

# National Blue Ribbon Schools Program

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Avon Middle School  
Avon Local Schools  
Avon, Ohio

## Audio: Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness

**Mike Ryan:** I'm Mike Ryan. I'm the assistant principal. One thing that Avon Middle School does extremely well is put systems into place immediately upon grasping a new challenge, and assisting our students who are misplaced or homeless is no different than that.

**Craig Koehler:** I'm Craig Koehler, principal of Avon Middle School. Mike heads up a great intervention program here with RTI at all levels, so I think it's a coordinated effort of the team, working together to make it happen so that students who are homeless have the least amount of barriers as possible and the most amount of support.

Years ago, when we first learned about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act, we in the district sent liaisons, and I was one of them, to be trained to understand the law and to understand the responsibilities of the school district. And we have learned over the years that the first thing we want to do is take care of the child and secure the child in the school setting and to make sure that their needs are being met.

**Mike Ryan:** Our system includes looking at data. Our teachers, counselors and even our social workers can get together, up to two times per month for 45 minutes where we discuss all at-risk students, in the classes. So all teachers in one grade level, for example, would be in a room discussing students that are having difficulties in their classroom.

From those discussions, we start connecting that, is it just one classroom or is it, is it across their entire curriculum? I get together with our counselor and our school psychologist and then we start to determine what the reason for the risk is. And there are many different variables that can be at play there but one that surfaces at times is homelessness or being misplaced from their home. And when that situation arises, we reach out to our social worker, Lauren Eigenbrod.

**Lauren Eigenbrod:** I'm Lauren Eigenbrod. I'm the social worker at Avon Middle School. I then make contact with the family and do a needs assessment. Then I help address the kind of social, emotional and environmental issues that come with being homeless. So, if it's identifying stable housing, if it's identifying resources for food, for clothes, any specific needs, then I reach out to community resources to get them hooked up with those resources.

We also are able to help provide additional transportation, if for some reason, they're not actually in the district. So we have to logically work with everyone in our district to get all of these needed resources in place to ensure that this child is able to come and go to school.

For any information that the staff needs, I will provide that to them as well and then I work with the family throughout the year to continue providing those additional services.

For other schools that would like to increase their students' supports, I would really encourage them to also include the parents or the caregivers as part of their team. You need to have the caregivers, the guardians, the parents involved and on-board, or you won't see changes, at the school.

**Craig Koehler:** In the past, before we had a social worker, we relied heavily upon our school counselors to fill in the gap and trying to ascertain, what were the needs of our students. And there were some limitations with that because, they could not have the flexibility in their schedule to do home visits or have the ability to connect with resources outside the school and for wrap-around services, and Lauren's specialty is just that.

As a National Blue Ribbon school, we are very proud of the team that we have assembled here and have thriving here, along with our students and staff and community. And we are just in a very great position to say thanks to our community for the many accomplishments of our school.