



## Helpful Phone Numbers and Websites

### Opening Doors Project

1-847-803-3535  
www.homelessed.net

### National Runaway Switchboard

Runaway Hotline: 1-800-RUNAWAY (24 hrs.)  
www.nrscrisisline.org

### Covenant House

Runaway Hotline: 1-800-999-9999 (24 hrs.)  
www.covenanthouse.org

### National Network for Youth

1-202-783-7949  
www.nn4youth.org

### Stand Up for Kids

1-800-365-4KID  
www.standupforkids.org

### Illinois Legal Aid

www.illinoislegalaid.org

If you have any questions regarding the educational rights of homeless children and youth in Illinois, you can contact any of the following:

Your Local School Homeless Liaison:

### The Opening Doors Project

(847) 803-3535

<http://www.homelessed.net/resource/default.htm>

At this website page you can click on a PDF link that lists district liaisons by district and by area.

### IL Coalition to End Homelessness

(708) 263-3590

### ROE #26 – Hancock/McDonough

(309) 837-4821

### Law Project of the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless

[www.chicagohomeless.org](http://www.chicagohomeless.org)  
(800) 940-1119

### Information Hotline

Illinois State Board of Education  
(800) 215-6379



### Opening Doors

2626 S. Clearbrook Dr.  
Arlington Heights, IL  
Phone: (224) 366-8623  
Fax: (847) 378-6225  
<http://homelessed.net>

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## Teen on Your Own – You Can Still Go to School *Here is How*

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Statewide Access to Education  
for  
Homeless Children and Youth

Funded by Illinois State Board of Education,  
Accountability Division, under the McKinney-Vento  
Homeless Children and Youth Program.

## Are you a teen on your own?

Under law, you are called an “unaccompanied youth” and are entitled to certain educational rights.

This includes young people who have:

- run away from home.
- been thrown out of their homes.
- been left on their own by a parent or guardian.

You are considered homeless and entitled to rights even if your parent(s) or guardian(s) say that you can come home.

## Who is Homeless?

You are homeless if you “lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.”

- This includes teens who stay at a shelter, in a car, at camping grounds, in a park, in a motel, in a train station or similar situations due to lack of alternative accommodations.
- **This can also include children or teens who are staying with friends or relatives because they cannot pay for a place to stay.** This is often called “couch-surfing”: you may be able to stay with a friend or relative for only a night or two before needing to find another place to stay.



**If you are a teen in any of these situations, you have nothing to be ashamed of, and you have valuable rights to help you enroll in and succeed in school.**

## Who Can Help You?

Each school district has a **homeless education liaison** whose work includes helping you to enroll and stay in school. This liaison can help you with any problems that come up as you enroll and attend school.

To find the liaison in your area, look on the back of this brochure. If there is no name in the box, please call one of the numbers beneath the box to find out the name of the homeless education liaison in your district.



## Choice of Schools

You decide:

- You have the right to continue attending your school and be with your friends, if that is your choice. Helping you return to the “**school of origin**” is one of the law’s main goals.
- If you decide that you want to attend school where you are now living, that is another choice you can make.
- It is a good idea to talk these possibilities over with the liaison before you decide. Teens who change schools often lose credits and have difficulty keeping up.

Whichever choice you make, you must be allowed to enroll or re-enroll **immediately**, even if you don’t have your school records with you. Proof of guardianship is not required in order for you to enroll.



## Other Important Points

### Eligibility

You are eligible for:

- Free lunch
- Fee waivers
- Food stamps/medical card

### Transportation

You have the right to get free transportation to school. You can get assistance from your liaison.

### Equal Access to Programs & Services

You have the right to have access to programs and services that other students have access to.

- Gifted and talented education
- Special education
- Vocational education
- English Language Learner services

### Sports Eligibility/IHSA

You have the right to participate in sports and have fees related to this waived. Get help by:

- Information available from the Illinois State Board of Education
- Assistance from liaison

### Re-enrollment

You may re-enroll in school as long as you can complete the necessary credits by age 21.

### Right to Appeal

You have the right to disagree with the decision(s) of the school or district about enrollment or transportation and to have that dispute resolved by someone who is impartial. The school is required to enroll you and allow you to attend school while the dispute is being worked out.