

RIGHTS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS

The Chicago Public Schools shall provide an educational environment that treats all students with dignity and respect. Every CPS homeless student shall have equal access to the same free and appropriate educational opportunities as students who are not homeless. This commitment to the educational rights of homeless children, youth, and youth not living with a parent or guardian, applies to all services, programs, and activities provided or made available by the CPS.

A student is considered **“homeless”** if he or she is presently living:

- in a shelter * sharing housing with relatives or others due to lack of housing
- in a motel/hotel, camping ground, or similar situation due to lack of alternative, adequate housing
- at a train or bus station, park, or in a car * in an abandoned building
- temporarily housed while awaiting DCFS foster care placement

All Homeless Students Have Rights To:

- **Immediate school enrollment.** *A school must immediately enroll students even if they lack health, immunization or school records, proof of guardianship, or proof of residency.*
- **Enroll in:**
 - *the school he/she attended when permanently housed (school of origin)
 - *the school in which he/she was last enrolled (school of origin)
 - *any school that non-homeless students living in the same attendance area in which the homeless child or youth is actually living are eligible to attend.
- **Remain** enrolled in his/her selected school for as long as he/she remains homeless or, if the student becomes permanently housed, until the end of the academic year. Academic success is helped when the student remains in the same school.
- **Priority** in certain preschool programs. Parents or guardians are encouraged to seek enrollment in these programs.
- **Participate** in a tutorial-instructional support program, school-related activities, and/or receive other support services.
- **Obtain** information regarding how to get fee waivers, free uniforms, and low-cost or free medical referrals.
- **Transportation services:** A homeless student attending his/her school of origin has a right to transportation to go to and from the school of origin as long as (s)he is homeless or, if the student becomes permanently housed, until the end of the academic year. CPS staff shall inform homeless parents/guardians or youth of transportation services to and from school and school-related activities.
Types of transportation services:
 - * For homeless students:
 - CTA transit cards, transfer fares, and if a student is age 12 years or older a CTA riding permit
 - * For parents of homeless students:
 - CTA transit cards for a parent/guardian of homeless Pre-K to Grade 6 students to accompany them to/from school
 - * For preschool through 6th grade, alternative transportation such as busing in parental “hardship” situations where documentation is provided. Examples of “hardship” situations are:
 - parent employment, job training, or educational program
 - mental and/or physical disability
 - children need to be transported to/from schools at different locations
 - rules of shelter or similar facility will not permit parent/guardian to leave to transport children to/from school
 - court order, DCFS, or DCFS contract agent requires activities that do not enable parent/guardian to transport children to/from school
 - other good cause why parent/guardian cannot use public transportation to transport children to/from school

Dispute Resolution: If you disagree with school officials about enrollment, transportation or fair treatment of a homeless child or youth, you may file a complaint with the principal. The principal must respond and attempt to resolve it quickly. The principal must refer you to free and low cost legal services to help you, if you wish. During the dispute, the student must be immediately enrolled in the school and provided transportation until the matter is resolved. The Homeless Education Dispute Resolution Process Form is available at all Chicago Public Schools and offices, including the Homeless Education Program (773)553-2242.

Every Chicago Public School has a Homeless Education Program Liaison who will assist you in making enrollment and placement decisions, providing notice of any appeal process, and filling out dispute forms. If you have questions about enrollment in school, or want more information about the rights of homeless students in the Chicago Public Schools, call the CPS Homeless Education Program at (773)553-2242 or the Chicago Public Schools at (773)553-1000. If you want more information about the rights of homeless students in Illinois, call the Illinois State Board of Education at (1-800) 215-6379.

