CHECK-IN CHECKLIST:
Connecting with Families During Hybrid and Remote Instruction

Whether your students are returning to school in-person, remotely, or a combination of both, liaisons play a critical role in helping students and families experiencing homelessness meet their **basic needs** (*e.g., food*), **education-related needs** (*e.g., remote learning tools*), and **social-emotional needs** (*e.g., supportive connections*).

One obstacle liaisons may face this year is maintaining consistent communication and connection with the students and families that they work with. This "Check-in Checklist" provides strategies liaisons can use in their outreach to families and youth, making sure that they are connected to school.

OUTREACH

☐ **Make a plan to regularly connect with ALL parents and unaccompanied youth in temporary housing.**

- Ideally, **all parents and unaccompanied youth in temporary housing should receive at regular individualized calls** during this time to check in on how they are doing and make sure they are connected with any needed supports from the school (e.g., help with remote learning, accessing grab and go meals) and from the community (e.g., referral for food pantry, housing assistance, benefits). If that is not possible, prioritize individual outreach to your most **highly mobile families and unaccompanied youth,** first.

- **Consider who else in the school/district is already doing this outreach and who might be available to help you.** In most districts, the McKinney-Vento liaison is taking the lead on outreach to families in temporary housing, but in some districts this is more than a one-person job, and liaisons are enlisting the help of others (e.g., teachers, counselors, student advisors, coaches, and other school or district staff), especially those with whom the student or family has a relationship. **Remember to coordinate your calls** with any that other staff may be making. Most parents, for example, don't want calls from three different people from their child's school in one week asking how they're doing. If possible, try to make sure that the same person is checking in with the same family. It's all about relationships!

- **Make sure that other school staff are aware of the possible signs of homelessness and that they refer families and youth to the liaison.** Some liaisons are distributing materials within their school districts and facilitating virtual trainings for their colleagues about identification and outreach strategies regarding students experiencing homelessness.

☐ **Create a system to track check-in conversations.** With people working in different places, it can be difficult to keep track of who has spoken with whom and what the next steps are. Create a shared Google Calendar, Google sheet, Excel sheet, or other organizational tool to keep track of check-ins and follow-ups. It doesn't have to be anything fancy. You can use the sample **Check-In Checklist on page 4** as a starting point.

☐ **Use all modes of communication to reach families and students** and don't give up if it takes a few tries. Liaisons have used email, phone, texting, regular mail, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat, WhatsApp, home visits, etc. to connect with parents and youth. When you do connect with a parent and student, make sure to ask about when and how best to reach them in the future and note it in your check-in tracker.

CHECKING IN

☐ **Be clear about who you are and why you are calling.** Share that the purpose of the conversation is to find out how best to support the family during this challenging time. If you haven't spoken with the parent or student before, explain your role. Try to schedule check-in conversations when you have blocks of uninterrupted time. This will allow for open conversations without time constraints. However, **if you have limited availability communicate this prior to starting the conversation** to avoid students and families feeling rushed.

> *"I'm the McKinney-Vento liaison for the school district. I'm reaching out to all parents and students in temporary housing to check-in and to find out how I can best support you."*

☐ **Use a strengths-based approach** that takes into account the difficulty of the situation and the individual needs of the student/family.

> *"We miss seeing Alex every day and appreciate everything you are doing to make sure he keeps up with school."*

☐ **Alert students and families of any limitations which might compromise their privacy** if you are working remotely.

> *"Before we get started, I want to let you know that I am currently working at home with my kids who you may hear in the background. Is it okay if they are in the room while we talk?"*

☐ **Ask open-ended questions, giving time for parents and students to share.** Remember that nobody expects you to have all of the answers. Just listening can make a world of difference. And being aware of challenges can help you better support students and families.

> "How are you doing?"
>
> "How is your child doing?"
>
> "How are they adjusting to all of the changes?"
>
> "How can we best support your child and your family in the days ahead?"

☐ **Offer a short list of need-specific resources and avoid sharing lengthy lists**. We're all feeling overwhelmed! You can use one of our [referral templates](#) and this [guide](#) as a starting point.

☐ **Ask for permission to share information about the student's housing status** and explain with whom you intend to share the information.

> *"Is it okay for me to share information about your situation with your child's teachers so that they better understand how to support your child's education during this time?"*

☐ **Make sure the family knows how to reach you and when you'll check-in again.** Avoid phrases like, "call me anytime;" unless you really are open to calls at any time. It's important to be transparent about when you are and aren't available to students and families.

> "Would it be ok if I called again next week to check in?"

TIPS FROM LIAISONS - What to do when you're having trouble getting a response

- Ask adults who have existing relationships with the students and families (*i.e. teachers, social workers, coaches, etc*.) to reach out. Families and youth may be more likely to connect with someone they already know and trust.
- Ask a friend of the student if they have updated contact information to share. Alternatively, ask the friend(s) if they can message the student you are trying to reach on social media to pass along your message.
- Reach out to emergency contacts previously provided by the family or youth.
- For some parents, a phone call may be comforting, but for others, a short text message may be preferable. Some students won't pick up a call on their cell phone, but will respond to a FaceTime call. Don't give up! It may take several attempts to figure out what works with a particular family or student.
- Make sure to explain upfront the reason why you are reaching out. Many families are overwhelmed with calls and/or are worried about "being in trouble." If they know your intention is to support them, they are more likely to respond.
- Many families will not respond to mass emails or text messages. Personalize your outreach as much as possible.
- If you are working with multi-lingual families, make sure that you are using interpreters and/or translation services to share both verbal and written information.
- Try using various communication apps such as Google Voice, Class Dojo, Remind, Pupil Path, Parent Square, Talking Points, Jupiter, Konstella, Zoom, etc.
- Create posters, flyers, brochures, guides, and/or information packets to leave in areas that families may be visiting (*i.e. community centers, local grocery stores, food banks, shelters, school meal pick up points, etc*.).

Check-in Checklist

Student's name:

Date:

Current living situation (e.g. doubled-up, in shelter):

Do you need help with?

🏠	Help and referrals provided
Housing for quarantine and/or recovery	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now
Emergency housing	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now
Benefits (unemployment, public assistance, SNAP)	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now
🍴	Help and referrals provided
Food, both weekday and weekend food access. *(**Tip**: ask about whether there is access to a fridge or microwave, which may impact what kind of food resources are needed)*	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now
Transportation to pick up food	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now

		Help and referrals provided
Health care	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	
Mental health care	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	
Cleaning supplies (*soap, sanitizer, disinfectant, etc.)* and personal protective equipment (*masks, gloves, etc.)*	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	
Hygiene supplies, and medicines	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	
Baby supplies (*diapers, formula, etc.)*	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	

		Help and referrals provided
Remote learning tools (*Chromebook, laptop, tablet, wifi/hotspot, etc.)*	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	
Special education services	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	
Services for English Language Learners	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	
School supplies (*e.g., books, math manipulatives, games, paper, pens, markers, etc.)*	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	
Prepaid cell phone to communicate with school staff	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	
OTHER:	☐ Yes ☐ Not right now	

For needs assessment questions geared toward youth specifically (rather than parents), see this [Quick Guide for Counseling Staff Working with Students Experiencing Homelessness](#) from SchoolHouse Connection

Ideas for referrals (both resources and services) can be found:

- NYS-TEACHS [Referral Templates](#) and [Referrals Guide](#)
- [NYS-TEACHS COVID-19 and Student Homelessness Q&A](#)
- [NYS-TEACHS COVID-19 Resource List](#)
- [Help Now NYC: Assistance for Individuals](#)
- Call NYS-TEACHS Infoline 800-388-2014 or email us at info@nysteachs.org