

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

BRIDGING THE GAPS & BUILDING CONNECTIONS





GOALS FOR TODAY

- Share strategies for family, school and community connections.
- Discuss the 7 core concepts of Family Engagement .
- Share resources for attendance interventions and ways we support our McKinney Vento families/youth

WHO WE ARE:

TRISHA WRIGHT

I am a mom of 3 who moved back to the area 8 years ago. I started at the SVSU in 2021 with a team who built the Family Engagement program from the ground up.

Recognizing early on that community partners are pivotal to Family Engagement work, I worked hard to get to know our community agencies. Over the years I have become embedded in the Bennington community and work in partnership with local agencies to help support our families.



WHO WE ARE:

NICOLE AVERSANO

Going into my sixteen year with our district, I bring over a decade of experience supporting students and families. For 14 years, I served as a special educator, working closely with some of our most at-risk youth. During that time, I found my greatest fulfillment not just in teaching academics, but particularly in case managing — ensuring students and their families had the tools, support, and resources they needed to succeed both in and out of the classroom.

When the opportunity to step into the Family Engagement Specialist role became available, it felt like a natural progression. My work has always been rooted in partnership, advocacy, and building trust. I'm honored to now focus full-time on strengthening the bridge between home and school, ensuring every family feels valued, heard, and empowered.





OUR TEAM MISSION:

Build strong, collaborative connections among families, schools, and the greater Bennington community. These connections then support the positive, equitable development of each child's education, while reducing factors of risk and promoting healthy social and emotional growth.



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Activity

BRIDGES & BARRIERS

HOW WE DO IT



Families & Students:

- Check-ins
- Advocate
- Meet them where they are at

School:

- Collaborate
- Problem Solve
- Support at meetings

Community:

- Bridging the gap
- Repairing & maintaining through collaboration
- Ongoing referrals



Team Work
MAKES THE
Dream Work



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7 CORE CONCEPTS OF FAMILY ENGAGEMENT



1. Creating a welcoming environment
2. Building effective 2 way communication
3. Supporting the success of students
4. Sharing power and responsibility
5. Partnering with the community
6. Providing equity & access
7. Ensuring sustainability



CREATING A WELCOMING environment

Scenario:

A high school mentor brought a student to the FES office. “This student is new and having trouble navigating the high school.”

What We Knew:

- School has a large population
- School is hard to navigate
- Student has no connections in the school or community
- Cutting Class and appears withdrawn



BUILDING EFFECTIVE 2 WAY COMMUNICATION

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Scenario:

A school nurse contacted an FES regarding a 4th-grade student who was struggling with health issues and visiting the nurse frequently.

What we knew:

- Family was brand new to Vermont.
- Neither mom nor dad spoke English
- Student had very limited English skills



SUPPORTING THE SUCCESS OF STUDENTS

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Scenario:

Elementary school reached out to FES to help support a family with ongoing concerns.

What we knew:

- 3 school aged children
- Behavior concerns
- Attendance concerns
- History of strained relationships within community
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SHARING POWER AND RESPONSIBILITY

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Scenario:

A high school teacher approached the FES after hearing from several students that a classmate might be experiencing homelessness.

What we knew:

- Student was reported to be sleeping behind a local store
- Unable to identify another place to stay
- Student on IEP with concerns around vulnerability



PARTNERING WITH THE community

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Scenario:

In a community collaboration meeting data was reviewed that highlighted a motel outside of town as a site of concern for family and youth safety

What we knew:

- School-aged students live there
- Rural area
- Frequent emergency service calls (police, rescue squad, UCS Crisis)
- Lack of public transportation
- Families need access to support



PROVIDING equity & Access

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Scenario:

Department of Children and Family Services reached out to FES worker to let the school know a family she was supporting was evicted and placed in Manchester by emergency housing.

What we knew:

- DCF support worker involved
- 1st grade student
- McKinney Vento



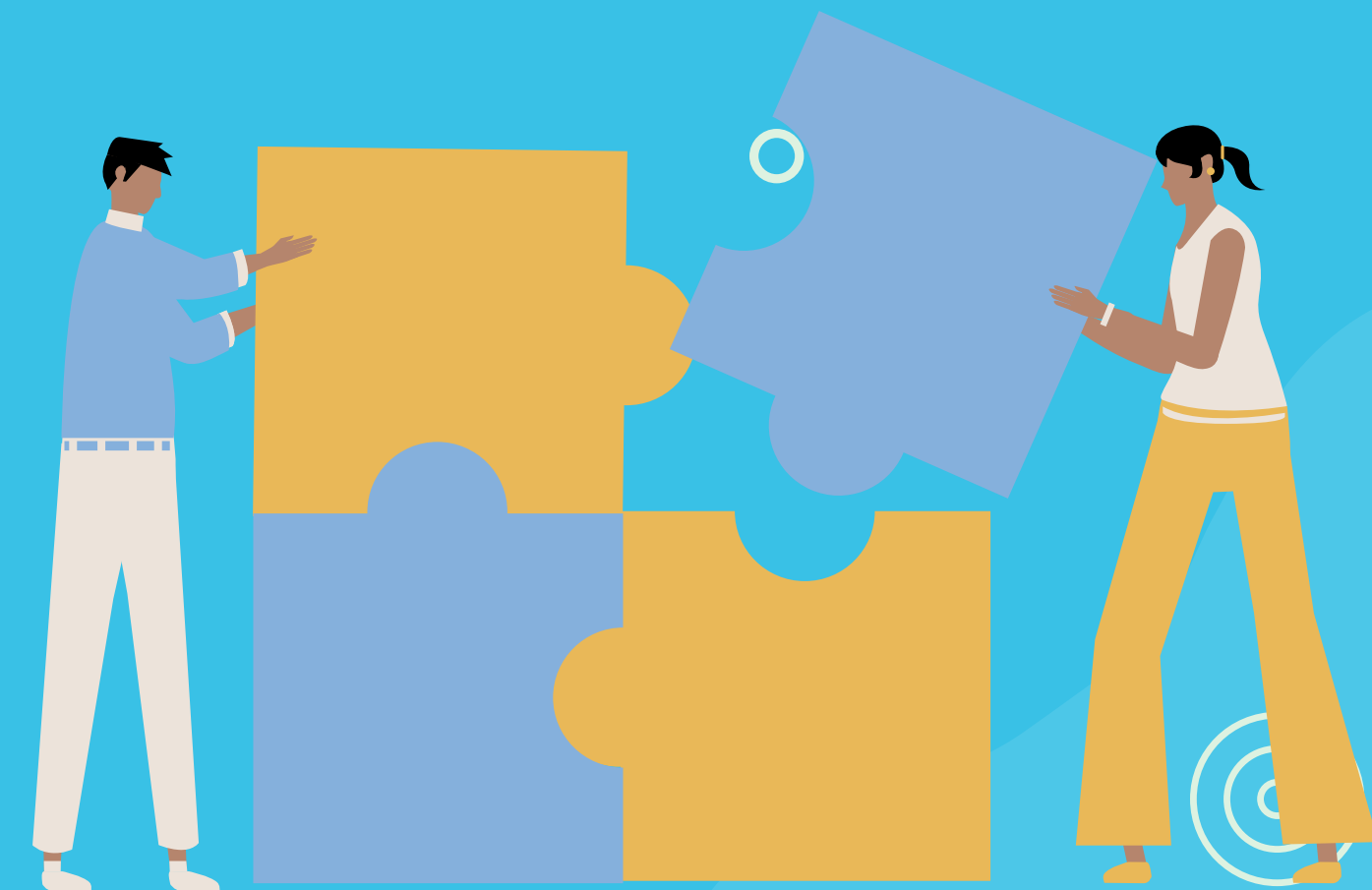
ENSURING SUSTAINABILITY

Scenario:

Local pediatrician office called FES to communicate a change of placement for a student with previous FES support.

What we knew:

- Rising 9th grader on an IEP
- On-going truancy
- DCF involvement
- Living in an unsafe environment
- Not taking regular prescribed medications
- Not attending regular wellness visits
- Engaging in criminal activity
- Suspected substance use



WHAT IS....

McKINNEY VENTO

Homeless assistance act - A federal law that mandates that states ensure homeless children and youth have equal access to a free appropriate public education

WHAT THIS MEANS....



***Immediate enrollment**



***Transportation**

***No enrollment barriers**

***Equal access to education**

***Educational stability**



Vermont Homeless Numbers

MCKINNEY VENTO

Overcoming Barriers Through Connection

How We Support:

- Weekly check-ins with students and families
- Linking to community resources
- Advocacy
- Collaborative data keeping
- Voluntary yearly training



What are we still working on?

- Systems identifier
- Elevated staff awareness
- Mandated yearly training
- Cohesive data systems
- Increased community collaboration



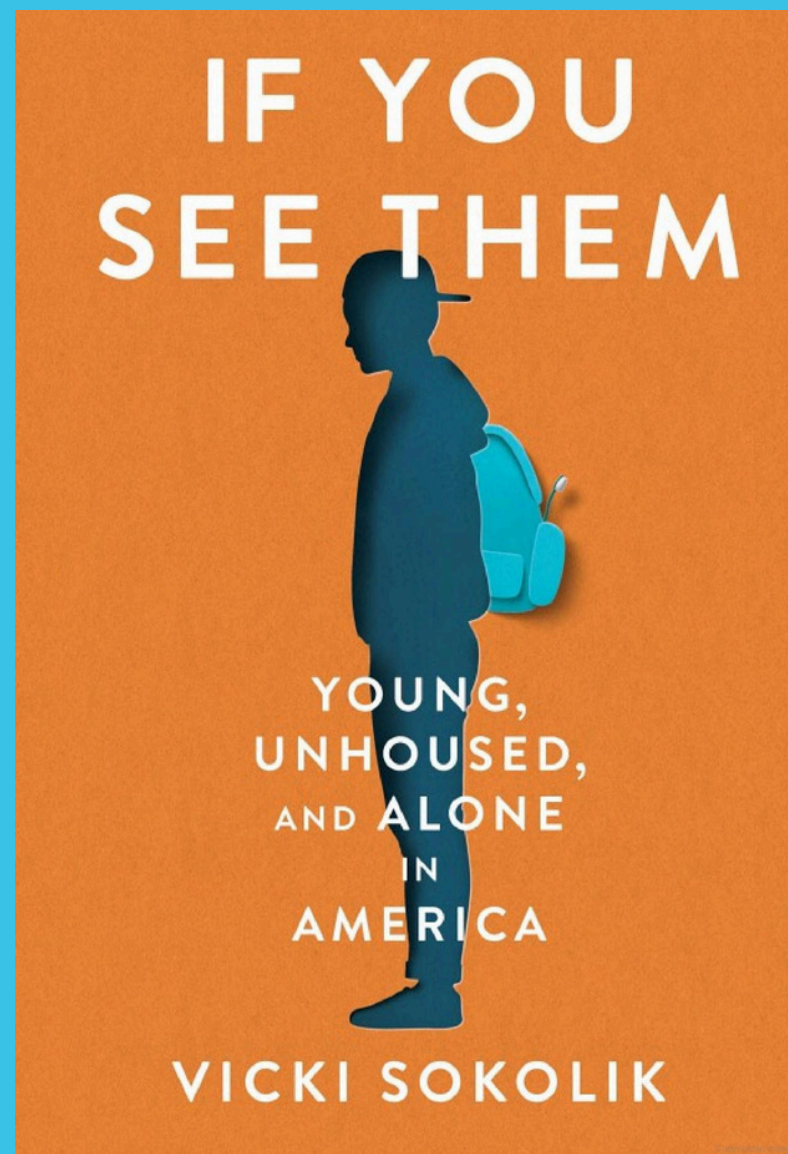
Unaccompanied Youth

“Young, Unhoused, and Alone”

A child or youth who is experiencing homelessness who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian

How We Support:

- Frequently check-ins
- Goal setting/Monitoring/Evaluating
- Resource Coordination/Referrals
- Collaborative Data Keeping
- Unaccompanied Youth Task Force
- If You See Them



Barriers:

- McKinney Vento protections only encompass school supports
- Obtaining documents and records
- NO youth shelters or transitional living supports.
- Lack of resources
- Awareness & understanding



ATTENDANCE MATTERS

Missing a day of school here and there may not seem like much, but absences add up

How We Support:

- Meet families where they are at
- Home visits
- Attendance meetings
- Community collaboration
- Developing an attendance tool kit



Attendance Intervention Narrative





CONTACT INFORMATION

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Resources

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AOE Family Engagement



Attendance works

McKinney Vento

<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/>

