

Secretaries and Enrollment Personnel

Tips for Ensuring Educational Access and Success for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

- Learn to identify the following tell-tale signs of homelessness:
 - Chronic hunger or fatigue
 - Erratic school attendance
 - Attendance at multiple schools
 - Poor grooming and/or clothing that draws attention
 - Lack of records such as birth certificate, proof of residence, proof of guardianship, immunization or other medical records, or previous academic records; or incomplete records
 - Parent who seems confused when asked about the last school attended by the student
 - Low-income motel address on enrollment form
 - Statements from family when enrolling, such as:
 - “We’ve been having a hard time lately.”
 - “It’s a new address. I can’t remember it.”
 - “We move a lot and are staying with friends until we find a place.”
- For more information on identifying signs of homelessness, visit http://www.serve.org/nche/nche_web/warning.php.
- Assure families that their children can enroll if you think that they are experiencing homelessness.
- Enroll the child immediately, even if they lack records normally required for enrollment. The immediate enrollment of homeless students without records is mandated under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, P.L. 107-110. For more information, visit http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/sc_enroll.php.
- Ask for the name and city of the last school attended; then call that school and ask to have the student’s academic records forwarded to your school.
- Arrange for the student to take a placement test if records are not available. For more information, download the NCHE brief entitled Prompt and Proper Placement: Enrolling Students Without Records at <http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/assessment.pdf>.
- Take the family to a private place to fill out enrollment forms.
- Offer to assist with filling out the enrollment forms. hesitation may indicate an inability to read.

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- Make sure the student enrolls in your school's free meal program. Homeless students are automatically eligible for free school meals. For more information, visit http://www.serve.org/nche/legis_other.php.
- Have copies of the school/class supply lists available.
- Provide a welcome pack with paper, a pencil, a pen, and crayons (younger grades).
- Privately and confidentially alert the child's teacher and guidance counselor of the student's living situation.
- Should the student transfer to another school, prepare a "parent pack", a 9" x 12" (laminated, if possible) mailing envelope with photocopies of the student's records (academic, social security, immunization, etc.). Share a copy with the family and be prepared to transfer the student's records to the new school quickly to expedite his/her appropriate classroom placement. Visit http://www.serve.org/nche/online_order.php to order NCHE Parent Pack Pocket Folders.
- Be sensitive, patient, calm, and reassuring. You can make a difference!
- For more information, contact the school district's local homeless education liaison.



This tip sheet was adapted from materials from the Maryland Department of Education. For more information about helping homeless students succeed in school, visit the National Center for Homeless Education website at <http://www.serve.org/nche>.