



OFFICE OF THE ATTORNEY GENERAL
STATE OF ILLINOIS

Lisa Madigan
ATTORNEY GENERAL

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Greetings!

The beginning of a new school year brings both excitement and challenges. According to the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, 26,000 children will be homeless throughout the course of the year. With the recent Hurricane Katrina disaster, schools will face an additional challenge as evacuees seek new homes and new schools. As you may know, both the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the Illinois Education for Homeless Children Act are very clear regarding the education rights of students whose lives have been touched by homelessness.

As Attorney General, I want to work with you to provide you with resources and materials to help you ensure that the new or continuing enrollment of homeless children in your school occurs as seamlessly as the law requires. Working with the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless and Opening Doors, we are providing the enclosed materials to school administrators, teachers, staff and parents throughout Illinois to help schools fulfill their responsibility to identify children who may be homeless and to ensure that their district's McKinney-Vento liaison assists those families in need.

Both federal and Illinois laws provide that a homeless child has a legal right to attend any one of a number of possible schools – including the one he or she was attending when permanently housed, the one in which he or she was last enrolled, or one in the district in which he or she now temporarily resides. The laws also state that the parent or the unaccompanied youth has the right to choose which school the child will attend and that the selected school is to immediately enroll the child, even if the child is unable to produce records normally required for school enrollment, including proof of residency or previous academic records.

I am pleased to be part of the effort to ensure that all children, including those without homes, can receive a quality education through Illinois' public schools. I commend all of you and your school districts for working hard to provide a quality education to those children whose lives have been so disrupted by homelessness. By working together, we can create a stable educational environment and make a difference in the lives of Illinois' homeless children.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa Madigan".

Lisa Madigan
Illinois Attorney General

For further information, please visit Opening Door's website, <http://homelessed.net>