**Narrative #1 – Abstract**

College Community School District is requesting 2012-15 homeless grant funds to support a program for services to homeless children, unaccompanied youths, and their parents. The grant would fund among other things a (.4) FTE Homeless Intervention Specialist position, summer school tuition and transportation at no cost to homeless students, and an after-school academic support program. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act definition of homeless will be used to identify children and unaccompanied youths as homeless. The program will provide services to College Community’s preschool program, four kindergarten through 4th grade primary buildings, one grades 5/6 intermediate building, one grade 7/8 middle school and 9th grade academy, and grades 10 through 12 high school.

The interventionist will play a key role in the identification and academic instruction for homeless students, acting as the liaison between the district and community agencies serving homeless students and their parents, coordinating summer school for homeless students, creating an after-school academic support program, assisting with providing clothing and school supplies for homeless students as needed, and providing direct support to parents of homeless students in locating temporary or permanent housing.

Expected outcomes include, but are not limited to: accurate identification and immediate enrollment of homeless children and unaccompanied youths; improvement in reading, writing, and math skills of homeless students; and assistance for homeless students and parents in accessing needed district and community resources.
Narrative #2 - Identification of Homeless Children and Youth

College Community has a comprehensive district-wide identification system in place to ensure that students will be accurately identified as homeless. The system includes many potential sources for identifying students who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. When parents move into the district the enrollment process includes completing a Student Residency Questionnaire (Appendix A.), which asks parents to indicate if they consider the address where they are living a temporary living arrangement. If a parent indicates “yes” they are prompted to answer several additional questions which help the interventionist determine if the living arrangement would be considered homeless. If it’s unclear if the living arrangement would be considered homeless the interventionist contacts the parent to get additional information.

Students currently living in the district, of course, sometimes become homeless as well. Most often this is discovered when a parent contacts the building secretary to notify the secretary of a change in address. Consequently all district secretaries will undergo annual training where the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless is reviewed and secretaries are updated on any new guidance in applying the definition. Secretaries are also coached on how to ask parents for additional information if information provided by the parent would seem to indicate a living arrangement may be homeless. Secretaries sometimes are still unsure and contact the interventionist to ask for clarifications or to request the interventionist contact the parent directly to obtain additional information to make that determination.
School counselors and building principals are in serviced on the interventionist position. They also contact the interventionist to let them know of any homeless living arrangement they become aware of through their personal contacts with students or parents. Sometimes information provided in contacts with community agencies regarding students leads them to believe a student is living in a situation that would be considered homeless. School counselors are provided with a quarterly list of students who have been identified as homeless. The College Community Communication Director places posters in community locations where homeless individuals will see them.

Information on students identified as homeless is kept by the Administrative Assistant to Learning Services at the ESC on an IMS system called Campus. Building secretaries contact the administrative assistant and interventionist when a homeless student's living arrangement changes to a permanent one or students move out of the district. The interventionist meets with the secretary and counselor in each building at the end of the school year to review the list of students currently identified as homeless to cross-check the list and add or remove any students as appropriate to ensure the list is up-to-date and accurate as possible at the start of each new school year.

**Narrative #3 - Establish Need**

To date one-hundred and fifty-seven or 3.2% of College Community’s students have been identified as homeless in the 2011-12 school year. A breakdown of this
percentage by grade levels is available in Chart C of the grant application. This percentage is consistent with previous years and on average one hundred and seventy students total are identified as homeless each school year. A search of the USDE web site did not find a percentage of expected homeless children or youth for a school district. Estimates were only stated in nation-wide numbers not percents. The 2009 Department of Housing and Urban Development annual report to Congress, which is considered accurate and current data on homelessness, estimated that 1% of the population was homeless. The 3.2 % identified by College Community would certainly be above that and reflective of the transitional housing/shelter programs located in our district that were described earlier in this section of the narrative.

Something both unique and challenging for College Community is approximately one-half of the students identified as homeless each school year live in one of two transitional housing/shelter programs located in the district. In other words, having the two transitional housing/shelters in our district doubles the number of homeless students attending College Community. Inn Circle, which is a HACAP program, provides apartments for homeless families for up to two years while the parent(s) put a plan in place to allow them to move into more permanent housing. Heart of Iowa (HOI) is a substance abuse treatment program that serves mothers with children from across the state of Iowa. Students in both programs are normally at-risk for more reasons than just being homeless. At the same time Kirkwood Community College is also within the district boundaries. As a result many landlords with houses or apartments in the district set up their properties to rent to college students, because they can generate more
income renting to 2-4 college students than renting to a single family. So the dilemma is we have double the number homeless students, but fewer than normal low cost housing options for a district our size.

As part of developing the proposed 2012-15 McKinney-Vento plan the district completed the Basic School Service/Activity Checklist for Homeless Children and Youth (Appendix B.) and the Basic Community Service/Activity Checklist for Homeless Adults, Teenagers, and Children (Appendix C.), which were suggested in the grant application as ways to describe the identified needs of homeless children and youth in the district. The school portion of the checklist was completed by the interventionist and the Title 1 Coordinator, while the community checklist was completed by the Program Director at Inn Circle and the Executive Director of the Willis Dady Emergency Shelter.

The school checklist noted two areas of minor concern. Some of our homeless students have issues with attendance and it’s something that the school counselors and interventionist focus on. Interestingly enough in the majority of cases school attendance patterns indicate there were attendance issues for these same students before the family became homeless. In other cases, however, school attendance issues seem directly related to a family being homeless. Regardless, in all cases the interventionist and other school staff work with the students, parents, and other community agencies involved to improve attendance for that student. Another area of minor concern for homeless students is access to Head Start or preschool programming. We do have homeless children enrolled in our preschool program or Head Start, but sometimes a
family’s homelessness leads to difficulty getting the required paperwork completed in a timely manner to get a preschooler into a program.

The community service checklist indicated much greater concerns for services to the homeless. Areas identified as major concerns by the directors for all parents, teenagers, and children were: job placement; transportation for jobs, services, and training; and emergency, transitional, and affordable/permanent housing. Minor concerns were noted for home intervention (child abuse and family problems); training to improve living and parenting skills; medical and mental services; substance abuse prevention; home intervention (child abuse and family problems); training to improve living and parenting skills; basic needs (food, clothing, etc.); and child care. The basic community service checklist reinforces the need and importance for two of the primary objectives for our proposed program. One being the need for accurate identification and immediate enrollment of homeless students due to the lack of affordable and permanent housing and the other being collaboration between College Community and community agencies to assist homeless children, parents and unaccompanied youth in accessing community services when the directors feel available services in some areas may not be sufficient to meet community needs.

**Narrative #4 – Objectives & Authorized Activities**

Listed below are the primary objectives for our proposed program to serve homeless students and their families. Each objective includes a description of the activities designed to meet that objective, an indication of who is being served through that
Objective, and an expected outcome.

Objective 1. Facilitate the identification and immediate enrollment of homeless children.

Parents who enroll children at College community will complete a Student Residency Questionnaire, which includes questions that help determine if their living arrangement is considered homeless. Professional development and other activities will be offered annually for the Administrative Assistant to Learning Services, building secretaries, teachers, school counselors, and building principals to heighten the understanding and sensitivity of such personnel to the rights and specific educational needs of homeless children, unaccompanied youths, and their parents. Transportation arrangements are made upon parent request to allow children to remain in their district of origin, if that is in the student’s best interest. Options include school district transportation, consideration of reimbursement for parents who drive their children, as well as bus passes for students and parents. It is expected that homeless children will be enrolled and served immediately.

Objective 2. Improve academic skills of homeless children and youth

Approximately 70-80% of the interventionist time will be spent in direct instruction of homeless students in one or more of the following academic areas: reading, math, or writing. Priority will be given to students in grades kdg.- 4 who are not already receiving assistance from Title I, ESL, ELL, special education, or a building level learning strategist in an effort to ensure that as many below grade level homeless students as
possible will get additional academic support during the school day. Typically the interventionist sees between 16-18 students for individual direct instruction per week in the two days they work. Homeless students are also eligible to attend summer school at no cost as summer school tuition and transportation expenses are paid for them. The grant would also fund an after-school academic support program at Heart of Iowa and Inn Circle. A licensed teacher would be hired to provide direct instruction at each site for up to two hours one day per week. The after-school program teachers would be in direct contact with the classroom teachers for students they are instructing in the after-school academic program. Assessment data such as number of problems attempted, number completed, number correct, sight words identified and sight words not recognized, number of sentences or paragraphs completed, data related to comprehension and fluency, etc. will be provided to classroom teachers for students seen by the interventionist and after-school academic support teachers. Spring and fall MAP scores for reading and math, district designed reading, math, and writing assessments, as well as other formative and summative assessments will also be used to measure student growth. It is expected the academic support provided by the interventionist, summer school programming, and after-school academic support programs would lead to measurable improvement in homeless students skills in the areas of reading, writing, and math.

Objective 3. Facilitate collaboration between College Community and community agencies which serve homeless children, unaccompanied youth, and their parents.

The interventionist and other district personnel will collaborate with community agencies
which provide services to homeless students and their parents. It is expected that the interventionist and other district staff, such as school counselors, will both initiate and/or respond to requests to and from community agencies which provide services to homeless children, unaccompanied youth, and their parents. The expectation is services provided by community agencies to College Community homeless students and their parents would be effective in helping students and parents access needed community or district resources for: food, clothing, and school supplies; emergency and/or affordable permanent housing; and medical, dental, mental, or other health services.

**Narratives #5 Coordination with Title I, Part A**

The following steps will occur to coordinate Title I and services to homeless students:

- The Title 1 Coordinator and interventionist will meet annually to review Title 1 services to homeless students.
- Homeless parents will now be included in Title 1 involvement policies as part of the annual update.
- Title 1 teachers will be made aware annually that homeless students are automatically eligible for Title 1 services whether or not they meet the academic standards of other children for eligibility.
- Title 1 teachers will be provided with a list of homeless students in their building quarterly. Teachers will be asked to inform the interventionist of any children on that list currently receiving Title 1 services.
- Title 1 teachers and the interventionist will collaborate on their services, so that
as many homeless students as possible are receiving direct instruction from one program or the other.

- Based on need, however, a homeless student may receive services directly from both the Title 1 teacher and the homeless interventionist to reinforce what is being taught through Title 1 or the interventionist may focus their instruction on an academic area not being addressed through Title 1.

- If funded the district proposes a combination of McKinney-Vento funds and matching funds be used to provide summer school at no cost to homeless students including those receiving Title 1.

- After-school academic support programs will be created at Inn Circle and Heart of Iowa, which are programs for students identified as homeless. Title I teachers will be made aware of the after-school programs and encouraged to enroll their students in these programs.

**Narrative #6 - Coordination and Collaboration**

Coordination and collaboration between the interventionist and other district staff and community providers is critical to homeless students and parents accessing needed services. As a result the interventionist and other school staff have contact with the following community agencies, among others, who provide services to the homeless population: Section 8 housing, Affordable Housing Network, Inn Circle, Heart of Iowa, Department of Human Services, Catholic Worker House, HACAP, Madge Phillips Center, Willis Dady Emergency Shelter, Foundation 2 Independent Living and Street Outreach Programs, Kirkwood Community College, Neighborhood Transportation
Service and JARC, Five Seasons bus system, other metro school homeless education liaisons, Family Systems, Foundation 2 Youth Shelter, Red Cross, Iowa Rental Help, Linn County Mental Health Center, College Community transportation Director, and ICAN. The purpose of the contacts is to coordinate efforts between district staff, community agencies, and other metro homeless education liaisons to reduce barriers that may limit the academic success of homeless students. These include, but are not limited to: assisting families or students with transportation; receiving needed medical, dental, mental, or other health services; assisting with securing emergency or more permanent affordable housing arrangements for families or unaccompanied youth; making arrangements to ensure adequate food, clothing, or school supplies; or helping parents make arrangements to receive counseling for students, parents, or families. The interventionist also coordinates services to homeless students with other district and AEA staff such as school administrators, school nurses, school counselors, school social workers, and Title 1, ESL, ELL, special education teachers and the districts Learning Strategists.

**Narrative #7 – Parent Involvement**

The key to parent involvement in the education of homeless children and youth is accurate and timely identification. College community has a comprehensive system in place that allows for accurate identification of homeless living arrangements both at the time of enrollment and for students who are already enrolled (See Narrative #2 - Identification of Homeless Children and Youth).
The majority of our homeless students are identified at the time of enrollment. The Administrative Assistant for Learning Services provides each parent or unaccompanied youth who indicates they are homeless on the residency questionnaire with the business card of the interventionist and encourages them to contact the interventionist regarding any barriers they are facing related to their child’s education. The card includes a district phone number and email address for the interventionist. The interventionist also at times provides parents with their cell phone number so parents can have more immediate access to the interventionist on days the interventionist is not scheduled to work.

In addition, when a student is identified as homeless the interventionist sends an email to the classroom or home room teacher asking the teacher to contact the interventionist, if they become aware of a situation where a parent or student is indicating a problem that would be a barrier to a student being successful. Teachers are conscientious about making the interventionist aware of comments by students or parents indicating a parent may need assistance from the interventionist, community agencies that serve the homeless, or other district staff. An email exchange between a parent and the interventionist is an example of assistance provided to a parent in the first contact with a family referred by a classroom teacher (Appendix D.)

The district also provides a mileage stipend to reimburse the interventionist for using their personal vehicle to meet with parents where they are living, rather than asking them to come to school. Other examples of parent involvement include the
interventionist accompanying non-English speaking parents to meetings with community agencies and landlords, helping parents with poor reading or writing skills complete applications for apartments, and providing transportation for parents to look at affordable apartments or houses for rent. If a parent does not have a working phone or lacks email access the interventionist contacts parents in person to invite them to meetings at school and may also provide transportation to and from school as well. To improve communication with homeless parents teachers routinely use a journal that goes back and forth to school daily to report on homeless students academic progress and activities a parent can be doing at home to reinforce what is being learned in school. The interventionist also attends meeting with homeless parents and community service providers to represent the school and jointly plan how barriers the family is facing can be addressed. As indicated earlier the districts communication director places a poster annually in locations where homeless parents may be most likely see them. The posters list the rights homeless parents have under McKinney-Vento.

It is not possible due to the large number of families who are homeless in College Community for the interventionist to contact each parent immediately upon enrollment, but the district believes there is a system in place which does provide a means for those parents who need assistance removing barriers to be identified quickly and be contacted by the interventionist in a timely manner. Many parents are also already aware of and are involved with community agencies which provide support to the homeless. Others just need assistance with identifying which community agency can address their concern most effectively.
**Narrative #8 - Staff Utilization Plan**

The position primarily responsible for delivering the proposed program to serve homeless children, unaccompanied youth, and families is the Homeless Intervention Specialist. The role of the interventionist includes responsibility for services to students PK-12 and families which includes:

- Assisting with proactively and accurately identifying homeless students on an on-going basis.
- Participating in decision-making and problem solving for students who are struggling in school as a result of being homeless.
- Contacting parents of homeless students to ensure they are aware of available community and state resources which might assist them in establishing a more stable living situation.
- Working individually with homeless students experiencing difficulty, which may include academic help in the areas of reading, writing, or math. Priority is direct instruction with students grade level kdg. – 4th grade.
- Identifying strategies which will allow us to most effectively serve homeless students and their families.
- Continuing efforts to better educate administrators, staff and students about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.
- Collecting and analyzing data related to homeless students and their success at College Community.
The homeless interventionist has a Masters Degree in Social Work (MSW) and is a licensed independent social worker (LISW) in the state of Iowa. The interventionist worked 18 years as a school social worker at Grant Wood AEA prior to being the homeless interventionist at College Community. The interventionist also holds a Permanent Professional teaching certificate in Iowa.

The Director of Learning Services is the interventionist’s supervisor and assists with plan development, plan oversight, and coordinates the work of the interventionist with other ESC offices.

The Director of Business Services assists with plan development, developing and monitoring the grant budget and expenditures, and responds to questions regarding the budget and services for homeless students or unaccompanied youth.

The Administrative Assistant to Learning Services assists parents at the time of enrollment with completing the Student Residency Questionnaire which includes questions which help determine if a student should be considered homeless. The assistant then updates and codes the Campus system to indicate a student is homeless or an unaccompanied youth. The assistant also notifies the building secretary when an enrolled student is identified as homeless.

The Administrative Assistant to the ESC collaborates with the learning services assistant to ensure that all students identified as homeless are eligible for F/R lunch.