



The Illinois Community College Board and the Illinois Center for Specialized Professional Support are partnering to support HOUSE Liaison's through professional development, training, and resources. The HOUSE Liaison Center will be a central hub for all resources developed under this project.

Look for more information on the HOUSE Liaison Center

[Equity in Career and Technical Education - ICCBHouseCenter \(ilequity.com\)](https://www.ilequity.com)



HOUSE HANDBOOK HIGHLIGHTS

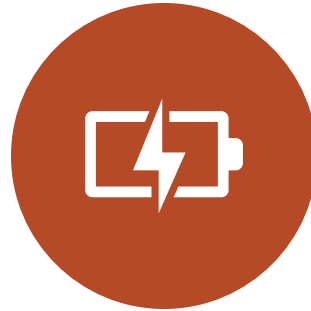
HOUSE SUMMIT, SP25



AGENDA:



CONTENT 30,000 FT
VIEW



NEW LIAISONS &
LESS NEW LIAISONS



TRAINING
COLLEAGUES



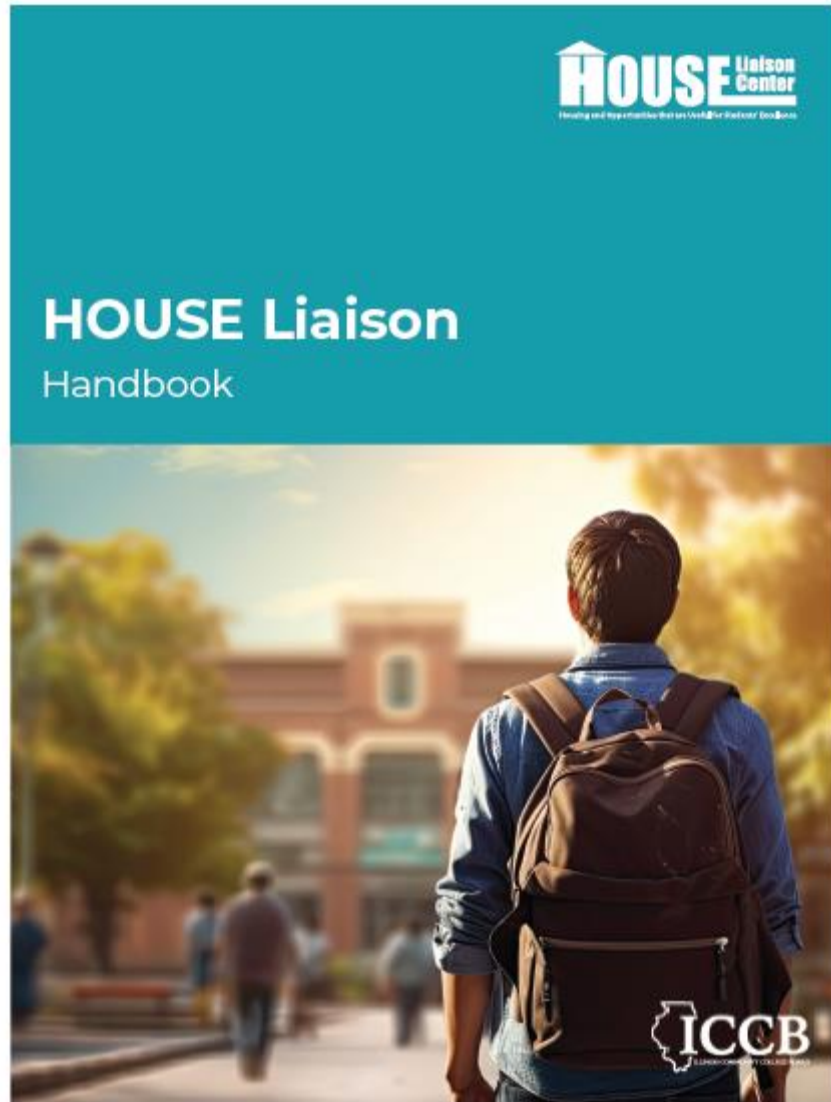
GETTING BUY-IN

30,000 FT VIEW

CONTENT

ORGANIZATION

ICCB COLLEGE EXEMPLARS



Contents

- 04 Introduction
- 06 Definitions
- 09 Homelessness and concurrent issues
 - 11 HOUSE Liaison financial aid duties
 - 13 Ways to help students disclose, using plain language
 - 13 Creating website elements
- 14 Data & Reporting
- 15 Three Frameworks
- 21 Service Delivery Models
- 24 Cross-College Collaboration
- 26 Related Legislation
- 28 College Spotlights

Using Plain Language

Helping Students Disclose

When asking students to self-identify that they are experiencing homelessness, using plain language rather than bureaucratic language is helpful. Keep your phrases short and conversational.

Plain language	Bureaucratic language
Do you ever need help finding a place to stay?	Did your high school or school district homeless liaison determine that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?
Does your current home meet your needs?	
Do you need help paying rent/bills?	

Creating Website Elements

HOUSE Liaisons are responsible for providing resources and contact information on their institution's website. Required information includes the services and resources available through the liaison, as well as local, state, and federal services. Here again, it's best to use plain language and keep it conversational.¹³

Plain language	Helpful tone
Short sentences	Use words students know
Important information first	Keep it conversational
Include details that help the student connect to the resource. Exclude additional content.	Fewest clicks to get to resource
Use numbered bullets for steps in processes	Typical response times
Repeat important information/contacts	

The Programs and the Laws

HOUSE Liaison Actions under HEHOA	How HOUSE Liaisons could Give Support	Related Law(s)
Understand financial aid and independent status for homeless students.	Help students complete FAFSA which determines eligibility for Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Illinois Promise, and Education and Training Voucher (ETV) among other aid (see StudentAid.gov and contact DCFS.ETVCoordinator@Illinois.gov)	Higher Education Act authorizes Pell, FSEOG, ETV
Identify services and resources for homeless students, help connect them to those services, and act as a liaison between a homeless student or student in care and other campus offices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set up campus food-selling stores to accept SNAP benefits Provide students with information on where SNAP benefits could be used near campus Set up at least one food pantry on campus Arrange for students to get food from a food bank or pantry near campus Establish a hunger task force with student members that sets goals and action plans, and meets a few times per year Develop a student meal credit donation program Designate a certain amount of money for free meal vouchers for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 2016 Farm Bill authorizes SNAP Child Nutrition Act authorizes WIC Illinois Hunger-Free Campus Act (unfunded mandate as of June 2024) Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act authorizes TANF Medicare and Medicaid Act authorizes Medicaid
Share information on the college's website about resources for homeless students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Post a link to StudentAid.gov, a portal for FAFSA application assistance, and AbeIllinois.gov, a single portal to apply for multiple benefits through the Ill. Department of Human Services Participate in an awareness day campaign activity Plan a campus awareness event during the national Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week 	Illinois Hunger-Free Campus Grant Act (unfunded mandate as of June 2024)

HOUSE Liaison financial aid duties (continued)

If the institution is unable to document based on the above support, Financial Aid Administrators must make a case-by-case determination. This determination is based upon a written statement or a documented interview with the student.

The statement or interview must confirm that the student is an unaccompanied homeless youth, or unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting; and made without regard to the reasons that the student is unaccompanied and/or homeless.¹³

Any student who was determined to be independent due to homelessness for the preceding award year is considered to be an independent for each subsequent award year at the same institution, unless student indicates a change in circumstances or conflicting information exists.¹⁴

pro tip >>>

Providing a permanent mailing address is often challenging for students experiencing homelessness. The HEA allows these students to use the college's address as their mailing address provided that the student asks for permission and that the college provides instructions to the student for retrieving that mail.

DCFS Financial Resources for Students in Care

DCFS provides specific financial support for students in care. A complete list of resources can be found at:

<https://dcfs.illinois.gov/brighter-futures/growing-minds/post-secondary-education-services.html> <https://dcfs.illinois.gov/brighter-futures/growing-minds/post-secondary-education-services.html>

LOOK FOR INFO BOXES

COLLEGE SPOTLIGHTS

City Colleges of Chicago

City Colleges continues to grow basic needs support services for students in an ongoing effort to remove obstacles to student success and in response to recent legislation. These services, administered by the Wellness Center at each of the seven colleges, ensure that we connect students with resources, address mental health needs, and provide comprehensive student supports.

City Colleges provides on-campus access to various basic needs resources to help eliminate obstacles to academic success and allow students to thrive:

- Healthy Student Market food pantry gives students the opportunity to access free produce, pantry items, and hygiene products.
- Partnerships with local community agencies bring on-campus and on-line enrollment for SNAP, Medicaid, and other public benefits programs.
- Two emergency financial assistance grants provide selected students with monetary support for basic needs and bills when facing an emergency.

City Colleges is actively addressing the needs of unhoused and housing insecure students:

- Students can self-identify as unhoused or housing insecure on our new student application, and they can complete an online intake poll once per term. Our HOUSE liaison then outreaches to these self-identified students to tell them about resources and connect them with community partners who provide housing supports.
- City Colleges has developed a relationship with DePaul USA, a non-profit organization that provides housing and wraparound services to unhoused college students, to provide 16 beds for City Colleges students. We are working with DePaul USA and other community agencies to scale up additional housing options for City Colleges students in future years.

Waubensee Community College

Waubensee Community College realized that for process and services to be consistent for students experiencing homelessness and students in care, they needed to create a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document. SOPs can bring stability to whole-college initiatives by clarifying unfamiliar terms, acting as a quick reference tool, and ensuring that processes happen consistently over time and case by case. They also serve as a learning aid, to help staff familiarize themselves with terms and processes across the institution, making this information accessible to an audience beyond the day-to-day players.

Waubensee's HOUSE SOP codifies the work of the institution in accordance with the Act, and promotes a unified vision of interdepartmental collaboration. The SOP is maintained by the HOUSE Liaison who also oversees the institution's Care Team, the Waubensee staff and administrators who operationalize the processes detailed in the SOP.

The SOP has several sections, detailing the functions and responsibilities of all involved, as well as situating the SOP in the larger context of the Act.

Definitions

To provide content necessary to understand the overall SOP, this section includes terms such as students experiencing homelessness, students in care, HOUSE Liaison, and Care Team.

Responsibilities

This section outlines the departments and positions responsible for carrying out the functions of the SOP, listed by position and duties as they pertain to the SOP.

Process Overview

This section establishes step by step processes and timeframes for each piece of the referral and support process. It includes the establishment and monitoring of a central student support email address and the location on the website of the HOUSE resources and referral process.

Referral and Intake processes

These sections walk the staff through the steps involved in managing intakes and assisting students seeking services. Each step notes expected timeframes for responding to students and the documentation required for components related to financial aid.

BANNER Input

Given the data required for HOUSE Liaisons, this SOP includes information on BANNER, Waubensee's student data system. The SOP provides a crosswalk detailing the BANNER screen numbers with their corresponding intake question number, taking the guess work out of data entry and ensuring the staff are all entering the same information into the same locations. This makes data collection and analysis much cleaner.

Communication templates

The SOP concludes with sample student communication templates for various probable situations. Here again, this creates a uniform process and experience for students.

Rend Lake College

Rend Lake College (RLC) has a CARES (Consultation, Advice, Resources, Exploration, Success) team that provides students with the opportunity to benefit from resources, referrals, and to discuss personal or academic needs. Any faculty, staff, or student can refer a student to CARES. The CARES team is made up of various staff who do outreach, field calls and emails. CARES also hosts free lunches on campus once a month. "Lunch on the Lake" not only provides free meals for students, but it also offers an opportunity to explore on and off-campus resources. Community partners from social service agencies are invited to set up tables highlighting their programs and services.

The CARES team staff maintain RLC's food pantry, laptop loaner program, mental health resources and more. CARES offices are located in three different areas on campus to promote accessibility, including an office inside the Wellness Room, which is centrally located in the library. The Wellness Room is a quiet and safe space for all students. Students can just chill, or they can utilize resources like the mini food pantry that includes snacks and ready-to-eat lunch items.

Improved access to food has been a priority of the CARES team. In addition to Lunch on the Lake, the food pantry, and the mini food pantry in the Wellness Room, a new initiative was launched in 2023 allowing students to charge a food card to their financial aid. Food cards are available in the bookstore and can be charged to financial aid like any other books and supplies. Cards are good in the RLC-Café so that students can have a hot meal and enjoy breakfast or lunch with their peers.

Moraine Valley Community College

The Counseling and Career Development Center at Moraine Valley Community College is a one-stop shop for meeting students' basic needs through their Project Care program. Project Care began in 2014 as a small food pantry on campus when an administrator in the TRIC Student Support Services program noticed that several students the program served were experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. The food pantry stocked ramen noodles, granola bars, trail mix, and other food that satisfied students' hunger while they learned. Today, Project Care is expanding its food pantry in size and scope thanks to a grant from Northwestern Medicine Palos Hospital. The Project Care Food Pantry aspires to become a community food pantry in partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository once the pantry expansion is complete.

In addition to the food pantry, Project Care also offers an Emergency Financial Assistance Grant Program sponsored by the Moraine Valley Foundation. The grant provides emergency financial assistance to students who are experiencing an unforeseen financial crisis that directly impacts their ability to remain enrolled and complete their education. Students have received grant funds to pay for car repairs, medical bills, rent and utilities.

Project Care also provides resources for students experiencing homelessness, and helps connect students to social service benefits, as well as low-cost Internet and other technology essentials. The MVCC House liaison says that what makes Project Care special is the way the whole campus participates in meeting students' basic needs by donating to the food pantry, referring students to the program, and helping fund the effort through payroll deductions.



STRATEGIC HANDBOOK USAGE

FIRST YEAR
OR BEYOND



AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

Thinking about your first year in the liaison role, what was the most challenging aspect of this work?

IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST YEAR...



Compliance



Duties



Definitions



Data

IF THIS IS YOUR FIRST YEAR...

■ Introduction

- Definitions of homeless and in care
- List of duties
- McKinney-Vento
- Continuum of Care

Duties

HOUSE Liaison duties described in the Act consist of 10 tasks around advocacy, subject matter expertise and student navigation.

Expertise

- Financial Aid eligibility, pertaining to students experiencing homelessness including Independent student status from the Higher Education Act of 1965
- Identify services/resources appropriate for students experiencing homelessness
- Track and monitor retention and graduation rates
- Data collection (ongoing) and reporting (annually) to the Illinois Community College Board
- Train the college's employees on identification and referral process for students experiencing homelessness

Navigation

- Assist students experiencing homelessness in applying for federal and state financial aid and services
- Act as intermediary between students experiencing homelessness and campus offices
- Connect students experiencing homelessness to local Continuum of Care program
- Publish services & resources for students experiencing homelessness on website
- Identify housing during breaks, if needed

The Act also gives the liaison the ability to provide additional services to students experiencing homelessness that the liaison believes are within the purview of the role.

Beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, if after three academic years the data submitted to the ICCB demonstrates that the number of students experiencing homelessness or the number of students in care is 2% or more of the college's student body, the college must create a position whose primary function is to carry out the duties of the HOUSE Liaison noted in the Act.³

Continuum of Care

Illinois has 19 Continuums of Care (CoC). The CoC do not always clearly overlap with community college districts, so it's possible that an institution will work with more than one CoC. To identify your CoC, the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) website provides a searchable database Grantee Contact Information - HUD Exchange

There are also likely offices on campus with existing relationships with the local CoC. Check with staff in TRIO, GEAR UP, and Upward Bound offices. Staff in Disability Services and in Adult Education may also have preexisting relationships with the local CoC. Since secondary institutions are required to have "homeless education liaisons" as part of McKinney-Vento, reaching out to the high schools is another way to establish connections with the CoC. You can find your secondary school homeless education liaisons by searching the database at the Illinois State Board of Education's website School District Homeless Liaison Locator (isbe.net)

When building a relationship with your CoC, consider what community colleges can bring to the table for the CoC. For example, CoCs may have continuing education, training, and planning council needs that the college can fill so that this relationship is a true partnership rather than a transactional one.

Continuum of Care List, Illinois

- IL-500 – McHenry County CoC
- IL-501 – Rockford/Dekalb, Winnebago, Boone Counties CoC
- IL-502 – Waukegan, North Chicago/Lake County CoC
- IL-503 – Champaign, Urbana, Rantoul/Champaign County CoC
- IL-504 – Madison County CoC
- IL-506 – Joliet, Bolingbrook/Will County CoC
- IL-507 – Peoria, Pekin/Fulton, Tazewell, Peoria, Woodford Counties CoC
- IL-508 – East Saint Louis, Belleville/Saint Clair County CoC
- IL-510 – Chicago CoC
- IL-511 – Cook County CoC
- IL-512 – Bloomington/Central Illinois CoC
- IL-513 – Springfield/Sangamon County CoC
- IL-514 – DuPage County CoC
- IL-515 – South Central Illinois CoC
- IL-516 – Decatur/Macon County CoC
- IL-517 – Aurora, Elgin/Kane County CoC
- IL-518 – Rock Island, Moline/Northwestern Illinois CoC
- IL-519 – West Central Illinois CoC
- IL-520 – Southern Illinois CoC

FIRST YEAR, CONTINUED

- Homelessness & concurrent issues
- Financial aid/FAFSA simplification
- Student Disclosures
- Data & Reporting

HOUSE Liaison financial aid duties

HOUSE Liaisons need to have a working knowledge of federal and state financial aid processes and qualifications. If liaisons are not based in the institution's Financial Aid office, having strong relationships with Financial Aid staff will be key to the success of connecting students to resources.

For Title IV federal financial aid implementation, the current version of the Higher Education Opportunity Act (HEA) was passed in 2008 as the Higher Education Opportunity Act 2.

This Act considers a financial aid applicant to be an independent student if they are:

- an unaccompanied youth who is homeless as defined in McKinney-Vento, or
- unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting

This is important because independent students do not report parent information on FAFSA, per the College Cost Reduction Act (2007), allowing institutions to calculate financial aid awards on the youth's income and assets. This removes some barriers for students experiencing homelessness and students in care to qualify for funds.

The FAFSA Simplification Act

The FAFSA Simplification Act brought changes beginning with the 2023/2024 academic year in terms of documenting independent student status.

Some of these changes include:

- Financial Aid Offices are not required to obtain proof for the student's self-reported answers on dependency status unless they have conflicting information.
- the Institution decides what constitutes reasonable proof to be provided.
- HEA requires that documentation, provided via documented phone call or in writing, must be accepted from:¹²
 - McKinney-Vento Secondary Liaison
 - Director of shelter/homeless services program
 - TRIO or CEAR UP director
 - Financial Aid administrator at another Institution who documented for the year prior

Data & Reporting

Institutions will report annually to the ICCB. This happens in two ways:

- through the college's AI (Annual Enrollment & Completion) report, and
- through a separate report completed by the HOUSE Liaison

HOUSE Liaison reports are submitted to the ICCB each spring and typically request the following information:

- Location of HOUSE Liaisons on campus
- Communication about HOUSE Liaisons and available supports
- Numbers of students receiving services
- Types of services, and outcomes
- Number of students experiencing homelessness or in care (taken from AI report)
- Challenges and professional development completed/needed

If you find that your institution is still in the process of implementing data collection, four reasonable points for information gathering are:

- the college's application
- the FAFSA form
- the registration form, and
- as part of students' advising process

Remember that homelessness is a status that can change, so put self-disclosures in parts of your process that students see every term.

pro tip >>>

Data collection on the AI report began in 2019 when students experiencing homelessness and students in care became Special Populations for the Carl D Perkins Post-secondary Career and Technical Education Grant. So there should be some mechanisms in place already to help students self-identify. Checking with the department responsible for data collection and report submissions to the ICCB is a good starting point.

¹² <https://itapartnersed.gov/knowledge-center/library/peer-colleague-letters/2023-11-04/#fafsa-simplification-act-changes-implementation-2023-24>



AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

For those of you not in year one in this role...

Thinking about your current year in the liaison role, what is the most challenging aspect of this work?

IF THIS IS NOT YOUR FIRST YEAR...

- Three Frameworks
 - Trauma-Informed Programs
 - Ethics of Care
 - Compassionate Assistance

Three Frameworks

This section provides three frameworks for HOUSE Liaisons:

- The Trauma-Informed Approach
- Ethics of Care, and
- Compassionate Assistance

All three frameworks involve approaching students with kindness, building a sense of community and connection that helps students thrive, and empowering students to use their strengths to achieve goals.

Framework 1: Trauma-Informed Programs

Trauma-Informed programs respond to their understanding of the impact of trauma by incorporating their knowledge about trauma into program design. Trauma-Informed programs examine their policies, practices and procedures through a trauma-informed lens, and actively seek to avoid re-traumatizing students. This approach is operationalized through six key principles: Safety, Trustworthiness and Transparency, Peer Support, Collaboration and Mutuality, Empowerment, Voice and Choice, and Cultural, Historical and Gender Issues.¹⁶

What are Trauma-Informed Principles?

1. Safety

Students and staff feel physically and psychologically safe. Students are invited to define what makes them feel safe. Policies, practices and procedures are structured to make students' sense of safety a priority. For some students, completing paperwork may make them feel uncomfortable or unsafe. Designing procedures so that data can be collected by scanning student IDs or by some other means removes a barrier to connecting students to services.

2. Trustworthiness and Transparency

The Institution and practitioners are transparent about program operations, which builds and maintains trust with students as well as internal and external partners. Transparency examples include: telling students why their

¹⁶ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2014). SAMHSA's concept of trauma and guidance for a trauma-informed approach (HHS Publication No. SMA 14-4884). https://hcrsawac.fhhs.gov/userfiles/files/SAMHSA_Trauma.pdf

Framework 2: Ethics of Care

Liaisons often have to apply rules and use their professional judgement as they serve students. Ethics of Care legitimize using care and context to make those decisions.¹⁹ It takes into consideration relationships, context, and a sense of responsibility to others when making decisions. Ethics of care assert that caring is a legitimate and appropriate way to relate to, serve, and support students. It includes three elements: caring, relationships, and context.

What are Ethics of Care Principles?

1. Caring

Caring involves one person's commitment to act to improve the condition of another person. Feeling compelled to take action to help someone else is a defining characteristic of what it means to care. Ethics of care subscribe to the belief that human beings have a responsibility to help each other. It goes without saying that practitioners operate using Ethics of care every day to serve students with compassion and benevolence. But Ethics of care are for practitioners just as much as they are for students. Direct service professionals can experience secondary traumatic stress as they work with trauma survivors and listen to their stories. It is paramount that practitioners establish and maintain a robust and consistent practice of engaging in self-care. Practitioners must show themselves the same care, compassion and benevolence that they offer to students.

2. Relationships

Ethics of care describe human relationships as a connection between two people in which one person perceives that the other has a need and responds to that need with a caring action to relieve suffering or improve the person's wellbeing.²⁰ Ethics of care hold that engaging in caring relationships is a basic part of human nature and shape human identity.

Our relationships with students provide caring connections that help meet their basic needs and help them recognize who they are. The Trauma-Informed Approach encourages practitioners to acknowledge students' strengths. As we do so in caring relationships, we help students transition from the belief that having food and housing insecurities constitutes a moral failure on their part. Instead of seeing themselves as shameful, practitioners can help students identify themselves as survivors, resilient, valued, worthy, capable and talented.

¹⁹ Dunn, C. P. and Burton, B. K. (2023, June 8). Ethics of care. Encyclopedia Britannica. <https://www.britannica.com/topic/ethics-of-care>

²⁰ Gilligan, C. (1993). In a different voice: psychological theory and women's development. Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press.

NOT YOUR FIRST YEAR, CONTINUED

- Service Delivery Models
 - High-touch vs Low-touch Services
 - Opt-in vs Opt-out Service Delivery

Service Delivery Models

It is important to plan and design basic needs service delivery intentionally to ensure that students receive the essential services to be successful. Thoughtfully planning program design also aids in the implementation of a quality, scalable, sustainable service delivery system that prevents burnout for practitioners. Service delivery models that include a mix of high-touch and low-touch services along with opt-in and opt-out services produce optimal results.

High-Touch vs. Low-Touch Services

Basic needs practitioners are often tempted to lean heavily on high-touch services. They enjoy working directly with students, and they have seen how students thrive in mentorships, coaching and other opportunities where they have frequent one-on-one contact with caring professionals. But high-touch services require a substantial amount of time and energy from practitioners. A comprehensive service delivery model that identifies where high-touch services are most appropriate and where low-touch services can provide quality care efficiently, would stave off compassion fatigue and burnout for practitioners, especially for those working with a small staff.

High-touch services

High-touch services provide support for a targeted population of students through one-on-one, direct interactions. Students who receive high-touch services need more intensive, personalized support which often includes short- and long-term goal setting to aid students in meeting their objectives.

Examples of high-touch services are:

- mental health counselling sessions
- initial basic needs consultations
- individualized coaching sessions
- emergency assistance appointments

Opt-out services

Opt-out services do not require students to take action to enroll. Students are automatically included in the service. If they do not wish to participate, they may opt-out.

Opt-out programs include:

- free breakfast for all students
- food pantries that are available to every member of the campus community
- monthly e-newsletter about basic needs resources that is sent to the campus's global e-mail distribution list

Choosing between opt-in and opt-out delivery

One advantage of opt-in service delivery is that practitioners can collect data from the application forms and registration procedures that students must complete to gain access to services. The data, including demographics and contact information, can then be used to reach out to students and inform them about other resources they might need.

There are also creative ways to collect data through opt-out service delivery, although rather than providing practitioners with students' contact information and data about their specific needs, data from opt-out services can help practitioners grow.

The opt-in model is great for its data collection capacity, but the requirement to complete an intake process may pose barriers to access for students requiring basic needs support. These students are often ashamed of their circumstances. It is very difficult for them to ask for help, so many of them do not ask. Students may be unaware of the services and resources available or may have difficulty identifying their needs. They may become aware of a service that was put in place to help them; however they may believe that the service is not for them and is instead for students facing more dire circumstances. For these reasons, opt-in services frequently see lower participation rates than opt-out services.

Removing the requirement to complete forms or applications increases access to services and leads to higher participation rates. Employing the opt-out model may also uncover basic needs that might otherwise have gone unnoticed and unmet. By offering events and programs that are open to all students, practitioners can hold optimism that students with basic needs will connect to the practitioners and resources that will address their food and housing insecurities.

NOT YOUR FIRST YEAR, CONTINUED

- Maximizing Cross-College Collaborations
- Related Legislation

Maximizing Cross-College Collaborations

Everyone at your institution can play a role in helping to create a network of support to meet students' basic needs. Think about how to make basic needs service delivery a whole college effort. Every person, in every division, at every level of the institution can participate.

Studies show that any supportive institutional representative can help students feel connected to the college and enhance their sense of belonging (Thompson et al., 2019). Brainstorm about who can serve students experiencing homelessness and students in care. Don't leave anyone out! You will need all hands on deck.

Here are a few ideas to jump start your thinking:

1. Trauma-Informed Care training

Since our students are trauma survivors with a high likelihood of mental health challenges, the college's counseling professionals could provide training on Trauma-Informed Care for financial aid staff, Veterans services staff, faculty and other employees who frequently provide direct service to students. This training would help practitioners view their policies and practices as well as students' experiences and challenges through a trauma-informed lens, help avoid re-traumatization for students, and equip practitioners with the tools needed to lead students with mental health concerns to early intervention.

2. On site Professional Development Programs

Plug into the professional development program at the college to educate faculty and staff about how to assist with ensuring students' basic needs are met. Make professional development regarding basic needs service delivery available all year long through live webinars, in-person training, and on-demand videos. Employees can complete the training and an assessment to earn professional growth units (PGUs), stipends, badges, certificates or other incentives that exist on your campus for professional development and training.

Related legislation

There are other pieces of legislation that look to address basic needs insecurity. The Farm Bill provides for programs such as SNAP and WIC on the national level and Illinois has the Hunger-free Campus Act on the state level.

Federal Laws and State Connections

Federal programs that can provide critical support to vulnerable students, and the authority to administer the programs is given to each state.

SNAP is the most expansive nutrition program in the United States, authorized regularly by legislation known informally as the Farm Bill. Nutrition programs may not be an obvious part of Farm Bill legislation but, in fact, funding for those programs makes up over 70 percent of the law's annual cost, with most of that amount dedicated to SNAP.²³

In early 2024, the USDA issued guidance urging states to focus SNAP outreach efforts on eligible college students, particularly now that COVID-19-era assistance has ended. To do so effectively, USDA encourages colleges to use FAFSA data, so long as students' prior written consent is obtained, and their privacy protected.

Hunger-Free Campus

Separately, the State of Illinois expanded colleges' responsibilities to food-insecure students last year through the passage of a law establishing the Hunger-Free Campus Grant Fund. While the law was not funded in fiscal year 2024, if funded, colleges could obtain state funds if one or more of their locations is designated a hunger-free campus by the Illinois Board of Higher Education. These funds could then be used by the community college to connect eligible students to resources that address food insecurity. The legislation lists a number of actions that could help homeless students right away.

example >>>
Both the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program or SNAP (formerly food stamps) and the Women, Infants and Children (WIC) Special Supplemental Nutrition Program address food insecurity and are overseen by the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA), but the Illinois Department of Human Services screens the applications and provides the payments.

²³ <https://www.congress.gov/products/bd/f/f12047>



FOR TRAINING

WITH WEBINAR SUPPORT



AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

What types of things have you done for training college employees on HOUSE?

HOUSE WEBINARS THAT ALIGN WITH THE HANDBOOK

HOUSE Liaison 101 (SP23, SP24, FL24)

- Duties
- Definitions
- Financial Aid
- Continuum of Care
- Data
- Resource roll out
- Plain Language/Web Examples

Identifying students on campus who are homeless (SP23)

- Self Disclosures
- Frameworks
- Service Delivery Models
- Plain Language
- Web examples



GETTING BUY IN AROUND YOUR INSTITUTION

EXEMPLARS & LEGISLATION TO NORM THE WORK



AUDIENCE PARTICIPATION

What types of things have you done to get buy-in across your institution?

SECTIONS CONTRIBUTING TO ROBUST BUY-IN

- Liaison Duties
- College potential to relieve stressors
- Three Frameworks
- Service Delivery Models
- Maximizing Cross College Collaborations
- College Spotlights
- Related Legislation

Maximizing Cross-College Collaborations

Everyone at your institution can play a role in helping to create a network of support to meet students' basic needs. Think about how to make basic needs service delivery a whole college effort. Every person, in every division, at every level of the institution can participate.

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Since our students are trauma survivors with a high likelihood of mental health challenges, the college's counseling professionals could provide training on Trauma-Informed Care for financial aid staff, Veterans services staff, faculty and other employees who frequently provide direct service to students. This training would help practitioners view their policies and practices as well as students' experiences and challenges through a trauma-informed lens, help avoid re-traumatization for students, and equip practitioners with the tools needed to lead students with mental health concerns to early intervention.

2. On site Professional Development Programs

Plug into the professional development program at the college to educate faculty and staff about how to assist with ensuring students' basic needs are met. Make professional development regarding basic needs service delivery available all year long through live webinars, in-person training, and on-demand videos. Employees can complete the training and an assessment to earn professional growth units (PGUs), stipends, badges, certificates or other incentives that exist on your campus for professional development and training.

COLLEGE SPOTLIGHTS/PEER COLLEGE EXEMPLARS

City Colleges of Chicago

City Colleges continues to grow basic needs support services for students in an ongoing effort to remove obstacles to student success and in response to recent legislation. These services, administered by the Wellness Center at each of the seven colleges, ensure that we connect students with resources, address mental health needs, and provide comprehensive student supports.

City Colleges provides on-campus access to various basic needs resources to help eliminate obstacles to academic success and allow students to thrive:

- Healthy Student Market food pantry gives students the opportunity to access free produce, pantry items, and hygiene products.
- Partnerships with local community agencies bring on-campus and on-line enrollment for SNAP, Medicaid, and other public benefits programs.
- Two emergency financial assistance grants provide selected students with monetary support for basic needs and bills when facing an emergency.

City Colleges is actively addressing the needs of unhoused and housing insecure students:

- Students can self-identify as unhoused or housing insecure on our new student application, and they can complete an online intake poll once per term. Our HOUSE liaison then outreaches to these self-identified students to tell them about resources and connect them with community partners who provide housing supports.
- City Colleges has developed a relationship with DePaul USA, a non-profit organization that provides housing and wraparound services to unhoused college students, to provide 16 beds for City Colleges students. We are working with DePaul USA and other community agencies to scale up additional housing options for City Colleges students in future years.

Waubensee Community College

Waubensee Community College realized that for process and services to be consistent for students experiencing homelessness and students in care, they needed to create a Standard Operating Procedures (SOP) document. SOPs can bring stability to whole-college initiatives by clarifying unfamiliar terms, acting as a quick reference tool, and ensuring that processes happen consistently over time and case by case. They also serve as a learning aid, to help staff familiarize themselves with terms and processes across the institution, making this information accessible to an audience beyond the day-to-day players.

Waubensee's HOUSE SOP codifies the work of the institution in accordance with the Act, and promotes a unified vision of interdepartmental collaboration. The SOP is maintained by the HOUSE Liaison who also oversees the institution's Care Team, the Waubensee staff and administrators who operationalize the processes detailed in the SOP.

The SOP has several sections, detailing the functions and responsibilities of all involved, as well as situating the SOP in the larger context of the Act.

Definitions

To provide content necessary to understand the overall SOP, this section includes terms such as students experiencing homelessness, students in care, HOUSE Liaison, and Care Team.

Responsibilities

This section outlines the departments and positions responsible for carrying out the functions of the SOP, listed by position and duties as they pertain to the SOP.

Process Overview

This section establishes step by step processes and timeframes for each piece of the referral and support process. It includes the establishment and monitoring of a central student support email address and the location on the website of the HOUSE resources and referral process.

Referral and Intake processes

These sections walk the staff through the steps involved in managing intakes and assisting students seeking services. Each step notes expected timeframes for responding to students and the documentation required for components related to financial aid.

BANNER Input

Given the data required for HOUSE Liaisons, this SOP includes information on BANNER, Waubensee's student data system. The SOP provides a crosswalk detailing the BANNER screen numbers with their corresponding intake question number, taking the guess work out of data entry and ensuring the staff are all entering the same information into the same locations. This makes data collection and analysis much cleaner.

Communication templates

The SOP concludes with sample student communication templates for various probable situations. Here again, this creates a uniform process and experience for students.

Rend Lake College

Rend Lake College (RLC) has a CARES (Consultation, Advice, Resources, Exploration, Success) team that provides students with the opportunity to benefit from resources, referrals, and to discuss personal or academic needs. Any faculty, staff, or student can refer a student to CARES. The CARES team is made up of various staff who do outreach, field calls and emails. CARES also hosts free lunches on campus once a month. "Lunch on the Lake" not only provides free meals for students, but it also offers an opportunity to explore on and off-campus resources. Community partners from social service agencies are invited to set up tables highlighting their programs and services.

The CARES team staff maintain RLC's food pantry, laptop loaner program, mental health resources and more. CARES offices are located in three different areas on campus to promote accessibility, including an office inside the Wellness Room, which is centrally located in the library. The Wellness Room is a quiet and safe space for all students. Students can just chill, or they can utilize resources like the mini food pantry that includes snacks and ready-to-eat lunch items.

Improved access to food has been a priority of the CARES team. In addition to Lunch on the Lake, the food pantry, and the mini food pantry in the Wellness Room, a new initiative was launched in 2023 allowing students to charge a food card to their financial aid. Food cards are available in the bookstore and can be charged to financial aid like any other books and supplies. Cards are good in the RL-Café so that students can have a hot meal and enjoy breakfast or lunch with their peers.

Moraine Valley Community College

The Counseling and Career Development Center at Moraine Valley Community College is a one-stop shop for meeting students' basic needs through their Project Care program. Project Care began in 2014 as a small food pantry on campus when an administrator in the TRIC Student Support Services program noticed that several students the program served were experiencing homelessness and food insecurity. The food pantry stocked ramen noodles, granola bars, trail mix, and other food that satisfied students' hunger while they learned. Today, Project Care is expanding its food pantry in size and scope thanks to a grant from Northwestern Medicine Palos Hospital. The Project Care Food Pantry aspires to become a community food pantry in partnership with the Greater Chicago Food Depository once the pantry expansion is complete.

In addition to the food pantry, Project Care also offers an Emergency Financial Assistance Grant Program sponsored by the Moraine Valley Foundation. The grant provides emergency financial assistance to students who are experiencing an unforeseen financial crisis that directly impacts their ability to remain enrolled and complete their education. Students have received grant funds to pay for car repairs, medical bills, rent and utilities.

Project Care also provides resources for students experiencing homelessness, and helps connect students to social service benefits, as well as low-cost Internet and other technology essentials. The MVCC House liaison says that what makes Project Care special is the way the whole campus participates in meeting students' basic needs by donating to the food pantry, referring students to the program, and helping fund the effort through payroll deductions.

LEGISLATION

- Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act (HEHOA)
- Farm Bill (SNAP, WIC)
- Hunger-free Campus Act (Illinois)

The Programs and the Laws

HOUSE Liaison Actions under HEHOA	How HOUSE Liaisons Could Give Support	Related Law(s)
Understand financial aid and independent status for homeless students.	Help students complete FAFSA which determines eligibility for Pell Grant, Federal Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grant, Illinois Promise, and Education and Training Voucher (ETV) among other aid (see StudentAid.gov and contact DCFS.ETVCoordinator@illinois.gov)	Higher Education Act authorizes Pell, FSEOG, ETV
Identify services and resources for homeless students, help connect them to those services, and act as a liaison between a homeless student or student in care and other campus offices.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Set up campus food-selling stores to accept SNAP benefits • Provide students with information on where SNAP benefits could be used near campus • Set up at least one food pantry on campus • Arrange for students to get food from a food bank or pantry near campus • Establish a hunger task force with student members that sets goals and action plans, and meets a few times per year • Develop a student meal credit donation program • Designate a certain amount of money for free meal vouchers for students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 2018 Farm Bill authorizes SNAP • Child Nutrition Act authorizes WIC • Illinois Hunger-Free Campus Act (unfunded mandate as of June 2024) • Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act authorizes TANF • Medicare and Medicaid Act authorizes Medicaid
Share information on the college's website about resources for homeless students.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Post a link to StudentAid.gov, a portal for FAFSA application assistance, and Abe.Illinois.gov, a single portal to apply for multiple benefits through the Ill. Department of Human Services • Participate in an awareness day campaign activity • Plan a campus awareness event during the national Hunger and Homelessness Awareness Week 	Illinois Hunger-Free Campus Grant Act (unfunded mandate as of June 2024)



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

BEYOND THE HANDBOOK



ONE PAGERS—LIAISON DUTIES, SERVICE DESIGNS



HOUSE Liaisons

Public Act 102-0083, more commonly known as the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act, created the Housing and Opportunities that are Useful for Students' Excellence (HOUSE) Liaison at publicly or privately operated post-secondary institutions in Illinois.

>> HOUSE Liaisons provide services and supports to students experiencing homelessness and students in care who are enrolled at the institution.

>> Institutions are required to identify at least one staff member to serve as the HOUSE Liaison. This position can be located in any department or division at the institution based on what is most appropriate at that institution.

>> Beginning with the 2022-2023 academic year, after three academic years the data submitted to the ICCB demonstrates that the number of students experiencing homelessness or the number of students in care is 2% or more of the college's student body, the college must create a position whose primary function is to carry out the duties of the HOUSE Liaison noted in the Act.

Students in Care

A person, regardless of age, who is or was under the care and legal custody of the Department of Children and Family Services, including youth for whom the Department has court-ordered legal responsibility, youth who aged out of care at age 18 or older, or youth formerly under care who have been adopted and were the subject of an adoption assistance agreement or who have been placed in private guardianship and were the subject of a subsidized guardianship agreement.

Students Experiencing Homelessness

An individual enrolled in an institution who lacks or is at imminent risk of lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or whose parent or legal guardian is unable or unwilling to provide shelter and care and includes a homeless individual as defined under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. For the purposes of this definition, the term "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" does not include residence in an institution of higher education's on-campus housing.

HOUSE Liaison Expertise

- Financial Aid eligibility, pertaining to students experiencing homelessness including independent student status from the Higher Education Act of 1993
- Identify services/resources appropriate for students experiencing homelessness
- Track and monitor retention and graduation rates
- Data collection (ongoing) and reporting (annually) to the state of Illinois
- Train the college's employees on identification and referral process for students experiencing homelessness

HOUSE Liaison Navigation

- Assist students experiencing homelessness in applying for federal and state financial aid and services
- Act as intermediary between students experiencing homelessness and campus offices
- Connect students experiencing homelessness to local Continuum of Care program
- Publish services & resources for students experiencing homelessness on website
- Identify housing during breaks, if needed



Identifying Your Continuum of Care (CoC)

To identify your CoC, the Housing and Urban Development (HUD) website provides a searchable database. When building a relationship with your CoC, consider what your college can bring to the table for the CoC. For example, CoCs may have continuing education, training, and planning council needs that the college can fill, so that this relationship is a true partnership rather than a transactional one.



Grants Contact Information-HUD Exchange

Resources



Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act <<



ICCB HOUSE Liaisons >>



IBHE HOUSE Liaisons <<

What are Opt-out services?

Opt-out services do not require students to take action to enroll. In general, Opt-out service delivery eliminates application barriers and eligibility restrictions so students are automatically enrolled in the service. If they do not wish to participate, they may opt-out. Examples of Opt-out programs include:

- food pantries that are available to every member of the campus community
- monthly e-newsletter about basic needs resources that is sent to the campus's global e-mail distribution list
- free breakfast for all students

Why Opt-out?

It is important to plan and design basic needs service delivery intentionally to ensure that students receive the essential services to be successful. When students struggle to meet their fundamental needs, it impacts their ability to focus on academics, develop meaningful relationships, sustain emotional health, connect to their college community, and persist to graduation (McKibben & Oarni, 2022).

Service delivery models that include a mix of high-touch and low-touch services along with opt-in and opt-out services produce optimal results.

Thoughtfully planning program design also:

- aids in the implementation of a quality, scalable, sustainable service delivery system
- prevents practitioner burnout



Opt-out to Increase Participation

Removing the requirement to complete forms or applications increases access to services and leads to higher participation rates. Employing the opt-out model may also uncover basic needs that might otherwise have gone unnoticed and unmet. By offering events and programs that are open to all students, practitioners can hold optimism that students with basic needs will connect to the practitioners and resources that will address their food and housing insecurities.

Opt-out vs Opt-in Services

Opt-in services require students to take action such as completing a form or application to enroll. The default is that students will not receive the service. They must seek out the service, program or opportunity and initiate enrollment to participate.

Examples of Opt-in resources include:

- financial aid
- mental health counseling
- public benefits programs such as WIC, SNAP and Medicaid

Nudging for Opt-out

Nudging may already be in use on your campus as you push information to students about various student lifecycle activities (registration, payment, graduation). But this strategy can also be used to help point students toward services that improve students' connection to basic needs resources. Research on nudging shows that it offers significant benefits for students: it alleviates the mental strain associated with poverty and unmet basic needs, reduces stigma, and empowers students to seek help when needed (O'Hara, 2017).

Opt-in vs Opt-out, Data Collection

The Opt-in model is great for its data collection capacity, but the requirement to complete an intake process may pose barriers to access for students requiring basic needs support. These students are often ashamed of their circumstances. It is very difficult for them to ask for help, so many of them do not ask. Students may be unaware of the services and resources available or may have difficulty identifying their needs. They may become aware of a service that was put in place to help them, however, they may believe that the service is not for them, but for students facing more dire circumstances. For these reasons, opt-in services frequently see lower participation rates than opt-out services.



RESOURCES (CONTINUED)

- ICCB/ICSPPS Resources about homelessness:
 - [Equity in Career and Technical Education - Resources](#)
- Grant opportunity **ECMC Foundation**:
 - [Basic Needs Initiative | ECMC Foundation](#)

WHAT QUESTIONS DO YOU HAVE FOR ME?

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Housing and Opportunities that are Useful for Students' Excellence

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