

The Rural Homeless: Special Needs and Solutions

Gregory Hardy
Cuba-Rushford Central School

The Rural Homeless: Special Needs and Solutions

Presenter: Gregory Hardy, Cuba-Rushford Central School

This workshop will explore a lesser-known aspect of McKinney-Vento: the special needs of rural homeless students and families. The workshop will provide a brief review of the research about student mobility in rural New York as well as some of the problems confronting small, rural districts. Participants will discuss and exchange tips that small districts can use to efficiently and effectively serve their McKinney-Vento students. Participants are encouraged to bring questions and comments about the needs of and services for rural homeless families in their districts.

This workshop is appropriate for new or experienced liaisons, social service providers, or for community-based organizations who serve rural families.

HARDY WHY? CRCS

- ✓Cuba-Rushford is a rural district in Allegany County
- ✓950 K-12 students
- ✓162 square miles
- ✓The district lies in thirteen different townships and two different counties

HARDY WHY? CRCS

Map 1. Upstate New York School Districts, Showing Patterns of Wealth and Disadvantage

The map shows various school districts across Upstate New York. A legend indicates that shaded areas represent 'Disadvantaged Districts' and unshaded areas represent 'All Other Districts'. Major cities like Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Binghamton, and Albany are labeled. A red box highlights the Cuba-Rushford district in the western part of the state. A scale bar at the bottom indicates 0, 50, and 100 miles.

HARDY WHY? CRCS TODAY

- ✓Characteristics of the rural poor
- ✓Problems of homeless families in rural areas
- ✓What we do in my school...
- ✓What do you do in yours?

Characteristics of Rural Poor

- "The world is defined in local terms" (Payne, 1996)
- "Local" for rural poor is a radius of 15-19 miles (Schafft, 2006)
- This is further defined by the location of a family group

Characteristics of Rural Poor

- "The world is defined in local terms" (Payne, 1996)
- Reinforced by a lack of adequate or reliable transportation
- Also reinforced by a lack of "start-up funds"

Characteristics of Rural Poor

- "People are possessions"
- This is most clearly the case regarding one's children
- "Education allows children to leave"
- "If my children get educated, they will leave and I will have nothing."

Characteristics of Rural Poor

- "Language skills are lacking"
- It's easier to avoid communication with the school than to feel foolish
- "We don't discuss this outside the family"

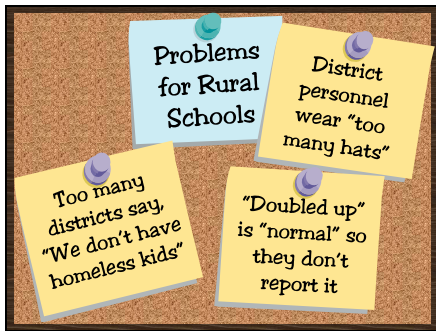
Characteristics of Rural Poor

- "Ramifications for schools"
- Families will become homeless frequently
- They will move to a new location close to the old one
- They will be likely to move in with family

Characteristics of Rural Poor

- "Ramifications for schools"
- They may not want to use the word "homeless"
- They may not tell anyone they moved
- They will probably not make a decision to move based on the educational needs of children





This is what we are doing in our District:

- ∞ Trained “front-line people” to ask the “right questions”
- ∞ Developed a simple form to guide procedure
- ∞ Developed a new position (Coordinator of Student Services)

This is what we are doing in our District:

- ∞Communicate clearly with everyone involved
- ∞Keep the Transportation Supervisor apprised of any changes
- ∞Remind ourselves of why we are doing this in the first place

These are what we perceive to be obstacles:

- ∞Transportation Supervisors don't necessarily know one another
- ∞There are still District leaders who choose to ignore dealing with these families

What success are you having in your own district?

Homeless Student Service Enrollment Procedure

Student Name:

Date:

Parent Name:

Phone:

At the time of meeting:

- Determined that the student is homeless
- Complete the STAC Form
- Determine School of Attendance →
- Set a time for next meeting or phone call (Bussing arrangements)
- Allow for a meeting between the parent and Coordinator of Student Services

Immediately following the meeting:

- Notifications by Homeless Liaison
 - Building Principal
 - Transportation Director (“Notify Building Secretary of bussing arrangements immediately”)
 - Building Secretary (“Notify parents of bussing arrangements immediately”)
 - Coordinator of Student Services (“Schedule a home visit or meeting”)
 - Title I Teachers in Building (“Immediate screening and enrollment”)
 - Cafeteria Manager (“Breakfast and lunch begin immediately”)
 - Cafeteria in Building (“Breakfast and lunch begin immediately”)
 - Attendance Clerk (“Create new student record”)
 - Superintendent (“Be aware that we have a new homeless family in the District”)
- Copy STAC for files
- Mail STAC original

Next day - follow up:

- Cafeteria services set and Title I services in place if needed
- Coordinator of Student Services home visit or meeting

References

Benitez, Cristobal. "McKinney-Vento Act: A Bridge to Social Justice and Homelessness." *SAANYS Journal*, Fall 2009.

Payne, Ruby K., Ph.D. *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*. Highlands, TX: aha! Process, Inc, 1996.

Schafft, Kai A. "The Incidence and Impacts of Student Transiency in Upstate New York's Rural School Districts." *Journal of Research in Rural Education*, 2005, 20(15).

Schafft, Kai A. "Low Income Student Transiency and Its Effects on Schools and School Districts in Upstate New York: The Perspective of School District Administrators." Cornell University, August 2002.

Schafft, Kai A. "Poverty, Residential Mobility and Student Transiency within a Rural New York School District." *Rural Sociology*, 2006, 71(2).

Additional Websites

<http://www.ers.usda.gov/Data/PovertyRates/>

The USDA site offers specific information about communities and counties based on national census data.

<http://www.ed.psu.edu/educ/crec/>

This is the site for the Center on Rural Education and Communities, and it provides a variety of links to research.

<http://www.ahaprocess.com/>

Most of the work by Ruby Payne is available from this site. There is information on generational poverty, as well as steps taken by schools and communities to combat the effects of poverty in rural areas.