

STATE OF NEW YORK

4029

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN ASSEMBLY

February 9, 2023

Introduced by M. of A. GONZALEZ-ROJAS -- read once and referred to the Committee on Higher Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to establishing liaison officers, regional contacts, and campus contacts to assist college students experiencing homelessness to find housing

The People of the State of New York, represented in Senate and Assembly, do enact as follows:

1 Section 1. The education law is amended by adding a new article 127-A
2 to read as follows:

ARTICLE 127-A

STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Section 6360. Definition.

6 6361. Liaison officers, regional contacts, and campus contacts.

7 6362. Access to housing for students experiencing homelessness.

8 6363. Priority enrollment.

9 6364. Assistance with college fees for students experiencing
10 homelessness.

11 6365. Pilot program to increase enrollment, attendance, and
12 success in college.

13 § 6360. Definition. As used in this article, the term "students experi-
14 encing homelessness" means students who at any time during the current
15 school year or the twenty-four months immediately preceding their
16 enrollment in college have been homeless, as defined by the meaning
17 assigned to the term "homeless children and youths" under 42 U.S.C.
18 Section 11434a and includes students who reside in a student housing
19 facility maintained by a college during an academic term but who are
20 homeless between academic terms.

21 § 6361. Liaison officers, regional contacts, and campus contacts. 1.
22 The state university of New York and the city university of New York
23 each shall hire at least one full-time equivalent staff member to act as

EXPLANATION--Matter in italics (underscored) is new; matter in brackets
[-] is old law to be omitted.

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1 a liaison officer for current and incoming students experiencing home-
2 lessness.

3 2. The liaison officer shall:

4 (a) have knowledge of and expertise in: federal and state financial
5 aid eligibility of students experiencing homelessness, including their
6 eligibility as independent students under Section 1087vv of the federal
7 Higher Education Act; support services, including health services; hous-
8 ing resources offered by the college and external housing resources,
9 including housing navigation services and existing housing programs for
10 homeless or low-income individuals or families; meal plan and food
11 programs and assistance, counseling services, academic supports, and
12 other resources available to students at the university; and best prac-
13 tices to identify and serve students experiencing homelessness, with the
14 goal of maximizing their enrollment, retention, and success in college;

15 (b) create systems for students experiencing homelessness to access
16 support services and other resources available to the students at the
17 university; coordinate with the state university of New York and the
18 city university of New York on innovative programming aimed at increas-
19 ing access, enrollment, attendance and success in college for students
20 experiencing homelessness, including pilot initiatives pursuant to
21 section sixty-three hundred sixty-five of this article;

22 (c) provide professional development and other technical assistance
23 activities to ensure the availability of campus contact persons for
24 current and incoming students experiencing homelessness at the universi-
25 ty, institute best practices to identify students experiencing homeles-
26 ness, and have information about financial aid, support services, and
27 best practices as designated by paragraph (a) of this subdivision;

28 (d) provide professional development and other technical assistance
29 activities to professors and university staff working in the areas of
30 financial aid, housing, student services, and teaching and academic
31 support regarding the characteristics, needs, strengths, and identifica-
32 tion of students experiencing homelessness;

33 (e) complete necessary administrative tasks and data collection
34 related to students experiencing homelessness, including developing,
35 administering, and analyzing the results of a survey annually, collabo-
36 ratively with campus contacts designated pursuant to subdivision four of
37 this section, social work interns, and other essential staff, to collect
38 data on student access to resources needed to address homelessness
39 across the state university of New York and the city university of New
40 York; and

41 (f) make available an annual report of the survey administered pursu-
42 ant to paragraph (e) of this subdivision on the websites of the state
43 university of New York and the city university of New York.

44 3. The state university of New York and the city university of New
45 York each shall require professors and university staff to attend at
46 least one training per year offered by the liaison officer for current
47 and incoming students experiencing homelessness.

48 4. The liaison officer for the state university of New York shall hire
49 one part-time adjunct staff to serve as regional contact in each of ten
50 economic development regions. Such regional contacts shall supervise the
51 campus contacts in their region and support the liaison officer to
52 ensure that students experiencing homelessness are identified, informed
53 of services available to them, and able to access support services and
54 other resources available in the region.

55 5. The liaison officer for the city university of New York shall hire
56 five part-time adjunct staff to serve as regional contacts. Such

1 regional contacts shall supervise the campus contacts in their regions
2 and support the liaison officer to ensure that students experiencing
3 homelessness are identified, informed of services available to them, and
4 able to access support services and other resources available in the
5 region.

6 6. Each college shall designate and may provide a stipend to at least
7 one person, who may be an employee of the college or an undergraduate or
8 graduate level student of any college who is completing an internship as
9 part of obtaining a degree in social work or a related field, to act as
10 a campus contact person for current and incoming students experiencing
11 homelessness.

12 7. The campus contact person shall:

13 (a) institute best practices to identify current and incoming students
14 experiencing homelessness, including:

15 (i) posting flyers, posters, and other written materials about the
16 rights of students experiencing homelessness using understandable and
17 culturally competent language, in locations on campus and in the commu-
18 nity where students experiencing homelessness are likely to see them;

19 (ii) posting, using understandable and culturally competent informa-
20 tion, about the rights of students experiencing homelessness on college
21 websites and social media;

22 (iii) collaborating with student organizations and other organizations
23 providing food, housing, or other services on campus and in the communi-
24 ty; and

25 (iv) sharing information about the rights of students experiencing
26 homelessness and the process to refer students who may be experiencing
27 homelessness to the campus contact with professors and other campus
28 staff;

29 (b) provide students experiencing homelessness with information
30 regarding their federal and state financial aid eligibility, including
31 their eligibility as independent students under Section 1087vv of the
32 federal Higher Education Act, and assistance to such students to ensure
33 they are able to apply for and receive federal and state financial aid
34 and all available on and off campus services for which they are eligi-
35 ble;

36 (c) provide students experiencing homelessness with information
37 regarding support services, health services, housing resources offered
38 by the college and external housing resources, housing navigation
39 services and existing housing programs for homeless or low-income indi-
40 viduals or families, meal plan and food programs and assistance, coun-
41 seling services, academic supports, and other resources available to the
42 students at the college;

43 (d) participate in professional development and other technical
44 assistance activities offered by the liaison officer; and

45 (e) contact liaisons designated under 42 U.S.C. Section
46 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii) as necessary to facilitate successful transitions
47 from secondary to postsecondary education for students experiencing
48 homelessness.

49 § 6362. Access to housing for students experiencing homelessness. Each
50 college shall:

51 1. prioritize students experiencing homelessness for access to exist-
52 ing housing resources offered by the college, as needed, during and
53 between academic terms, including granting them first priority for hous-
54 ing facilities that remain open for occupation during the most days in a
55 calendar year; and

1 2. develop a plan to connect students experiencing homelessness with
2 external housing resources when existing housing resources offered by
3 the college are not available, including through working with existing
4 housing programs for homeless or low-income individuals or families.

5 § 6363. Priority enrollment. Each college that administers a priority
6 enrollment system shall grant priority in that system for enrollment in
7 classes to students experiencing homelessness.

8 § 6364. Assistance with college fees for students experiencing home-
9 lessness. For students experiencing homelessness, each college shall:

10 1. waive administrative fees and fees based on enrollment, including
11 health and wellness, student activity, consolidated services, and tech-
12 nology fees, that are not fully covered by a student's financial aid
13 package; and

14 2. defer the payment of any fee or deposit, including housing fees and
15 deposits, that are covered by a student's financial aid package until
16 the college receives the aid, such that students shall not incur late
17 fees on payments delayed while awaiting disbursement of financial aid.

18 § 6365. Pilot program to increase enrollment, attendance, and success
19 in college. 1. The department, when monies therefore have been appropri-
20 ated by the legislature or are otherwise available, is hereby authorized
21 to establish a pilot program to increase the enrollment, attendance, and
22 success in college of students experiencing homelessness. Campuses of
23 the state university of New York and of the city university of New York
24 shall be eligible to apply for grants through the pilot program and
25 shall accommodate up to five hundred students. Applications and proposed
26 activities shall be coordinated with the university liaison officer and
27 the campus contact person designated pursuant to section sixty-three
28 hundred sixty-one of this article. The department shall evaluate appli-
29 cations and award funds based on quality, need, and compliance with the
30 elements outlined in subdivision two of this section.

31 2. Applications for grants shall include the following elements:

32 (a) staffing with sufficient capacity and authority to implement all
33 the proposed activities;

34 (b) coordination with the local housing authority, department of home-
35 less services, department of social services, and public and private
36 agencies that provide housing, shelter, or services for homeless or
37 low-income individuals or families;

38 (c) housing navigation services to assist students to find funding for
39 housing resources offered by the college and external housing resources,
40 including working with existing housing programs for homeless or low-in-
41 come individuals or families;

42 (d) outreach to and services for students who are parents, including
43 housing services;

44 (e) collaboration with student organizations, opportunity programs, or
45 student support programs to identify and support students experiencing
46 homelessness;

47 (f) plans to implement a questionnaire for all enrolling students that
48 will help determine whether enrolling students are experiencing home-
49 lessness;

50 (g) designated funding for housing, such as temporary dormitory rooms
51 while housing navigation services take place, housing in the community,
52 host homes, housing during academic breaks, and fees associated with
53 housing, including application fees and move-in stipends for furniture
54 and supplies; and

55 (h) financial literacy, soft skills, and life skills training,
56 provided by the applicant or in collaboration with a community agency.

1 3. Applications for grants are encouraged to include the following:

2 (a) plans to incorporate and appropriately supervise graduate-level
3 interns, particularly social work interns, to undertake appropriate
4 activities;

5 (b) plans to develop relationships with landlords and incentives to
6 house college students, including in collaboration with existing housing
7 programs for homeless or low-income individuals or families; and

8 (c) voluntary questions about homelessness on college application
9 forms.

10 4. applicants shall submit an annual report of data regarding the
11 access to programs and services provided to students in the pilot
12 program that are necessary to meet their basic needs, including food,
13 housing, physical and mental health care, and related services.

14 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.