

Free Furniture



Department of Homeless Services (DHS)' Rehousing Office will give families a furniture allowance through public assistance. To contact Rehousing call **(212) 361-6617, 6618, 6635, 6636, 6639, or 6640.**

Furnish-a-Future (718-875-5353) offers free used furniture and will deliver it for free. Families must have a referral from DHS.

Housing



New York City Housing Authority (NYCHA) will still accept applications for public housing and Section 8 for families, even if they are living in a shelter, although there are very long waitlists. For more information, contact the NYCHA office in your borough. Offices are closed to the public on Wednesdays.

Bronx: 1 Fordham Plaza, 5th fl., 10458, (718) 329-7859

Brooklyn: 350 Livingston St., 2nd fl., 11217, (718) 250-5900

Manhattan: 55 West 125th St., 7th fl. 10027, (212) 828-7100

Queens: 120-34 Queens Blvd., 2nd fl., Kew Gardens 11415, (718) 286-7500

Staten Island: 120 Stuyvesant Place, 2nd fl., 10301, (718) 448-7326

Real Estate Brokers

<http://www.informationforfamilies.org/htm/housing/aphunt04.htm>

Administration for Children's Services (ACS) Housing Subsidy is available to families who have an ACS case or who are working with a preventive services agency. The subsidy is up to \$300 per month for rental assistance for 3 years. To get an application, call the ACS Info Line (212) 442-4723 or go to 150 Williams Street, 1st Fl.

Rental Assistance Program (RAP) is available to people who are homeless and working. The program offers \$300 per month for 2 years to help pay the rent after permanent housing has been found. For more information, contact Jim Radford at Coalition for the Homeless 212-776-2140.



Free Voicemail is available if you are homeless and phoneless. For more information, call the Coalition for the Homeless (212) 776-2000.



Advocates for Children

Short Guide to the

Educational Rights of Children and Youth in Temporary Housing in New York City



A Publication of
Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.
September 2005

This guide does not provide legal advice. It is a summary of policies and laws. Parents and youth should get help for their particular situation. The back part of this guide lists websites and phone numbers for educators, advocates, and lawyers who can help.

Advocates for Children of New York, Inc.
151 West 30th Street, 5th Floor
New York, NY 10001
(212) 947-9779

Helpline: Tuesdays and Thursdays, 10:30 a.m.-1 p.m.



If you are living in one of the following situations:

- o Shelter;
- o Emergency or transitional housing;
- o Sharing housing with someone because you cannot find or afford housing;
- o On the street.



Your children have important rights under the McKinney-Vento Act, a federal law. They have the right to:

- Go to school, no matter where they live or how long they have lived there;
- Choose between the local school where they are currently living, the school they attended before they lost their housing, or the school where they were last enrolled;
- Enroll and participate in school without providing proof of residency, immunizations, school records, or other documents normally needed for enrollment;
- Enroll and attend class in the school of their choice even while the parent and the school resolve disagreements about enrollment.
- Receive transportation to and from school and school programs;
- Receive the same special programs and services, if needed, as those offered to other students who are eligible to receive them.



SCHOOL CHOICE

Children and youth in homeless situations have the right to attend:

- The **zoned school** where they are currently living OR
- The school they attended **before they lost their housing** OR
- The school where they were **last enrolled**

GED programs, and English classes, see:

Afterschool Programs:

- Family Guide to Afterschool Programs: www.pasesetter.com/#asp_directory
- The After School Corporation: http://staging.tascorp.org/policy_resources/site_maps/nyc_school_districts

GED Programs:

- Alternative Schools, www.nycenet.edu/hs_directory/2004-05/transferschools.pdf
- Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day School, 212-353-2010
- Brooklyn Comprehensive Night Program: 718-434-5043
- Literacy Assistance Center, (212) 803-3300, www.lacnyc.org/hotline/nycalidirectory.htm (list of GED Programs for youth and adults)

English Classes: www.nypl.org/classes/esol.html

INFORMATION FOR FAMILIES AND YOUTH IN TEMPORARY HOUSING

Below are other resources that may be useful to families or youth who are homeless.

Advocacy for Homeless Children and Youth



- Coalition for the Homeless, 212-776-2000
- The Door, 212-941-9090 (for youth)
- The Streetwork Project, 212-695-2220 (for youth)

Benefits Advocacy (Welfare, Medicaid, Food Stamps)

- Coalition for the Homeless: 212-776-2000
- The Door, 212-941-9090 (for youth only)
- Legal Aid Society: 212-577-3300
- Legal Services of New York: 646-442-3600
- New York Legal Assistance Group: 212-750-0800
- Urban Justice Center: 646-606-5600

Counseling



- For a list of mental health providers, call 1-800-Lifenet
- **Medicaid Exemption.** Individuals living in shelters can receive straight Medicaid so they can get treatment at any hospital or clinic that accepts Medicaid. To get straight Medicaid, fill out an Exemption Form and send it in with a residency letter from the shelter. To get an **Exemption Form** call **(800) 505-5678**.

CSE Chairperson: Cheryle Knobel, 718-968-6266
CPSE Administrators: 718-968-6257, 72, 74, 75, 77, 78

- **Region 7 (Districts 20, 21, 31)**

715 Ocean Terrace, Staten Island, NY 10301
CSE Chairperson: Chaire Donnellan, 718-420-5754
CPSE Administrators: 718-420-5785, 91, 93, 94, 95

- **Region 8 (Districts 13, 14, 15, 16)**

131 Livingston Street, Room 309, Brooklyn, NY 11201
CSE Chairperson: Deborah Cuffy-Jackson, 718-935-4900, ext.4322
CPSE Administrators: 718-935-3945, 47, 48, 49, 67, 73, 75

- **Region 9 (Districts 1, 2, 4, 7)**

CSE Chairperson: Gerald Donegan, 917-339-1575
CPSE Administrators: 917-339-1641, 45

- **Region 10 (Districts 3, 5, 6)**

4360 Broadway, New York, NY 10033
CSE Chairperson: Marilyn Sprecher, 212-342-8338
CPSE Administrators: 212-342-8333, 34, 35, 36, 37



Education Advocacy Services for Children with Special Needs

To contact an education expert about a school-related problem, call:

- Advocates for Children: 212-947-9779. Hotline hours are Tuesdays and Thursdays from 10:30a.m.-1p.m.
- AHRC (Association for the Help of Retarded Citizens): 212-780-2534
- Bronx Parent Resource Center: 718-329-3854
- Bronx Legal Services Corp.: 718-993-6250
- Legal Services for Children: 212-683-7999
- LSNY Brooklyn: 718-852-8888
- NYLPI (New York Lawyers for the Public Interest): 212-244-4664
- Parent to Parent of New York: 718-494-4872
- Partnership for the Homeless: 718-875-0027 (for children and youth in Region 5, Districts 19, 23, and 27)
- Queens Legal Services: 718-392-5646
- Resources for Children with Special Needs: 212-677-4650
- Sinergia: 212-496-1300
- United We Stand: 718-302-4315



EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES

For other services, such as afterschool programs,

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS:

How do I decide whether I should **transfer** my children to a local school?

⇒ There are many things to consider and every family is different. Many times it's better to keep your children in the same school. Students who transfer have to make new friends and get used to new teachers, and it can take several months for students to catch up with the school work. However, sometimes it makes sense to transfer because of issues such as transportation (see pages 5-7), travel time (see below), and, for some families, safety (see page 4).

If I move into permanent housing or another shelter, can my children **stay in the school they currently go to**?

⇒ **YES.** In New York City, all students have the right to stay at the **same school until they graduate** from that school, even if they have moved to a different school district in the city.

Can my 19-year old child **return to high school** even though he dropped out over a year ago?

⇒ **YES.** Students have the right to go to school until they receive their **high school diploma** or until the end of the school year after they turn **21 years old**. The Department of Education has many new high schools especially for older students who don't have many credits or who have been out of school for some time. For more information visit the **High School Enrollment Centers** at the Regional Learning Support Centers (see Important Information on page 11).

Do I have to transfer my children to a new school if my family is temporarily living in a **different borough**?

⇒ **NO.** All parents in temporary housing can choose to keep their children in the school they were attending, even if it's in another borough (see pages 5-7 for information on transportation). They can also choose to transfer their children to the local school where they are temporarily living. Although the commute to the old school may be difficult, it is often very hard on children and youth to transfer to a new school.

What can I do to help my children if they have to travel a **far distance to school**?

⇒ For families living in shelters, parents can **request a shelter transfer**. Families who have been placed in a shelter outside of the school district of origin may be able to transfer to a closer shelter depending on whether there are beds available. To find out more about shelter transfers, contact Advocates for Children.

⇒ Request yellow bus services for children in grades K-6 (see pages 5-6).

If my family is living in a **domestic violence** shelter can I keep my children in the same school?

⇒ **YES, but** often it is best to transfer your children because of safety concerns and confidentiality. In all cases, parents should make sure that the school has a copy of the order of protection if there is one, that the address is blocked on the school computer system, and that school staff know not to give any information about the children to the batterer.



ENROLLMENT

Students who are in temporary housing should be **immediately enrolled** in school, **even if they do not have**:

- school records,
- medical records **including immunization records**,
- proof of residency, including residency letters from shelters,
- guardianship papers,
- birth certificate or other documents normally needed.

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

How long should it take to enroll my children in school?

⇒ **The same day** you take your children to the new school. Children and youth in temporary housing have the right to **immediate** enrollment in school, which means being able to **attend classes and participate fully** in school. This is also true for students who receive special education services.

Is it my responsibility to get my children's **old school records** and give them to the new school?

⇒ **NO.** It is the new school's responsibility to get the school records, not the parent's or youth's. However, if you have your children's records, you should bring them with you when you go to enroll. If the student was previously enrolled in a NYC public school, the school records (including the type of special education placement) should be available through ATS, the Department of Education's computer system. All schools have access to ATS.

Can my child be turned away from school if I don't have her immunization records?

NYS-TEACHS (New York State Technical and Educational Assistance for Center for Homeless Students)

1-800-388-2014, Website: nysteachs.esboces.org

LeTendre Education Fund provides college scholarship for students who are or have been homeless: www.naehcy.org/about_letendre.html

Education and Training Voucher Program provides up to \$5000 a year for foster youth and former foster youth to go to college: www.statevoucher.org/ny.php

SPECIAL EDUCATION CONTACTS

For help with services for children and youth with special needs, including special education services, contact:



Early Intervention: 1-800-577-BABY (2229) (for children 0-3 years old)



Committee on Special Education (CSE) (for children 5-21 years old) and **Committee on PreSchool Special Education (CPSE)** (for children 3-5 years old). See below for contact information for the CSE and CPSE in each Region.

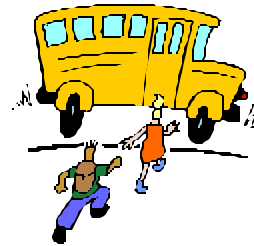
- **Region 1 (Districts 9, 10)**
1 Fordham Plaza, Bronx, NY 10458
CSE Chairperson: Sileni Nazario, 718-329-8000 x30002
CPSE Administrators: 718-329-8000 x3023, 24, 25
- **Region 2 (Districts 8, 11, 12)**
3450 East Tremont Ave, 2nd Fl., Bronx, NY 10465
CSE Chairperson: Michelle Beatty, 718-794-7460
CPSE Administrators: 718-794-7420, 21, 22
- **Region 3 (Districts 25, 26, 28, 29)**
30-48 Linden Place, Flushing, NY 11354
CSE Chairperson: Claudia Block, 718-281-3460
CPSE Administrators: 718-281-7554, 7556, 3446
- **Region 4 (Districts 24, 30, 32)**
28-11 Queens Plaza North, Long Island City, NY 11101
CSE Chairperson: Paul Lomtevas, 718-391-8448
CPSE Administrators: 718-391-6176, 6174, 62516263, 6302, 8336, 8157, 8338
- **Region 5 (Districts 19, 23, 27)**
82-01 Rockaway Boulevard, Ozone Park, NY 11416
CSE Chairperson: Sherri Shulman, 718-642-5836
CPSE Administrators: 718-642-5714, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21
- **Region 6 (Districts 17, 18, 22)**
5619 Flatlands Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11256

- **Region 2 (Districts 8, 11, 12)**
Regina Ross (718) 828-2834, rross3@nycboe.net
1230 Zerega Avenue, Bronx, NY 10462
- **Region 3 (Districts 25, 26, 28, 29)**
Sara Nunez (718) 739-3636, snunez4@nycboe.net
30-48 Linden Place, Flushing, NY 11354
- **Region 4 (Districts 24, 30, 32)**
Keisha Boatswain (718)391-8368, kboatswain@nycboe.net
28-11 Queens Plaza North, Long Island City, NY 11101
- **Region 5 (Districts 19, 23, 27)**
Charlene Mitchell (718)642-5803, cmitchell4@nycboe.net
82-01 Rockaway Boulevard, Ozone Park, NY 11416
- **Region 6 (Districts 17, 18, 22)**
Ainsley Rudolfo (718)968-6246, arudolfo@nycboe.net
5619 Flatlands Avenue, Brooklyn, NY 11256
- **Region 7 (Districts 20, 21, 31)**
William Bonner (718)420-5640, wbonner@nycboe.net
715 Ocean Terrace, Staten Island, NY 10301
- **Region 8 (Districts 13, 14, 15, 16)**
Patricia Totaro (718)935-4205, ptotaro@nycboe.net
131 Livingston Street, Room 309, Brooklyn, NY 11201
- **Region 9 (Districts 1, 2, 4, 7)**
Cecilio Diaz (917)339-1698, cdiaz@nycboe.net
333 7th Avenue, New York, NY 10001
- **Region 10 (Districts 3, 5, 6)**
Roberto Reyes (917)521-3608, rreyes9@nycboe.net
4360 Broadway, New York, NY 10033
- **District 75 (citywide special education programs)**
Paul Cooper (212) 802-1579, pcooper2@nycboe.net
Michelle Marcel (212) 802-1579, mmarcel@nycboe.net
400 First Avenue, New York, NY 10010
- **District 79 (alternative high schools)**
Lisa Clark (718) 557-2657/2651, lclark2@nycboe.net
90-27 Sutphin Boulevard, Jamaica, NY 11435

**New York State Education Department
Education of Homeless Children and Youth Program**

- Shelia Evans-Tranumn, State Coordinator
Tel. (718) 722-2796
email: stranumn@mail.nysed.gov
- Patricia McGuirk, Program Manager
Tel. (518) 473-1236
email: pmcguirk@mail.nysed.gov

⇒ **NO.** Students can't be turned away if they don't have their immunization records. If the student was previously enrolled in a NYC public school, the immunization records should be available through ATS, the Department of Education's computer system. All schools have access to ATS.



TRANSPORTATION YELLOW BUS SERVICE

If you have children in **grades K-6**, they are eligible for **yellow bus service** through the Department of Education if there is an available route.

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

How do I **request bussing** for my children?

⇒ Contact the Department of Education worker at the shelter or the Regional Coordinator of the Students in Temporary Housing Program (see Important Information on page 11).

How do I **check** on a **bussing request**?

⇒ Contact the **Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT)**, tel. (718) 784-3313.

⇒ If OPT hasn't gotten the request and it is for a **special education** student, contact the placement officer at the **Committee on Special Education (CSE)** (see Important Information on page 11).

What do I do if the Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) has the wrong address for my child?

⇒ Contact the school and ask that they enter the correct address into ATS, the Department of Education's computer system. The Office of Pupil Transportation can't process a request for bussing without the right address.

Can my children get bussing if they are living outside the district or Region?

⇒ **YES.** Children in temporary housing in grades K-6, including those in shelters and those temporarily living with family or friends, can get bussing as long as there is an available bus route. This is true even if they are living in a different borough.

If my family is living in a **domestic violence shelter**, can my children get bussing?

⇒ **YES.** The shelter caseworker should let the parent know where it would be safe for the children to be picked up (either at an address or a corner). This information, but not the address of the shelter, should be given to the Office of Pupil Transportation.

If my family is **temporarily living with friends**, can my children get bussing?

⇒ **YES.** Contact the Students in Temporary Housing (STH) Regional Coordinator for help (see Important Contacts and Resources).

Can I get bussing for my children **after we move into permanent housing**?

⇒ **SOMETIMES.** Children may be able to get bussing **through the school year** when the family moves into **permanent housing** depending on whether there is an available route. For more information contact Advocates for Children.



MetroCards for Students

- Students in grades K-12 not getting bussing should get a **full-fare MetroCard** from the school.
- Students **waiting to get a transportation pass** should receive **MetroCards** from the Students in Temporary Housing Program (see Important Information on page 11 for contact information).

MetroCards for Parents

- Parents who must go with their children on public transportation (subway or bus) should get an **unlimited weekly MetroCard every week** or **four \$2 MetroCards every day** from the Department of Education worker at the shelter or the Students in Temporary Housing Program. (see Important Information on page 11 for contact information).
- Parents should also get MetroCards to attend school meetings, parent-teacher conferences, and special education appointments.

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Is there a **time limit** for how long I can receive MetroCards to accompany my children to school?



Responsibilities of the Staff of the Students in Temporary Housing (STH) Program

- Reach out to children and youth in all different kinds of homeless situations;
- Make sure students are enrolled in school immediately, even if they do not have the papers they would normally need;
- Help families and youth get immunizations, immunization records or other medical records if a student needs them;
- Tell parents and youth about all transportation services and help set up transportation;
- Tell parents and guardians about all the programs and services the school has for their children;
- Make sure parents and guardians can take part in their children's education;
- Settle disagreements between schools and families or youth quickly;
- Make sure pre-schoolers who are homeless can enroll in Head Start, Even Start or other pre-school programs;
- Put up notices about the educational rights of students in homeless situations;
- Refer students to any medical, dental, mental health or other services they need;
- Coordinate with social services and housing agencies to ensure access to education; and
- Make sure students have a full and equal chance to do well in school.



IMPORTANT CONTACT INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

For help with school-related problems if you are in temporary housing, contact:

**New York City Department of Education
Students in Temporary Housing (STH) Program**

Jacques Michel, Program Manager

212-374-6606

Email: jmichel4@nycboe.net

**Students in Temporary Housing Regional Coordinators and
Addresses for the Regional Learning Support Centers**

- **Region 1 (Districts 9, 10)**

Iris Nieves (718)741-5421, nieves2@nycboe.net

Mark Gonzalez (718)741-3156, mgonzalez8@nycboe.net

1 Fordham Plaza, Bronx, NY 10458

(see Important Information on page 11 for contact information). If the Regional Coordinator for Students in Temporary Housing can't fix the problem for the parent, the Regional Student Placement, Youth and Family Support Services Director will give the parent a **written explanation** of the decision including information about the right to appeal the decision.

- For **high school students**, parents and unaccompanied youth should contact the High School Enrollment Center at the Regional Learning Support Center (call 311 for the telephone number for the Enrollment Centers). If the Enrollment Center can't fix the problem for the parent or unaccompanied youth, the Director of Student Enrollment, Liz Sciabarra, will give the parent or unaccompanied youth a **written explanation** of the decision including information about the right to appeal the decision.
- To appeal the decision, parents and unaccompanied youth can file a complaint with the Commissioner of the State Education Department.

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS:

How long should it take to get a written decision?

⇒ **The same day the problem happened.** The Department of Education should work quickly to resolve any problem. If you are not happy with the result, the Regional Student Placement, Youth and Family Support Services Director (for elementary and middle school students) or the Director of Student Enrollment (for high school students) should give you a written decision as soon as possible.

Can I still appeal even if the school did not give me a written decision?

⇒ **YES.** Contact the Students in Temporary Housing Regional Coordinator for help.

Who can help me with an appeal?

⇒ **The Students in Temporary Housing Regional Coordinator** must help you under federal law. You can also contact Advocates for Children for help.

Where can I find a copy of the form to appeal a school's decision?

⇒ The appeal form can be downloaded from: <http://www.counsel.nysed.gov/appeals/petition.htm> or you can ask the Students in Temporary Housing Coordinator for a copy of the form (See Important Contact Information on pages 12-13).

⇒ **NO.** While the family is homeless there is no time limit for how long parents may receive MetroCards to go with their children to school.

How can I get MetroCards if I leave the shelter before the Department of Education worker arrives?

⇒ Ask the Department of Education worker for MetroCards in the afternoon the day before.

Can I still get MetroCards for school if my family is homeless but not living in a shelter?

⇒ **YES.** Contact the Students in Temporary Housing Regional Coordinator for help (see Important Contacts and Resources).

Can I still get a MetroCard to take my children to school if I am in a workfare program or WEP?

⇒ **DEPENDS.** If you are getting an unlimited MetroCard from your workfare or WEP assignment, you shouldn't need another one to take your children to school. But if you aren't getting MetroCards from WEP, you can get one from the Students in Temporary Housing Program.

PRE-K and HEAD START



- Children who are homeless should be placed in pre-K if the parent wants. Parents should send their children to Pre-K because it can be very helpful to them. Children who attend pre-K programs do better in reading and math, are more likely to graduate from high school, and are less likely to repeat a grade.
- Children who are homeless should be given priority for admission to Head Start. Contact the Students in Temporary Housing for help enrolling your child in Head Start. (see Important Information on page 11 for contact information).

QUESTION and ANSWER

Can my child still attend pre-K even if there isn't any room at the local pre-K program?

⇒ **YES.** The Department of Education Students in Temporary Housing (STH) worker at the shelter or the STH Regional Coordinator should find a seat at another school in the district. If there aren't any available seats in the district, the STH worker or Regional Coordinator should find a seat in another district.



UNACCOMPANIED YOUTH

- Youth who are homeless and who are not living with their parents or legal guardians (known as unaccompanied youth) can and should go to school.

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS

Do I need a parent to enroll in school?

⇒ **NO.** Unaccompanied homeless youth do not need their parents to enroll in school.

Can I go back to high school even though I'm 20 and was discharged from school 2 years ago?

⇒ **YES.** All youth who have not received a high school diploma have the right to attend school through the school year when they turn 21, even if they have dropped out or were discharged from school. There are several schools just for older students who may not have a lot of credits. Contact the STH Regional Coordinator or the Enrollment Center at the for help (see Important Contacts and Resources).



SPECIAL EDUCATION

- For students in homeless situations who transfer to a new school, the Committee on Special Education must find a **new placement in 3 days.**
- Transportation to the new school must be arranged in **5 days.**

QUESTIONS and ANSWERS:

Can I have my child evaluated for special education services even though I may be moving soon?

⇒ **YES.** Schools must evaluate students for special education services if the parent makes a request even if student may be transferring schools soon.

How long should it take for special education services to begin once I request an evaluation?

⇒ **No more than 60 school days.** Evaluations, IEP meeting, and placement must be completed within 60 school days from the day the parent consents for evaluation.

How do I request an evaluation for my child?

⇒ If you have a child 0-3 years old who you think may be slow to sit-up, crawl, walk, talk, or have another developmental delay, you can contact the **Early Intervention Program at 1-800-577-BABY (2229)** to request an evaluation.

⇒ To request an evaluation for children between 2 years 9 months and 4 years 9 months write to the **Committee on Pre-school Special Education** at the local Committee on Special Education (see Important Information on page 11 for contact information).

⇒ To request an evaluation for special education services for children and youth between 5-21 years-old, write to the **School-Based Support Team** where the student is enrolled and the local **Committee on Special Education** (see Important Information on page 11 for contact information).

Who can I contact if I have a question or problem about my child's special education placement?

⇒ If you have a question about or a problem with your child's **special education placement**, you can call Advocates for Children's Helpline, Tuesdays or Thursdays 10:30a.m.-1p.m. or one of the other education advocacy service listed on page 14.

APPEALS



- If there is a problem at school with a student who is homeless (for example if a school refuses to admit a student or provide transportation), parents and unaccompanied youth have the right to appeal the school's decision.
- If there is a problem about enrollment, the student must be **immediately admitted** to the school of choice while the problem is being resolved.
- For **elementary and middle school students**, parents should contact the Department of Education worker at the shelter or the Regional Coordinator for Students in Temporary Housing