

STATE OF NEW YORK

4247

2023-2024 Regular Sessions

IN SENATE

February 7, 2023

Introduced by Sen. GOUNARDES -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed to the Committee on Education

AN ACT to amend the education law, in relation to providing assistance to students experiencing homelessness

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

1 Section 1. Title 7 of the education law is amended by adding a new
2 article 116 to read as follows:

ARTICLE 116

HOMELESS STUDENT HOUSING ACCESS AND ASSISTANCE

Section 5800. Definition.

6 5801. Designation of liaison officers, regional contacts, and
7 campus contacts to assist students experiencing home-
8 lessness.

9 5802. Access to housing for students experiencing homelessness.

10 5803. Priority enrollment.

11 5804. Assistance with college fees for students experiencing
12 homelessness.

13 § 5800. Definition. For the purposes of this article, the term
14 "students experiencing homelessness" shall mean students who at any time
15 during the current school year or the twenty-four months immediately
16 preceding their enrollment in college have been "homeless children or
17 youth" as such term is defined under 42 U.S.C. Section 11434a, and
18 includes students who reside in a student housing facility maintained by
19 a college during an academic term but who are homeless between academic
20 terms.

21 § 5801. Designation of liaison officers, regional contacts, and campus
22 contacts to assist students experiencing homelessness. 1. The state
23 university of New York and the city university of New York each shall
24 hire at least one full-time equivalent staff member to act as a liaison
25 officer for current and incoming students experiencing homelessness.

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

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1 2. The liaison officer shall:

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

13 (b) create systems for students experiencing homelessness to access
14 support services and other resources available to the students at the
15 university; coordinate with the state university of New York and the
16 city university of New York on innovative programming aimed at increas-
17 ing access, enrollment, attendance and success in college for students
18 experiencing homelessness, including pilot initiatives as outlined in a
19 pilot program to increase enrollment, attendance, and success in college
20 for students experiencing homelessness;

21 (c) provide professional development and other technical assistance
22 activities to ensure campus contact persons for current and incoming
23 students experiencing homelessness at the university. Institute best
24 practices to identify students experiencing homelessness and have infor-
25 mation about financial aid, support services, and best practices
26 described by paragraph (a) of this subdivision;

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

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

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

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

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

54 5. The liaison officer for the city university of New York shall hire
55 five part-time adjunct staff to serve as regional contacts. Regional
56 contacts shall supervise the campus contacts in their regions and

1 support the liaison officer to ensure that students experiencing home-
2 lessness are identified, informed of services available to them, and
3 able to access support services and other resources available in the
4 region.

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

11 7. The campus contact person shall:

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

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

18 (ii) posting using understandable and culturally competent information
19 about the rights of students experiencing homelessness on college
20 websites and social media;

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

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

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

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

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

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

48 § 5802. Access to housing for students experiencing homelessness. Each
49 college shall:

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

55 2. develop a plan to connect students experiencing homelessness with
56 external housing resources when existing housing resources offered by

1 the college are not available, including through working with existing
2 housing programs for homeless or low-income individuals or families.

3 § 5803. Priority enrollment. Each college that administers a priority
4 enrollment system shall grant priority in that system for enrollment in
5 classes to students experiencing homelessness.

6 § 5804. Assistance with college fees for students experiencing home-
7 lessness. For students experiencing homelessness, each college shall:

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

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

16 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately and shall apply to the
17 academic year next succeeding the date on which this act shall have
18 become a law.