School Nurse

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 so you can recognize them. Common signals are attendance at several schools, poor hygiene, transportation problems, and poor health and nutrition.
- Verify immunization records and, if needed, refer the student to the local health department.
- Observe and alert the principal to any serious medical concern.
- Ask about glasses; the child may need them but not have any.
- Make sure the child enrolls in the free and reduced-price meal programs.
- Assist parents with the completion of medical records.
- Remember that sending a sick child "home" may not be a safe or stable place for a child who is experiencing homelessness. Help families determine options for their children, if ill.
- Contact the school district homeless liaison so that additional services can be coordinated.
- Follow-up with children sent to obtain immunizations or physicals.
- Contact the parent or shelter if a child is absent for three or more days.
- Develop reliable, accessible resources for medical, dental, and eye care.
- Sponsor a PTA health night.
- 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.