

The Clairton Collaborative

*A 2010-11 initiative of the Homeless Education Network
Allegheny County, PA*



PROJECT OBJECTIVES

- 1) Improve communication among parents, school faculty and staff and housing provider staff
- 2) Facilitate increased parental engagement in children's education
- 3) Train school staff for more effective identification of and service to children and youth who are homeless
- 4) Develop and implement a targeted literacy program using both school and housing provider resources
- 5) Evaluate the impact of the collaborative initiative

PARTNERS

| Clairton City Schools | Sisters Place, Inc. | HCEF | Community Partners |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Social Worker/Homeless Liaison *High School Guidance Counselor *Reading Specialist **Superintendent **Assistant Superintendent | *Program Manager *Child Development Specialist **Executive Director | * Education Program Manager **Executive Director | PAHCI Region IV Coordinator **Homeless Education Network Director Duquesne University |

* Day-to-day program support ** Planning/oversight



STAGES & TIMELINE

- **July 2010:** HCEF facilitated planning meetings with key staff from Sisters Place and Clairton City Schools to determine project objectives, process, and responsibilities.
- **August 2010:** A Back-to-School orientation at Sisters Place was held for the families by the Clairton and HCEF staff, providing a unique opportunity for face-to-face introductions and information sharing at the family's residence. The following week, Sisters Place provided transportation for families to attend a tour of the school. The PA Homeless Children's Initiative Region IV Coordinator held a 2-hour in-service at the Clairton Education Center for all administrators, counselors and front-line staff; topics included the identification of homeless students and McKinney-Vento compliance.
- **September 2010:** The staff of Sisters Place, Clairton Schools, and HCEF met to finalize plans for the parent engagement and literacy components of the initiative, including 1) **monthly parent meetings** with the Clairton Guidance Counselor and Social Worker/Homeless Liaison occurring at Sisters Place, and 2) **weekly literacy support** to individual students from the Clairton Reading Specialist occurring at the Sisters Place Afterschool Center. Both components are funded by HCEF through grants received via the Homeless Education Network (HEN).
- **October 2010 – Present:** Continuation of monthly parents meetings and weekly literacy support
- **December 2010:** Duquesne University researcher Dr. Jinhee Kim was introduced to key staff from all agencies and initiated an independent evaluation of the program to be completed in March 2011.
- **April 8, 2011 – 2nd Homeless Education Network Summit:** HCEF presented the Clairton-Sisters Place-HCEF initiative as a model for interagency collaboration in the service of families experiencing homelessness. Findings of the Duquesne evaluation were shared.

✓ School & Agency Personnel

- Administrators & front-line staff received training on McKinney-Vento and identifying homeless students
- School and agency staff have ongoing access to one another; data-sharing is enabled.
- HCEF provides funding and administrative support to facilitate the joint initiative via the Homeless Education Network

✓ Parents

- A Back-to-School Orientation acquainted mothers with key school personnel, important dates, and contact information
- Mothers meet with Clairton guidance counselor and social worker each month at Sisters Place to review student attendance, grades, behavior, and special concerns

Interagency Collaboration: Who benefits?

✓ Students

- A Back-to-School Orientation and school tour introduced students to their teachers and generated excitement for the coming year
- Clairton students participating in the Sisters Place afterschool program receive one-on-one instruction with the Clairton reading specialist at Sisters Place
- Needs of individual students are more effectively addressed due to improved communication between Clairton and Sisters Place staff

✓ Community

- An evaluation by Duquesne University has been completed and will be shared with interested parties by the Homeless Education Network
- The Clairton-Sisters Place-HCEF initiative will serve as a model program in Allegheny County with the potential for replication at many other schools and homeless provider sites.