



LOCATING COMMUNITY RESOURCES FOR HOMELESS STUDENTS

Homeless students often have many needs outside the classroom, some of which may include finding shelter, food, clothing, transportation, and counseling. The following points may help you to efficiently refer homeless families to community resources that can appropriately meet those needs.

1. Begin your search using personal connections to resources. For example, you may know a secretary at a church, a clerk at a resale shop, a nurse at a public health facility, or an administrator at a community-based agency. Ask them where they would refer homeless families for basic services. Be sure to ask them for the name and phone of a helpful staff person at the resource agency.
2. If you do not have personal contacts in the community, directly call local organizations such as township offices, newspaper offices, police stations, and/or churches. Explain your role at school and ask them where you can find free or low-cost meals, shelter, and other basic needs. Also ask them to call you if/when they sponsor special community programs for families in need.
3. Check out the resources as personally as possible – make a visit or a phone call to find out what services they really provide.
4. Attempt to identify both public and private resources, but be aware that the services of private organizations may be available only on a temporary basis. Keep up-to-date on their existence.
5. Keep out-to-date on changes in resources' phone numbers, addresses, and services by calling them periodically.
6. Be aware that some resources do not want to become widely-known; they may be providing services with very limited supplies. Find out their philosophy from the start.
7. Avoid handing out resource listings that have a definite order; the first resource on the list will become overwhelmed while the final ones will be under-utilized.
8. Try to avoid making inappropriate referrals by carefully matching the families' needs to the service providers' resources. Be aware that the family may not have the spare time or money to spend on dead-end phone calls.
9. Try to locate resources for services beyond the obvious. For example, service clubs may be able to provide mentoring or tutoring, camps for children, or summer employment for youth.
10. Recognize that the contacts you make at community agencies may become your allies in getting children into school. Ask them to call you when they "hear" about homeless families in the community.

Opening Doors – Statewide Access to Education for Homeless Children and Youth

Adult Learning Resource Center, 2626 S. Clearbrook Drive, Arlington Heights, IL 60005
ROE #26 – Hancock/McDonough, 130 S. Lafayette - Suite 200, Macomb, IL
<http://homelessed.net>