

School and Community Partnerships: Together We Can!



Wisconsin Homeless Education Conference
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Share your name, district/organization, and favorite Fall activity in the chat!

Meet Your Presenter



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Founder and Principal

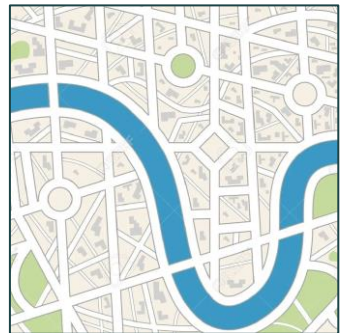
Pearl Strategies

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Today's Roadmap

- Partnership requirements under the law
- School-community partnership strategies “starter pack”
- School-community partnership panel





School-Community Partnerships: Requirements and Strategies

Why Partnerships?

- Multiple federal statutes include **requirements for cross-systems partnership**, coordination, and referrals, including
 - McKinney-Vento Act (schools)
 - Child Care and Development Block Grant Act (child care subsidies)
 - Head Start Act (Early Head Start/Head Start programs)
 - HEARTH Act (the homeless response system)
 - Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (runaway and homeless youth providers)
- School-community partnerships are a focus of American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funds



Why Partnerships?

- Human services systems often are stretched to capacity and operate in silos
- And yet...no single system can meet all the needs of students and families experiencing homelessness
- Gaps between systems create challenges for program staff and can lead to children, youth, and families not getting the help they need

Safe and Stable
Housing



Education and
Employment



Permanent
Connections



Wellbeing



What Makes a Strong Partnership?

- Strong school-community partnerships are
 - **Mutually beneficial**, with all partners receiving a return on their investment of engagement in partnership work
 - **Systematic**, implemented via reliable, consistent, organized practices that are communicated across all levels of partner organizations
 - **Stable**, remaining strong even as partner leadership and staff change over time
 - **Responsive and growing**, addressing the ongoing and emerging needs of partners and the students and families they serve



Share in the chat: What else makes a strong partnership?

The 4-Step “Partnership Starter Pack”

1. Reach out
2. Listen to your partners and focus on areas of mutual benefit
3. Target touchpoints that can build early momentum
4. Continue to engage and invest



The 4-Step “Partnership Starter Pack”

Step 1: Reach out

- Reach out and make contact with your partners across the aisle
 - Engage partners early so they can provide input “before the cake is fully baked”
 - Develop a “partner inventory” with contact information organized by tabs; “crowdsource” by setting it up as a shared and editable Google sheet
- Share about your work and ask your partners to share about theirs
 - Share about each system’s focus, desired outcomes, population(s) served, strengths, and challenges
 - Look for common goals and ways partners can help each other address challenges



The 4-Step “Partnership Starter Pack”

Step 2: Listen to your partners and focus on efforts with mutual benefit

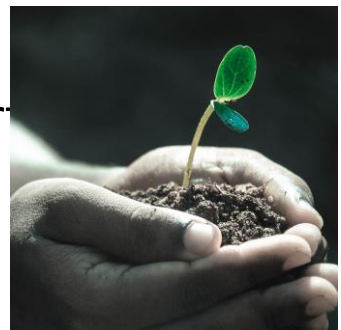
- Build a partnership where each partner receives a return on their investment of time and resources
 - Focus on “give and take” across partner goals and challenges
 - Seek to add value to the work of all partners
- Move from abstract discussion to concrete action steps
 - Move from abstract to concrete to ensure progress towards shared goals
 - Identify and pursue concrete outcomes from partnership efforts to demonstrate a return on investment



The 4-Step “Partnership Starter Pack”

Step 3: Target touchpoints that can build early momentum

- Focus first on “low-hanging fruit” (goals that may be achieved with relatively limited effort)
 - “Don’t let the perfect be the enemy of the good”
 - Early “wins” help build trust, shared ownership of the work, and a sense of progress
- Over time, take on more complex issues
 - Leverage the momentum from early wins to take on challenges that require more effort but yield greater impact



The 4-Step “Partnership Starter Pack”

Step 4: Continue to engage and invest

- Establish ongoing communication with your partners across the aisle
 - Scheduling a regular check-in time with key partners to share updates and assess the effectiveness of joint efforts
 - Consider setting up a Google group for broader partner groups to facilitate the sharing of information and calendar appointments
- Discuss emerging issues and consider additional needed action
 - Adjust course over time as the partnership grows and new issues emerge



Areas of Focus

Areas of focus for partner work may include

- Needs-sensing (particularly in early conversations)
- Identifying children, youth, and families at risk of and experiencing homelessness across systems
- Connecting children, youth, and families to services across system partners (cross-system referrals)
- Targeting system resources to children, youth, and families
- Delivering coordinated and comprehensive services across systems
- Staying informed about new legislation, opportunities, funding streams, etc.
- Maintaining a connected and active cross-systems partner network

 **Share in the chat: What have you focused on in school-community partnerships?**

Navigating Different Definitions

- YHDP stakeholders are likely to engage with partners who approach homelessness work from a different angle, including
 - Using a different definition of *homelessness*
 - Focusing on a particular area of need (housing, education, employment, mental health, behavioral health, etc.)
- While these “systems culture differences” may create challenges, they can be navigated successfully with intentionality and good will
- For more information and recommended strategies, download NCHE’s [*Navigating Definitions of Homelessness in the YHDP Context*](#)



**Questions?
Comments?**



Partnerships Panel

Meet Our Panelists



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Questions for Our Panelists

1. Please tell us a little bit about your school district.
2. Who are your district's key community partners? What are you partnering on together?
3. What is working well in your school-community partnerships? How have services to students and families improved? Where have you run into challenges?
4. What recommended do's and don'ts do you have for developing and maintaining strong school-community partnerships?



**Questions?
Comments?**

Thanks for Joining!



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