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Connecticut State Department of Education Launches “No Matter What” Campaign to Highlight Resources Available for Students Experiencing Homelessness and Housing Instability

WATCH: No Matter What Campaign

(HARTFORD, CT) – At last week’s State Board of Education meeting Education Commissioner Charlene M. Russell-Tucker and agency staff publicly announced for the first time the launch of a communications and outreach campaign by the Connecticut State Department of Education (CSDE) titled **“No Matter What.”** The effort is focused on highlighting the education rights of all students, regardless of housing status.

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act guarantees support for students experiencing homelessness so they can continue attending school with the tools they need to succeed. Every Connecticut school district has a **liaison** dedicated to assisting students who may be facing challenges to safe, stable housing and living situations, but not all students reach out for help. The “No Matter What” campaign includes advertising, community outreach, and school-based communications to help school staff recognize such students and provide whatever supports are needed.

“All Connecticut students have a right to access our public schools no matter what housing challenges they or their family may be facing,” **said Commissioner Russell-Tucker.** “The federal McKinney-Vento Act offers important protections for children and youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability and this campaign helps us ensure these resources reach the children and youth who need them. Schools provide a welcoming and stable learning environment for students so that they can learn, grow and reach their full potential.”

"Homelessness can be traumatic for children that experience it and having a consistent school can provide a level of stability for the child," **said Seila Mosquera-Bruno, Commissioner of Housing.** "DOH ensures that all of its homeless contractors that provide services to homeless families are connected with the appropriate McKinney-Vento liaison to ensure that the child is able to attend the appropriate school. Ultimately, education is the best tool to prevent intergenerational poverty and homelessness, so ensuring homeless children have access to education is of utmost importance to DOH."

"Recognizing when a student is experiencing challenges is a cornerstone of effective education. This campaign provides an important opportunity to identify the challenges of homelessness and highlight the services and support available for students coping with it," **said Louis Tallarita, Connecticut's McKinney-Vento State Coordinator.** "By publicizing this information, we hope to help more students both enroll and stay in school, no matter what."

Information shared by students and families experiencing homelessness is confidential and school staff members are not permitted to disclose information about a student's living situation to anyone other than the liaison, other school administrators, and/or school staff only as needed.

The McKinney-Vento Act ensures that students can:

- Go to school, no matter where they are currently staying or how long they have lived there.
- Choose to attend their current school or enroll immediately in the local school where they are staying.
- Attend classes and participate fully in all school activities, even if records and documents normally required for enrollment are missing, for example, a birth certificate, proof of residence, previous school records, or immunization/medical records.
- Access the same programs and services that are available to all students, including transportation and supplemental educational services.
- Receive school meals at no cost.

The campaign, running in English, Spanish, Polish, and Portuguese, will be in convenience stores, pediatrician offices, and in print, social, and digital media highlighting resources available to students experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

For questions about McKinney-Vento protections for students, please contact Louis Tallarita, Education Consultant, louis.tallarita@ct.gov. Attached is a document that outlines warning signs of housing instability and how to talk to students about their housing situation. You can also visit the State Department of Education's web page for more resources at <https://ct.gov/NoMatterWhat>.

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CSDE Contact:

Eric Scoville, Director of Communications

Email: Eric.Scoville@ct.gov

[CSDE Media Inquiry Submission Form](#)

Cell: 860-309-8760

Twitter: [CT State Department of Education Twitter](#)

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