



SUPPORT EXTENDING LIAISONS TO COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Low Educational Attainment → Increased Likelihood of Homelessness and Homelessness → Increased Likelihood of Low Educational Attainment

14%

Homelessness among 4-year college students*

College-aged youth who experience homelessness are less likely to attend college and even when they do attend college, many still struggle with homelessness.¹ Many homeless youth are struggling with trauma from their past experiences and often do not have the same supports and guidance from a trusted adult as housed students. They also many not have family or mentors in their life who have attended college before and who can provide them with information about financial aid, on- and off-campus housing, food and meal programs, and counseling options when personal or educational issues arise. College students experiencing homelessness need more

information about educational resources from educators and homeless services providers.²

Homeless Liaisons Provide Essential Guidance & Resources for Success

One key way to ensure that college students experiencing homelessness get the support they need is to provide them with the same services that former and current foster youth attending college receive in Texas: a liaison to guide them through their post-secondary education challenges. Currently, under the McKinney-Vento Act, every school district in the country is required to have a homeless liaison.³ Foster care liaisons are also required.⁴ These liaisons are necessary because homelessness creates special needs to ensure success and when this help is provided students are more successful.

Homeless liaisons on the K-12 level must, among other things, ensure homeless youth are:

- Identified through outreach and coordination activities with other entities and agencies;
- Enrolled in school without the usual documentation needed for enrollment and with equal opportunity to succeed;
- Able to receive educational services for which they are eligible; and
- Provided referrals to health care, housing, and all other appropriate services.

The need for this type of assistance does end simply because a young person has made it to the collegiate level. In fact, the need for this kind of support only increases as barriers become more complex and high-stakes.

¹ Kull, M. A., *et al.*, *Missed opportunities: Education among youth and young adults experiencing homelessness in America*. Chicago, IL: Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago (2019), available at <https://www.chapinhall.org/research/education-youth-homelessness/>

² *Id.*

³ 42 U.S.C. §§ 11431, *et seq.*

⁴ Tex. Edu. Code § 33.904.

* Goldrick-Rab, S., *et al.*, *College and university basic needs insecurity: A national #RealCollege survey report*, The Hope Center for College, Community, and Justice (April 2019).

Stable Housing Is Essential to Student Success

Likely many former foster youth, homeless college students often have to figure out where they are going to live and how they are going to eat when their college dorms and cafeterias shutter during the Summer or holiday breaks. This can create additional stress and anxiety for these students, particularly around finals time as the transition approaches. Thankfully, Texas has proposed legislation that would support these youth when their college dorm would otherwise shut down.

“I’ve been trying to get back into school so I can get a degree and get an awesome career going, but not having that stability of: Is this place that I’m staying currently going to be raided by the police? Are they going to cut up the tents like they’ve been doing in some camps around here? Is this one place I’m staying at, how long will I be able to stay? Are they going to work with me on that? It stresses me out. On top of that, I’m running into people, and their lives are together. They’ve got a place to stay, they have food in their mouth every day and all of that stuff. I’m walking in that crowd, and what do I say to people? I don’t want to be an outcast from the group because I don’t have what people assume are an automatic given.”

—W.P., Houston youth**

SUPPORT HB 214 & HB 1482

Texas’ young adults who are experiencing homelessness should receive the same supports for success in their post-secondary educational experience as our former foster youth. They are populations that face common barriers and they both deserve to have those barriers removed to better succeed. Support HB 214 & HB 1482, which:

- ✔ **Extend the benefits of a guiding liaison to homeless college students;**
- ✔ **Ensure homeless college students will have someone to point them in the right direction and provide them with guidance that parents, guardians, or mentors of housed students would provide;**
- ✔ **Provide for housing in-between traditional college/university term schedules; and**
- ✔ **Guarantee college students experiencing homelessness have priority access to on-campus housing, when available.**

“There’s a lot of growth and a lot of learning that happens during that time. These are youth that are pretty profound and resilient and have gone through a lot. Homelessness can be very traumatic... Going to school or going to college, and at the same time not having a place to stay during the night while trying to handle and manage all of the ‘normal’ teenage and early 20-something life experiences, it’s just challenging.”

—Austin advocate**

** Texas Appleseed & Texas Network of Youth Services, *Young, Alone, and Homeless in the Lone Star State: Policy Solutions to End Youth Homelessness in Texas* (2017), available at https://www.texasappleseed.org/sites/default/files/YoungAloneHomeless_FullReport_fin.pdf.



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