United States Interagency Council on Homelessness

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STRENGTHENING PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN EDUCATION AND HOMELESSNESS SERVICES

It's 1990. I'm in line behind my friend Maggie to pay for lunch in our high school cafeteria. I subtly drop back a couple of people so she doesn't see me give my lunch number and drop a dime into the lunch

lady's hand. If Maggie paid attention to detail, she'd know I was on free and reduced lunch. And I didn't want that.

Fast forward six years. I'm in a different line - waiting to walk across the stage at Tulane University to receive my diploma. Two years later, I'd walk across a different stage at Vanderbilt University to receive my M.A. I was a proud graduate, and I was ready to take on the job market.

Since that time, I have been fortunate to experience continued gainful employment and financial stability, which I attribute largely to my education. Research backs this up.

- Youth with less than a high school diploma or GED **have a 346% higher risk** of experiencing homelessness than youth with at least a high school degree.

- The unemployment rate for someone with less than a high school diploma **is almost three times** that of someone with a bachelor's degree.

- The weekly income of someone with a bachelor's degree **is more than double**that of someone with less than a high school diploma, with **these income trends**holding true over the course of one's lifetime.

- In **no state, metropolitan area, or county** can a full-time minimum-wage worker afford a modest two-bedroom rental home.

The power of education to transform individual lives, and its value as a precursor to stable and gainful employment, must inform our efforts at all levels to prevent and end homelessness.

So Now What?

With its comprehensive reach across urban, suburban, and rural communities alike, the education system can play a pivotal role in preventing experiences of homelessness, providing critical school-based supports to young people during experiences of homelessness, and equipping people to exit homelessness to stable, affordable

housing. To make sure we build the strongest possible partnerships between our homelessness services and education system (PreK, K-12, and post-secondary), we should ask ourselves the following questions. Are we:

- Elevating the role education can play in ending homelessness, thinking in terms of both prevention and intervention?

- Intentionally building partnerships between schools and other systems working with families and youth experiencing homelessness?

- Leveraging every available resource – public and private; federal, state, and local; targeted and non-targeted assistance – to its fullest to serve children and youth experiencing homelessness, and support their educational success?

- Seeking to innovate in how we serve and youth experiencing homelessness through prevention, diversion, housing, service interventions, and targeting of flexible funds?

- Being aspirational for young people, believing that they are capable of graduating from high school and continuing to post-secondary education despite their current circumstances, and equipping them with the information and support they need to progress?

Some communities have developed strong partnerships between their schools and their homelessness services systems. For instance, some have **developed Memorandums Of Understanding agreements to share data across systems while protecting client privacy**. In others, school district homelessness education liaisons sit on CoC Boards. And still others are **targeting rental assistance to college students without stable housing**. But there is much more that can be done. HUD's **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YDHP)** holds promise for yielding innovative pathways to effective partnership between housing providers, schools, and other community stakeholders. Over the next several years, NCHE will be providing technical assistance to YHDP sites across the country to support them in implementing their site's education goals. Specific areas of focus may include:

- Building cross-systems relationships as a foundation to intentional partnership

- Sharing and analyzing cross-systems data for program planning and implementation

- Identifying youth experiencing homelessness across housing and education systems

- Targeting youth identified as experiencing homelessness by schools for housing and services interventions

- Supporting youth's educational goals through credit recovery, dropout prevention, college preparation and readiness, and higher education transition and degree completion assistance

- Engaging schools in the development of a comprehensive and youth-friendly local coordinated entry process

- Engaging schools to ensure a comprehensive and **effective local Point-in-Time count**

- Partnering with Child Care and Development Fund providers and Head Start programs to prioritize children experiencing homelessness for services

- Considering innovative, education-focused uses of flexible funding

   Lessons learned from this work will be shared broadly, providing models for other communities looking to strengthen cross-sector partnerships in their coordinated community response to prevent and end homelessness.