



## Homeless Education Network (HEN)

### MEETING REPORT

Thursday, March 26 2020

9 – 11 AM | Zoom

---

This is a report of key topics discussed at the HEN meeting on Thursday, March 26.

### Covid-19 General Resource Lists/Links

Access these for lists of services specifically geared toward helping folks through covid-19 shutdowns; useful to review together with individuals/families experiencing homelessness:

- **Crowdsourced, comprehensive google doc compilation of resources;** contains help for families, educators, income loss, job loss, mutual aid, food, housing, utilities, and much more:  
[https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oL6ju8kEQd\\_cWltkufZvVq1tMGetsY92ZVDzlwPa35l/edit?fbclid=IwAR3xrfwGXklHgR-jdwHeAMULJJ3W0rRwgPtk\\_nEp6rt4PtpbWqvYXmhn4m8](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1oL6ju8kEQd_cWltkufZvVq1tMGetsY92ZVDzlwPa35l/edit?fbclid=IwAR3xrfwGXklHgR-jdwHeAMULJJ3W0rRwgPtk_nEp6rt4PtpbWqvYXmhn4m8)
- Mobile optimized (acts like an app), user-friendly website that maps free, easy-access goods/services in Allegheny County; has covid-19 banner updates: [www.bigburgh.com](http://www.bigburgh.com)
- **Allegheny County Department of Human Services (DHS) is hosting a daily covid-19 call for county service provider updates;** notes, presentations, and audio record of all previous meetings are also available: <http://dhstraumaresourcelibrary.alleghenycounty.us/covid-19-information-for-dhs-providers/>
- You can also **dial 2-1-1 from any phone** to speak to a United Way rep who can help guide you to local resources you or another might need to access during the crisis

### HCEF's Covid-19 Program Updates

Use these to stimulate your thinking about how your own organization/community can adapt to meet the changing needs of youth experiencing housing instability during covid-19 changes:

- **Hope Through Learning Award** -- now accepting applications for \$2,500 scholarships available to any McKinney-Vento (at any point in their schooling, k-12) students in SW PA (priority on Allegheny County) attending a post-secondary education program. Application form: <https://form.jotform.com/90924218463156>. More info: <https://homelessfund.org/hope/>
- **Non-digital education packets distributed to afterschool students living in shelter** -- <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TzXc6tQW-rq2thnh97pXo7PS1-KVwU0ISx3ir-JuJ40/edit?usp=sharing>. Similar could be provided with meals at Grab n Go sites as resources allow.
- **Teen Outreach Program** – Still providing virtual college/career prep, basic needs assistance, and regular check-ins to McKinney-Vento students in select high schools (UPrep, Westinghouse, Brashear, Steel Valley, Woodland Hills). Beginning to connect student with virtual tutors as able. Email [cmcaneny@homelessfund.org](mailto:cmcaneny@homelessfund.org) for questions or call/text at 412-719-5630.

### HEN Recommendations/Best Practices for Educating under Covid-19

Some (hopefully) helpful tips on how to best assist unstably housed students during covid-19 (some of these are taken from breakout group notes, so thanks to all participants!):

- **Consult this checklist for education and childcare providers:**  
<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/COVID19-and-Homelessness-Checklist.pdf>. Consider signing up for further updates from national student homelessness experts,

To suggest a topic or speaker for a future HEN meeting, contact Brian Knight at [bknight@homelessfund.org](mailto:bknight@homelessfund.org).



## Homeless Education Network (HEN)

### MEETING REPORT

Thursday, March 26 2020

9 – 11 AM | Zoom

SchoolHouse Connection: <https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up/>

- **Keep in constant contact:** Every student's situation will be different, and needs change quickly for students/families in unstable situations. Make sure that you are reaching out often and staying as up to date as possible on student needs.
- **Consider communication access/preference:** some students/parents will respond best to email, others to text, phone calls, google voice, Zoom, Facebook message, etc. Be flexible and creative in outreach.
- **Utilize existing contact points, like Grab 'n Go sites:** Schools may be able to distribute more than just meals for free/reduced lunch students; print education materials, books, toiletries/hygiene products, or other physical supplies might be offered simultaneously to avoid creating new contacts that increase infection risk. **Personnel working at Grab 'n Go sites also offer a point of communication.** Keep in contact with them about what they hear from families. Consider asking them to act as informal needs assessors.
- **Foreground information/resources for unstably housed students in mass/public communications:** (Some) people can be hesitant to request what isn't highlighted. **Information about domestic violence and family support services is particularly critical,** as people are more vulnerable to trafficking during crisis times.
- **Transportation is still an issue:** Families may have difficulty making it to Grab 'n Go (or other) sites regularly; offering multiple meals they can prepare at home can ease the transportation burden.
- **Internet limitations:** Many students will struggle with online learning resources due to lack of access, but some may be able to use hotspots that are still available in school or library parking lots, without breaking social distancing. If able, **provide devices** for students who need them – some schools are beginning to scrub old devices and offer them as needed. **If Comcast denies someone free service due to existing debts/unpaid bills, they may waive these requirements if you ask your state legislator's office to connect to the Comcast government affairs person.** Not very direct, but it's something.
- **Parents need help:** While school is out, parents will be largely responsible for any education maintenance/progress for their students. They need proactive resources and training to set them and their children up for success. Encourage reading, provide education packets (above), etc. **Please reach out if you have successful parent training/engagement strategies that we can share with everyone!**

### Drawn to Home Release Update

Peter Harvey, Allegheny County DHS Community Resource Specialist, provided an update on Drawn to Home, an outreach project that uses a comic book to broaden community perspectives on homelessness:

- **Drawn to Home is a comic book project that uses storytelling to attempt to raise public consciousness about people experiencing homelessness.** Coordinated by Peter Harvey (AC DHS) and Jay Poliziani (Northside Common Ministries), the book contains personal stories of housing instability from people in Southwestern Pennsylvania. Available with the comic book is a one-page 'curriculum' for educators, mentors, and leaders to use as a guide for students engaging with the material. Link: <http://www.drawntohomecomic.com/>

To suggest a topic or speaker for a future HEN meeting, contact Brian Knight at [bknight@homelessfund.org](mailto:bknight@homelessfund.org).



## Homeless Education Network (HEN)

### MEETING REPORT

Thursday, March 26 2020

9 – 11 AM | Zoom

### **The Wellness Collective**

Shanon Williams, Wellness Collective Founder, informed participants about the Collective's relatively new programming, which focuses on connecting community members in need to trauma-informed assistance through crowdfunding, mutual aid, and paths to independent wellness/sustainability.

- **The Wellness Collective is a consortium of neighbors helping neighbors through emergencies and onto a path of stability.** Currently serving The Greater Pittsburgh Area, this membership collective allows everyday people to access immediate support and long-term solutions to necessities such as mental and physical health, housing, transportation, nutrition, education, and the like!

<https://www.thewellfolk.org>

### **Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program**

Laura Saulle, DHS Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program Manager, offered an in depth presentation on a new series of sustainably funded programs and services aimed at addressing/preventing youth homelessness in Allegheny County.

- **School McKinney-Vento liaisons and existing housing/human service providers will play a key role in identifying unstably housed students** in the school systems and connecting them to YHDP resources before .
- **Access Laura's presentation here:** <https://docs.google.com/presentation/d/1cK6pDzVobLjgNvgYzCHy-GKAH1nkr2alm01XrbNniQ/edit?usp=sharing>. Please email [Laura.Saulle@AlleghenyCounty.US](mailto:Laura.Saulle@AlleghenyCounty.US) with questions about how you/your organization can best get involved with/support this project.

**Thanks for everything all of you are doing!**