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# HOUSE LIAISON TRAINING FAQS

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This document captures the questions that were asked in the chat during the AY 2023-2024 HOUSE Liaison Training or sent afterwards. Answers were provided by speakers from Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, Department of Children and Family Services, Foster Progress, Illinois Student Assistance Commission, and SchoolHouse Connection.

- **What is the name of the Illinois law that established HOUSE Liaisons? Where can I find the text of the law?**

HOUSE Liaisons were established in 2022 by Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act (110 ILCS 131/1 et seq.). The text of the law can be found on the Illinois General Assembly website: [110 ILCS 131/ Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act. \(ilga.gov\)](https://www.ilga.gov/legislation/110/ilcs/110%20ILCS%20131%2F1%2F1000.htm).

- **Where can I find the list of HOUSE Liaisons?**

The contact information for designated HOUSE Liaisons can be found at [IBHE HOUSE Liaisons](#).

- **Is there an age restriction for defining who is a "student"?**

There is not an age limit for students experiencing homelessness accessing college and getting resources.

- **What are our obligations as an institution for housing between breaks if we do not offer any on campus housing?**

Schools that do not have on campus housing should help connect students with their local Community of Care and other housing service providers in the community.

- **We are an institution that only has graduate students. Does this law apply to us?**

Yes, Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act applies to institutions that only offer master and doctoral degrees.

- **Who are students in care?**

As defined by the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act (110 ILCS 131/5), "Student in Care" means:

“any person, regardless of age, who is or was under the care and legal custody of the Department of Children and Family Services, including youth for whom the Department has court-ordered legal responsibility, youth who aged out of care at age 18 or older, or youth formerly under care who have been adopted and were the subject of an adoption assistance agreement or who have been placed in private guardianship and were the subject of a subsidized guardianship agreement.”

- **What is the process for using on campus housing/residence halls to assist homeless students? Is a student's conduct history a factor in deciding if Housing will assist?**

Under the law homeless students should be prioritized for on campus housing, but that doesn't change the school's policies around safety and the school's student conduct policies around safety and behavior.

- **Are there any best practices for tracking homeless student/youth in care graduation rates?**

For data collection, Alyssa Phillips (Chicago Coalition of the Homeless representative) points to <https://hope.temple.edu/hope-impact-partnerships>. HOPE works with institutions across the country to identify homeless students as well as other data points including graduation rates.

- **Can part time students use any of the DCFS funding?**

Students who attend part-time can access the Education and Training Voucher (ETV) and the Tuition and Fee Waiver, if they meet the eligibility criteria.

- **Are college scholarships for youth in care open for students attending community college as well as universities?**

Yes. We have scholarship recipients attending community college, universities, private schools, and out of state schools. Students attending out of state or private schools would receive all scholarship benefits except the tuition and fee waiver.

- **For DCFS book reimbursement, does that pertain to access codes for Pearson and other book publishing companies?**

Students will need to purchase the access codes, then submit receipt for reimbursement.

- **Is it best for Students in Care to work directly with DCFS or through the Housing Liaison?**

Our hope is to educate the HOUSE Liaisons to be resources for students in care, in addition to accessing our Post-Secondary Education Specialists for assistance.

- **I have had students unable to access shelter resources since they are couch surfing. The differences between the education definition of homeless and the HUD definition are problematic for getting them help. What is being done about this?**

Advocates are working on trying to get HUD to have the same definition of homelessness as McKinney-Vento. Collecting data on students not being able to access community resources can be helpful to be shared so changes can be made at a larger level. Same for housing lists and lack of community resources. Collecting and sharing this information can help us get a better of picture of what is available and what is not. As well as connecting students to other supports outside of housing that can be helpful such as food and clothing pantries, drop in centers, health care clinics, and access to public benefits.

- **I'm interested in creating a "YCAP" program on our campus. How would I go about doing this?**

YCAP is in collaboration with DCFS. Please reach out to Kim Peck, DCFS, [kim.peck@illinois.gov](mailto:kim.peck@illinois.gov) or Kate Danielson, Foster Progress, [kate@foster-progress.org](mailto:kate@foster-progress.org) to discuss including your campus in the future.

- **According to the State Law, is providing on campus Housing the primary resource? What are the other resources schools should provide to homeless students and students in care?**

*Alyssa Phillips, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless:* Schools should prioritize and assist students experiencing homelessness with accessing on campus housing, including during breaks. HOUSE Liaisons should also assist students with accessing financial aid and the specific help they may need to apply as an unaccompanied homeless youth or independent student. HOUSE Liaisons should also work to connect students with community and other school resources, such as food pantries, the local Continuum of Care, health clinics, tutoring, resume support and other services that may help homeless students.

*Jillian Sitjar, SchoolHouse Connection:* HOUSE liaisons are a best practice and mimic the role of the McKinney-Vento liaison in the K-12 system. This [resource](#) includes other ways homeless higher education liaisons can support students outside of providing housing.

*Kim Peck, DCFS:*

- o Assistance with completing financial aid documents for federal and state aid and any institutional aid.
- o Connecting youth in care with community-based resources as needed.
- o Connecting youth in care with campus-based resources, developing resources identified as needs, that are not currently provided.

- **We have campus housing, however, individual students don't stay on campus in the summer. Are we required to provide housing during this break?**

The law states that if other students are permitted on campus then the institution needs to open it for homeless students. If other students do not stay on campus, then the institution does not need to provide housing.

- **Are the liaisons considered program serving individuals serving individuals experiencing homelessness?**

Yes, HOUSE liaisons are considered programs serving individuals experiencing homelessness. Liaisons can provide determinations by using this [sample form](#). More resources about the FAFSA and determinations are available on the SHC FAFSA [page](#).

- **For ISAC's e-messaging platform, none of the categories quite fit me, but, I do help students complete the FAFSA. Which option should I select?**

Selecting "Counselor" would be fine.

- **Can updates to FAFSA be done during the year if a student's housing situation changes? For example, they were in stable housing but then during the academic year things change to unstable/homeless?**

Corrections can be made to the FAFSA when necessary. When this situation occurs, it is crucial the student is in contact with the financial aid office at their institutions so they can accurately reflect packaging based on their situation. Also, they will need to receive that determination and a financial aid administrator can now make that determination.