
Resources and Strategies to Help Schools Assist Families Experiencing Challenges Related to the Economic Recession

February 2009

Basic Needs

Resources

- Information and referral centers for families in need of services are available in all Wisconsin communities. Call 211 or go to <http://www.resourcehouse.com/en/uwdc/cgi-bin/location.asp> to find help in your community or one nearby.
- A variety of support programs are offered through county Departments of Social and Human Services. A listing of county agencies can be found at <http://www.dhs.wisconsin.gov/areaadmin/HSDListing.asp>.
- Many counties and communities have programs for families that are supported by United Way. To find one serving your local community, go to <http://www.unitedwaywi.org>.
- Information about how to become part of an effort to address poverty in your community is available through the Vision 2020 Campaign at www.2020wi.org.
- Local libraries may list local resources to help families meet basic needs.
- Telephone books often have separate sections listing services and organizations that serve families.

Strategies

- Post a list of community agencies that can assist with food, clothing, energy assistance, employment, medical help, and shelter needs in your school office and other places that have frequent traffic by parents and other family members. A sample *Community Information Directory* can be found at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless/forms.html>. Contact Kathy Trotta at (608) 266-1863 or kathleen.trotta@dpi.wi.gov to obtain 11 x 17 inch community listing posters.
- Create mouse pads and refrigerator magnets with community information on it. For more information, contact Tamara Sutor from the Middleton-Cross Plains School District at tsutor@mcpasd.k12.wi.us or (608) 829-9029.
- Use a district staff team approach to ensure students' basic needs are being met. Please see *Team Approach to Support Highly Mobile and Homeless Students* at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless/resources.html> under "Resources."

Clothing

Strategies

- Partner with stores and community agencies, such as the Salvation Army, St. Vincent de Paul, local churches, etc. for clothing vouchers.
- Initiate a clothing exchange table in your schools where families/students can donate and take free clothing - no questions asked.
- Ask your parent/teacher organization to watch for “buys” at rummage sales for student needs throughout the year. Parents may be willing to look for specific requests based upon need, e.g., size 14 boys’ long-sleeve shirts.
- Partner with a community agency to create a community clothes closet or create your own, <http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/ppp/2008/pdf/76.pdf>. For more information about starting a community clothes closet, contact Heather Lisitza, Wisconsin Rapids School District, at (715) 422-6382 or heather.lisitza@wrps.org.

Community Education Programs

Strategies

- Provide information to parents about community programs that help maintain stability, such as landlord-tenant rights and responsibilities, car and housing maintenance, etc., through school publications and postings.
- Advertise GED, post-secondary and technical education programs in school publications.
- Create mentoring programs for both parents and students to help them cope. Contact Ann Forbeck, Janesville School District, (608) 743-6490 or aforbeck@janesville.k12.wi.us for information about starting a mentoring program.

Child Care

Resources

- The Wisconsin Child Care Resource & Referral Network at <http://www.supportingfamiliesogether.org/> can provide information on affordable quality childcare.

Early Education and Preschool

Strategies

- Use Wisconsin Early Learning Standards with your district preschool program, <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/EarlyLS.htm>.
- Partner with the Wisconsin Early Childhood Collaborating Partners <http://www.collaboratingpartners.com/> to create a community preschool approach in providing early education services.

- Coordinate with Head Start at <http://www.whsaonline.org/> for preschool enrollment.
- Go to Parents Plus <http://www.parentspluswi.org/> for resources on early childhood development and other parenting tips.

Educational Support

Resources

- Information about Title I instruction and services is available at <http://dpi.wi.gov/titleone/index.html> and <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless/resources.html> (see *Use of Title I Funds for Homeless Students under “Resources”*).
- Information for teachers on helping students who are homeless can be found at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless/forms.html> under “Forms, Applications, and Guidance”.

Strategies

- Ask your parent/teacher organization to sponsor food and clothing drives.
- Provide personal care items and laundry detergent as “welcome packets” for families who are low-income or homeless, and unaccompanied youth.
- Partner with universities and colleges to provide assistance with mentoring and tutoring programs.
- Offer before- and after-school tutorial programs. More information about the Kenosha Unified School District’s after-school program for students who are economically disadvantaged or homeless is available from Fran Anderson at kusd@shalomecenter.org or (262) 658-1713, Ext. 117.
- Provide training tailored to meet your district’s needs. UW-Extension has a new curriculum, Poverty Awareness for Community Engagement (PACE). Contact your UW Extension county agent at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/cty/> for additional information.
- Implement a service learning unit about food and hunger. The Green Bay School District has a middle school service learning unit on Nutrition and Well-Being. Contact Michelle Eberhardt at MEBERHAR@greenbay.k12.wi.us for additional information.

Employment Support

Resources

- Information about the Workforce Investment Act (WIA) for dislocated, laid-off, and low-income youth and adults is available at <http://www.wisconsinjobcenter.org/directory/>.
- Information about Wisconsin Works (W-2) is available at <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/w2/>.
- Information about vocational schools and work force development programs is available at <http://www.school-directory.net/schools-in-wisconsin.html>.

Strategies

- Advertise job training and employment programs in your school publications.

Financial Support

Resources

- Information about family budgeting classes through the University of Wisconsin-Extension is available at <http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/>.

Strategies

- Create a district emergency, endowment fund or foundation to assist with student needs.

Food

Resources

- Adults, families, and unaccompanied youth are eligible for FoodShare. A listing of county social and human services departments can be found at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/localhealth/counties/LHD%20Report03122008.pdf>.
- Information about local food pantries can be found at: http://www.wiscap.org/cia_food_security.htm.
- Individuals/households can purchase a food package to stretch money, <http://sharewi.org/>.

Strategies

- Engage in FoodShare outreach, <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/em/imagencies/index.htm>. Inform your community about ACCESS. Anyone in Wisconsin can visit www.access.wi.gov to seek help with health, nutrition and other Wisconsin Department of Health Services programs (enclosure). FoodShare (food stamps) brings money into communities.
- Partner with your food service manager:
 - offer breakfast in the classroom at elementary schools
 - serve Wisconsin School Day Milk in late afternoon
 - offer a mid morning nutrition break
 - offer the grab 'n go program for middle and high schools
 - apply for Severe Need Breakfast reimbursement.
- Take the Breakfast Challenge and expand participation of school breakfast. Go to www.dpi.wi.gov/fns/brkchlng.html for additional information. On-line contracts may be amended 24/7.

- Participate in the After School Snack Program. DPI School Nutrition staff offer technical assistance and best practices for all program administration (<http://dpi.wi.gov/fns/directory.html>).
- Create a friendly competition among grades or classrooms in your school to see who can collect the most items for your local food pantry.
- Serve breakfast and/or lunch at summer school; or participate in the Summer Food Service Program. <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/fns/sfsp1.html>.
- Remind households in your district/school newsletter(s) or white space on monthly lunch menu that they may apply *at any time* for the National School Lunch Program. Participation helps each school district with Title I, SAGE, and other grants/monies. Direct Certification eligibility can be requested as often as the school district wishes from the Department of Children and Families.
- Open a food closet or create a backpack program to discreetly send food home with young children over long weekends and holidays. La Crosse elementary schools use food closets, and backpack programs operate at Tomah Area, Evansville Community, and Royall School Districts.
- Inquire at your county Extension Office about horticulture classes and Master Gardener hands-on assistance, advice, or grants (<http://www.uwex.edu/ces/flp/>).

Health Issues

Resources

- Many families may qualify for BadgerCare Plus and the Family Planning Waiver Program. School professionals can help families and unaccompanied youth explore eligibility at <http://access.wi.gov>.
- The Katie Beckett Program at <http://dhs.wisconsin.gov/bdds/kbp/> allows certain children who are residents of Wisconsin with long-term disabilities or complex medical needs, living at home with their families, to obtain a Wisconsin Medicaid card.
- A list of health providers for women, children and families can be found at <http://www.mch-hotlines.org/web/mch/home.nsf>.
- A list of free dental and medical clinics can be found at <http://freemedicalcamps.com/vcity.php?stateid=WI>.
- A list of domestic abuse programs in local communities can be found at <http://www.wcadv.org/>.
- Information about how school districts can work with parents in domestic abuse situations can be found at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless/forms.html> under “Forms, Application, and Guidance.”
- Advocacy and Benefits Counseling for Health is a Wisconsin-based nonprofit public interest law firm at <http://www.safetyweb.org/> and is dedicated to ensuring health care

access for children and families, particularly those with special needs or whose health is at risk.

Strategies

- Local public health departments can offer immunization, communicable disease follow up, and maternal child resources.
- Larger urban areas and tribal communities may have public access health clinics that will see patients on a sliding fee basis.

Homeless Students

Resources

- Information about the educational rights of children and youth who are homeless is available at <http://dpi.wi.gov/homeless/>.
- Information about best practices for working with preschool children who are homeless can be found at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless/resources.html>.

Strategies

- Place posters summarizing the educational rights of students who are homeless in all school buildings. Free posters, as well as other information on homeless issues, can be obtained through the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) at <http://www.serve.org/nche> or 1-800-308-2145.
- Place Child Find information in emergency shelters and transitional housing programs to ensure that families who are homeless are included. Go to <http://dpi.wi.gov/ec/eccfpage.html> for more information about Child Find requirements.

Housing

Resources

- Information about low-income housing can be obtained by calling 211 and is available through a variety of sources:
 - Department of Commerce at <http://wifrontdoorhousing.org/Search.cfm>;
 - Wisconsin Community Action Programs at <http://www.wiscap.org>, and
 - Rural Housing, Inc. at <http://www.wisconsinruralhousing.org>.
- Help with housing and other assistance for unaccompanied youth is available through the Wisconsin Association for Homeless and Runaway Services. Information is available at <http://wahrs.org>.
- Resources for families facing foreclosure can be found at a variety of websites including: <http://www.995hope.org>, <http://www.nw.org>, and <http://www.hud.gov>.

Legal Assistance

Resources

- Wisconsin residents can receive legal assistance through Legal Action of Wisconsin. Information is available at <http://badgerlaw.net/Home/PublicWeb/LAW>.
- The Legal Services Corporation will help people find legal services in or near their local communities. Information is available at <http://www.rin.lsc.gov/rinboard/rguide/pdir1.htm>.
- Information about legal support programs available in the community is available through County Departments of Social or Human Services.

Parent and Youth Support

Resources

- Low-income students are eligible for services through the Wisconsin Education Opportunity Program (WEOP). More information is available at <http://dpi.wi.gov/weop/directory.html>.
- Some students may be living apart from their parents. The Caregiver's Authorization Form, available at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless/pdf/caregiverAuth.pdf>, may be used to authorize a non-parent to represent the student.
- Information to assist pregnant and parenting teens is available at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/sppw/schlageparent.html>.
- Offer counseling to students about violence prevention. Contact Nancy Olson, Platteville School District, nolson@platteville.k12.wi.us or (608) 342-4010 ext. 1217, for information about their "Choices" program.
- Other information about support for families can be found at the Department of Children and Families website at <http://dcf.wisconsin.gov/>.

Strategies

- Create a safe and welcoming environment for parents and students.
- Create mentoring programs by having parents who were homeless or living in poverty show other struggling parents how to achieve stability.
- Offer parenting classes.

Post-Secondary Education

Resources

- The Talent Incentive Program (TIP) provides grant assistance to the most needy and educationally disadvantaged resident students attending eligible colleges and

universities in Wisconsin. More information is available at <http://dpi.wi.gov/weop/directory.html>.

- Information about financial aid and scholarship information is available from the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) at http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php.
- Encourage families to participate in the Wisconsin Covenant Program <http://wisconsincovenant.wi.gov/> which supports students beginning in 8th grade to graduate high school and enroll in college.

Strategies

- Partner with community agencies, such as the Kiwanis, Lions Club, university organizations, etc., to establish scholarship funds to help low-income students apply for college, technical school or other post-secondary learning opportunities.

Transportation

Strategies

- Learn what community and county transportation programs are available for parents and unaccompanied youth.
- Information about providing transportation for students who are homeless can be found under “Resources” at <http://www.dpi.wi.gov/homeless>.