



STATE OF CONNECTICUT

STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION



To
Superintendents of Schools
All Department of Children and Families Staff
Directors of STAR Homes
Directors of SAFE Homes
Directors of Permanency Diagnostic Centers
Directors of DCF - Licensed Shelters
Directors of Pupil Personnel

From: Susan I. Hamilton, M.S.W., J.D. *SIH*
Commissioner, Department of Children and Families

Mark K. McQuillan *M*
Commissioner, Department of Education

Date: August 9, 2007

Re: McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act
Update of Joint Memorandum Dated 2/15/05

The purpose of this memorandum is to update school districts and child protective service professionals on the list of settings that fall under the rubric of emergency or transitional placements for children and youth in the custody of the Department of Children and Families (DCF). In a Joint Memorandum dated February 15, 2005, both the Department of Education (SDE) and DCF agreed that "children and youth in DCF custody who are placed in emergency or transitional shelter placements are entitled to and will be afforded the protections provided by McKinney-Vento" (Homeless Assistance Act, 42 USC Section 11431, et seq.)

DCF has recently restructured the method of providing care and supervision to children and youth in the network of emergency shelters funded by that Department. It was determined that smaller, home-like settings with integrated clinical services better serve the population residing in shelters. Over the past two years, DCF engaged in the process of closing or converting some existing facilities to establish a new network of Short Term Assessment and Respite Homes (STAR Homes). These STAR Homes essentially serve the same population of children and youth as served by the prior facilities and seek to establish the following improvements:

- **reduction in beds** from 97 shelter beds statewide to 84 STAR Home beds statewide;
- **smaller program** size STAR Homes containing 6 beds per home;
- **more local Homes** established statewide (14) that are geographically dispersed resulting in children and youth being placed closer to the town of nexus;
- **integrated clinical services** onsite to improve the needs of children and youth; and
- **higher staff to children ratios** to improve safety and treatment needs.

It is anticipated that the establishment of STAR Homes will have a favorable impact on students and in the delivery of educational services by school districts. Some potential benefits include:

- **no changes to school district responsibility;**

- **shorter distances in transporting students due to more locally placed programs;**
- **fewer children and youth impacted due to reduction in total beds; and**
- **improved coordination with school districts due to higher DCF staff ratios and staff enhancements.**

Both DCF and SDE reaffirm our commitment to protecting children and youth experiencing homelessness. Therefore, all children and youth placed in STAR Homes shall qualify for such protections previously established under the February 15, 2005 SDE/DCF Joint Memorandum and the Federal McKinney-Vento Act. Attached to this memorandum is a current list of existing STAR Homes, as well as an updated listing of Safe Homes, Permanency Diagnostic Centers and Youth Emergency, Assessment and Respite Programs (Emergency Shelters). Additional updates will be provided to school districts as additional STAR Homes are put "on line" and as other program changes occur. If you have any questions regarding the STAR Homes or the transition to this new program, please contact Robert Plant, PhD, Director of Programs and Services, DCF, at (860) 560-5035.

Similarly, questions related to the rights provided under the McKinney-Vento Act should be directed as follows: DCF staff members in Area Offices should consult with your Education Consultant or your Principal Attorney; Directors of STAR and SAFE Homes or Permanency Diagnostic Centers should contact your DCF liaisons; and Superintendents of Schools may contact Mr. Louis Tallarita, Consultant, SDE, at (860) 807-2058.

Thank You.