

10 Things Secretaries/Enrollment Personnel Can Do for Students Experiencing Homelessness

1. Learn to identify the following tell-tale signs of homelessness:
 - Chronic hunger or tiredness
 - Erratic attendance at schools
 - Attendance at multiple schools
 - Poor grooming or clothing that draws attention
 - Lack of records, such as birth certificate, immunization record, pre-school physical, and school records, or incomplete records
 - Parent who seems confused when asked about the last school attended
 - 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.”
2. Assure families that children can enroll if you think that they are experiencing homelessness. (This is mandated by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act, P.L. 107-110.)
 - Enroll the child immediately (even without records). Ask for the name and city of the last school attended; then call that school and ask to have the records sent.
 - Arrange for the child to take a placement test if records are not available.
3. Take the family to a private place to fill out enrollment forms.
4. Offer to assist with filling out the enrollment forms. Hesitation may indicate an inability to read.
5. Assist with filling out free and reduced-price meal program forms. Arrange for lunch that day.
6. Have copies of the school/class supply lists.
7. Provide a welcome pack with paper, pencil, pen, and crayons (younger grades).
8. Privately and confidentially alert the child’s teacher and guidance counselor of the student’s living situation.
9. Before a student leaves, prepare a parent pack, a 9” x 12” (laminated, if possible) mailing envelope with photocopies of the student’s records (scholastic, social security, immunization, etc.). Share a copy with the family, and be prepared to share records with the new school quickly to expedite appropriate placement.
10. Be sensitive, patient, calm, and reassuring. YOU can make a difference!

For more information, contact your school district’s homeless education liaison.

Adapted from Maryland Department of Education flyer

