School Nurse

You Can Support the Access and Success of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in School

• Be familiar with common characteristics of children who are homeless so you can recognize them. Common signals are attendance at several schools, poor hygiene, transportation problems, and poor health and nutrition.

• Verify immunization records and, if needed, refer the student to the local health department.

• Observe and alert the principal to any serious medical concern.

• Ask about glasses; the child may need them but not have any.

• Make sure the child enrolls in the free and reduced-price meal programs.

• Assist parents with the completion of medical records.

• Remember that sending a sick child “home” may not be a safe or stable place for a child who is experiencing homelessness. Help families determine options for their children, if ill.

• Contact the school district homeless liaison so that additional services can be coordinated.

• Follow-up with children sent to obtain immunizations or physicals.

• Contact the parent or shelter if a child is absent for three or more days.

• Develop reliable, accessible resources for medical, dental, and eye care.

• Sponsor a PTA health night.

• Show that you care about the student!

*This tip sheet was adapted from Illinois, North Carolina, Texas, and Virginia Departments of Education and the National Center for Homeless Education documents.*