

COLLEGE ACCESSIBILITY BILL PASSED

SB190 will assist students experiencing homelessness in receiving assistance to successfully complete their education.



Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act Niya Kelly and Alyssa Phillips

Module 1

Introduction

Despite facing many challenges including deep poverty and instability many youth who experience homelessness wish to pursue careers that require some form of postsecondary education.



Students experiencing homelessness are often invisible on college campuses, unsure if there are services available, and confused about who they should turn to when problems arise.

Students attempt to blend in because they want to be like other students despite their atypical circumstances.



- Students experiencing homelessness who were part of our scholarship program shared their perspectives and expressed struggles with applying for financial aid, finding housing, and identifying staff on campus who can answer their questions.
- Overall, students shared that they felt alone and that there was an expectation that they should be able to make it without asking for help.



Statistics:

- According to a national study performed by Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago in 2019, **4.2 million** youth and young adults experienced homelessness on their own during a 12-month period.



Kull, M. A., Morton, M. H., Patel, S., Curry, S., & Carreon, E. (2019). Missed opportunities: Education among youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in America. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

Statistics:

- The same study found that 29% of young adults experiencing homelessness were enrolled in college or another educational program.



Kull, M. A., Morton, M. H., Patel, S., Curry, S., & Carreon, E. (2019). Missed opportunities: Education among youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in America. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago.

This conversation inspired what became SB190 (Public Act 102-0083) – Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act (Sen. Glowiak-Hilton and Rep. West).



SB 190 (Public Act 102-0083)

Creates the Higher Education
Housing and Opportunities Act



Definition:

A student experiencing homelessness or homeless student is “an individual enrolled in an institution who lacks or is at imminent risk of lacking a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence or whose parent or legal guardian is unable or unwilling to provide shelter and care and includes a homeless individual as defined under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.”

Definition:

For the purpose of this definition, the term "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence" does not include residence in an institution of higher education's on – campus housing.



Indicators a student might be an unaccompanied homeless youth:

- Overly concerned about how to complete documentation needed for the institution that requires parental signatures
- Difficulty providing an address
- Giving vague answers about their living situation
- Stressed about where they will be living during the summer
- Hunger
- Wearing the same clothes repeatedly
- Exhaustion
- Expressing feeling like their only option is to drop out of school

Module 2

Compliance

To aid students experiencing homelessness, each institution of higher education shall designate at least **one** staff member to serve as a liaison to assist homeless students enrolled at the institution.

The designated staff member may be employed in the office of financial aid, in campus housing services, or in any other appropriate office or department as determined by the institution.

Under 110 ILCS 131/10 (a) the liaison designated shall offer assistance and resources to any homeless student or student enrolled at the institution. The liaison shall have the following responsibilities:



- To understand provisions pertaining to the financial aid eligibility of homeless students, including eligibility as an independent student under the federal Higher Education Act of 1965
- To identify services and resources that are available to and appropriate for a homeless student



- To assist homeless students or students in care in applying for and receiving federal and State financial aid and available services.
- To track and monitor the graduation rate and retention rate of homeless students and students in care enrolled at the institution.



- To report annually to the Board of Higher Education or the Illinois Community College Board, as appropriate, the number of homeless students and students in care enrolled at the institution.
 - The report must include the number of students who received assistance of services through the liaison and the type of service or assistance received by the student. If the information is available, the report may describe the outcome for the student as a result of the services or assistance he or she received through the liaison.

- To act as an intermediary between a homeless student or student in care and the office of financial aid, student support services, and campus housing services.
- To connect a homeless student or student in care to a local continuum of care program.



- To publish on the institution's website information about the services and resources available through the institution's liaison, as well as contact information for local, State, and federal services.
- To develop a plan to provide access to on-campus housing or to suitable off-campus housing between academic breaks to homeless students or students in care enrolled at the institution.

- To train the institution's employees to identify students experiencing homelessness and to refer those students to the liaison.



At his or her discretion, the liaison may provide any additional service he or she reasonably believes is within the purview of the role of liaison.

The Board of Higher Education and the Illinois Community College Board shall adopt rules, policies, and procedures to implement and administer this Act. Each Board must:

- Provide access to a training program developed by a homeless advocacy organizations.
- Require a liaison to receive training on an annual basis.



- Collaborate with the State Coordinator for McKinney-Vento Homeless Education and the contact liaisons to facilitate the efficient transition of homeless students from secondary to postsecondary education
- Provide homeless students and students in care information about support services, including financial aid, on-campus and off-campus housing, food and meal plan programs, and counseling services, and other resources and any other relevant information to assist these students.

- Issue annual reports about students experiencing homelessness and students in care enrolled at academic institutions.

Each institution that provides on-campus housing for students enrolled at the institution shall:

- Grant priority for on-campus housing to students experiencing homelessness and students in care who are enrolled at the institution, including but not limited to, access to on-campus housing that remains open during academic breaks, and waive fees for the on-campus housing during academic breaks

- Allow students experiencing homelessness and students in care who are enrolled part-time at the institution to access on-campus housing.
- Provide information about the availability of on-campus housing to students experiencing homelessness and students in care.
- Provide information about the services and assistance offered by the institution regarding homelessness in financial aid and admission packets and on the institution's website.

- Collaborate with the State Coordinator for McKinney-Vento Homeless Education and the contact liaisons to facilitate the efficient transition of homeless students from secondary to postsecondary education
- Provide homeless students and students in care information about support services, including financial aid, on-campus and off-campus housing, food and meal plan programs, and counseling services, and other resources and any other relevant information to assist these students.

Module 3

Best Practices

Best practice is for information to be shared with all students about resources for students experiencing homelessness.



It is critical that students experiencing homelessness are aware of resources on campus. Use various methods such as, emails, flyers, posters, school websites and social media accounts, and appropriate and safe in-person visits to provide information to students experiencing homelessness.



Create a list of resources available through the school and community that can be shared with students.



Establish a contact person with departments at the school and local community organizations that provide services to students experiencing homelessness such as food pantries, youth drop-in centers, housing and case management.



Record or host webinars that discuss resources and assistance with financial aid for students experiencing homelessness and faculty and staff that are interested in learning how to support their students.

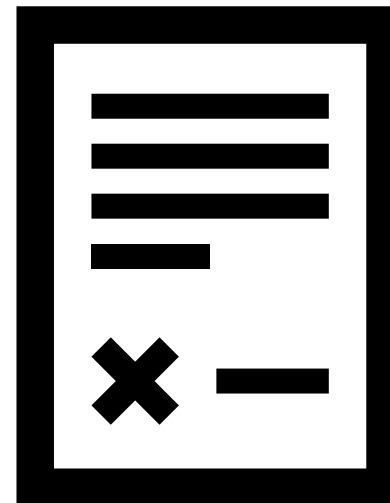


- Schools should consistently collect and update contact information of students experiencing homelessness.
 - This includes current address, phone numbers (including cell and alternate phone numbers), email address, and emergency contact information.
 - Schools should reach out to students to update this information monthly.

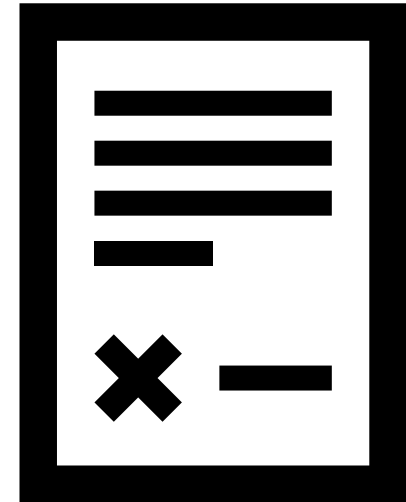
Module 4

In Practice- Financial Aid

Students remain eligible for financial aid despite experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity.



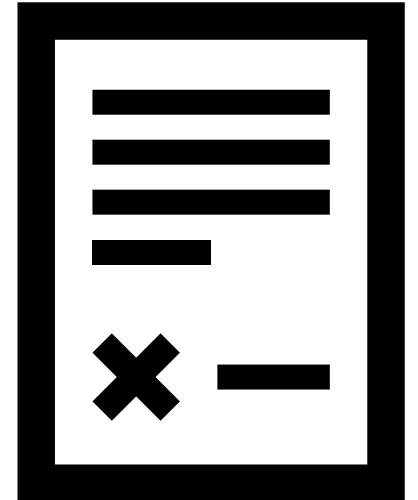
Under the Higher Education Act, youth who meet the definition of "independent student" can apply for federal aid without getting parent financial information or a signature.



For purposes of federal student aid and the FAFSA, there are two key definitions to keep in mind.

- Homeless: Means lacking fixed, regular, and adequate housing
 - This includes living in shelters, parks, motels, hotels, public spaces, camping grounds, cars, abandoned buildings, or temporary living with other people because you had nowhere else to go.
 - Also, living in any of these situations and fleeing an abusive parent, maybe considered homeless even if the parent would otherwise provide a place to live.
- Unaccompanied: Means not living in the physical custody of a parent or guardian
 - For financial aid purposes, a student must meet both definitions to be considered independent and not be required to report parent information.

A student can be verified as an unaccompanied homeless youth by their high school homeless liaison, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program director or designee, HUD homeless assistance program director/designee and a financial aid administrator.



The questions below are found in the Dependency section of the FAFSA. If a student answers “Yes” to the first question, they will be prompted to answer the follow-up questions regarding a determination of homelessness from one of the following approved sources.

- High school or district homeless liaison a. Locator: www.isbe.net/Pages/Homeless-Liaison-Contact-Information
 - The director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) a. Locator: <https://www.hud.gov/findshelter>
 - The director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program a. Locator: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/fysb/grants/illinois-rhy>
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Progress bar with steps: Student Demographics (checked), School Selection (checked), Dependency Status (3), Parent Demographics (4), Parent Financials (5), Student Financials (6), Sign & Submit (7).

SCHOOL SELECTION

Student Homelessness Filter Question

On or after July 1, 2021, were you homeless or were you self-supporting and at risk of being homeless? ⓘ

Yes

No

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STUDENT INFORMATION

Student Homelessness Questions

At any time on or after July 1, 2020, did you receive a determination from any of the entities listed below that you were an unaccompanied youth who was homeless, or were self-supporting and at risk of being homeless?

Select all that apply or "None of the above."[?]

Your high school or school district homeless liaison

The director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

The director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program

None of the above

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Students Without a Determination:

If a student is unable to obtain a determination from one of the sources listed, they may still be considered independent for financial aid purposes, but they will need to work directly with the financial aid office.

In that case they will be presented with a screen on the next page. If they feel they meet the criteria, they can continue without parent information.

STUDENT INFORMATION

Homeless or at Risk of Being Homeless Acknowledgement

Choose the appropriate option below based on your circumstances. ?

- I am unaccompanied and either homeless or at risk of being homeless, and will not provide information about my parent(s).
- I will provide information about my parent(s).

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<https://fsapartners.ed.gov/knowledge-center/fsa-handbook/2022-2023/application-and-verification-guide/ch5-special-cases>)

- Financial Aid Administrators (FAAs) can make those determinations using relevant information and documentation from other recognized third-parties
- The determination may be based on a documented interview with the student, if there is no written documentation available
- If another school has made this determination, an FAA can rely on that determination
- FAAs are not required to confirm that a student is homeless or unaccompanied unless they have conflicting information
- If an FAA disagrees with the determination, that is not considered conflicting information and the determination should be accepted (they can contact an approved source to evaluate the determination, but they can't change it themselves)

A college **may** ask for but cannot require the following documentation to identify a youth as experiencing homelessness:

- Local school district personnel
 - State homeless education coordinators
 - The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)
 - Third parties such as private or publicly funded homeless shelters and service providers
 - Financial aid administrators from colleges other than the school to which you're presenting the documentation
 - Staff from college access programs such as TRIO (e.g., Talent Search or Upward Bound) or GEAR UP
 - College or high school counselors
 - Mental health professionals, social workers, mentors, doctors, or clergy
-

There is **no specific documentation** that an unaccompanied student must provide to a financial aid office to determine the students' status as an unaccompanied independent student.

Financial aid administrators should not require the youth to provide extensive documentation as it creates barriers for accessing higher education. (Dear Colleague Letter, U.S. Department of Education, July 2015).



A student doesn't need to provide a home address on the FAFSA if they are experiencing homelessness. They just need a mailing address where they can reliably receive mail. The mailing address can be the address of a relative or friend or it can be the college's address.

Misconception	Fact
A student must provide their permanent address in order to apply for financial aid	No, but you must provide a mailing address where you can reliably receive mail. The mailing address can be the address of a relative or friend or it can be your college's address. Students may use their school's mailing address after confirming the school's consent to do so
Only a homeless shelter staff can confirm a student's unaccompanied status	People who can confirm a student's homeless status <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A high school or school district homeless liaison • A director of an emergency shelter or transitional housing program funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development • A director of a runaway or homeless youth basic center or transitional living program
Financial Aid Administrators cannot certify a student as homeless or unaccompanied	Financial aid administrators are permitted to make a homeless determination. They may ask students to provide supporting documents. An advisor must make a determination and can affirm a student's status as homeless without supporting documents
Letters from providers must have "wet" signatures	Nothing in the Every Student Succeeds Act and the Higher Education Act requires an original document over an emailed or faxed copy

There will be changes to these rules in the, near, future (exact date TBD) due to FAFSA Simplification.

- Students who are deemed to be independent for financial aid purposes for one award year will be deemed independent students for the subsequent award years **only if** the student attends the same institution
- Financial aid administrators (FAA) will be able to accept documentation of independent student status from another FAA at a different institution
- List of people who can make a determination of unaccompanied homeless youth will be expanded to include:
 - Director or designee of a director of an emergency or transitional shelter, street outreach program, or homeless youth drop-in center
 - Director or designee of a director of a program funded under a TRIO or GEAR UP grant

SchoolHouse Connections

[Federal Application for Federal Student Aid \(FAFSA\) | SchoolHouse Connection](#)

Module 5

Trauma Informed

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE PRACTICES

- Safe, comfortable, and welcoming environment
- PRIVACY
- Clean, accessible, functional and de-cluttered space
- Culturally inclusive and responsive space
- Modeling the language student uses (regarding their housing situation)

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE PRACTICES

- Provide information and resources to clients in an unbiased manner; provide choice
- Transparency about the process, policies, decision making, and services
- Respect their experience; listen to understand
- Engage in ways that are nonjudgmental and non-shaming
- Reducing risk of re-traumatization in service settings

TRAUMA INFORMED CARE PRACTICES

- If a student discusses a traumatic situation with you, show appreciation for their willingness to share
 - *"Thank you for sharing that with me. I know it can be difficult to talk about those things."* (Or something to that affect)
- It's important to hold space for the student and have a strengths-based approach when working with client
- Stay calm

Module 6

Student POV

Wrap Up

Key Takeaways:

- Youth experiencing homelessness apply and attend higher education
- New legislation provides that institutions will designate at least one staff member who will serve as a liaison
- Students identify that housing and financial aid are two of their biggest priorities but also need support in becoming food secure and identifying other available resources.
- In working with students make sure to provide grace, trust, and compassion in what can be a moment crisis. Trauma-informed assistance is important.

● Tech Support or Questions:

● Contact:

- Chicago Coalition for the Homeless Law Project Education Attorney
 - Alyssa Phillips, aphillips@chicagohomeless.org
 - Contact Info:
 - Phone: (312) 641-4140
 - Toll-Free Legal Assistance: 1 (800) 940-1119
- SchoolHouse Connection
 - Jillian Sitjar, Senior Program Manager, Higher Education, jillian@schoolhouseconnection.org