McKinney Homeless Children Education Program: 2004-05

At a Glance

The McKinney Homeless Children Education Program is designed to create and provide enriching and supportive services for homeless children and their families. It also advocates on behalf of homeless families by educating staff and community of their responsibilities to the homeless and about the rights and issues of homeless children, youth, and their parents.

The program manager and counselor coordinate the program. Student interns, teachers, and case managers also help the children of homeless families. The interns are Dallas Independent School District students who were hired through the cooperative education programs at Skyline High School and Yvonne A. Ewell Townview Center to work with children who live in homeless shelters and attend district schools. A student intern’s teacher and the program manager must approve an application before a student is hired.

Student interns tutor homeless children, and help with other school-related issues. They also serve as role models and sources of information for homeless children. Regular district teachers teach in the homeless education program. The case managers are employees of the homeless shelters. They help homeless families manage their lives, assisting with such concerns as purchasing medicines, receiving dental care, and obtaining the General Educational Development or GED. The shelters themselves pay the case managers’ salaries.

Evaluation Methodology

The 2004-05 evaluation’s focus was to survey student interns, teachers, and caseworkers about the program, examine the program’s strengths and weaknesses, and recommend improvements. The data were analyzed and reported. The evaluation also included information about a similar survey conducted in 2003-04.

FINDINGS

Budget and Expenditures

The program’s estimated budget for the 2004-2005 school year was $270,000. Three thousand dollars ($3,000) of the budget was for the program’s evaluation. Personnel salaries, program-related training, and instructional materials accounted for the largest portions of the budget and expenditures.

Program Outcomes

- A total of 26 and 17 respondents (interns, teachers, and case managers) completed the surveys for 2004-05 and 2003-04, respectively. Most respondents were female.

- A majority (74%) of the teachers and case managers said their interns were adequately trained and doing a good job. Ninety-four percent said school administrators supported the program. Respondents expressed the need for more interns. Overall, teachers and case managers were satisfied with the program.

- Most teachers and case managers said the interns made their work more personally rewarding. They indicated that the most positive aspect of the program for them was to watch the emotional maturity of the interns develop as they grappled with the realities faced by homeless children. They also cited the positive results of the program. They also indicated program involvement impacted everyone in emotionally significant ways throughout the school year.
The interns recommended that program management curtail opportunities for poor student behavior. They also recommended more program activities for homeless children. They indicated that the most positive aspect of the program was helping the homeless students communicate with others.

Although the interns’ primary focus was on helping students with their schoolwork and school-related concerns, they often served as role models, and sources of support and information in other aspects of homeless students’ lives. They felt their work helped homeless students earn better. The majority of the interns suggested the program include more paid hours for interns. Overall, interns were satisfied with the program and their internships.