



# OUR HOME

Opening Doors: Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

OUR HOME

April 2004

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## Do You Have A Good Working Knowledge of McKinney-Vento?

*Rob Houchin, Regional Superintendent  
ROE #53 - Tazewell*

As a high school principal, I had paid little attention to the term "homeless" because I didn't think that we had any in our small high school of 300 students. The awakening to the true meaning of the term came for me early in September. My ignorance of the McKinney-Vento Act nearly cost a girl her senior year of high school. That experience has led to my commitment to make sure that I am properly prepared to handle the education of homeless children.

Lisa's\* mother moved to New York during Lisa's freshman year of high school, leaving her to live with her sister and brother-in-law. She was a seventeen-year-old senior honor student and a cheerleader in her third day of the school year when her brother-in-law put her on a bus, against her will, and sent her to New York. Lisa promptly returned and moved in with a friend. When she attempted to return to school, she was told that she was no longer a resident in that district and could not attend school.

After nearly three weeks of unsuccessful attempts to return to school, she was

directed to my office for assistance. My intervention received a negative response as I tried to reason with the district. Not only would they not allow her in school, they would not allow her to attend our county alternative education program, as well. Another week of Lisa's senior year slipped away.

It was only through contact with my TAOEP coordinator that I discovered that he was also the Homeless Liaison for our county. His input led to phone calls to Eileen Worthington and the Illinois State Board of Education, both contacts giving me the information and support that I needed to confidently and aggressively approach the school again. By this time, Lisa had moved two more times, bouncing around from friend to friend, and eventually ended up living in an adjacent district.

After much discussion, but no agreement that she was a homeless or an "unaccompanied youth," the school agreed to allow her to return to school. It was either that, or an ISBE attorney knocking on their door. I also informed the school that she was to

receive free lunches, tutoring to catch up, and be returned to the cheerleading squad. She didn't need transportation, but I was prepared to order the district to provide it, if needed.

I am pleased to report that Lisa is doing well and will graduate with her class this spring.

Since that incident, I have taken numerous calls from other school officials regarding the McKinney-Vento Act. I discovered that I was not the only one ignorant about the requirements of this act. Most superintendents in my county are now eager to make sure that they do not make a mistake in this area.

It is critical that the Regional Superintendents have a good working knowledge of the law, and that this knowledge be communicated to the liaisons, schools, and community to help ensure that homeless children are not left behind. There are too many resources available for us to be ignorant of this law.

\* Name has been changed.

### 3rd Annual ICH Conference

October 28 & 29, 2004

Holiday Inn Collinsville/St. Louis

Collinsville, Illinois

For information contact:

Mary Kay Bonnes  
618/876-0607

bonnessm@granitecity.com

### Hotline Assistance

If you have questions or comments regarding the Opening Doors Project, or a homeless student, you may contact the ISBE Homeless Hotline at:

**800/215-6379**

or contact :

Rich Dehart,

Principal Consultant

Accountability Division

Illinois State Board of Education

100 North First Street

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## Editor's Notes

It has been a very busy year for all of us but all too soon we find that the school year is quickly drawing to a close. Like most of you I find myself scrambling to finish reports, evaluations, and budgets, close files and finish that endless 'to do' list. However, with all of this going on, I find myself already planning for FY 2005!

While this past year has seen the advent of the new McKinney-Vento Lead Liaison Program in Illinois, there are still a few more changes to come. The Lead Liaison Programs, initiated in May of 2003, hit the ground running and have worked hard to identify LEA Liaisons in every public district and provide training to them. For FY 2005 the changes will continue. The local McKinney-Vento Programs that you have known through the years will be phased out at the end of this year and will be replaced entirely by the Lead Liaison Programs. There will be seven Lead Liaison Programs for Illinois in FY 2005, one in each of the six regional areas and a seventh in Chicago.

The plus side to the change in program design and delivery is that we will now be able to provide services for the entire state of Illinois . . . the down side is that we will miss the smiling faces, devotion, and expertise of those individuals who will be leaving the program. To those individuals I would like to say farewell, thank you, and stay in touch!

*Eileen Worthington, Editor*

## Our Home

To submit an article for **OUR HOME** please send to:

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Phone 309 / 837-4821  
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mworthing@roe26.k12.il.us

## Go Hide

*Sue Kanthak, Coordinator Homeless Services, Rockford Public Schools*

We all know the importance of what we do, but every once in a while it smacks you right in the face. I recently found a family that was staying at a local nighttime-only shelter. We were able to get their oldest child into preschool immediately. After attending for about a week, he went with the class to the school library for the first time. Isaiah, who also has a speech delay, ran to the Parent Support Specialist and said, "O I." The PSS asked him to say it again and he said very quietly, "O I." "One more time?" the PSS asked Isaiah. He took her face in his hands and said as clearly as he could, "O IDE." She soon realized that he was asking her if he had to go hide. The family spent their days at the public library and the children would have to hide from time to time. The PSS explained that he did not have to hide here, but he went behind a bookshelf anyway and listened to the story from there.

## New Homeless Shelter Built in Peru Opened New Year's Day

*Libby Boyle, Liaison, ROE #35 - LaSalle*

After spending many of the autumn and early winter nights at a shelter in Ottawa, sleeping outdoors or in cars, homeless people in the LaSalle-Peru area now have a brand new shelter in Peru. While concrete on the sidewalks was still drying, the new Public Action to Deliver Shelter homeless shelter opened on New Year's Day.

The shelter can hold about 50 people comfortably while offering them a hot meal, a shower, toiletries, hats and gloves; and soon the Peru PADS will have laundry services.

"Everything that is in a home we will provide here," site coordinator Adrienne Richards said.

So far the operation of the shelter has run smoothly, said PADS fund-raising chairman Carol Alcorn. "People have been generous," she said. "Right now we need money to pay for the building, and we plan to have fund-raisers in the spring."

## LeTendre Education Fund Scholarships

Children and youth in homeless situations face numerous barriers to educational success. Deep poverty, high mobility, and school requirements often make attending and succeeding in school a challenge. Despite these challenges, many students who experience homelessness not only graduate from high school but wish to pursue a college education.

Established in 1998 in memory of André E. LeTendre, husband of Mary Jean LeTendre, former Director of Compensatory Education for the U.S. Department of Education, the LeTendre Education Fund for Homeless Children provides scholarship assistance to students who are homeless or have experienced homelessness.

The scholarship funds are available to students who are homeless or who have been homeless during their school attendance, and who have demonstrated average or higher than average achievement.

According to federal law, a person is considered homeless who "lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence." This includes people living in shelters, cars, motels, campgrounds, or places not meant for human habitation, as well as children and youth who are living with friends or relatives temporarily because they lack permanent housing.

Applicants may be high school juniors; seniors; students enrolled in a GED or other alternative education program; or recent graduates/GED recipients (up until age 20).

For scholarship information or to obtain an application please contact The LeTendre Education Fund for Homeless Children, c/o the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, 4701 Connecticut Avenue, NW, #402, Washington, DC 20008 or call NAEHCY at 202/364-7392. Application forms may be downloaded from the NAEHCY web site at <http://www.naehcy.org/2004application.html>.

*Applications for 2004 LeTendre Scholarships must be received by mail or by fax by 5:00pm EST September 15, 2004.*

## Data Collection and More

*Rich Dehart, Principal Consultant - ROE 47*

It has been approximately nine months since I assumed the responsibility of State Coordinator under the McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth program. That short time has been enlightening, to say the least.

"Getting your feet wet," as some would put it, was interesting and involved. I extend my thanks to each of the local, regional and Opening Doors coordinators for support and patience. I am a true believer that it is at your level that the success or failure of any program is determined. It is my duty to assist you in providing the tools and resources necessary for your continuing success.

On to matters of interest: I just returned from a State Coordinators of McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth meeting. Topics of discussion were Head Start, data collection, public awareness programs, and other items in and out of discussion. I will touch on these and more, with intentions to expand information as it becomes available to me.

Renewal of the Head Start program is working its way through Congress at this time. It was stated that there is considerable mention of McKinney-Vento throughout the proposed bill. There was no mention of possible timelines for passage or implementation. I did get the name, address, etc., for the Illinois Head Start Collaborative Office and will be contacting them for collaboration between us. The web page for the Illinois program is <http://www.ilheadstart.org/>.

The data collection effort moves right along. Specific information of what the feds propose may be found at: <http://edicsweb.ed.gov/>

Select "Browse Pending Collections"

Select "(02476) 1810-0650-v.2 State Data Collection for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (KA)"

Select "Download Attachments"

Select "Att\_homeless ed collection package.doc"

The Department of Education intends to have data collected by October 1, 2004! The document will not be finalized until May of 2004, but what is in the Federal Register is not anticipated to change. I will be addressing this in the future in more detail as I learn more.

A new CD, titled First Step<sub>2</sub>, has been released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services and the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. It is advertised as "... interactive tool for case managers, outreach workers, and others working with people who are homeless." It is available at <http://www.cms.hhs.gov/medicaid/homeless/firststep/index.html> or by calling 800-998-9999 and it is free!

On Monday, April 26, at 8:30 pm, the N Network (Noggin Network) broadcast "A Walk In Your Shoes: Homeless." It is about two 15-year-olds, one of whom is homeless while the other is not. The one who is not "shadows" the other to experience a life quite different from her own! A parent discussion guide is available at <http://discussions.the-n.com/>. I received a VHS copy of the program and am working to get multiple copies. It was very well received at the conference.

And last, at least for now, for those of you who know and have worked with Patricia F. Julianelle, Staff Attorney at the National Law Center, you will be interested to know that she will be leaving the National Law Center and moving to Santiago, Chile. She will be replaced by Joy Moses. Good luck to Patricia!

### Sixth Annual HUD Peer - to - Peer Homeless Provider Conference



September 21 & 22 - Cliffbreakers Hotel - Rockford, Illinois

*There is no registration fee for this conference but attendees must register.*

Registration materials will be available after July 16, at [www.icaanet.org](http://www.icaanet.org) or call us at (217) 789-0125



## Opening Doors

### Who are we?

*Opening Doors is an Illinois State Board of Education grant-funded project provided through the McKinney - Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001.*

*Under the direction of Rich Dehart, Principal Consultant, Accountability Division, the goal of this initiative is to disseminate information and provide technical assistance to Illinois schools and shelters as to the educational rights and needs of homeless children and youth.*

*The Opening Doors project partners include:*

### **Adult Learning Resource Center**

**1855 Mt. Prospect Road  
Des Plaines, IL 60018  
Phone 847/803-3535  
Fax 847/803-3231**

### **Regional Office of Education #26**

**Hancock/McDonough  
130 S. Lafayette Street  
Suite 200  
Macomb, IL 61455  
Phone 309/837-4821  
Fax 309/837-2887**

### **Illinois Coalition to End Homelessness**

**127 North Marion Street  
Suite 7  
Oak Park, IL 60301  
Phone 708/848-0503  
Fax 708/848-0530**

**Visit us on the world wide web at  
<http://homelessed.net>  
to receive FREE materials!**



# Opening Doors

## Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

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We're On the Web! <http://homelessed.net>

OUR HOME was supported 100% through a grant from the Illinois State Board of Education funded by the United States Department of Education under the McKinney-Vento Education for the Homeless Children & Youth Program for an approximate cost of \$350.00.

### Information and Resources Available

Jeanne Rowe - Coordinator, Opening Doors Project

If you need additional resources, please go to our website, <http://homelessed.net>, and use our order form, which can be found by clicking on "Opening Doors Publications" at the bottom of the Resources link. You are welcome to order up to ten copies of any item, or a master. If you are a McKinney-Vento program and need more than ten copies for training or awareness purposes, the limit does not apply to you.

Our new *Illinois McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Programs* Directory is available for download in pdf form. We are also happy to announce that vol. 2 of *Lunch Box News* will be available for distribution in May and will be put on our web site in pdf form. Please plan to check it out!



*Save the Date!*

### **16th Annual NAEHCY Conference**

*October 2004 - Radisson Riverfront Hotel - St. Paul, Minnesota*

*Membership is open to everyone with an interest in homeless education. Annual dues are \$40.00, which includes a discount on the annual conference and a subscription to *The BEAM*, the organization's newsletter.*

*Send check and name to NAEHCY - P.O. Box 26274 - Minneapolis, MN 55426.*

*Questions? Call 952-945-0228 or email to [info@naehcy.org](mailto:info@naehcy.org)*