

Beyond the Backpack

Practical Roadmaps to Career and
College Readiness for Youth
Experiencing Homelessness

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Agenda

1. Introduction
2. Why the Standard Fails
3. Integrate Basic Needs
4. Redefine Career Readiness
5. Streamline the Financial Aid Labyrinth
6. Build Your Network
7. Q & A

Beyond the Backpack

Dismantling systemic barriers
through investment in cross
sector relationships.



What is the single most impactful intervention
for preventing youth experiencing
homelessness from becoming chronically
homeless adults?

40%

of youth identified as experiencing
homelessness will not graduate
high school this year.

Why “Standard” Fails

Making sense of the evidence base.

Basic needs

- Shelter, food, clothing, sleep, medical/dental/behavioral healthcare, etc.

Developmental trauma

- Skills learned through modeling
- Development of self-actualization and self esteem

Current trauma

- Chronic fight/flight/freeze/fawn (limbic system) activation
- Access to the frontal lobe becomes limited

Siloed systems of care

- Government, education, community-based, and faith-based organizations



Integrate Basic Needs

Concurrent basic needs fulfillment

Prioritize emergency financial assistance, food, and housing stability alongside academic advising.



Trauma-informed pedagogy

Implement trauma screening and asset-based framing to foster sense of safety and encourage active engagement.

Continuous scaffolding

Build a network of trusted adults to support students pre- and post-enrollment.



Cross-system collaboration

Align your site's efforts directly with community-based organizations and state agencies. A no-silo approach.

**Easier said
than done?**

Redefine Career Readiness

Are students ready to meet their own basic needs while seeking career opportunities?

- Earn as you learn opportunities
- CTE programming
- Rapid and/or stackable credentials or certifications
- Apprenticeship/paid work experiences



Streamline the Financial Aid Labyrinth



McKinney-Vento Collaboration

Where applicable, secure independent status determinations rapidly

Timely Application Support

Ensure youth receive side-by-side support for applications for FAFSA, Oregon Promise, and other applicable applications

Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program (ODHS)

Ensure youth are connected to your local YEHP project so they have access to tuition waivers and other support

No Assumptions

Youth need more support around timeliness, application completion, technology access, etc.

Build Your Network

The magic of collaboration is that you get to be the expert at your part of the continuum of care, while supporting the success of both youth and your community partners.

- ✓ Define your youth's holistic needs, including ones you are not prepared to meet.
- ✓ Identify ways youth are currently regularly accessing support.
- ✓ Are there areas where services and support exist but youth are not regularly accessing them? Why? What are the barriers?
- ✓ Who are your collaborative partners and where are there opportunities for growth?
- ✓ Who are you not connected with, but should be?

Scaffolding

Supporting student success beyond high school graduation.



Q & A