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# MASSACHUSETTS DEPARTMENT OF ELEMENTARY & SECONDARY EDUCATION

## ***Homeless Education Advisory 2007 – 9 A – Addendum to Homeless Education Advisory 2004 – 9: Children and Youth in State Care or Custody***

This addendum to ***Homeless Education Advisory 2004 – 9: Children and Youth in State Care or Custody*** addresses program design changes to the system that provides children and youth who are in the care or custody of the Department of Social Services (DSS) with short-term temporary, transitional or emergency housing. All other provisions of *Homeless Education Advisory 2004-9* continue in effect.

Stabilization, Assessment and Rapid Reintegration/Reunification (STARR) Programs are short-term placements that have replaced the temporary, transitional, or emergency housing previously provided by “bridge” homes, diagnostic assessment centers, and shelters. As a result, placements in STARR Programs, both latency and adolescent, are considered temporary, transitional, or emergency homeless housing under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The STARR program model anticipates a 14 to 45 day length of stay. Upon discharge from STARR, children and youth will either return home, or be placed into another DSS placement such as a group or foster home and thus will no longer be considered homeless for purposes of McKinney-Vento. However, there may be occasions when DSS is unable to reunify the student with his family or make another appropriate placement within 45 days. DSS anticipates that stays longer than 45 days will be the exception, not the rule. If it is necessary for the student to remain in the STARR program beyond 45 days, the student will continue to be considered homeless.

The presumption is that the majority of students in STARR placements will be educated in their school of origin. However, there may be some students who are enrolled in the school district where the STARR placement is located, based on the best interest of the particular student. The transportation services required for such students is described in ***Homeless Education Advisory 2002 – 3: School Selection and Transportation Requirements for Homeless Students***. It should be noted that there may be limited situations when DSS determines that a student in a STARR placement is unable to leave the program, in which case, educational services for such student will be provided within the STARR program. Communication between DSS, the STARR program and the responsible school district is critical to ensure that such students receive appropriate educational services. Key elements in the coordination of services for children educated in STARR programs include the following:

- Notice – DSS will notify the responsible school system when children and youth are to be educated in a STARR program so that educational planning discussions can begin (entry notification is needed even if the student is returning to the school of origin so that transportation can be arranged).
- Credit arrangement – once notified, the appropriate STARR program staff and the school district must collaborate and coordinate appropriate educational services so that the student may receive academic credit.
- Discharge Plan – once the student is ready to return to school after being educated in a STARR program, a discharge plan should be developed to successfully reintegrate the student into the school setting. (Ideally discharge planning begins at entry.)

In conclusion, this advisory is intended to provide guidance to local school districts and social service providers in Massachusetts as they continue to implement the provisions of the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Act (McKinney-Vento) regarding the identification, enrollment, attendance, and success in school of homeless children and youth in the care of the state.

Effective communication and coordination between DSS and the responsible school district is critical to ensure that these students receive the support that they need for academic success.

The Department is available to facilitate communication between DDS Education Coordinators, DSS Case Worker and the schools. For assistance, contact Peter D. Cirioni, State Coordinator, Office for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, 781-338-6294, [pcirioni@doe.mass.edu](mailto:pcirioni@doe.mass.edu) or Sarah Slautterback, Homeless Education Specialist, 781-338-6330, [sslautterback@doe.mass.edu](mailto:sslautterback@doe.mass.edu).