students, communications, tracking students, transportation, and using local, state, and national data to ensure success before, during, and beyond a pandemic. Templates for forms will be created. Having this manual in place will help ensure that districts are prepared to serve student's critical needs during a time of any emergency.

Mentor-Mentee Program

The State Coordinator will create a mentor-mentee program for our homeless liaisons throughout the state. This program would connect seasoned homeless liaisons, particularly from the Leadership Team, to mentor new liaisons. While NCHPEP supports the needs of liaisons being new and having someone who is in a similar role to talk with about the program, to process a case, discuss compliance issues or have to review a report or attend a meeting provides support to a program in education that is limited in resources and supports at the local level. The mentor-mentee program would provide a stipend to mentors for the time spent working with their mentees and in their regions of the state. During this time, mentors would do regular check-ins by phone, email, site visits, meet with them quarterly to provide professional support, share resources, and offer encouragement, direction, and growth. Focus areas would be in the priority areas of homeless education that include data collection, funding, program development, including needs assessments, monitoring, and training requirements.

Describe how the SEA will use at least 75 percent of funds awarded under ARP Homeless II for distribution to LEAs in accordance with the final requirements. This must include a description of how the SEA will distribute funds in accordance with the required formula to address the needs of students experiencing homelessness and the extent to which the SEA has encouraged or will encourage the creation of consortia for those LEAs that may not meet the required minimum formula amount.

The ARP II funds will be available in CCIP. The formula is based on the 50% in proportion to the number of homeless children and youth identified by each LEA relative to all LEAs in the State, using the greater number of homeless children and youth in either the 2018-2019SY or in the 2019-2020SY in each LEA. In addition, NCHPEP will encourage districts with funding levels below the threshold to participate in a consortium to receive funds and to work with one another on projects, trainings, community partnerships, including with charter schools in county seats, to reduce duplication, enhance communication, remove barriers to students, and work towards student recovery from the pandemic.

Distribution of Funding (75%)

The State Coordinator's Office has conducted consultations with homeless liaisons to obtain feedback on the program and student needs, discuss funding opportunities with ARP, address concerns for meeting students' needs, and gather information on ARP I and II's intended uses funding.

Grant Process

- Develop Allotment Policy details and obtain State Board of Education approval
- Review current requirements of funding and the existing platform for the McKinney-Vento subgrant process to develop questions for ARP II
- Develop a training session for homeless liaisons about ARP II funding, including allowabilitites, applying in CCIP, and reporting requirements
- Set up registration for training sessions
- Listserv notice released on upcoming information sessions/registration
- Inform finance of funding process and requirements
- Training documents and information posted to the website
- Information sessions for liaisons and Title I Directors that are regionally based and are face to face meetings and recorded virtual sessions for later review
- Launch CCIP application process
- Provide information and technical assistance to liaisons

- Develop an FAQ, address concerns during the application process
- Review applications for alignment with local plans, allowable activities, and services; feedback and approvals provided by the State Coordinator and allocations through CCIP and notification to Superintendent of each applicant
- Approval of all budgets completed; GAN letters provided to approved applicants
- Monitoring
- End of Year Reports
- Provide ongoing support to grantees through technical assistance calls, meetings, etc.

Formula for Funding

- Title I set-aside dollars, along with student identification counts from the 2018-2019SY or 2019-2020SY, will be used to formulate the award amounts for the competition.
- All LEAs and charter schools will be encouraged to apply for funding to increase awareness and identification rates within their districts.

Encouraging Consortia's

Currently, NC has one consortium made up of three LEAs with the 2020-2023SY McKinney-Vento subgrants. Discussion of forming a consortium takes place with all LEAs and charter schools during meetings about available funding as well as with those who demonstrate an interest in applying for federal funding but who fall short of the minimum student count for the lowest funding tier. Encouragement and information will continue to be provided in all discussions and meetings with the LEAs and charter schools to form consortia when possible.

To enhance consortia's, the state will continue to provide those schools with low numbers of students identified as homeless the opportunity to expand their programs by working with others. Lower funding amounts will be provided to districts to come together to provide training, offer programs and services to students experiencing homelessness by collaborating internally and externally. This may include student peer groups focused on developing social and emotional skills, student peer groups working on projects for the community, student peer groups having a safe place beyond school hours to go such as with the Boys & Girls Clubs, YMCA, Scout Programs, or other programs that promote as well as support student development and their interest in areas such as but not limited to sports and athletics, performing arts, music, science, history, culinary arts, mechanical, medical, etc. All costs for working with and supporting students would be grant-funded. Districts working with community programs will be strongly encouraged to work with those that are well-positioned to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness in historically underserved populations such as rural children and youth, Tribal children and youth, students of color, children, and youth with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students experiencing homelessness, and connect them to educationally-related support and wrap-around services.

ARP Homeless I & ARP Homeless II

Explain how the SEA will ensure that ARP-HCY supplements the support and services provided with ARP ESSER funds and does not replace the use of ARP ESSER funds to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness.

NCHPEP will provide technical assistance during the funding application process and the funding period through individual calls, Tuesday Talks, New Homeless Liaison Training, Compliance Forums, and Program Quality Reviews (monitoring). Additional support will be provided in the annual funding meetings offered by the State Coordinator, feedback from yearly reporting, and reviewing local data to support liaisons in understanding identification and supporting the needs of students experiencing homelessness. The array of technical assistance will ensure that LEAs

understand that funds may be used for any of the sixteen activities uses permitted by the McKinney-Vento Act and those in ARP. In addition, technical assistance will be provided on analyzing the needs of students for determining how to use funds for other extraordinary or emergency assistance needs and to ensure costs are reasonable, necessary and supplement the support and services while aligning with allowable uses. In making available ARP-I funding, NCHPEP has already begun to work with liaisons across the state to educate them on the differences between the two funding sources (ESSER and ARP). For example, supplemental transportation costs and other expenses needed to support student learning and to expand on the summer program were conducted depending on the LEA. The expansion of staff time for outreach, identification, and to address student needs that were impacted by the pandemic occurred in LEAs as needed as well.

Ensuring Supplements

- Individual technical assistance through calls, emails, on-site visits, and virtual meetings
- Group discussions and trainings during the quarterly Leadership Team meeting, Tuesday Talks, New Homeless Liaison training for LEAs, New Homeless Liaison training for Charters, regional compliance forums, regional round table discussions, and New Title I Directors Institute

Continuing Guidance

- Annual NCHPEP Learning Institute for LEAs
- Annual NCHPEP Learning Institute for Charters
- Annual NCHPEP subgrantee funding meeting
- Program Quality Reviews (monitoring) through individual and small group
- Guidance tools will be created and made available to all homeless liaisons through dissemination through meetings, email, Listservs, and posting to the NCHPEP website

The extent to which the SEA will use its State-level activities funds to award subgrants or contracts to community-based organizations that are well-positioned to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness in historically underserved populations such as rural children and youth, Tribal children and youth, students of color, children and youth with disabilities, English learners, LGBTQ+ youth, and pregnant, parenting, or caregiving students experiencing homelessness, and connect them to educationally-related support and wrap-around services.

Contracts to Community-Based Organizations (C-B-O)

With the additional position of an Early Education System Navigator, state funds will support the collaborative efforts with the Title I preschool office and local programs, the Head Start State Office and local programs, the NC Child Care Resource and Referral (CCR&R), NC Pre-K, higher education institutes, Yay Babies of NC, and other early education Community-Based Organizations (C-B-O) partners that the State Coordinator identifies. These partners in education are well established to identify students experiencing homelessness in historically underserved populations, such as rural communities and those in communities of color, which will connect them to educationally-related support and wrap-around services. Working collaboratively will allow information with families to be shared to meet all the students' needs and resources to be leveraged and not duplicated. In addition, this position will open the door for more opportunities to collaborate with Migrant Education, Exceptional Children, Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council for Children (ICC), and mental health services, and others supporting and working with early learners. The State Coordinator's Office will collect data, assess what is learned by the efforts conducted with ARP funding for these initiatives, and utilize the findings to continue services beyond the ARP funding.

Navigating the transition of the next chapter after high school can be confusing to all students but mainly a student experiencing homelessness. The Higher Education System Navigator would collaborate with programs at the local, state, and national level, including the Post-Secondary Institutes in the state, to ensure the barriers for NC students wanting to attend college are removed. The opportunity to work together to ensure successful transitions in these

vulnerable populations would be valuable to all participating programs. Thus, Community Based Organizations (C-B-O) will also play a significant part in these efforts and will be included. The C-O-B partners will be programs that provide shelter and services to homeless youth, those that offer mentorship, academic, and life skills in educational settings and provide meaningful experiences to help aspire student achievement in their academic and personal goals. Opportunities for an LEA and C-B-O to work together to review the academic, personal interests, social, and emotional needs, and other supports of students experiencing homelessness, especially those impacted by the pandemic will occur. The collection and review of data to develop action plans will be required for partnerships and the contracting of services. The State Coordinator's Office will conduct an annual report to be completed by any contracts awarded. The assessment of results will determine the TA that NCHPEP may need to provide. The State Coordinator will develop long-term action steps to continue successful initiatives beyond the ARP funding, which will be critical for supporting our students and their success in school.

Connecting to Educationally Related Support & Wrap-Around Services

The State Coordinator participates in weekly COVID-19 State Leadership meetings and monthly Balance of State meetings with the NC Coalition to End Homelessness (NCCEH). In addition, a series of collaborative sessions to provide opportunities for homeless liaisons and those working in the housing services agencies to develop meaningful relationships in serving students and families experiencing homelessness is conducted annually during state-level meetings. One outcome of focus will be the development of a centralized identification/referral protocol whereby housing agencies can make referrals to liaisons and vice versa. The NCHPEP will pilot a Head Start app that will provide referrals for homeless liaisons to connect to local early education programs that have openings, waiting lists, and homeless students on a priority list.

Provide how the SEA will encourage LEAs to award contracts to community-based organizations to help identify and support historically underserved populations experiencing homelessness.

Encouraging LEAs to Award Community-Based Organizations

LEAs will be provided training and technical assistance on external collaborations by the State Coordinator's Office before applying for ARP II funding in CCIP. A prompt application process requires collaborative efforts with community-based organizations, especially those with underserved populations. Training at the time of applying and after funding is provided will include guidance on working with local organizations that are well established in the community and support liaisons with their knowledge of families and unaccompanied homeless youth that may be experiencing homelessness. Discussion of the advantages of such partnerships with liaisons during individual technical assistance (calls/emails/virtual & in-person meetings) as well as through group meetings (Learning Institute, regional compliance forums, regional round tables) will occur, and the coordination efforts will be documented to share across the state. Finally, the State Coordinator's office will work with state partners to host a regionally and or statewide networking opportunity. As a result, all homeless service providers become familiar with local services and available and appropriate agencies for supporting their identified students and families. The development of Action Plans, MOU's, and communication tools will be strongly encouraged. Examples and best practices will be posted to the NCHPEP website. Further recommendations to liaisons are listed below.

Collaborations Recommendations

- Working collaboratively with local Boys and Girls Club, YMCAs, or community centers to provide tutors, service HUBS, family nights, awareness events, supplies, and technical assistance centers
- Creating homework/study rooms in local homeless shelters

- Presenting on homeless education to the local CoC, DHHS, DCDEE, Colleges & University SPOCs, LGBTQ + youth centers, 211 operators, Human Trafficking Office, North Carolina State Education Assistance Authority, churches, and others
- Develop information packets to meet the needs of internal programs such as EC, migrant education, foster care, child nutrition, athletics, etc.

Working with families and communities is beneficial for all school districts. These funds can provide resources on how parents and community agencies can effectively support their students in school success. Providing parents with resources and strategies for children’s learning will help the child and enable the parent in their role.

Submitted by:

Lisa Phillips, State Coordinator for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth
NC Department of Public Instruction
Office of the Deputy State Superintendent of Innovation
Federal Program Monitoring and Support Division
336-315-7491 or 336-543-4285

lisa.phillips@dpi.nc.gov

Website: <https://hepnc.uncg.edu/> or <https://www.dpi.nc.gov/districts-schools/federal-program-monitoring/homeless-program-monitoring>