

STATE OF NEW YORK

9170

IN SENATE

May 2, 2024

Introduced by Sen. STAVISKY -- read twice and ordered printed, and when printed to be committed 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
24 a liaison officer for current and incoming students experiencing home-
25 lessness.

26 2. The liaison officer shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

52 5. The liaison officer for the city university of New York shall hire
53 five part-time adjunct staff to serve as regional contacts. Such
54 regional contacts shall supervise the campus contacts in their regions
55 and support the liaison officer to ensure that students experiencing
56 homelessness are identified, informed of services available to them, and

1 able to access support services and other resources available in the
2 region.

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

9 7. The campus contact person shall:

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

42 (e) contact liaisons designated under 42 U.S.C. Section
43 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii) as necessary to facilitate successful transitions
44 from secondary to postsecondary education for students experiencing
45 homelessness.

46 § 6362. Access to housing for students experiencing homelessness. Each
47 college shall:

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

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

1 § 6363. Priority enrollment. Each college that administers a priority
2 enrollment system shall grant priority in that system for enrollment in
3 classes to students experiencing homelessness.

4 § 6364. Assistance with college fees for students experiencing home-
5 lessness. For students experiencing homelessness, each college shall:

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

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

14 § 6365. Pilot program to increase enrollment, attendance, and success
15 in college. 1. The department, when monies therefore have been appropri-
16 ated by the legislature or are otherwise available, is hereby authorized
17 to establish a pilot program to increase the enrollment, attendance, and
18 success in college of students experiencing homelessness. Campuses of
19 the state university of New York and of the city university of New York
20 shall be eligible to apply for grants through the pilot program and
21 shall accommodate up to five hundred students. Applications and proposed
22 activities shall be coordinated with the university liaison officer and
23 the campus contact person designated pursuant to section sixty-three
24 hundred sixty-one of this article. The department shall evaluate appli-
25 cations and award funds based on quality, need, and compliance with the
26 elements outlined in subdivision two of this section.

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

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

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

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

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

40 (e) collaboration with student organizations, opportunity programs, or
41 student support programs to identify and support students experiencing
42 homelessness;

43 (f) plans to implement a questionnaire for all enrolling students that
44 will help determine whether enrolling students are experiencing home-
45 lessness;

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

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

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

54 (a) plans to incorporate and appropriately supervise graduate-level
55 interns, particularly social work interns, to undertake appropriate
56 activities;

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

4 (c) voluntary questions about homelessness on college application
5 forms.

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

10 § 2. This act shall take effect immediately.