Using the Self-Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Experiencing Homelessness

CHILD CARE
SERVICES

Association

Child Care Services Association
PO Box 901
Chapel Hill, NC 27514
Phone: (919) 967-3272
www.childcareservices.org

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LESSON PLAN

Overall Goal
To create awareness of the *Self-Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Experiencing Homelessness* and build capacity to use it in early childhood programs.

Training Time
Two hours

Learning Outcomes
Following this session, participants will be able to:
- Describe the importance of early childhood education for young children experiencing homelessness (YCEH)
- Demonstrate how to use the Self-Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Experiencing Homelessness
- Identify community partners to engage around EC homelessness

Materials and Resources
See lists of materials, handouts and resources after Procedures/Instructional Techniques section.

PROCEDURES/INSTRUCTIONAL TECHNIQUES

Estimated Time (minutes)	Content/Key Points	Instructional Technique
10	Introductions. People answer the True/False questions as they enter. Then mingle and we eventually discuss, as people introduce themselves.	Walk around meeting others and then introduce self and a comment about the True/False questions.
Part One: Introduction to Early Childhood Homelessness		
5	1. Description of EC homelessness: fixed, regular and adequate night-time residence.	Handout available, review with participants. Write on flip chart.
5	2. Quick statistics about early childhood homelessness with the NC EC Homelessness 50-State Profile data sheet (see resources).	Mini-lecture

Part Two: The Value of Early Care & Education for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness (YCEH)		
Objective: Understanding the importance of early childhood education for young children experiencing homelessness (YCEH).		

10	1. What We Know: a review of basic child development as described in the NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development manual. Discuss how the domains are intertwined for whole child development.
	  a. Approaches to Play and Learning: how children learn and includes children's attitudes toward and interest in learning.
	  b. Emotional and Social Development: focuses on children's feelings about themselves and relationships with others.
	  c. Health and Physical Development: children's physical growth and motor development, nutritional choices, self-care and health and safety practices.
	  d. Language Development and Communication: focuses on the many aspects of communication, language and early literacy development (including early reading and early writing).
	  e. Cognitive Development: focuses on children's abilities to gain, organize and use information in increasingly complex ways.
		Do a walk-about. Hang five flip charts pages on the wall, each with the name of one of the domains. Ask participants to write on the flip chart examples of early learning that pertain to each domain (e.g. language and communication could have comments about reading books, babbling with a baby or learning to write one's name.)
		
		Review what was written and draw connections about the WHOLE CHILD. Note that we will come back to this.

5	2. Brain development: discuss handout made from the Science of EC Brain Dev (Harvard) or use the original brief. – https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/03/InBrief-The-Science-of-Early-Childhood-Development2.pdf	Mini lecture. Relate to the above as development occurs across all areas and growth across domains is critically important to health and development. Use one of the handouts about brain development.

5	3. Understanding trauma and resilience in the lives of YCEH
	   a. Define trauma, toxic stress, resilience and social buffering
	      i. **Trauma:** Events and/or circumstances that are physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening to an individual and have lasting adverse effects.
	         1. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration says, "Individual trauma results from an event, series of events, or set of circumstances that is experienced by an individual as physically or emotionally harmful or life threatening and that has lasting adverse effects on the individual's functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, or spiritual well-being" (SAMHSA, 2014). As a shortcut, remember "The Three E's of Trauma: Events, Experiences, and Effects"
	     ii. **Toxic Stress:** the prolonged activation of stress response systems without adequate adult support. It is the strong, unrelenting activation of the body's stress management systems. Increases the risk of poor, lifelong health and wellness consequences. Relate to ACES and the counting of adverse events.
	    iii. **Resilience:** The ability to cope, overcome hardship or adversity, in the context of relationships, that help one cope with stress challenges and hardship.
	    iv. **Social emotional buffering:** being in a caring relationship that allows a child, or adult, to build resilience. "You can be that one person in a child's life who changes everything by buffering a child's stress." (From the HS video. Link is in the resources list.)
	
	The Center for the Developing Child at Harvard U has coined the phrase "Serve & Return."
		Mini lecture to define each term and how they relate to homelessness.
		
		Refer to the ACES & Toxic Stress Infographic from Harvard Center for the Developing Child.
		
		Provide examples of serve and return. Talk to partner then as a whole group answer the two question. Record the answers on flip charts.

10	4. Ask why enrolling a child experiencing homelessness is critically important (based on above concepts)? What can an early childhood program offer to a child/family experiencing homelessness? NOTE: make ties to the developmental domains and to trauma, toxic stress. Discuss how shelters are designed for families, not for children. Connect how using Foundations provides the context in which to teach, especially for a child experiencing trauma and/or homelessness. Also give some perspective on shelters and how they are typically designed to focus on the adults, not often on the child with their own needs. Example: no diaper changing tables, food only at certain times that are appropriate for adults, play spaces that may not have welcoming environments.	Talk to partner then as a whole group answer the two questions. Record the answers on flip charts.
	BREAK: Encourage people to take a break during the next section – group work on the tool.	

Part Three: The Self-Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Programs Serving Families Experiencing Homelessness

Objective: Learn how to use the Self-Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Experiencing Homelessness

5	1. Review of the Self-Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Experiencing Homelessness
	 a. Review the tool's organization and the How to Use section.
	  i. Five Sections: Identification and Support; Removal of Barriers; Responding to Family Needs; Engaging in Strategic Collaboration; Improving Collection, Reporting and Utilization of Data
	  ii. Recommendations for Action: listed for each item in each section. Some are recommendations have Low Resource Requirements, others need Some Resource Requirements and the last group require Substantial Resources. The resource requirements are differentially shaded in the tool.
		Make sure everyone has a copy of the tool. If not ask people to share. Give a mini-lecture to describe the tool, why it was made and how to use it.

10	iii. Action Plan: at the end of the tool to determine what items the team/center will work on and the timeline. iv. How to Use: page 5	
15	2. Split into four small groups and assign each group one of four sections (excluding Collaboration). Each group will study their section and report out about the items in their section. Whole group discussion about impressions, degree of challenge, reasons for inclusion of certain items. NOTE: if participants are from one or more centers, they could be grouped by center rather than randomly. Small group work, followed by large group discussion.	Small group work, followed by large group discussion. Also discuss if there were any items that they questioned.

25	3. Action Plan
	    a. Introduce the Action Plan
	    b. Hand the four groups a completed section of the tool (exclude the Collaboration section as that is Part Four of the training).
	    c. In small groups, create action plans that could be made based on the information given to the group.
	    d. As a whole group report out on some items that are in their action plans.
		Ask groups to discuss one action item at a time, what it is, why they chose it and what resources they need. Use prompt questions like:
		• How would this change impact children and families?
		• Could you take this back to implement in the next 3 to 6 months?
		• Who would you need on your team to help get this done?
		• What resources would you need?

Part Four: Community Partners

Objective: Identify possible local community partners

15	1. Using the Strategic Collaborations section, have participants list who in their community might care about YCEH and their families.
	    a. Either working as a whole group, or in small groups, have participants identify organizations and individuals that are or could be engaged in work around EC homelessness. Ask participants to star any people or organizations that they know that are already work with homelessness.
	    b. Provide Continuum of Care link
		Have participants review this section silently. Then, using chart paper, have participants work with others from their community to make a web to identify people and organizations focused on YCEH.
		
		After they have worked for 5-7 minutes, ask them to identify those that are described in item D1 (homeless service providers like McKinney-Vento liaisons), or D2 those who can help with identification (such as hotel managers, legal aid, public health etc.).
		
		Then have groups work on D2.

Part Five: Review and Closure		
5	1. Review of the value of ECE programs for YCEH. 2. Review the Self-Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Experiencing Homelessness and how it can be used in an ECE program. 3. Remind participants of the need to support our most vulnerable children.	Ask people to complete the Assessment of Learning as we close.

Materials
Flip chart paper
Markers
Sticky notes
Blue tape for the walls
Nametags

Handouts and where to find them
1. Pre-Session Assessment True/False Initial Activity handout – included
2. The McKinney-Vento Homelessness definition handout – included
3. Which families are experiencing homelessness scenarios handout – a blank and one with answers is included
4. What to know about early childhood brain development handout – included
5. In-Brief: The Science of Brain Development (can use instead of Handout 4) or provide the link at https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/03/InBrief-The-Science-of-Early-Childhood-Development2.pdf
6. NC EC Homelessness 50 State Profile data sheet – https://www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/disadv/homeless/early-childhood-homelessness-state-profiles-2021.pdf, page 51
7. Copies of the self-assessment tool – https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/ncase-resource-library/self-assessment-tool-early-childhood-programs-serving-families-experiencing
8. Extra Action Plan pages – in the self-assessment tool
9. Sections A, B, C and E –print each and complete the sections with random answers so participants can use the copies to create action plans
10. Section D – in the self-assessment tool
11. ACES and Toxic Stress Infographic (HCDC) – https://harvardcenter.wpenginepowered.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ACEsInfographic_080218.pdf
12. Map and list of CoCs in NC – included
13. Post-Session Assessment of Learning – included

Resources

Early Brain Development
- https://46y5eh11fhgw3ve3ytpwxt9r-wpengine.netdna-ssl.com/wp-content/uploads/2007/03/InBrief-_The-Science-of-Early-Childhood-Development2.pdf
- https://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/childdevelopment/early-brain-development.html

Early Childhood Education
- https://ncchildcare.ncdhhs.gov/Portals/0/documents/pdf/N/NC_Foundations.pdf?ver=2017-05-16-105950-953 (NC Foundations for Early Learning and Development)

Trauma
- https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/pdf/family-engagement-cultural-perspectives.pdf
  (Applying Strengths-based Attitudes)
- https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/mental-health/article/understanding-trauma-healing-adults
  (A link for a five-part series of PDF documents focused on understanding trauma and how to support families with young children.)
- https://www.first5la.org/files/ChildHomelessnessTrauma.pdf
- https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/video/understanding-stress-resilience-young-children-head-start-staff
  (an eight-minute video about stress and resilience)

Homelessness
- https://www.childcareservices.org/programs/early-childhood-homelessness/
  (many papers and resources about early childhood homelessness)
- https://childcareta.acf.hhs.gov/ncase-resource-library/self-assessment-tool-early-childhood-programs-serving-families-experiencing https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/search/eclkc?q=supporting+a+family+experiencing+homelessness (starting webpage for a vast array of information about homelessness)
- https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/publication/decision-making-tool-determine-familys-homelessness-situation
  (Excellent guidance on how to work with families to determine whether they are housed or experiencing homelessness)
- https://www.dcdee.moodle.nc.gov/course/index.php?categoryid=22 (DCDEE's Moodle catalog of professional development has two links to learn about homelessness, including the nine-module Head Start series on supporting children and families experiencing homelessness, and another focused on serving children and families experiencing homelessness).

A Sampling of Organizations and Agencies Supporting Child and Youth Homelessness
- North Carolina Coalition to End Homelessness – https://www.ncceh.org/
- North Carolina Homeless Education Program (UNCG) – https://hepnc.uncg.edu/
- NC Homeless Education Program Contact list page (scroll to find the most current liaison list) – https://hepnc.uncg.edu/contact/
- National Center for Homeless Education – https://nche.ed.gov/
- National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth – https://naehcy.org/

Pre-Session Assessment True/False Initial Activity

What Do You Think?	True or False
Everyone knows what a person experiencing homelessness looks like.	
There are more than 37,000 children under age 6 homeless in North Carolina.	
Homelessness can cause trauma.	
Trauma can cause homelessness.	
Housing is affordable for most everyone in NC.	
Child care is affordable for most families.	
Teens parenting young children is a large and vulnerable population of those experiencing homelessness.	
Child care is difficult to find, especially for children less than 3 years old.	
Being homeless is due to personal failure.	
Sleeping on your friend or family member's couch is not considered homeless.	
I would know if a family without housing was enrolled in our center.	
Early childhood programs can support children and families experiencing homelessness.	
At enrollment, asking people about where they live, rather than just their address can lead to a conversation about the family's security, safety and whether they have their own home.	

The McKinney-Vento Definition of Homelessness

Children who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence by:

- Sharing housing due to the loss of housing, economic hardship, etc.;
- Living in hotels, motels, trailer parks, camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations;
- Living in cars, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, etc.;
- Abandoned in hospitals, other locations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters; or whose
- Primary nighttime residence is not designed for, or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings.
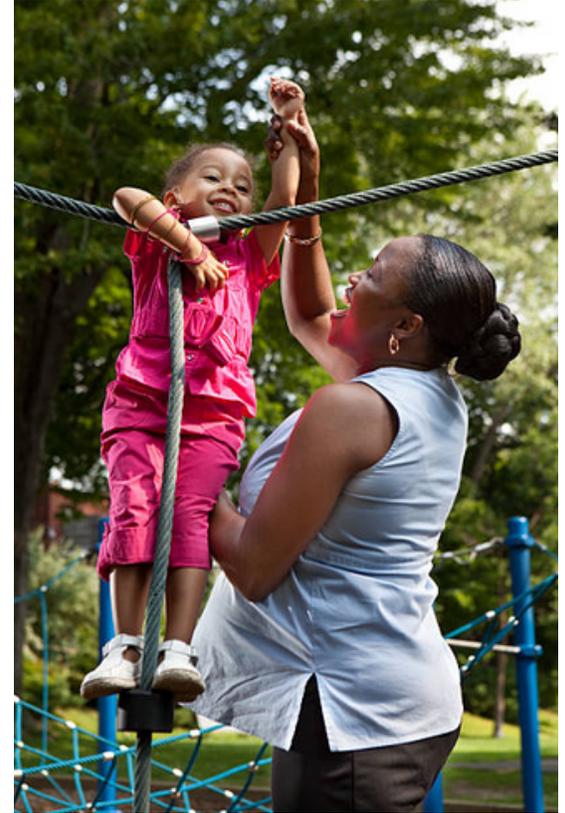
Which families are experiencing homelessness?

Scenario 1: Maria and her two children share a home with her brother and his family. They have their own bedrooms (the children share one) and Maria has a key to the house. She shares her paycheck with her extended family and participates in the chores to keep the household functioning.

Are they experiencing homelessness?

Scenario 2: Vanessa has a job, has her infant daughter enrolled in an Early Head Start program and her 8- year-old son enrolled in public school. They have been living in their car for the past few months.

Are they experiencing homelessness?

Scenario 3: George and his family found the best apartment they could find for their limited income. It is in a low-resource neighborhood with many unemployed people. In the winter they often have to use the oven to warm their place and stuff rags in the leaky windows. About once a month the hot water doesn't work and the landlord does not seem interested in fixing it.

Are they experiencing homelessness?

Scenario 4: The Smith family are itinerant workers along the east coast. They live in Florida most of the year where they have a reasonably safe and stable home in a campground. However, during their summer work in Maine, they live in a campground with unreliable plumbing and many days the ground is completely muddy. The bugs are bad, there are no screens and no air conditioning.

Are they experiencing homelessness?

Which families are experiencing homelessness? Instructor/Answer Sheet

Note: Answers are in red, but will not be on the sheet given to participants.

Scenario 1: Maria and her two children share a home with her brother and his family. They have their own bedrooms (the children share one) and Maria has a key to the house. She shares her paycheck with her extended family and participates in the chores to keep the household functioning.

Are they experiencing homelessness? Answer is No

Scenario 2: Vanessa has a job, has her infant daughter enrolled in an Early Head Start program and her 8- year-old son enrolled in public school. They have been living in their car for the past few months.

Are they experiencing homelessness? Answer is Yes

Scenario 3: George and his family found the best apartment they could find for their limited income. It is in a low-resource neighborhood with many unemployed people. In the winter they often have to use the oven to warm their place and stuff rags in the leaky windows. About once a month the hot water doesn't work and the landlord does not seem interested in fixing it.

Are they experiencing homelessness? Answer is Yes

Scenario 4: The Smith family are itinerant workers along the east coast. They live in Florida most of the year where they have a reasonably safe and stable home in a campground. However, during their summer work in Maine, they live in a campground with unreliable plumbing and many days the ground is completely muddy. The bugs are bad, there are no screens and no air conditioning.

Are they experiencing homelessness? The answer is yes and no. In Florida they are not considered homeless, but in Maine the living conditions are inadequate and therefore meet the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness.

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What to Know About Early Childhood Brain Development

From: In Brief: The Science of Early Childhood Development from the Center on the Developing Child, Harvard University

1. Brains are built from the bottom (back of the head) up, and over time
    a. Early experiences affect the building process and create either a sturdy or fragile foundation.
    b. In the first few years of life, more than 1 million new neural connections are created every second.
    c. After this rapid growth, pruning occurs so the brain functions more efficiently.

2. Genes and experiences interact to shape the developing brain.
    a. It isn't nature vs. nurture, but the combination of the two, experiences and genetics.
    b. A "serve and return" relationship between children and parents (or caregivers) supports brain development. A baby babbles, make faces etc. and when adults respond and engage they are stimulating that baby's brain and development.

3. A brain's capacity to change decreases with age.
    a. The brain is most flexible early in life (e.g., language acquisition abilities fade over time).

4. Cognitive, emotional and social capabilities are completely intertwined.
    a. Emotional well-being and social competence provide a strong foundation for learning and cognitive development. All domains really.

5. Toxic stress damages the brain's development and can lead to lifelong problems with learning, behavior, physical and mental well-being.
    a. In the absence of buffering protection from an adult, such stress shapes the architecture of the developing brain.
    b. Repeated traumatic experiences/threats trigger the brain and the body's internal systems to be on constant high alert, sending signals that exhaust the ability to cope.

North Carolina Continuums of Care

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development defines Continuum of Care as:

"The Continuum of Care is a community plan to organize and deliver housing and services to meet the specific needs of people who are homeless as they move to stable housing and maximum self‑sufficiency. It includes action steps to end homelessness and prevent a return to homelessness."

North Carolina Continuums of Care

500 Winston-Salem/Forsyth Co.	506 Wilmington/Brunswick/New Hanover/Pender Co.
501 Asheville/Buncombe Co.	507 Raleigh/Wake Co.
502 Durham City/Durham Co.	509 Gastonia/Cleveland/Gaston/Lincoln Co.
503 NC Balance of State	511 Fayetteville/Cumberland Co.
504 Greensboro/High Point/Guilford Co.	513 Chapel Hill/Orange Co.
505 Charlotte/Mecklenburg	516 Northwest NC
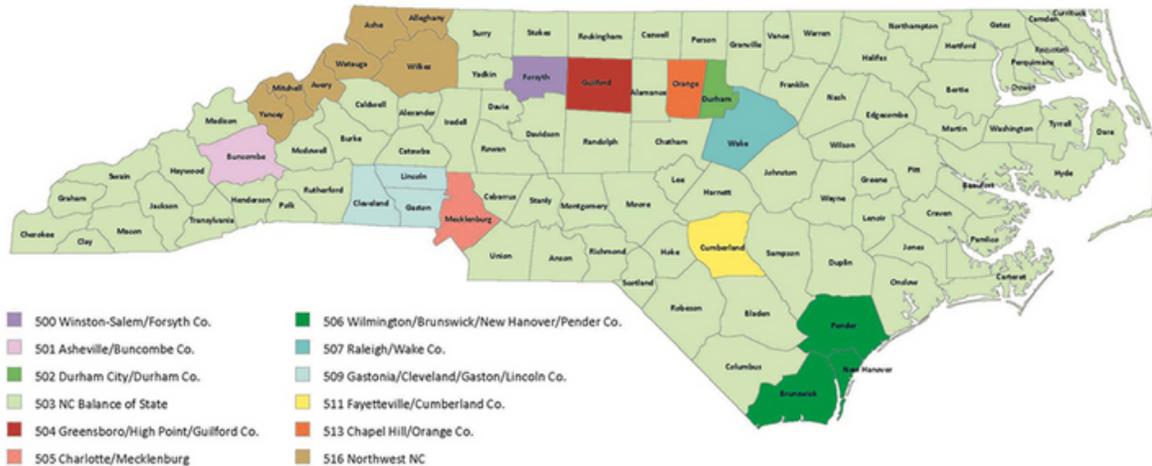
North Carolina's CoCs – As of June 2022

North Carolina has 12 Continuums of Care. COC office information is subject to change.

1. Asheville/Buncombe County
2. Chapel Hill/Orange County
3. Charlotte/Mecklenburg County
4. Durham City/Durham County
5. Fayetteville/Cumberland County
6. Gastonia/Cleveland/Gaston/Lincoln counties
7. Greensboro/High Point/Guilford County
8. Northwest NC
9. Raleigh/Wake County
10. Wilmington/Brunswick/New Hanover/Pender counties
11. Winston‑Salem‑Forsyth County
12. North Carolina Balance of State

Balance of State: Alamance, Alexander, Anson, Beaufort, Bertie, Bladen, Burke, Cabarrus, Caldwell, Camden, Carteret, Caswell, Catawba, Chatham, Cherokee, Chowan, Clay, Columbus, Craven, Currituck, Dare, Davidson, Davie, Duplin, Edgecombe, Franklin, Gates, Graham, Granville, Greene, Halifax, Harnett, Haywood, Henderson, Hertford, Hoke, Hyde, Iredell, Jackson, Johnston, Jones, Lee, Lenoir, Macon, Madison, Martin, McDowell, Montgomery, Moore, Nash, Northampton, Onslow, Pamlico, Pasquotank, Perquimans, Person, Pitt, Polk, Randolph, Richmond, Robeson, Rockingham, Rowan, Rutherford, Sampson, Scotland, Stanly, Stokes, Surry, Swain, Transylvania, Tyrell, Union, Vance, Warren, Washington, Wayne, Wilson, Yadkin

Source: https://www.childcareservices.org/wp-content/uploads/HMIS-Report-for-Orange-Durham-and-Balance-of-State-6-27-22-Final-.pdf.
Map from NCCEH: https://www.ncceh.org/coc/

Post-PD Session Assessment of Learning

Professional Development Session Title: Using the Self-Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Experiencing Homelessness

Date of Session: _____   Instructor's Name: _____

Hours: Two

Identify five ways that a child experiencing homelessness can benefit from enrollment in an early childhood education program.

I became familiar with the Self-Assessment Tool for Early Childhood Programs Serving Children Experiencing Homelessness.

Yes_____   No_____

I learned how to use the self-assessment tool.

Yes_____   No_____

I think my early childhood center could benefit from using the tool.

Yes_____   No_____

I plan to bring the tool back to my center so we can start using it to assess our program.

Yes_____   No_____

I better understand who to connect with in my community to support young children experiencing homelessness.
Yes_____   No_____