

The
Intersection of
Homelessness
and Domestic
Violence –
A Young Child
Perspective

A Presentation for Home
Visiting and Family
Support Programs In
Pennsylvania

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McKinney-Vento Definition: Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence

- **Fixed:** Securely placed; not subject to change or fluctuation
 - A fixed residence is one that is stationary, permanent, and not subject to change.
- **Regular:** Normal, standard
 - A regular residence is one which is used on a regular (i.e. nightly) basis.
- **Adequate:** Sufficient for a specific requirement; lawfully and reasonably sufficient
 - An adequate residence is one that is sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.

NOTE: Children's eligibility is determined by the Education subtitle of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act 42 U.S. Code § 11434a (2) which goes on to say that the definition includes.....



McKinney-Vento Definition*: Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence

***Education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act 42 U.S. Code § 11434a (2)**

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason
- Living in hotels, motels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Abandoned in hospitals
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Primary nighttime residence is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings

Keisha and Jonell.....



“Recently, I was working with an Early Head Start program when some of the teachers expressed their concern for eight-month-old Jonell, who had recently begun crying more than was typical for him. After his crying had been going on for two weeks, the staff decided to meet with Jonell’s mom, Keisha, to learn whether she had noticed any changes that might help explain what was distressing Jonell. Keisha shared that, due to family violence, she and Jonell had recently moved in with friends. Money was tight, and they had little food where she was staying. Because she was so focused on finding a job, Keisha had not been able to apply for any assistance yet. Keisha was still breastfeeding Jonell; however, she was not eating and could tell Jonell was unsettled whenever she tried to feed him. What the Early Head Start staff in conversation with Keisha discovered together was that Keisha was not producing enough milk, and Jonell was hungry. Both Keisha and Jonell were not getting the nutrition they needed..”

Decision-Making Tool to Determine a Family's Homeless Eligibility

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/decision-making-tool-family-homeless.pdf>

Is the family sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason?

Is the family living in a motel, hotel, trailer park, or camping ground due to lack of alternative accommodations?

Is the family living in an emergency or transitional shelter?

Is the family living in a nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designated for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings?

Is the family living in a car, park, public space, abandoned building, substandard housing, bus, or train station, or similar setting?

Is the family living in a situation that is not considered "fixed"?

Is the family living in a situation that is not considered "regular"?

Is the family living in a situation that is not considered "adequate"?

Training Module Series:

<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/apoyo-y-bienestar-familiar/articulo/supporting-children-families-experiencing-homelessness>

Rethinking Impact from the Perspective of the Young Child – Safety Considerations

- Staying together vs. separation
- The most basic needs for food, water, medications
- Hygiene supplies, diapers, laundry
- Refrigeration, kitchen and bathroom access
- Safe space, utilities, toxins, potable water, noise, stair guards



<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/HOUSING-CHILDPROOFING-SAFETY-CHECKLIST.pdf>

Rethinking Impact from the Perspective of the Young Child – Safety Considerations, cont'd

- Size of household, overcrowding
- Special needs, assistive devices, any special accommodations
- Safe sleep, adequate sleeping arrangements
- Safe people, abuse, neglect, substances, weapons
- Access to quality early care and learning
- Social support networks



<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/HOUSING-CHILDPROOFING-SAFETY-CHECKLIST.pdf>



Homelessness in the early years has serious negative effects on health and development

- **BEFORE BIRTH**: Homelessness during pregnancy exacerbates barriers and inequities to access to prenatal care.
- **INFANTS**: Homelessness during infancy interferes with safe sleep environments.
- **TODDLERS**: Homelessness during toddlerhood limits opportunities for movement and makes it difficult to monitor for developmental delays.
- **PRESCHOOLERS**: Homelessness during the preschool years makes it hard to keep books, crayons, and other learning items handy.

<https://www.pakeys.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Homelessness-in-the-early-years-has-serious-negative-effects-on-health-and-development.pdf>

Homelessness in the early years has serious negative effects on social emotional development and mental health

- **BEFORE BIRTH**: Homelessness during pregnancy exposes parents to trauma and emotional stress which directly impacts fetal development.
- **INFANTS**: Homelessness during infancy interrupts responsiveness of parent-infant relationships needed for healthy attachment.
- **TODDLERS**: Homelessness during toddlerhood prevents the regularity and predictability needed for mastery of self and immediate surroundings.
- **PRESCHOOLERS**: Homelessness during the preschool years fosters fear and uncertainty which hinders learning and is often misunderstood creating further isolation.

<https://www.pakeys.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Homelessness-in-the-early-years-has-serious-negative-effects-on-social-emotional-development-and-mental-health.-1.pdf>



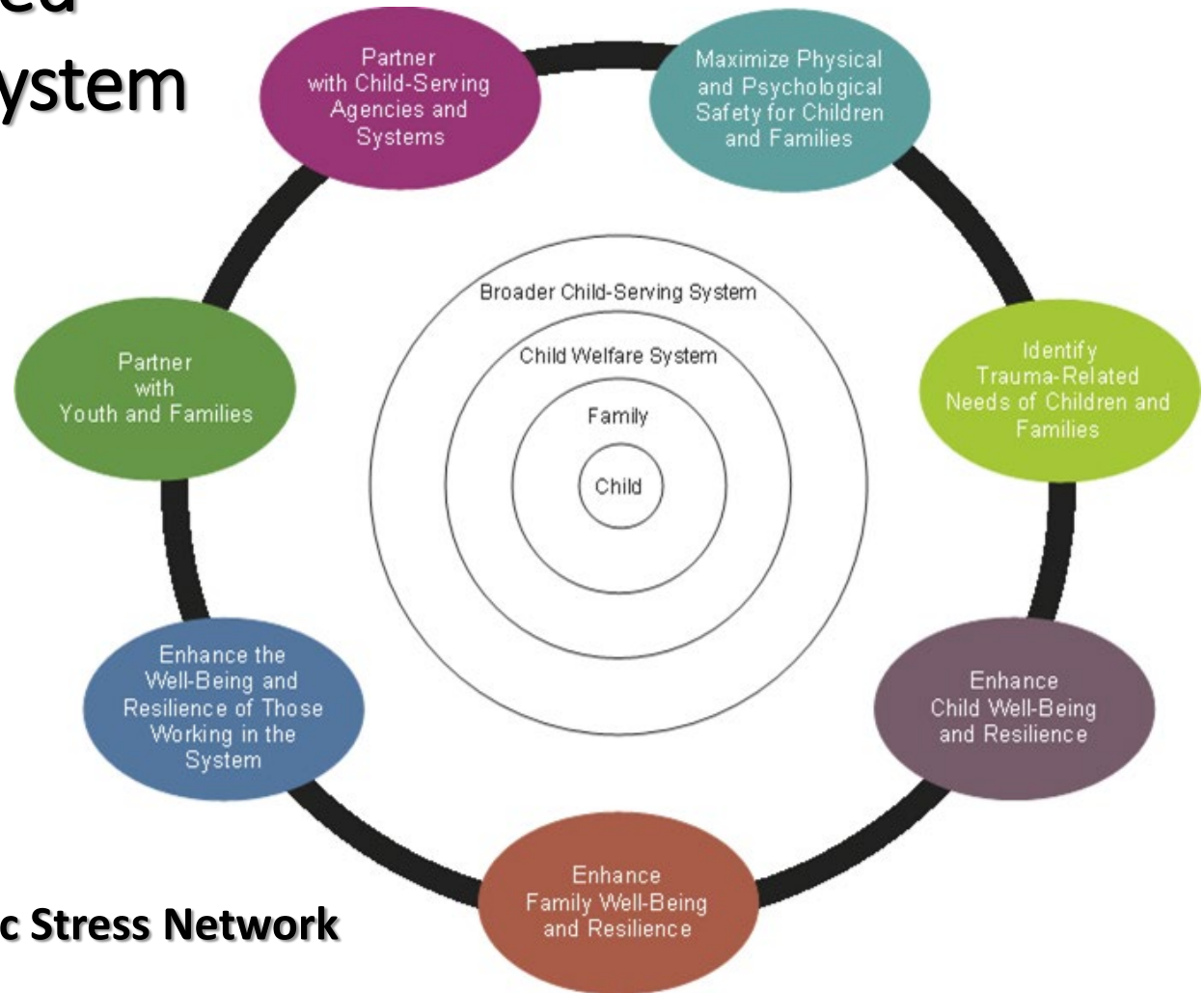
High Quality Trauma Informed



The challenges presented by homelessness during the early years are particularly urgent to address. *“While becoming homeless is potentially traumatizing for people of any age, it is important to recognize that, when young children experience trauma, there is a relatively short window in their developmental process to address the trauma before it becomes a serious problem that affects them as adults.”*

Source: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (July 31, 2019). Child Homelessness: A Growing Crisis. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. <https://www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/child-homelessness-growing-crisis>

Essential Elements of a Trauma-Informed Child-Serving System



National Child Traumatic Stress Network