

## Resources and Materials for People Working with Youth



**National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)**  
202-364-7392 [www.naehcy.org](http://www.naehcy.org)

**National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)**  
800-308-2145 [www.serve.org/nche/](http://www.serve.org/nche/)

**National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty (NLCHP)**  
202-638-2535 [www.nlchp.org](http://www.nlchp.org)

**Opening Doors Project**  
224-366-8623 [www.homelessed.net](http://www.homelessed.net)

## Resources for Youth

**National Runaway Switchboard**  
Runaway Hotline: 1-800-RUNAWAY (24 hrs.)  
[www.nrscrisline.org](http://www.nrscrisline.org)

**Covenant House**  
Runaway Hotline: 1-800-999-9999 (24 hrs.)  
[www.covenanthouse.org](http://www.covenanthouse.org)

**National Network for Youth**  
1-202-783-7949  
[www.nn4youth.org](http://www.nn4youth.org)

**Stand Up for Kids**  
1-800-365-4KID  
[www.standupforkids.org](http://www.standupforkids.org)

**National Center for Homeless Education**  
1-800-308-2145

**Illinois Legal Aid**  
[www.illinoislegalaid.org](http://www.illinoislegalaid.org)

**Opening Doors** has a brochure with helpful information for youth that you can order at:  
[www.homelessed.net/resource/publications.htm](http://www.homelessed.net/resource/publications.htm)

If you have any questions regarding the educational rights of homeless children and youth in Illinois, you can contact any of the following:

Your Local School Homeless Liaison:

**The Opening Doors Project**  
(224) 366-8623

<http://www.homelessed.net/resource/default.htm>  
At this website page you can click on a PDF link that lists district liaisons by district and by area.

**IL Coalition to End Homelessness**  
(708) 263-3590

**ROE #26 – Hancock/McDonough**  
(309) 837-4821

**Law Project of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless**  
[www.chicagohomeless.org](http://www.chicagohomeless.org)  
(800) 940-1119

**Information Hotline**  
**Illinois State Board of Education**  
(800) 215-6379



**Opening Doors**  
2626 S. Clearbrook Drive  
Arlington Heights, IL 60005  
Phone: (224) 366-8623  
Fax: (847) 378-6225  
<http://homelessed.net>

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## The Educational Rights of Illinois' Unaccompanied Youth: Giving Assistance

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## Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

Funded by Illinois State Board of Education, Accountability Division, under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Children and Youth Program.

## “Unaccompanied Youth”

*Definition: a youth not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.*

This includes young people who have:

- run away from home.
- been thrown out of their homes.
- been left on their own by a parent or guardian.

Possible reasons:

- physical or sexual abuse
- pregnancy
- sexual orientation
- drug or alcohol abuse of parent(s)



## Who is Homeless?

The definition of “homeless children and youth,” under the McKinney-Vento federal act, “means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.” This includes a person who stays at a shelter, in a car, at camping grounds, in a park, in a motel, in a train station or similar situations due to lack of alternative accommodations.

**This can also include children or teens who are staying with friends or relatives because they cannot pay for a place to stay.** In the case of homeless youth, being doubled-up is often called “couch-surfing”: the youth may be able to stay with a friend or relative for only a night or two before needing to find another place to stay.

## Homeless Education Liaisons

Each school district must appoint a homeless education liaison. It is the liaison’s responsibility to:

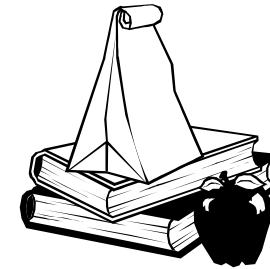
- Help unaccompanied youth choose and enroll in a school
- Inform unaccompanied youth of their rights to transportation and assist youth in accessing transportation
- Provide unaccompanied youth with information about their right to appeal school or district decisions and ensure that youth are immediately enrolled, pending resolution of disputes.

In addition, liaisons and other school personnel should work to identify and offer services to unaccompanied youth. To find the liaison in your area, look on the back of this brochure. If there is no name in the box, please call one of the numbers beneath the box to find out the name of the homeless education liaison in your district.

## Choice of Schools

Youth have the right to attend the school that they attended before becoming homeless if that is their wish and it is feasible. They also have the right to go to the school that serves the area where they are currently staying. Youth who move from school to school often lose credits and have difficulty keeping up, so it is generally in the best interest of the youth to stay in their “school of origin.”

Whichever choice the youth makes, he/she must be allowed to enroll or re-enroll **immediately**, even if he/she doesn’t have school records. Furthermore, proof of guardianship is not required to enroll.



## Other Important Points

### Eligible for

- Fee waivers
- Free lunch
- Food stamps/medical card

### Transportation

Youth have the right receive free transportation to school and may get assistance with this from their liaison.

### Equal Access to Programs & Services

- Gifted and talented education
- Special education
- Vocational education
- English Language Learner services

### Sports Eligibility/IHSA

- Information available from ISBE
- Assistance available from liaison

### Right to Appeal

School-district decision(s) about enrollment or transportation (enrollment required while dispute is being resolved).