

## Teachers

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

- Be familiar with common characteristics of children and youth who are homeless. Common signals are attendance at several schools, poor hygiene, gaps in learning, transportation problems, poor health and nutrition, and a lack of preparedness for class. For more information, visit [http://www.serve.org/nche/nche\\_web/warning.php](http://www.serve.org/nche/nche_web/warning.php).
- Assist other students in being sensitive to stereotypes of homeless people.
- Adjust assignments so that students not living in permanent settings can complete them. (For example, such students may not have a place to perform a science experiment or the resources to bring in an article about current events.)
- 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](http://www.serve.org/nche/legis_other.php).
- Ensure that the student has every opportunity that a non-homeless student has for participation in after-school activities and in-school programs.
- Communicate with the parents about school performance.
- Connect the student with tutoring and remediation services, if needed.
- If you have a snack break, keep a store of snacks for students who don't bring one.
- Do not take away possessions. Students may need their "stuff" nearby for security.
- Hold the student accountable for what she or he can control (e.g., behavior or attitude) not what is not under the student's control (e.g., inability to watch a news program or purchase a poster board for a project).
- Discuss concerns with the guidance counselor, school social worker, school nurse, or local homeless education liaison.
- Before you receive a new student:
  - Prepare a list of your class routines and procedures.
  - Prepare a new student file with information for parents and guardians.
  - Maintain a supply of materials for students to use at school.
  - Prepare a "getting-to-know-you" activity for the class to do when a new student arrives.
  - Have the class schedule visible.

## Teachers (cont.)

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- When a new student enters the class:
  - Introduce the student to the class.
  - Assign a class buddy to assist with routines.
  - Review the academic record and closely monitor the educational progress of the student.
- When a student leaves:
  - Support the class and the student by discussing the move and having classmates write letters to the departing student.
  - Give the student a copy of the school's contact information so that letters can be written back either via e-mail or traditional mail.
- Show that you care about the student!



*This tip sheet was adapted from materials from the Illinois, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia Departments of Education, and the National Center for Homeless 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>.*