



Karen B. Salmon, Ph.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

August 23, 2019

The Honorable Mary L. Washington
James Senate Office Building, Room 102
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

The Honorable Geraldine Valentino-Smith
House Office Building, Room 201
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Workgroup to Study Shelter and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Minors

Dear Senator Washington and Delegate Valentino-Smith,

On behalf of the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE), I am writing in response to your letter dated July 25, 2019, requesting information in preparation for the next meeting of the Workgroup to Study Shelter and Supportive Services for Unaccompanied Homeless Minors on September 3, 2019.

Out of the approximately 18,000 homeless youth enrolled in Maryland's public schools during the 2017-2018 school year, approximately 2,200 were identified as being unaccompanied homeless youth. Statistically, unaccompanied homeless youth perform below grade level in academic achievement. In addition to the academic challenges facing unaccompanied homeless youth, the following represent some of the other obstacles facing such youth in the educational context: frequent mobility/change of schools, transportation problems, emotional and physical needs/health care, and inadequate food and clothing.

Maryland's local school systems (LSSs), through the work of school social workers, teachers, counselors, and pupil personnel workers, are on the frontline in addressing homelessness among youth. Each LSS ensures coordination among its programs and the community agencies serving students experiencing homelessness including: Title I, Part A - Improving Basic Programs Operated by Local Educational Agencies; special education (Child Find, home visiting programs); early learning services (Head Start/Early Head Start); Family Support Centers; English language learners; and at-risk youth programs. Additionally, each LSS:

- Has a designated homeless education coordinator/liaison to assist homeless students and coordinate services.
- Ensures that homeless students are included in statewide assessments.
- Conducts an annual program evaluation to determine its effectiveness.
- Has clear procedures to ensure appropriate credit is awarded to homeless students for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school.

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- Has provisions for immediate school enrollment of all age eligible homeless children and youth, including provisions for public, preschool, unaccompanied youth, and alternative school placement where available.

At the State level, the MSDE's work, including any grant-funded activities in support of unaccompanied homeless youth, is governed by the requirements of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the Code of Maryland (COMAR) Regulation 13A.05.09. *Programs for Homeless Children*. To that end, the MSDE implements procedures to address the identification, enrollment, and retention of homeless students through coordinating and collaborating with other program offices and community agencies. The MSDE maintains a close working relationship with other State agencies such as the Maryland State Department of Human Services and the Department of Juvenile Services. For example, the MSDE has developed a Memorandum of Agreement for LSSs to implement with their local department of social services and juvenile services.

For the 2019-20 school year, through an annual federal grant awarded under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the MSDE received \$1,429,281 to support homeless youth. This year, through this federal grant, the MSDE will in turn award sub-grants totaling \$1,071,961 to 15 of Maryland's 24 LSSs, with each sub-grant ranging from approximately \$31K to \$94K, to support school district-level initiatives.

Another initiative supported by the MSDE is the Maryland College Application Campaign (MCAC). In 2017, the MCAC added the unaccompanied homeless youth population to the college campaign. The MCAC helps students navigate the post-secondary admission process, the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) process, and other ways to pay for postsecondary education. The MCAC is a partnership with the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC) and College Goal Maryland. Since 2017, the MCAC has presented to numerous groups such as the Baltimore County Continuum of Care Homeless Round Table, supervisors of counselors, college and career resources specialists, directors of student services, pupil personnel workers, student support personnel, and others who work with the unaccompanied homeless youth population in an effort to increase the utilization of the State tuition waiver program. The MCAC collaborates with the Public Justice Center of Maryland, Advocates for Children and Youth, the Interagency Council on Homelessness, and others on the MCAC steering committee to engage two-year and four-year colleges and universities across the State to identify resources and single points of contacts (SPOCs) at these institutions. Collaboration efforts also include providing technical assistance, with specialists at the MSDE working with the homeless education coordinators/liaisons at participating LSSs.

Please let me know if you need additional information regarding the above initiatives.

Sincerely,



Mary L. Gable

Assistant State Superintendent

Division of Student Services, Academic Enrichment, and Educational Policy

c: Thomas S. Elder
Jason A. Kramer
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