

Guidance Counselor

You Can Support the Access and Success of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in School

- Be familiar with common characteristics of children 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.
- Introduce yourself as someone who works as an advocate for the child's success in school.
- Arrange a follow-up meeting with parents a couple of weeks after enrollment.
- Ask if the child participated in any after-school activities or had special classes at a previous school, then work to connect the child with similar resources if they are available.
- Make sure the child enrolls in the free and reduced-price meal programs.
- Ensure that the student has every opportunity that a non-homeless student has for after-school activities and in-school programs.
- Let parents know of their child's educational rights.
- Know your attendance zone, visit shelters to make contact with the shelter director, and reinforce that students will find the school safe and supportive.
- Offer support for the physiological needs of the student (food, clothing) as well as the social/emotional needs (safety, security, and belonging).
- Train peer buddies to orient students to the school.
- Show that you care about the student!

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

