



Episode 11 – “BONUS: Looking Ahead for the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program” Transcript

Matt Butensky:

Welcome to this bonus episode of the I Will Be Your Voice podcast. It's a new year, 2024, and we thought we'd set our intentions with our Center for Schools and Communities team who are working on statewide projects for the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness program. So today we're keeping it all in the family with our technical assistance staff here at the Center for Schools and Communities. And we're just going to preview what we have coming for 2024, what we're excited about, what we're looking forward to planning and working for you and for Pennsylvania. And with that, we're going to get started. How does that sound?

Ben Simmons:

That sounds great.

Taylor Teichman:

Let's do it.

Melissa Turnpaugh:

Golden.

Matt Butensky:

Awesome. Well, by now you probably know me. I am Matt Butensky, and I'm a project manager at the Center for Schools and Communities. And we have several staff who work on these programs for Pennsylvania, and I'm so excited to talk about what we have coming for 2024. So with that, I'm going to have Taylor start. And Taylor introduce yourself and talk about-

Taylor Teichman:

Hi.

Matt Butensky:

Yes, hi. And what you have coming and what you're looking forward to in 2024.

Taylor Teichman:

Sure. Hi, I am Taylor Teichman with the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness program. I am excited for, well, I guess quite a few things this 2024. We are in the early stages of planning for our annual statewide Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference, which will be taking place in the fall of 2024. So, a little bit away at the moment, but we're always thinking throughout the year of what we would like to bring to the conference and to our liaisons and educators there. So that being said, we're looking forward to bringing... We always bring some kind of McKinney-Vento foundational setting type of session. So you'll definitely have the opportunity to experience hopefully a few sessions around that at the conference. And we're also hoping to have some other tracks that will highlight particular student populations, including LGBTQI+ students. We're hoping to bring some focus around pregnant parenting and or caregiver students who are experiencing homelessness, and also to what we know are some other vulnerable student populations.

Also excited that we are collaborating with the PA Head Start State Collaboration Office. We're doing a lot of capacity building and support right now for our regional teams across the state, and for LEAs really harnessing and focusing in on our birth-to-age-five population. So you'll see and find hopefully some additional resources and materials trainings coming down the road with that collaboration. We're also looking at collaborating with some state and national experts to compile some children and youth human trafficking resources materials and trainings that will be directly for educators and youth-serving professionals. We know from research that this is a vulnerable population for both labor and sex trafficking. So we are looking forward to being able to bring some additional resources in for folks around that. And then finally, we are looking at doing some educator wellness retreats, getting folks outside in nature to refuel some energy. And within those spaces, we'll be exploring and unpacking workplace culture. We'll be hosting some leadership conversations in those spaces and really kind of sitting with the question, what is our personal inheritance. So just a few things.

Matt Butensky:

That's just a few things?

Taylor Teichman:

Just a few things.

Matt Butensky:

That's exciting. You have a lot going on and a lot planned for 2024. We like to say that Taylor works on our ECYEH main program as we are currently doing a lot of navigating of the American Rescue Plan, Homeless Children and Youth projects. So Taylor has a lot of things going on for ECYEH main. And any hints or ideas where Paving the Way might go for 2024?

Taylor Teichman:

Ooh.

Matt Butensky:

Too early? Is it too early?

Taylor Teichman:

Let's say likely the eastern side of the state this year. Since we were just on the western side of the state for 2023, we were out in the Pittsburgh area, so we're hoping to bring this over more towards the eastern side of the state this year.

Matt Butensky:

Yes. So, what we can expect is probably later this spring a call for proposals. So, if people are interested in presenting at our conference, we love to have anyone that's really focused on this topic area possibly present for us. So, you can look for that call for proposals later this spring, consider what you might want to present on. Now that's exciting. Yeah. Okay. And for the under-five population, we know that those children are often under-reported. So, we know that in general, identification has been increasing a lot in Pennsylvania for students experiencing homelessness, but we know that there's still work to do, particularly with the under-five populations. So, teaming up with our early childhood partners is something that we've had on our front burner for the last couple of months and are excited about what we might do further with them. Thank you, Taylor, for sharing about what you're working on for 2024.

Taylor Teichman:

Thank you.

Matt Butensky:

So, with that, I had said Taylor works on ECYEH main, and I thought we'd talk a little bit now about American Rescue Plan, Homeless Children and Youth projects. As we know, American Rescue Plan, HCY, is coming to a close in 2024, and we have kind of a slew of new projects that we're still planning and trying to make really good use of the funding while we have it to help our students. So Melissa, who you've heard on many episodes of I Will Be Your Voice, is our ARP-HCY girl, and she's going to talk about what we have cooking. Melissa, say hi.

Melissa Turnpaugh:

Hello again to all my fans out there listening. So for 2024, super excited to be starting. We just recorded our first episode for the podcast I Will Be Your Voice yesterday with Eden Village. So hopefully you've had a chance to check that out and hear about what's going on right here in our area of Harrisburg. But the biggest thing that I'm most excited about is our Build Your Best Summer Camp. That will be for 50 middle school students experiencing homelessness across

Pennsylvania. So, the past couple of years, we have done this a hundred percent virtually, and this will be our first year that we actually get to have these students in person. And being someone who did a lot of direct work in my previous positions, this is something that is really near and dear to my heart, and super excited to spend a week with the middle school kids and kind of getting to know them and their stories and helping them expand their personalities and figuring out what's next for them as they navigate life.

So, we're going to be hosting this at a higher education institute that will be able to accommodate our 50 middle school students. They'll get the experience to stay in dorms, get the opportunity to experience college life for age appropriateness, being able to have a tour of the campus. So they'll get to see dorms and classrooms and the athletic facilities and any other amenities that this university may have, but also be able to talk to some of the staff and maybe get to have a better understanding of what it takes to get into college, what they need to obtain in order to go to a certain higher education institute, but also just be able to maybe figure out what they want to do as a career pathway.

So, we get to put this on, we're looking at having it July 15th to the 19th of 2024. So, we are in the beginning stages of that and just super excited to start rolling out all those pieces and getting registration and being able to get a bunch of middle school students experiencing homelessness to join us and to have an opportunity that they probably have not experienced before. So, if you know anyone who is of sixth grade to eighth grade, so that's rising, sixth to eighth, send them our way. We'd love to have them and join us for a week.

Matt Butensky:

Yay. And we do have a university potential site identified, but we're not quite ready to share where it will be, but it will likely be a more central location that's accessible. And we are trying to figure out some of the transportation logistics and how some of our regional offices might be able to assist with transporting if you do have a student that's quite far away. So, we're trying to consider all of those logistical things now. But yeah, we're excited about our first Build Your Best School Year in-person summer camp.

Melissa Turnpaugh:

A week of no sleep. Here we go.

Matt Butensky:

Melissa is not going to get any sleep.

Taylor Teichman:

And she's going to love every moment of it.

Matt Butensky:

Uh, your dream.

Melissa Turnpaugh:

My dream. 50 kids.

Matt Butensky:

Yay. Thank you for sharing that. So yeah, that is a continuation or a growth of one of our ARP-HCY projects, so we're excited about that. And not least by any way, shape, or form, but I wanted to talk with Ben because Ben is working on one of our ECYEH main and ARP-HCY projects, which is something new that we have not dove into before for our statewide TA and training program. So tell us about it, Ben.

Ben Simmons:

Hi, I am Ben Simmons. I work across a number of our initiatives here at the Center for Schools and Communities. So, it's an honor to be here, and it's my pleasure to do that work. So, what we're looking to do is modernize some of our technical assistance efforts. We've noticed that there's a big need for training when a new homeless liaison takes on their role. And we want to take a little bit of the burden of that training off of the school district, the local education agency, and/or the region. So, what we're looking to do is synthesize all of that information and put that into a kind of archived modular course. So, this course is a way for homeless liaisons or any professional looking to understand the role of a liaison and ECYEH and PA.

They can access this at any time from anywhere. Even though recent data has revealed that, no surprise, people across the state don't want to travel to our in-person events. So, this is a good way to fill in those gaps where you might not be able to access information, so we've got a space to fill in all of those gaps. This is going to be a certificate course. You can gain your Act 48, National Association of Social Workers credit, as well as just your certificate of completion. So, it's a convenient way to meet those needs as well. We really are looking to unify our training efforts across the state. So, we're looking to supplement what regions are already doing and make it easier for them to do that as excellently as they already do.

We also are looking to provide that scaffolded approach. So, we're building up to the ideal homeless liaison, someone who knows exactly what they need to do, when they need to do it. So, you have somewhere to go for all of your answers. Hopefully, our goal is to make this an easy transition for a new homeless liaison or to kind of bolster your knowledge as you perfect your craft. We're also just looking to become a national model of what technical assistance and professional development looks like as we take this initiative into the 21st century and hopefully, meet that diverse need for all of our constituents.

Matt Butensky:

That sounds exciting.

Ben Simmons:

Everyone says learning is fun.

Matt Butensky:

Learning is fun, learning is fun. No, I think we have really wanted to explore offering course modules and things that people could tap into when they need it. And this sounds like a great way for us and a great time for us with the existence of ARP-HCY still in front of us to explore that now while we have a little bit more capacity. So, thank you for sharing that. That sounds exciting. Another item we're looking to build out in working with the Pennsylvania Department of Education is some additional Act 1 support as well. Did you want to just briefly mention what we might be looking at for that and how we might support LEAs?

Ben Simmons:

Yeah. So, Act 1 is, as some of us may know, it was passed in 2022, meant to bridge the gap for students who have experienced educational instability and specifically students of the population who have experienced homelessness, or in foster care, or are court-involved. So, what we're looking to do is really zero in on our initiatives and focus on what resources we can develop and provide. As new guidance comes out of different channels, we want to make that easily accessible and really easy to communicate with families, with the community, and with students.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah. So, we already have some new flyers created and in the pipeline that will speak specifically to educators and caregivers on our student populations, which are those experiencing homelessness and those in foster care placement. So more to come on Act 1 technical assistance support in 2024 as well. Yay. Thank you. I wanted to really briefly share about another project we have that is coming soon through our ARP-HCY projects, which is called the Bridge Project in Pennsylvania, which is going to offer online mental health services for children and youth experiencing homelessness. So, we have partnered with two teletherapist providers that are going to be offering services. The services will be referred through the school homeless liaison, and we're currently building out the program so that students that need these really important mental health counseling and therapy services can get it during the school day or at a time that they wish to, which will be made through appointments in conjunction with the school homeless liaison and of course the service providers.

So, we're going to have a lot more coming out about the Bridge Project in Pennsylvania, and we're really excited about it because it's something we haven't seen before. And it will be, as I said, online based, it's going to be free of course, for the student. Also, their family member may be eligible to participate. No insurance is going to be required for participation. So we're really excited about that new project coming and it should be out within the next couple of weeks, months, we'll see. Coming soon. So that is kind of a quick rundown of what we have coming for 2024, and I'm sure there's more. There's definitely going to be more. But anything else we wanted to share or talk about, about 2024, any other things we hope to get to in 2024? That's a lot. It's a good start.

Ben Simmons:

It's a decent start. Let's see what we can add on. It's only February.

Matt Butensky:

Let's see what we can add on. I'm sure we will. Continuing projects, we still will have our monthly Restorative Practice Series ongoing through at least September, so that's something people can check out and hear about, and learn about through our e-blasts. We will continue to release podcast episodes and yeah, we're excited to make announcements soon about the 2024 conference and where we might be for this year's event. So, with that, any final words from any of the team?

Melissa Turnpaugh:

Be there, be square.

Matt Butensky:

Be there, be square. Anything? Okay. We're really are a great group of... We're a family.

Melissa Turnpaugh:

Long distance relatives.

Matt Butensky:

Melissa says long distance-

Taylor Teichman:

We are family.

Matt Butensky:

But no, it's such a privilege and honor to get to work with the team here. And we really are excited about how we get to work with all of you in the field in Pennsylvania, and we're so excited to share these new projects with you in 2024. So, stay tuned, check back often. We have a refreshed website as well for ECYEH. So that's another-

Taylor Teichman:

We do have a refreshed website.

Matt Butensky:

Yeah, that's another thing. So, check back. But thanks for tuning into this bonus episode of the I Will Be Your Voice podcast. Hope you can check back again for more episodes and we'll see you soon.

Melissa Turnpaugh:

Bye.

Taylor Teichman:

Bye.

Ben Simmons:

Thanks for all you do.