



Dannel P. Malloy

GOVERNOR
STATE OF CONNECTICUT

TO: Superintendents of Schools

FROM: Dannel P. Malloy, Governor
Dr. Dianna R. Wentzell, Commissioner of Education

DATE: September 28, 2017

SUBJECT: Displaced Children from Puerto Rico

In light of the devastation affecting Puerto Rico from Hurricane Maria, we are strongly suggesting all Connecticut school districts identify children of school age who have been displaced and may have travelled to Connecticut and are in need of assistance. Districts are advised to revisit their process and protocols aligned with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to ensure that any student arriving from Puerto Rico or any affected storm area has immediate access to school and expedited connections to the services they may need.

Given Connecticut's close connection to Puerto Rico, we anticipate that many families may be seeking refuge in our state. In the wake of this disaster, children and youth may be sent to reside with relatives or friends in a safe place while their parents seek supports needed to re-establish their families and communities. These students will likely qualify as "unaccompanied homeless youth" under the McKinney Vento Homeless Assistance Act and must be provided the rights and services guaranteed to them by law. Widespread disaster can mean students will arrive without records and it may not be possible to obtain records from their previous schools. District personnel should be counseled to enroll these students immediately, as required by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. These students will also automatically qualify to receive free school meals and must also be provided with health and other related services necessary to ensure their academic success.

Per established procedures, all students experiencing homelessness must be accurately reported in the statewide public school information system (PSIS). Local homeless education liaisons and other school personnel who have identified a student as homeless must routinely provide the PSIS district coordinator with relevant information regarding the homeless status of a student and their primary nighttime residence. Please ensure that all students identified as homeless are consistently and accurately represented in the district's PSIS data.

School can be a place of stability, normalcy and support for children and youth who are displaced by disasters. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act ensures educational rights and protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness. Thank you for all of your assistance in helping these families achieve some stability following these traumatic events. For additional assistance related to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, please contact Louis Tallarita at (860)807-2058 or louis.tallarita@ct.gov.

cc: Charlene Russell-Tucker, Chief Operating Officer
John D. Frassinelli, Bureau Chief