

# School Social Worker

Bruce A. Copeland, Ph.D., MSW, LCSW, CSOTP  
Coordinator, School Social Work  
Hampton City Schools

# Related Fields of Study

- Sociology, School Counseling, Psychology and Social Work explores all aspects of human thought and behavior
  - Sociology - Sociologists studying a people or culture only and seeing the problems or differences, groups, cultures and societies
  - School Counseling - in general, a counselor is much more **concerned with what happens at school** and how to get a student to succeed in their schoolwork. They can delve into issues of bullying, behavioral problems, learning disabilities, and other things that prevent a student from getting good grades, but they are mostly concerned with academics.
  - Psychology - psychology as the study of the problems and trying to right them from an **individual level** (Medical, Disease Model)

## – Social Work

- Concerned with Social Justice - Improving people's quality of life by **fixing problems** relating to poverty, oppression, injustice
- advancing social policies
- Social workers work from three different levels: micro, mezzo and macro levels.
- Strengths-Based, Empowerment, Advocacy Model

# **School Social Work National Model**

An Overview

# Practice #1: Provide evidence-based education, behavior, and mental health services

- Primary direct service component
- Unique expertise in child and family work
- Assistance to school staff in implementing interventions with fidelity
- Accomplished by...
  - Implementing multi-tiered programs and practices,
  - Monitoring progress, and
  - Evaluating effectiveness

## Practice # 2: Promote a school climate and culture conducive to student learning and teaching excellence

- School policies and procedures
- Capacity-building
- Supportive relationships
- Accomplished by...
  - School policies and administrative procedures
  - Enhancing professional capacity
  - Facilitating engagement

## Practice #3: Maximize access to school-based and community-based resources

- Primary indirect or macro-practice component
- Coordinates available services
- Capitalizes on knowledge of school and community resources
- Accomplished by...
  - Promoting a continuum of services
  - Mobilizing resources and promoting assets
  - Providing innovative leadership, interdisciplinary collaboration, systems coordination, and professional consultation

# Key Constructs

- Home-school-community linkages
- Ethical guidelines and educational policy
- Education rights and advocacy
- Data-based decision-making



- Not every school employs social workers. Usually, states don't require them to use social workers; but in **urban settings, especially at low-income schools**, many administrators and school boards find that social work is integral to their students' success. Social workers are concerned with issues that go on at home. This can mean anything from making sure a student has their food and housing needs met to identifying and pursuing cases of possible child abuse. Social workers are also much more likely to meet with parents and school administrators to discuss what can be done about a student's situation.

# Hampton City Schools

- Demographic Facts
  - Hampton City Schools has 1,530 highly qualified and dedicated teaching professionals. That is, 259 elementary, 216 middle and 237 high school teachers hold a master's degrees and higher. Ninety-four teachers are National Board Certified.
  - Hampton City Schools serve 20,829 students including 530 students from 56 countries, speaking 35 different languages. The district budget is \$196,018,093, which includes a \$10,061 per pupil expenditure.
  - Students are offered rigorous academic instruction that includes 19 advanced placement courses. Currently, Hampton City Schools has 19 Elementary, 5 middle schools and 4 high schools. In addition, there is 1 Early Childhood Center, 1 Gifted Center, 2 PK-8 Schools and 1 alternative learning programs. Of its 33 schools, 12 are Title I.

- Like many school divisions across the nation, Hampton City Schools strives to meet the unique learning needs of students experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage. Of the more than 20,000 students educated in the Hampton City Schools, nearly approximately **12,522 (56%) are considered economically disadvantaged. Of that number approximately 4,906 receive free or reduce lunch.** They include 355 students who are homeless students are considered homeless. Of these students, 111 are housed in either hotel/motels or in shelters. That is, 87 are housed in hotels/motels and 24 reside in shelters.
- Families with children are among the fastest growing segments of the homeless population. In the United States today, an estimated 1.35 million children are likely to experience homelessness over the course of a year (The Institute for Children and Poverty, 2004). According to Access to Success: Meeting the Educational Needs of Homeless Children and Families (1993), homeless children are nine times more likely to repeat a grade, four times more likely to drop out of school, three times more likely to be placed in a special education program, and two times more likely to underperform on standardized tests than non-homeless children.

# HCS Social Work Services

- Regular Education

- Home School
- McKinney Vento
- Child Abuse/Neglect
- Attendance
- Culture and Climate
- Mental Health
- Policy
  - » Disproportionality – Low Income, Minorities, Special Education  
**(Black male students as disabled in the categories of Intellectual Disability and Specific Learning Disability)**
  - » Achievement Gap- Low Income, Minorities, Special Education
  - » Discipline - Low Income, Minorities, Special Education
  - » Disadvantage - Low Income, Minorities, Special Education

# McKinney Vento

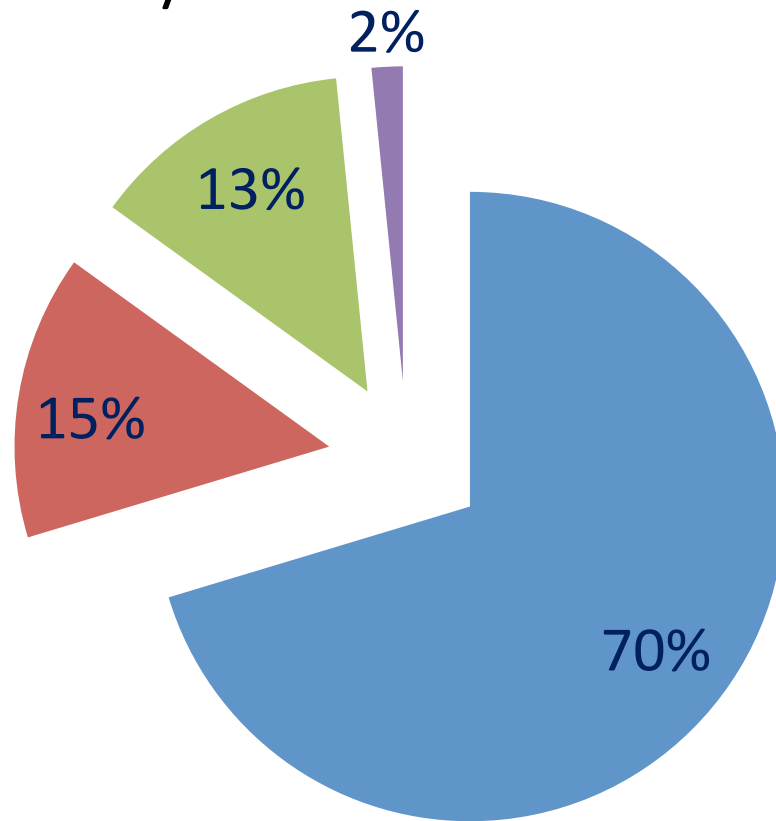
## Defining homelessness

- An individual (including children and youth) who:
    - *sharing housing* due to **loss of housing or economic hardship**
    - lacks a **fixed, regular,** and **adequate** nighttime residence :
      - **Fixed:** Stationary, permanent, and not subject to change
      - **Regular:** Used on a predictable, routine, or consistent basis (*e.g. nightly*)
      - **Adequate:** Sufficient for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments
- Can the student go to the SAME PLACE (fixed) EVERY NIGHT (regular) to sleep in a SAFE AND SUFFICIENT SPACE (adequate)?***

Initial Primary Nighttime Residence	Category
<p>Children and youth living in abandoned buildings, campgrounds and vehicles, <b>space not meant for habitation</b>, trailers or FEMA trailers, cars, bus and train stations, and abandoned in the hospital. <b>Substandard or inadequate housing</b> does not easily fit into any category as it is not governed by a specific definition and is judged on a case-by-case basis. An inadequate dwelling may shelter but it is not adequate housing.</p>	<p><b>Unsheltered</b></p>
<p>Children and youth living in <b>shelters and transitional housing programs</b> (homeless and domestic violence programs). Children and youth awaiting foster care placement.</p>	<p><b>Shelter</b></p>
<p>Children and youth (<b>including runaway youth or unaccompanied youth</b>) who <b>live with relatives or friends</b> due to being homeless.</p>	<p><b>Doubled-Up</b></p>
<p>Children and youth living in <b>hotels/motels</b> due to a lack of alternative adequate accommodations.</p>	<p><b>Hotel/Motel</b></p>

# Virginia 2012 Primary Nighttime Residence

- Doubled up
- Sheltered
- Hotel/motel
- Unsheltered



# Defining homelessness (cont'd)

Including children and youth :

- abandoned in hospitals
- *awaiting foster care*
- having a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, regular sleeping accommodations
- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations
- *migratory students* meeting the description
- *unaccompanied youth* meeting the description



# Who are unaccompanied students?

- 2-step process
  - 1) Does the student's living arrangement **meet** the McKinney-Vento Act's **definition of homeless**?
  - 2) Once homelessness is determined, is the student **unaccompanied**?
- Unaccompanied = “**not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian**”; in practical terms, this means the youth does not live with the parent or guardian

# McKinney-Vento Act: Immediate Enrollment

Requires public schools to immediately enroll students experiencing homelessness even when lacking documentation, such as:

- proof of residency
- guardianship
- birth certificates, school records, or other documents
- medical records, including immunization records
- uniform or dress code requirements

# McKinney-Vento Act: Enrollment Options

- School choice:
  - school of origin, if feasible
  - school in current residency area

# McKinney-Vento Act: Attendance

- Transportation
- Attendance Officers
- Truancy Laws

# McKinney-Vento Act: Attendance & Success

- Comparable services
- Parental involvement
- Liaison collaboration between social service agencies and school divisions to serve students
- Restricts segregation of homeless students

# Ensuring Access to Educational Services

- Free and reduced price breakfast and lunch programs
- Title I
- Special education
- Gifted programs
- Transportation
- After school and summer programs
- Head Start and (Even Start), VPI

# Participation

- Regular classes
- Other special programs for which student is eligible (e.g., special ed, gifted ed)
- Field trips
- After school activities (???)

**How does the school district determine if a student fits the definition of “awaiting foster care”?**

HCS Division **recommends contacting** the Children’s Division of the **Department of Social Services** for assistance in making a determination as to a student’s care status.



**If a homeless coordinator suspects that a “homeless” child is not truly homeless, how would the division prove that a person is not homeless?**

- McKinney-Vento requires homeless children to be **enrolled immediately** even if the student can't provide education records.
- **Until the division determines otherwise**, the student should be enrolled.
- Most school divisions have a standard enrollment/registration form and/or a proof of residency waiver **form** that **should provide** the homeless coordinator **enough information to make a determination** as to the student's homeless status.
- If not, the homeless coordinator can continue to **monitor** the child's status throughout the school year if the form doesn't provide enough information for the coordinator to initially make an informed decision.

# Poverty

- What School Social Workers Know:
  - Poverty is the Achievement Gap
  - A good quality education offers a student in poverty the best chance to move into the Middle Class
  - Relationships matter when educating students in poverty
  - As poverty increases achievement decreases.
  - Public Education is Based on middle class values, business principles and is political
  - Schools are a reflection of the community