Guidelines

The following can be used as a guideline to complete the mapping tool and assessment of the resources available to housing-insecure students on a college campus. Read the following section descriptions for further clarification on the value of the elements included in the mapping tool and where one can locate the resources on campuses.

_____

A. TRAINING AND RESOURCES TO ADDRESS HOUSING INSECURITY

Colleges and universities offer training to faculty and staff and provide guidance on how to have a conversation with their students about housing insecurity, the appropriate language to use during such conversation, and additional resources to direct students to either on or off-campus. Resources available to assist faculty and staff can include access to informational material about the needs of housing insecure students in higher education, instructions and example dialogues addressing how to approach a housing insecure student, and contact information to connect students with other professionals that offer assistance.

Faculty members may also acknowledge the prevalence of students' basic needs insecurities in the class setting by providing information on the resources and supports for students facing housing insecurity in the syllabus and in the class. Faculty members can encourage students in their classes to disclose circumstances that can affect students' abilities to complete assignments throughout the semester. Such circumstances may be related to having inadequate housing. For example, students without regular, safe, and secure housing may also not have regular internet access or use of a printer.

Where to find information on training and resources available to faculty and staff: Dean of Students, Provost or Senior Officer for Faculty Affairs, Faculty Teaching and Learning Center

_____

B. PROGRAMMING & PARTNERSHIPS TO ASSIST SPECIFIC POPULATIONS

This section of the mapping tool assesses if a campus has specific offices and programming to support groups of students that face unique challenges and may be vulnerable to housing insecurity. If students are supported by offices and programs dedicated to meeting the needs of these groups, the students will have the space to focus on achieving housing security. Specific populations within the student body that are vulnerable to housing insecurity include, but are not limited to, veterans, individuals that were formerly in the foster care system, first-generation students, DACA and undocumented students, students

with families, students that are single parents, survivors of domestic and sexual violence, members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and individuals that were formerly incarcerated.

If the needs of students within these populations exceed the resources available on-campus, colleges and universities refer students to community organizations that may offer additional resources. For example, if a student veteran needed assistance that extended beyond the resources provided at the Veterans Services Office on campus, staff may refer the student to the Veterans Support Organization in the community. When developing relationships with community organizations that offer resources to students, members of the campus community should have regular and consistent communication with the community organization to ensure that organization has the appropriate resources and services to support students.

Where to find information on programming and partnerships to assist specific populations: Student Affairs, SPOC, TRIO Programming, Financial Aid Services, Health Center, Counseling Center

_____

The following three sections (section C, section D, and section E) apply only to colleges and universities that offer on-campus housing options to students. ***If your campus does not offer on-campus housing, proceed to section F.***
_____

C. BREAK HOUSING

Students that live on-campus during the academic year may not have a safe, secure, and stable environment to return to when campus is closed. Circumstances that prohibit students from having a consistent home environment to return to during breaks include financial difficulty, lack of familial acceptance, and interpersonal conflict resulting in violence. The stress and anxiety for students that search for housing options during break periods can be tremendous and negatively affect academic performance. Colleges and universities can address this student need by offering on-campus housing options when the college or university closes. Break periods may include fall break, Thanksgiving, winter break, Easter, spring break, and summer break.

Where to find information on break housing options for students: Residential Life, Student Affairs, SPOC
_____

D. HOUSING CONTRACTS

In order to meet the needs of nontraditional students and students without a secure home, colleges and universities provide alternative options for on-campus housing. Housing contracts may be designed for students with families, providing programming and space for students to live with their partner and children. Additionally, there are 9-month housing

contracts available to students that include housing during break periods occurring during the academic year. Further, 12-month housing contracts provide students with on-campus housing for the entire academic year and the summer break.

Where to find information on alternative housing contracts: Residential Life, Student Affairs, SPOC
_____

E. ON-CAMPUS SHORT-TERM HOUSING

In cases of immediate emergencies, students may approach faculty or staff on campus to inquire about on-campus dorm rooms that are available for short-term stays. Spaces may be offered to students for free or for an additional fee.

Where to find information about on-campus short-term housing options: Residential Life, Student Affairs, SPOC, Counseling Center, Health Center
_____

F. EMERGENCY HOUSING PARTNERSHIPS

Colleges and universities may foster partnerships with community organizations that provide emergency shelter, long-term transitional housing, and other services to housing insecure students. Institutions may also provide vouchers for students to stay in nearby hotels for short periods of time as a way of stabilizing their living situations while staff members work with the students to find long-term, affordable housing.

Further, some colleges and universities have staff members that offer case management support and services to students and may provide assistance when applying for public housing. This person may act as an emotional support and also guide a student through the application process.

Where to find information on emergency housing partnerships: Residential Life, Student Affairs, SPOC, Financial Aid, Counseling Center, Health Center
_____

G. SINGLE POINT OF CONTACT (SPOC)

Under the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act, youth experiencing homelessness receive intentional support and guidance during their elementary and secondary education. In order to support unaccompanied college students experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, campuses may have a member of the staff act as a single point of contact (SPOC). The SPOC is responsible for helping unaccompanied students that face housing insecurity navigate the college or university experience. This individual often has connections with other offices on campus that can offer students assistance, such as Student Affairs and Financial Aid, and off-campus resources such as emergency shelters in the area.

Where to find information on the SPOC: Student Affairs, Financial Aid Services, TRIO Programming, Admissions, Academic Advising, Health Center, Counseling Center

_____

H. EMERGENCY FUND

An emergency fund is available for students facing a financial challenge that prohibits them from continuing and completing their post-secondary education. There are stringent requirements for circumstances and situations in which a student is eligible to receive aid from the emergency fund. Often times, student situations are evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

Where to find information on the emergency fund: Financial Aid Services, Dean of Students, Student Affairs, TRIO Programming

_____

I. INFORMAL SUPPORT OF UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

Faculty and staff are integral parts of a college or university community. Colleges or universities can address the specific needs of housing-insecure students using online forums or listservs and mobilizing the community to help a student in need. Often times these channels of communication are informal.

Where to find information on forums or listservs that function as informal support of a university community: Faculty, staff

_____

J. INCLUSION OF ALL STUDENTS IN CAMPUS COMMUNITY

Including students in raising awareness and understanding the needs of housing-insecure students is a powerful way to mobilize a campus community. Student groups may organize and advocate for their own needs and fellow students in need. Additionally, students may engage in volunteer opportunities that serve populations facing housing insecurity, broadening their understanding of the issue. Colleges and universities can also offer courses that include discussions of broader social justice issues that may result in individuals experiencing housing insecurity and homelessness.

Where to find information on student groups that discuss housing insecurity: Student Affairs

Where to find information on volunteer opportunities for students: Civic Engagement Office, Student Affairs

Where to find information on courses on housing insecurity and homelessness: Course Catalog, Faculty

_____

K. FINANCIAL AND LEGAL SERVICES

Financial Services
Under the College Cost and Reduction Act of 2007, youth (18-24) that are unaccompanied and homeless, or unaccompanied, self-supporting, and at risk of being homeless, are able to file their FAFSA and seek independent student status. This independent status allows students to apply for federal financial aid without their parent or guardian's information and qualify for additional financial aid due to their circumstances. Prior to the College Cost and Reduction Act, individuals who were not in contact with their parents or guardians, or not able to access the appropriate information to complete the FAFSA, faced tremendous barriers in receiving financial aid. Thus, it is critical that financial aid administrators are familiar with the protocol and regularly use their professional expertise to verify students' independent status if a student is at risk of experiencing homelessness or experiencing homelessness.

Where to find information on how to assist students in filing for independent status: Financial Aid Office, SPOC, TRIO programming

Some staff at colleges and universities are dedicated to helping students achieve the financial stability needed to find stable housing by assisting students in raising their credit scores, building a credit history, finding low-interest loans, and opening a second-chance checking account. When providing students with the tools, resources, and guidance to become financially-secure, students become better candidates in housing applications.

Where to find information on programs that provide financial coaching to students: Financial Aid Office, SPOC, TRIO programming

Legal Services
Some students face housing insecurity as a result of landlord tenant disputes. Thus, staff in colleges and universities have developed partnerships with community organizations that provide legal aid, such as Community Legal Aid in Massachusetts. Professionals from the organization visit college campuses and offer one-on-one consultations for students facing eviction. Colleges and universities may also allow law students or staff members to assist students in these legal matters.

Where to find information about legal services available to students in landlord tenant disputes: SPOC, TRIO Programming

_____

L. On-campus Facilities

Students facing housing insecurity should have access to on-campus facilities that could lessen the difficulties these students face when trying to attend classes without a safe, secure place to live. Students that face housing insecurity and homelessness may have difficulty maintaining hygiene. For example, individuals facing housing insecurity may not have regular access to a shower. Campuses often have showers available to all members of campus communities in the locker rooms of athletic facilities. Students may also have access to washers and dryers on-campus for free or reduced rates. Finally, if a student does not have a regular and safe place to store their belongings while in classes, an institution may give the student access to a locker to keep their personal belongings.

Where to find information about shower facilities, laundry facilities, and locker availability: Student Affairs, Athletic Department, Residential Life, SPOC