Southeast Region Community Collaborative

3/14/2018

Number of Attendees: 16
Attendee Affiliations included MDHHS, MYOI, EMU MAGIC, several local school districts (Foster Care Liaisons and school social workers), WCC Reach Program, The New Foster Care, and Ozone House

FSM Welcome: Maddy Day, FSM Updates and FSM Champion Challenge
- Thank you to MDHHS for cohosting
- Welcome to attendees, overview of folder contents and agenda
- Quick background on FSM / FSM Community Collaboratives and info on how to access future events by registering online
- FSM has guides about financial aid, higher education, etc. (http://fosteringsuccessmichigan.com/library/fsm-guides) and a transition checklist, and we are able to send those to you.
- Certificates available for those looking for training hours.
- Michigan's Campaign to End Homelessness resource information
- Michigan's Children's list of questions for gubernatorial candidates
- Please fill out survey!

FSM Policy Update: Ann Rossi
- Introduction
- Two hats: college side (contract manager/coordinator) and k-12 side (making sure kids get to college)
- Doing several ESSA trainings throughout spring
- Overview of PowerPoint slide sheet from folder regarding ESSA
- For specific information/training, contact Ann Rossi at **rossia@michigan.gov** or Kathleen Hoehne at **hoehnek@michigan.gov**
- When federal budget passed, Families First Prevention Act passed, upping age of YIT funding from 21 to 23 and ETV from 23 to 26 (optional state by state)

Shawntae Harris' TedTalk *The Hidden Homeless on College Campuses*
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-wKZEXxRPSk

Panel Discussion (Recording Available at https://www.facebook.com/FosteringSuccessMichigan/)

Introduction of Panel members: Bri S. (WMU Seita), Elazar N. (WCC REACH), Dave Zellmer (Ozone House), Shawntae Harris (WCC)

Questions for all panel members:

With 58,000 homeless students on campuses nationwide [data from TedTalk], this is such a prevalent issue—I'm interested for each of you to share what helped get this on your radar.
- Number came from FAFSA responses, so probably low. Didn't get on radar till working for youth runaway shelter, when I discovered that what I experienced was homelessness.
- I've been at Ozone House since 2009. Ozone house provides services around housing for youths aged 10-20. Through my work I've become more aware.
- I moved from California where cost of living is very expensive. Once I found out what definition of homelessness meant, I realized I've been homeless a lot.
- I learned about homelessness through working at FSM. Also being a mentor to youths with experience in foster care is showing me how it affects everyone.

For professionals on panel. How do you work with students around housing questions?
- Housing is expensive here, too, but other issues come up: no co-signers, no money for security deposits. There's not really an answer, just cobble together a plan.
- Knowing community resources and advocating for more. What about students who don't have any place to live but the dorms? What happens when they're not in school? Adds layer of stress that can impact school. Working at Ozone House, I'm familiar with community resources in this area. Build connections with landlords, see who will work with youths with evictions on record.

[To students on panel] Prior to going to college, how were you supported or planned support for housing?
- I was staying with a friend before college. Had to scrounge around and call around to see how I could get into college. Support from campus support programs and me hustling.
- I was living with my grandparents. I reached out to my aunt. Moved in summer after graduation. That didn't work out, then I didn't have anywhere to go. I had plans but they fell through.

What do you wish the professionals/supportive adults had done or helped you with, especially on precollege-side, regarding housing?
- Promote self-advocacy. Hard to fight for you if you're not fighting for you.
- Support them while they're doing what they are doing. Be there for them.

For professionals, what are some things that you have learned that have made a significant difference for students with housing instability?
- Listening to the students, then using resources to help them.
- Be knowledgeable about the resources that are out there.

Questions from Audience:

Is there a Mckinney Vento or HUD liaison on college campuses?
- REACH program helped me connect with resources. Through Dave and the Ozone House I was able to get needs met. Met with landlord who helped a lot.
- Seita Scholars program sits you down and asks if you have trouble in different areas. DHHS liaisons on campus help a lot, too.
- I sat on Continuum of Care panel. We applied for homelessness grant. We use a resource map and a system map to determine who is accessing what.
- Networking. Make sure students are networked in and have access to resources, are applying for scholarships, etc…
- Know your network, extend that network to your students.

[To students] What are some of the strengths you have that have helped you feel stable in the housing domain?
- Resilience. Have to talk about and voice difficulties.
- Grit. No matter how many times you get knocked down, you have to get right back up.

[To students] At what point did that concept make sense to you?
- Always taught to try hard. I saw that people who didn't try didn't get what they wanted.
- Saw the result of people who didn't get back up, and wanted something more for myself.

[To professionals] What are some things that you guys try to pull out to keep them working towards their goals?
- When coaching, I try not to talk much about self, but sometimes it's helpful to tell stories. Seeing real life examples helps.
- Starting somewhere. It can be overwhelming, just doing it piece by piece. Safety planning is important.

What are some other domain areas that youths experiencing homelessness need in order to succeed?
- Mental health, employment. Each person's level of resilience is different.
- One of the domains we worked with was life skills.
- Planning is important, need to have contingency plan upon contingency plan.
- I look at it as there are so many options, take advantage of all of them.

[To students] In working with some of my teens, it's tough engaging, especially the importance of education. Did you experience any struggles during your high school times?
- School was a place to be. I didn't like being at home. What pushed me through was looking at parents of friends, working their butts off and barely paying rent. Invest in yourself.

- Showing can be assisting. Make plans with the students. Assist and support them. Instead of thinking about highest grade, assist them to get Cs and Ds, which might be good to them.
- Not all teachers are created equally. May not see that student needs a tutor.

[Maddy question to all panel members] If you could wave a magic wand and change some thing or policy in the housing domain, what would it be?
- Housing shouldn't have to be hard to get. Shouldn't have to cobble together plans.
- I'd give students as much access to capital as they can possibly have.
- Education is power. Get the information out there and it won't be ignored. Educate on what homeless really means.
- More funding to support and pay and recognize people in this field.

Debriefing: Any final thoughts from the audience?

[General question] What do I need to do in my community to get students ready for this process?
- Know the resources. Advocate at state and federal level. Make sure professionals are checking in with students and making a plan. Has to be funding. Need to network and communicate.
- Have a community task force to at least assess the needs of the community.
- Reach out into community. When community is aware it can start to make steps in right direction.
- From small strides. As a k-6 principal you have control over the environment of the school. Make it a safe and stable environment.
- What gets counted gets funded. Know the numbers. Build trust to get numbers. There's a lot of power when you show in an authentic way that changes need to be made.

[General question] A lot of campuses have empty buildings. Are they being targeted for possible housing for students with housing instability?
- I feel like things are moving away from brick and mortar. More stipends and scholarships to help students afford housing. It's a good idea—campus real estate is big bucks.
- We need to think about how we are building relationships with landlords.

[General question] As a school social worker, how can I identify students with housing instability and where does confidentiality come into play?
- Confidentiality is a big piece, but it shouldn't get in the way of a student's access to resources. Be familiar with definition of homeless and find someone close to the student to ask.
- In staff meetings, let other teachers know about the issue so they understand their behaviors.
- [audience member] We are spread thin as school social workers, so resources are important.

- [audience member] In my district we have a social worker in each building. Through training, we are told 'if you see this, do this'. We are told how to approach the students and we don't use the word 'homeless' but 'in transition'. One of the most important things you have at your disposal are secretaries. I train them: if you hear this, this, this, or this, call me.
- [audience member] I was an elementary secretary for 16 years, it's true, you hear and see a lot. I'm now a foster care liaison, which is new. We had a meeting a few weeks back and we were told there were questions that we are required to ask, but many districts didn't know about it.

Takeaways
- 'Homeless' is a broader term than most people realize, and includes 'couch surfing' and not having stable, predictable housing.
- Resilience and self-advocacy are skills that are just as important to have as the resources available for housing stability.
- There is a lot of needed work in this domain. School social workers are spread thin, and foster care liaisons (a new position) don't necessarily understand the full scope of their position.
- Networking and getting to know your community are key to providing adequate resources for students struggling with housing.
- For more information regarding homelessness and education, visit the [National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)](#) website, or [Schoolhouse Connection](#)'s website.