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 Guiding Every Student Higher 

2026 Federal Programs Institute

Rising Together Collaboration: Lessons from Homeless Liaisons in the Field

Vanessa Waters

McKinney-Vento Grant Manager

August 2026



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While the State supports your desire to maintain documentation of the meeting and what you learn, **please respect our decision to safeguard information** and do not attempt to use tools such as these. If you choose to use a tool such as this, the State will block that tool from the meeting.





Agenda

- Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program Purpose & Definition
- McKinney-Vento & Program Collaborations
- Federally Required Collaborations
- From the Field
 - Overton County Schools
 - Haywood County Schools
- Questions, Resources, & Contacts

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Program Purpose & Definition



Purpose of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

- The purpose of the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youths (EHCY) Program is to ensure that each homeless child or youth **has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education**, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths. 42 U.S.C.A. § 11431
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McKinney-Vento Definition of Homeless

- **Lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence:**
 - Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason;
 - Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
 - Living in emergency or transitional shelters, or are abandoned in hospitals;
 - Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings;
 - Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
 - Migratory children living in the above circumstances.

42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)

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Fixed, Regular, and Adequate

- **Fixed** (stationary, permanent, not subject to change)
- **Regular** (used on a nightly basis)
- **Adequate** (sufficient for meeting the physical, psychological, and safety needs typically met in a home environment)

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McKinney-Vento Act & Collaborations

TN

Department of
Education

McKinney-Vento Act Program Collaboration

- Collaboration is a means to expand the capacity of programs and agencies to provide services in a coordinated way. CB3
- Per the U.S. Department of Education's (ED's) [Non-Regulatory Guidance](#) (2018), Section V: Collaboration and Coordination are required under the McKinney-Vento Act. CB2
- Local education agencies (LEAs) must collaborate and coordinate specifically with:
 - Community-based organizations (CBOs), and
 - Entities and agencies (including Federal programs) that are required to identify and serve homeless children and youth and to coordinate with LEAs. 42 U.S.C. §11432 CB1

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Slide 9

- CB1** - Please add a citation to the "must" statements. I'm not finding this in the non-regulatory guidance document
:https://www.ed.gov/sites/ed/files/policy/elsec/leg/essa/160240ehcyguidance072716.pdf
Courtney Boykin, 2025-08-05T15:53:59.934
- CB1 0** [@Vanessa Waters]
Courtney Boykin, 2025-08-06T15:25:34.714
- CB2** Consider adding the title of this document and a link to it here, as well.
Courtney Boykin, 2025-08-05T15:54:29.889
- VW2 0** updated
Vanessa Waters, 2025-08-06T17:00:28.821
- CB3** [@Vanessa Waters] Should we remove "federal" to account for local and state programs? Is there a specific provision for just federal programs?
Courtney Boykin, 2026-07-30T14:00:48.387
- VW3 0** [@Courtney Boykin] do we have stare programs that require identify & serve? Also I added State
Vanessa Waters, 2026-07-30T15:37:04.687

Community-Based Organization

- Although the McKinney-Vento Act does not define community-based organizations, the Elementary and Secondary Education Act defines a CBO as “a public or private nonprofit organization of demonstrated effectiveness that:
 - Is representative of a community or significant segments of a community; and
 - Provides educational or related services to individuals in the community

20 U.S.C. § 7801(5)



Examples of Effective Community Collaborators, Part 1

Housing & Emergency Shelter

Partners: Metro Social Services, Local Housing Authorities, Family Shelters
Strategic Impact: Prioritizes families for rapid re-housing and immediate shelter access.
Regional Example: Office of Homeless Services
State Example: Tennessee Department of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services (TDMHSAS) Office of Housing & Homeless Services

Early Childhood Education

Partners: Head Start & Early Head Start, Local Preschool Programs
Strategic Impact: Expedited enrollment through categorical eligibility.
Regional Example: Local Head Start Centers
State Example: Tennessee Head Start Collaboration Office / Tennessee Head Start Association

Transportation & Logistics

Partners: Public Transit Authorities, District Transportation Teams
Strategic Impact: Maintains school-of-origin stability through transportation support.
Regional Example: WeGo Public Transit
State Example: Tennessee Department of Transportation (TDOT) or statewide transit coordination efforts supporting student transportation access



Examples of Effective Community Collaborators, Part 2

Juvenile Justice & Child Welfare

Partners: Juvenile Courts, Tennessee Department of Children's Services

Strategic Impact: Supports unaccompanied youth, credit transfers, and enrollment continuity.

Regional Example: Tennessee Department of Children's Services

State Example: Tennessee Department of Children's Services (DCS)

Community & Wrap-Around Services

Partners: Youth-Focused Nonprofits, Mental Health Clinics

Strategic Impact: Provides counseling, basic needs support, and FAFSA navigation.

Regional Examples: Oasis Center (Nashville); Hamilton County Families in Transition

State Example: Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth (TCCY) or Tennessee Alliance for Kids, Families & Communities

McKinney-Vento / Education Collaboration

Partners: Local School District Family Resource Centers, School Social Workers, Student Support Teams, Tennessee Department of Education

Strategic Impact: Supports early identification, immediate enrollment, school stability, and coordinated access to academic and community resources for students experiencing homelessness.

Regional Examples: Local School District Family Resource Centers

State Example: Tennessee Department of Education, Federal Programs & Oversight Division



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Federal Collaborations

Collaborations with Federally Funded Programs

ED's EHCY Program Non-Regulatory Guidance includes a wealth of information on collaboration and coordination between LEAs and federally funded homeless service providers.

- [Head Start Services](#)
- [Higher Education & Federal Student Aid](#)
- [U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service \(USDA\)](#)
- [Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program \(SNAP\)](#)
- [Runaway and Homeless Youth Act \(RHYA\)](#)
- [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development \(HUD\)](#)
- [Families First- Temporary Assistance for Needy Families \(TANF\)](#)

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Overton County Schools

Lesley Riddle
Federal Programs

Deanna Savage
OCS District Liaison



How To Get Started – Community Based Organization Involvement

- **Attend Community Meetings** such as Upper Cumberland Human Resource Agency, County Commission, and Local Chamber of Commerce
- **Learn About Community Concerns** to determine how you can engage in conversations and solutions
- **Prepare a Brief Introduction** to explain who you are and how you could be supportive and how your students can be supported
- **Engage Authentically** with a focus on conversations and community goals rather than your own agenda, while looking for common interests
- **Participate Actively** through supportive initiatives that are important to the organization, volunteer on committees, and contribute ideas when possible
- **Follow Up Promptly** with thank-you cards, social media posts, or through shared resources with helpful information



Wrap Around Support Provided Through Local Partnerships



Transportation Support

UCHRA provides safe transportation for students and families, removing barriers to work and school, provides funding to pay utility bills, and pays parents to attend and engage in EMPOWER sessions.



Food Security During Holidays

Local churches and youth groups fill and distribute food boxes and holiday meals to ensure family food security during breaks and non-instructional days.



Clothing and Essentials

Thrift stores supply clothing and shoes to students, supporting school clothing closets and family needs throughout the school year.



Career Readiness & Financial Aid

The Chamber of Commerce offers paid internships for high school-aged homeless students; businesses provide prepaid cards aiding families financially.



Family Wellness Programs

4-H Extension Office conducts cooking sessions, teaching healthy snack preparations, and provides kitchen tools and small equipment for families.



Wrap Around Support Provided Through Local Partnerships Continued



Immediate Food and Shelter Security

Local churches provide our families with food every Friday with fresh foods and provide shelter with hotel stays and monthly housing opportunities.



Hygiene Essentials

TTU Nursing Program packages 100 hygiene-filled bags for our families each semester.



Financial Supports

Local grocery store provides ten \$50 gift cards each fall and spring to assist families and business donors provide rolled quarters for elementary school teachers to help with snacks.



Attendance Incentive Programs

Dairy Queen and Sonic provide incentive cards to homeless students for improving attendance.



Food Backpack Program

Every school in the district has a church that partners to provide homeless/struggling families with weekend food supplies in gallon bags and placed in student backpacks.



Community Partners



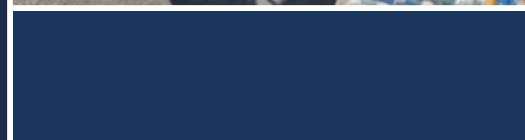
**JOIN US FOR A
BACK TO
SCHOOL
PARTY!**

JULY 19TH, 2026 3PM-7PM

LIVINGSTON CHURCH OF GOD
505 AIRPORT RD, LIVINGSTON, TN 38570

FREE FOOD, GAMES, AND SCHOOL SUPPLIES!!!!
WHILE SUPPLIES LAST

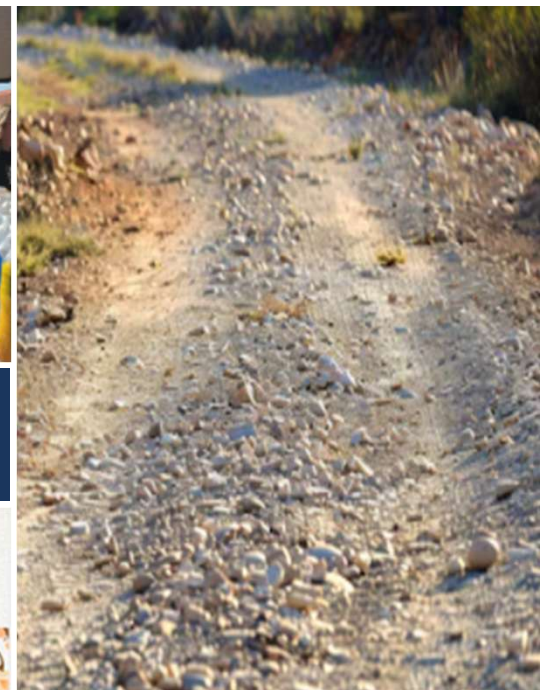
BOUNCE HOUSE, WATER GAMES, INSIDE GAMES
HAMBURGERS, HOTDOGS, DRINKS



Pick Up Times:
930am-130pm

please join us for a
**Thanksgiving
DINNER PICK UP**
FRIDAY, NOVEMBER 21ST

Provided by Overton County Schools
At 112 Bussell St. at the Reach Building,
Livingston, TN 38570
text or call Deanna Savage
at 931-397-0151



**Thank
YOU**

COMMUNITY PARTNERS HELP WITH THANKSGIVING

Deanna Savage
December 17, 2024

Overton County Schools would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to Netherland Church of Christ and Mt. Glead Community Church for their incredible generosity and contribution in helping to feed over 100 students and families during Thanksgiving. Your support is appreciated.

© Tennessee Department of Education

Why Community-Based Organizations Matter to Homeless Families

- Provide immediate basic needs
- Connect families to other resources
- Offer family-centered support services
- Improve access to family healthcare and mental services
- Support employment and financial stability
- Strengthen community connections
- Promote better outcomes for children

“A caring community can change a family’s story from surviving today to succeeding tomorrow.”



Overton County Contact Information

- Deanna Savage
 - Homeless Liaison
 - Overton County Schools
 - Office: (931) 823-1287
 - Email: dsavage@oc-sd.com

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Haywood County Schools

Beyond the Grant: How Community
Partnerships Meet the Need



map copyright 2005 digital-topo-maps.com

Haywood County Schools – At a Glance

- Rural West Tennessee School District
- 6 Schools – 3 Elementary, 1 Middle, 1 High School, and Alternative School
- Approximately 2,200 students
- 42% economically disadvantaged
- Child poverty in Haywood County 32.6% compared to the state's average of 18.7%





Why Community Partnerships Matter

- Educational support does not end every family crisis.
- Rural families have fewer emergency options.
- Trusted partners extend our reach.

Building Relationships Before a Crisis

- Show up before help is needed.
- Share redacted needs and service gaps.
- Learn each other's strengths.
- Stay connected across community tables.



A Network Built Around Family Needs

- Housing: Vision Haywood, West TN Homeless Solutions, Local Landlords Network
- Essentials: Mustard Seed, Carl Perkins Center, One Safe Place Family Justice Center, WRAP, Purple Pantry
- Flexible/Seasonal: Exchange Club, Civic Organizations, Teknor Apex, local churches, Ford Community Center





A Family Crisis Reaches the District

- Hospitalization disrupted the family
- Job loss and eviction followed
- The family doubled up with a relative
- Hospital social worker connected us



One Need – Many Partners



- School: supplies, clothing, and food.
- Housing: property search, deposits, rent, and utilities.
- Home: furniture and household essentials.

From Hospital Discharge to Housing Stability



- Immediately: school re-entry support began
- Together: community partners acted
- Within three weeks: permanent housing was secured
- The result: a safe home for recovery and learning.

Lessons From the Field

- Build relationships before requests.
- Make every request specific.
- Blend resources: funds, donations, and in-kind support.
- Protect privacy. Show gratitude. Report impact.



Haywood County Contact Information

- Twyla King
 - Homeless Liaison
 - Haywood County Schools
 - Office: (731)772-9613 ext. 4018
 - Email: Twyla.King@hcsk12.net

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Questions & Resources

Resources

- [ePlan > TDOE Resources > ESSA Information, Guidance, PPTs, & Webinars > Title IX, Part A Education for Homeless Children & Youth > McKinney-Vento Toolkit and Resources](#)
- [U.S. Department of Education: Identifying and Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness from Pre-School to Post-Secondary Ages](#)
- [Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program Non-Regulatory Guidance](#)
- [National Center for Homeless Education \(NCHE\):](#)
 - [NCHE Homeless Liaison Toolkit](#)
 - Homeless Education Helpline: (305)306-8495 or NCHE.helpline@safalpartners.com
- [SchoolHouse Connection](#)

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**A GUIDE TO EFFECTIVE
COLLABORATIONS WITH
COMMUNITY-BASED
ORGANIZATIONS TO SUPPORT
STUDENTS EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS**



National Center for Homeless Education
September 2023

Effective Collaborations with Community-Based Organizations

- [A Guide to Effective Collaborations with Community-Based Organizations to Support Students Experiencing Homelessness.](#)

**HOUSING AND EDUCATION
COLLABORATIONS TO SERVE
HOMELESS CHILDREN, YOUTH
AND FAMILIES**



National Center for Homeless Education
October 2023

Housing and Education Collaborations

- The brief provides basic information to help homeless service providers and homeless education staff understand each other's roles in supporting children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness, while offering tools to enhance collaboration among agencies.
- [Housing and Education Collaborations to Serve Homeless Children, Youth and Families](#)



National Center for Homeless Education
Supporting the Education of Children and
Youth Experiencing Homelessness
<http://nche.ed.gov>



BEST PRACTICES IN INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION BRIEF SERIES

Coordinated Entry Processes: Building Mutual Engagement between Schools and Continuums of Care

INTRODUCTION

This brief is designed for educators, including State Coordinators for Homeless Education and local homeless education liaisons, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) Continuum of Care Program recipients. It provides a brief overview of HUD **coordinated entry processes**, and suggests strategies for building local coordinated entry engagement and collaboration between schools and CoCs. Briefs on additional homeless education topics are available at <http://nche.ed.gov/briefs.php>.

FOR SCHOOLS: GET TO KNOW HUD HOMELESS ASSISTANCE PROGRAMS

The HUD-administered Continuum of Care (CoC) and Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) Programs provide funding to regional or local planning bodies to coordinate housing and service provision for individuals, families, and unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness. Key elements of CoC-funded

McKinney-Vento Definition of *Homeless** 42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)

The term "homeless children and youth"—

- A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and
- B. includes —
 - i. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;
 - ii. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...;
 - iii. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
 - iv. migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

* The above is the definition of *homeless* used by U.S. public schools. Schools and CoCs use different definitions of *homeless* for purposes of program administration, as established by each program's authorizing federal statute. See the Eligibility for Services sidebar on page 4 for more information.

Coordinated Entry Processes

- [This brief](#) is designed for educators, including State Coordinators for Homeless Education and local homeless education liaisons, and U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) CoC Program recipients. It provides a brief overview of HUD coordinated entry processes and suggests strategies for building local coordinated entry engagement and collaboration between schools and CoCs.



About the Point-In-Time Count

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is an annual count of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in the last 10 days in January. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) requires its [Continuum of Care \(CoC\) grantees](#) to conduct an annual count of sheltered homeless persons. CoCs also must conduct a count of unsheltered homeless persons every other year (odd numbered years).¹ Each count is planned, coordinated, and carried out locally by service providers and trained volunteers.

The Importance of Data

In its *Home Together: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) underscores the importance of collecting, reporting, and analyzing high-quality, timely data on homelessness, and leveraging a variety of data sets to plan, target, and scale needed housing and service interventions. Important sources of data on homelessness in the United States include

- [Education for Homeless Children and Youth \(EHCY\) program data](#);
- HUD [Point-in-Time count](#) (AHAR Part 1), [Homeless Management Information System](#) (HMIS; AHAR Part 2), and [Worst Case Housing Needs data](#);
- [Runaway and Homeless Youth Act grantee \(RHY-HMIS\) data](#);
- U.S. Census Bureau [American Housing Survey \(AHS\) data](#); and
- other relevant data sources, as appropriate to the specific federal, state, or local context.

Each source provides unique insights; as such, the most accurate and complete picture of family and youth homelessness can be developed only when considering all of these sources. CoCs and schools are encouraged to work together to share and leverage their respective data sets, in accordance with applicable law, by referencing each other's numbers in reports and public talking points, as appropriate, and using multiple sources of data to inform local efforts to serve families and youth.

Statutory Guidelines under PPRA and FERPA

The two key pieces of federal legislation that guide how local educational agencies (LEAs) and schools may engage in PIT count planning and implementation are the [Protection of Pupil Rights Amendment \(PPRA\)](#) and the [Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act \(FERPA\)](#). PPRA addresses the administration of surveys, while FERPA addresses the sharing of personally identifiable information (PII) about students with third parties.

Survey administration under PPRA: PPRA [20 U.S.C. § 1232h(c)] requires LEAs to develop and adopt policies, in consultation with parents, regarding

- the right of a parent of a student to inspect, upon request, a survey created by a third party before the survey is administered or distributed by a school to a student;
- any applicable procedures for granting a request by a parent for reasonable access to such survey within a reasonable period of time after the request is received;
- arrangements to protect student privacy that are provided by the agency in the event of the administration or distribution of a survey to a student containing certain protected categories of information; and
- offering an opportunity for the parent to opt the student out of participation in such surveys.

The rights provided to parents under PPRA transfer to the student when the student turns 18 years old or is an emancipated minor [20 U.S.C. § 1232h(c)(5)(B)].

Information-sharing under FERPA: FERPA generally prohibits LEAs and schools that receive funds under any program administered by the U.S. Department of Education from disclosing student education records, and the personally identifiable information (PII) contained therein, without the prior written consent of a parent [20 U.S.C. § 1232g(b)]

Housing and School Partnership on the Point-In-Time Count

- The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is an annual count of people experiencing homelessness on a single night in the last 10 days in January.
- HUD requires its CoC grantees to conduct an annual count of sheltered homeless persons.
- CoCs also must conduct a count of unsheltered homeless persons every other
- nche.ed.gov/housing-and-school-partnership-on-the-point-in-time-count/



National Center for Homeless Education
Supporting the Education of Children and
Youth Experiencing Homelessness
<http://ncche.ed.gov>



BEST PRACTICES IN INTERAGENCY COLLABORATION BRIEF SERIES
Partnering to Support Educational Success for Runaway and Homeless Youth

This NCHE brief

- provides an overview of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth and Runaway and Homeless Youth programs,
- reviews McKinney-Vento Act and Runaway and Homeless Youth Act requirements related to cross-systems collaboration, and
- suggests cross-systems collaboration strategies in support the education of runaway and homeless youth.

INTRODUCTION

Education is important for all young people, but may be an especially critical need for runaway and homeless youth. Research by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago found that young people who lack a high school diploma are at a 346% higher risk of experiencing homelessness than their peers who complete high school (Morton, Dworsky, & Samuels, 2017, p 12). Further, educational attainment beyond high school is associated with increased employability, income levels, and ability to afford housing. People with higher levels of education have lower levels of unemployment (U.S. Department of Labor [DOL], 2018) and higher lifetime earnings (Social Security Administration [SSA], 2015). A higher income also supports a person's ability to secure and maintain stable housing (Aurund et al, 2018), which reduces a person's risk of experiencing or returning to homelessness.

This brief is designed for educators and providers of services for youth experiencing homelessness, including

**McKINNEY-VENTO DEFINITION OF HOMELESS
42 U.S.C. § 11434a(2)**

The term "homeless children and youth"—

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 - iii. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
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Partnering to Support Educational Success for Runaway and Homeless Youth

- This NCHE brief provides an overview of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth and Runaway and Homeless Youth programs, reviews McKinney-Vento Act and Runaway and Homeless Youth Act requirements related to cross-systems collaboration, and suggests cross-systems collaboration strategies in support of the education of runaway and homeless youth.
- ncche.ed.gov/partnering-to-support-educational-success-for-runaway-and-homeless-youth/

Additional CoC Supports

- [Continuum of Care \(CoC\) Program](#)
- State of Tennessee Area CoCs:
 - [Jackson/West Tennessee CoC](#)
 - [Tennessee Valley Continuum of Care \(East Tennessee\)](#)
 - [Homeless Advocacy for Rural Tennessee \(HART\) \(Upper Cumberland/ Middle Tennessee\)](#)

U. S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)

- HUD currently administers a [variety of programs](#) dedicated to preventing or ending homelessness within the United States.
- The Continuum of Care (COC) Program is designed to:
 - promote community commitment to ending homelessness;
 - provide funding for nonprofits and government entities to quickly rehouse homeless individuals and families while minimizing the trauma and dislocation caused by homelessness;
 - promote access to and effect utilization of mainstream programs; and
 - optimize self-sufficiency among those experiencing homelessness.

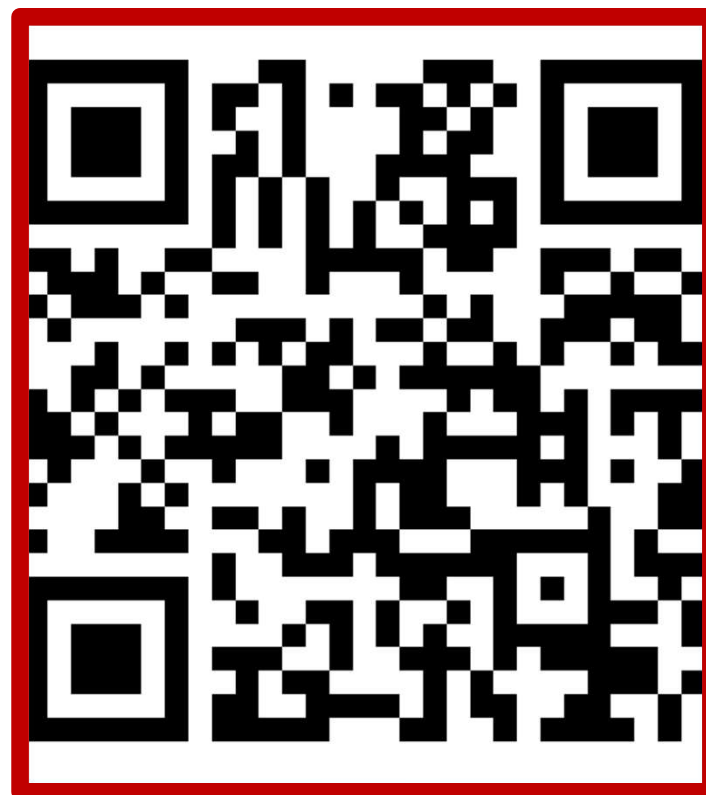


Questions?

**Please share your
feedback from this
session.**

You may also complete the
feedback survey at the link below.

[2026 Federal Programs Institute Session
Feedback Form](#)



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What's Next?

Listing of next sessions inserted here.



Thank You!

Vanessa Waters | McKinney-Vento Grant Manager

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(615) 917-3750

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