



Dr. John D. Barge, State School Superintendent

Strategies for Effective Collaboration between Parent Involvement Coordinators (PICs) and Homeless Liaisons

- 1. Setting the Plan-** Parents come from various lifestyles, ethnicities, and cultural backgrounds. They may be grandparents, foster parents, aunts, uncles, legal guardians or another adult who serves as the primary caregiver of a student. It is important to be sensitive to the needs of all parents and develop a plan that ensures every effort is being made to address their circumstances.
 - a. Educate each other about the student and family populations served in local education agencies (LEAs). PICs and Homeless Liaisons should be aware of sensitivity and confidentiality issues along with the danger of labeling families experiencing homelessness. Sensitivity and confidentiality are essential for building trust among all hard to reach parents.
 - b. Conduct a needs assessment and develop a list of parent requests to map out ways to meet the needs of both parent populations.
 - c. Divide the responsibilities of addressing the primary needs of parents based on community contacts and the availability of resources.
 - d. Take a close look at what has not worked in the past to discover the direction that needs to be taken to *effectively* build parent capacity within the schools and retain those relationships.
 - e. Develop a plan to on how to approach and engage hard to reach parents.
 - f. Work together to achieve common goals and avoid duplication of services.
- 2. Enhance the Work That Is Already Being Done-** Collaborative efforts will be ineffective if successful connections are not built with and between parents at the school. Homeless Liaisons are focused on five components: identity, school selection, enrollment, transportation and dispute resolution. Combined with the resources PICs offer, the two can have a major impact on students and their families. When parents see school and district staff working in partnership they are more inclined to build trust and make a stronger connection to the school and staff.
 - a. Have PICs connect with the Homeless Liaison as they identify new families and assist in enrolling them into a new school. Once enrolled, have the PIC ensure with a joint greeting by distributing a welcome packet to the family with details enclosed about educational resources, parent resource center hours and a list of workshops that are offered.
 - b. Collaborate on cultural-based community and school events that are held annually and include all parents to promote networking opportunities.

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- c. Have Homeless Liaisons inform PICs about where homeless and hard to reach families are located in the area so the PICs may use a centralized location in the community to sponsor workshops, job fairs and parent conferences. Homeless Liaisons can help market these events and also attend so their parents will see a familiar face and in turn feel more at ease. The PIC and Homeless Liaison can also seek assistance from the school's guidance counselor during these events as a means of providing professional counseling for families requesting such services.
 - d. Utilize the PIC to initiate contact with homeless and hard to families who are recently identified and newly enrolled in the school. When appropriate, inform them about the availability of services and resources. It is important that the PIC is very discreet when using this approach to ensure confidentiality of the family's status.
 - e. Work together to create ways to engage *all* parents in their child's education inclusive of school volunteer opportunities or ways they can enhance their child's learning at home. Many parents want to contribute, but are not aware of what they can do or how they can help.
 - f. Organize transportation services and childcare for families to attend events such as Open House, PTA meetings, Parent-Teacher Conferences and Academic Nights where applicable and appropriate.
- 3. Communication Leads to Sustainability-** Effective communication with one another is essential for collaboration to be a success. Good communication will help everyone stay informed about the work that is being done within the local school, district, and community. It also provides various opportunities to plan for future initiatives.
- a. Set aside time at least twice per month to meet and discuss any changes, concerns, and improvements that have been made to engage all parents.
 - b. Correspond with each other via e-mail or phone in between meetings as needed to address questions or concerns that may arise.
 - c. Foster an open-door policy with one another, so both professionals are comfortable with the collaboration.
 - d. Demonstrate genuine interest in the well-being of all children and it is likely that the parents will be more likely to play a role in the parent-school-community partnership.

Notes:

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