The Institute for Community Research

Summary of Work

January-June, 2016

1. Authored a guidebook for youth-serving organizations and educational institutions titled, *“A School-Community Initiative with Youth Voice to Improve Resources for Unstably Housed Youth.”* The “Guidebook” was designed for community-school partnerships to plan and implement a community-based initiative for improving local system response to unaccompanied homeless and housing insecure youth.
2. Designed a 30-minute lesson on youth educational rights for high school homerooms/advisory classes, in partnership with CCEH, CCA, and the Meriden Superintendent and high school principals. The lesson featured the newly launched [www.youth-help.org](http://www.youth-help.org) website and one of the PSA-style videos (funded by the CT Department of Education) that describes the educational rights and protections under the McKinney-Vento Act. The “Youth Rights in School” homeroom/advisory lesson is attached. In May, the advisory lesson was administered to all advisory classes (all grades) in Francis T. Maloney High School and Orville H. Platt High School in Meriden.
3. Designed and coordinated the assessment of the advisory lesson to obtain feedback from students and teachers regarding its effectiveness. During the last five minutes of the advisory period, the teacher and students completed an Exit Slip with three questions to provide feedback on the lesson. Only one submission per advisory group was required with multiple responses from the group, although some groups included responses from individual students. The completed Exit Slips were sent to the main office after the advisory lesson. ICR picked up completed Exit Slips from each school, compiled all responses into one document, and analyzed results. Results indicated that advisory groups found the lesson to be helpful because many students and teachers had not been aware of the educational rights of students under the McKinney-Vento Act, and the lesson provided guidance to students and teachers about who to contact for help.
4. Designed and facilitated a follow-up meeting with Torrington students, high school staff, and community partners (including the McKinney-Vento Liaison) to identify next steps for action based on the plan developed by youth and adult stakeholders at the “Community Conversations and Action Workshop” in Spring 2015. Approximately six adults (the McKinney-Vento liaison, two staff from F.I.S.H., one staff member from the local youth bureau, the Torrington Superintendent, a guidance counselor, and the Deputy Director of CCEH) and 15 students attended the follow-up meeting on May 18, 2016. All of the adult stakeholders and approximately 2/3 of the students at the follow-up meeting had participated in the workshop last spring.

The purpose of the follow-up meeting was to share results of the work from the workshop last spring, and to build consensus on next steps. During the last part of the meeting, the students and adult stakeholders split into two groups, and worked together to develop a project idea based on the basic guidelines that a project should be: (a) addressing a barrier that was identified in the community asset mapping workshop; (b) student-led; (c) carried out in collaboration with a community partner; (d) done with existing resources; and (e) small but meaningful (for example, project can be completed within 1-3 month period).

Two project ideas emerged from the meeting. One project focuses on addressing the communication barrier, with the goal of raising awareness about the resources available to youth in the community. The other project focuses on addressing financial barriers for basic resources such as food. This team’s goal is to create a place in the high school where students can get food and other basic resources for free. The teams plan to meet over the summer to start on projects.