**The mission of Impact Center Schools program:**

**End student homelessness in the Center School District.**

Homelessness is a problem for any family, but the impacts are even more significant when it involves school-age children. You can imagine how difficult it is for students to learn when they are worried about where they will be sleeping that night or when their next meal may be coming. Students in homeless families struggle with regular attendance and academic achievement.

This page aims to provide more detailed information on the Impact Center Schools program and how your donation will be used to help end homelessness for CSD students. We'll cover the following topics:

* Statistics on the impact of homelessness on student learning and how big a problem it is in CSD
* Why homelessness is a difficult problem to solve
* How the Impact Center program works and why its model is so successful
* The current needs of Impact Center, and how your donation makes a difference for students

**The impact of homelessness/housing insecurity on students**

When we talk about homelessness for CSD students, we talk about families with no permanent home and those with insecure housing. The government classifies this at-risk population as McKinney Vento students. Simply put, their housing situation is unstable because they are shacked up with family, in a hotel, in a shelter, or living out of their vehicles. They wake up every day not knowing where home may be that night. They often don't know when their next meal will be and don't have stable environments promoting academic achievement. For example, the local McDonald's lobby provides much-needed free wifi for homework but isn't the best place for concertation learning. They often move from one place to another, sometimes requiring multiple changes in school during the academic year. Studies show that students who move during the school year can lose up to 3/4 of a year of learning as they adjust to the new curriculum, social groups, rules, and expectations. The "mobility rate" measures how many students come in and out of the classroom during the year. The CSD average is just under 40%. In other words, when teachers greet their students on the first day of school, they can expect that 4 in 10 faces will be different by the end of the year. The disruption that this creates in the classroom affects all of the students, and the opportunity for the district to achieve a higher level of academic excellence.

**Why homelessness is a complex problem to solve**

We all have challenges in our lives. Bouncing back from adversity is common in nearly all individual and family success stories. We find with homeless families that the misfortune in their lives has overwhelmed their ability to bounce back. It is usually a combination of factors, including job loss (or poorly paying jobs), unreliable or no transportation, unstable family life, substance abuse, mental or physical health issues, family violence, neighborhood violence, and lack of good role models. Before being houseless, these factors may have existed, making poverty a way of life with no easy way out. Consequentially, when surviving rather than thriving becomes the manual operational system, one can find a history of job loss, evictions, unpaid bills, health issues, and high school dropouts. Many families can't hope past their current realities. Dealing with multiple bureaucratic organizations makes the problem all the more difficult. There are over ten thousand families on the Kansas City housing voucher waiting list. After a year or two of waiting, only half of these families will be housed because less than 50% of landlords will not accept KCHA vouchers. Families get to the point where they simply cannot solve these compounded issues alone. They need a friend with compassion and resources to help them.

**How Impact Center works and why the model is successful**

The Impact Center model was developed by the Kansas Community Leadership Enterprise about five years ago in cooperation with the Kansas City Kansas school district to address the needs of about 1,400 homeless students in that district. The first regional integration was Avenue of Life, and the program has reduced the number of homeless students by about 50% in its first four years of operation. A community non-profit organization called Serve the World Charities serves as the backbone agency in south Kansas City (the exact role played by Avenue of Life in KCK). In conjunction with several other community organizations, including Colonial Presbyterian Church, Caring for Kids, Holmeswood Baptist Church, Health Foward Foundation, and United Way, it aims to reduce the CSD's homeless student population in its first four years.

The concept is simple - the school district identifies families ready to do the hard work of changing their life trajectories. A Navigator (the friend) works with the family across nineteen domains to secure various resources (partner agencies) and work with the family to develop a renewed mindset. A renewed mindset includes but is not limited to accepting accountability, prioritization, and positive habit formation. The partner agencies provide the resources, and the Navigator (the friend) provides the coaching. The program is a year-long intensive case management, but the families remain in the program until the youngest child graduates from high school. The program has worked on a small scale, serving over 30 families, and has housed 107 students thus far. The success of the model is astounding. Over 88% of the families placed in permanent housing remained housed 18 months after placement, and 65% of families that entered the program on government subsidies are subsidy-free. Impact Center Schools have reduced the number of homeless students by 31% in three years. It is truly an impressive statistic if you look at various programs nationwide.

**How your donation will make a difference**

The most pressing need for Impact Center Schools to be successful is to add more Master level Social Workers (Navigators) to increase their service capability. Secondly, continue to develop an inventory of affordable homes that families can rent once they overcome their barriers to success. Lastly, grow partnerships to provide resources in the nineteen domains stated earlier. Over time, we plan to have an extensive team and an inventory of affordable housing that will transform our families' lives and underserved portions of the CSD community.

Your donation will allow us to make the CSD community another model to follow in attacking this complex social problem.

Thanks to the support of our alums and community in 2020, we could hire a full-time Social Worker and executive director to facilitate this amazing work.

[Click here](https://bloch.umkc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Impact-KCK-Assessment.pdf) to read an Assessment Study of the program completed in 2018 by the L.P. Cookingham Institute of Urban Affairs at UMKC.