This summary of policy recommendations focuses on three areas: (1) the integration of policies and practices for families experiencing homelessness; (2) the promotion of healthy families; and (3) building the evidence base to guide effective policy. This is not an exhaustive list; rather, these recommendations are drawn from results of the innovative studies in this monograph of *Advances in Child and Family Policy and Practice*. Family homelessness must be addressed by a comprehensive, integrated set of policy and practice strategies and public and private funding for a purposeful research agenda to build the evidence base. Family's needs must be at the center of decision-making and policy-building. Solutions are within reach, but greater political and public commitment is critical to reduce homelessness and aid parents without homes in advancing their lives and supporting their children's futures. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2017 APA, all rights reserved)

Understanding and meeting the needs of families experiencing homelessness: Introduction to the brief.
Haskett, Mary E.

Homelessness among US families has risen at a steady rate in recent decades and reached a peak during the recent recession. Families—most often single mothers with young children—are the fastest growing segment of the homeless population. Rates of homelessness are difficult to establish due to unreliable tracking and discrepancies in definitions across federal agencies. However, national experts estimate that approximately 2.5 million children were homeless in America in
2013. Although there is wide variability in the experiences of families who suffer the loss of their home, and there are differences in adaptation of family members to those challenges, many parents and children who are homeless have faced adverse experiences that place them at risk for mental health and developmental concerns. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2017 APA, all rights reserved)

**Mental health and adaptation of children experiencing family homelessness.**

Herbers, Janette E.; Cutuli, J. J.; Kolarova, Lyuboslava; Albu, Amanda; Sparks, Lauren A. Haskett, Mary E. (Ed). (2017). Child and family well-being and homelessness: Integrating research into practice and policy., (pp. 7-26). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, xiv, 116 pp. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50886-3_2](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50886-3_2)

To understand how children adapt in the context of family emergency housing, and how aspects of measurement might obscure positive adaptation, we defined three specific goals for this study. First, we aimed to describe children's mental health symptoms measured at two time points, 1 month apart during their stay in emergency housing. With well-validated measures of parent distress and child traumatic stress, internalizing problems, and externalizing problems, we expected to find improvements across the 1-month interval based on both child report and parent report. For our second goal, we were interested in comparing children's self-reported and parent-reported traumatic stress symptoms in the context of parent distress, with the expectation that parents would conflate their own distress with their perceptions of children's traumatic stress, leading to inaccurate reports particularly by the most distressed parents. Finally, we sought to predict mental health outcomes after one month from specific factors that vary across individuals and families: child cognitive functioning including general intelligence and executive functioning, and warmth expressed by parents regarding their children. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2017 APA, all rights reserved)

**Observed parenting in families exposed to homelessness: Child and parent characteristics as predictors of response to the early risers intervention.**

Holtrop, Kendal; Piehler, Timothy F.; Gewirtz, Abigail H.; August, Gerald J. Haskett, Mary E. (Ed). (2017). Child and family well-being and homelessness: Integrating research into practice and policy., (pp. 27-48). Cham, Switzerland: Springer International Publishing, xiv, 116 pp. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50886-3_3](http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-50886-3_3)

The literature examining predictors of child and parent intervention outcomes and moderators of treatment response is limited and largely inconclusive. Further research is needed to determine which characteristics differentially predict parenting practice outcomes following participation in psychosocial preventive
interventions. The purpose of this study was to identify which child and parent characteristics predict differential responses to the Early Risers intervention among formerly homeless families residing in supportive housing. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2017 APA, all rights reserved)

Assessment of families experiencing homelessness: Analysis of current practice.
DeCandia, Carmela J.; Bassuk, Ellen L.; Richard, Molly

The purpose of this investigation was to begin to fill this knowledge gap by analyzing current assessment practices of providers serving homeless families across the United States. First, we broadly reviewed what is known about the risk factors for family homelessness. Next, we sampled various emergency shelters, transitional housing programs, and supportive housing programs, and collected the initial assessment/intake protocols from 55 geographically diverse programs. Based on knowledge of homeless families, we developed a protocol for determining the comprehensiveness and relevance of the assessments and reported the findings. We conclude with a discussion of how the study results can help close the research-practice gap and inform policy regarding assessments of homeless families. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2017 APA, all rights reserved)

Access to early childhood services for young children experiencing homelessness.
Perlman, Staci M.; Shaw, Sara H.; Kieffer, Charles H.; Whitney, Grace-Ann C.; Bires, Carie

This chapter is based on data generated through an integrated mixed methods transformative design which included collecting and analyzing two independent strands of qualitative and quantitative data, and then seeking convergence, or relationships, between the two data sets. The purpose of this merged analysis between the NAEHCY survey of homeless services and early childhood providers and The Cloudburst Group's (Cloudburst) HUD-funded qualitative study of homeless parents was to develop an understanding of key barriers and facilitators to accessing early childhood services for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers experiencing homelessness. The studies addressed these issues from the perspectives of (a) parents experiencing homelessness and (b) community-based
services providers who were engaged with this population. In this design, both qualitative and quantitative data are analyzed concurrently and also independently. Select findings from each study have been reported previously but the data sets have not been explored through an integrated mixed methods transformative design. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2017 APA, all rights reserved)

Interagency collaboration to promote mental health and development of children experiencing homelessness.
Haskett, Mary E.; Tisdale, Jennifer; Clay, Amy Leonard

As is clear from the introduction to this issue of Advances in Child and Family Policy and Practice, children experiencing homelessness warrant the attention of mental health, early childhood, and education professionals. Unfortunately, structural, interpersonal, and individual barriers limit these children's access to appropriate and timely attention from professionals. In addition, services provided to families without homes are not integrated or coordinated between housing agencies or across sectors. Filling service gaps and improving the coordination of mental health and developmental services for children experiencing homelessness was a priority in our community and led to development of Community Action Targeting Children who are Homeless (i.e. Project CATCH). The CATCH vision is that all families experiencing homelessness in Wake County will have access to a coordinated system of care that nurtures the health, well-being, and success of their children. The project provides leadership to implement a multi-tiered system of care by (a) coordinating and integrating shelter and community services for families (community level), (b) changing the structure, policies, and practices of shelters to better support families (shelter level), (c) enhancing parenting to strengthen parent-child relationships that can mitigate the potentially harmful impact of homelessness on children (family level), and (d) assessing children's mental health and development to inform referrals for appropriate community services (child level). CATCH is funded by private foundations and state agencies and is staffed by a Coordinator, Outreach Case Manager, Circle of Parents Coordinator, and several part-time employees. It is supported by an advisory group of professionals in young children's mental health, education, business, and homelessness. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2017 APA, all rights reserved)
In 2010, the Obama administration launched the Opening Doors campaign, and with it, announced a plan to end homelessness among children, youth, and families. The *Opening Doors* plan engages a guiding vision, "...no one should be without a safe, stable place to call home," and sets forth the objective that every community have in place systematic responses to prevent homelessness and ensure that homeless episodes are rare, short, and nonrecurring. The plan calls for four essential capacities: prompt, effective means to identify individuals at risk; intervention to prevent the loss of housing and avert homelessness; when homelessness cannot be avoided, immediate access to shelter and crisis supports while permanent housing and related supports are secured; and, rapid connection to supports that are tailored to families' unique needs and strengths, with the ultimate objective of securing permanent, safe, stable housing. An unvoiced assumption is the notion that government's role in ensuring safe, affordable housing may "yield social benefits" and thus might address persisting gaps in educational, vocational, and income attainment among families caught in intergenerational cycles of poverty, among whom racial and ethnic minorities are disproportionately represented. (PsycINFO Database Record (c) 2017 APA, all rights reserved)