



## **FREE AND REDUCED MEALS FOR STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS**

### **Categorical Eligibility of Students Experiencing Homelessness for Free Meal Benefits**

- Children identified as **runaway, homeless** or **migrant** are categorically eligible for free meals in the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Programs. If their school participates in both breakfast and lunch programs, they receive both.
- The definition of homeless children is the same one used in the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act; that means that children living in doubled-up situations are eligible. The host household's income is not a factor in this eligibility.
- Eligible children may be directly certified based on a list provided by an appropriate person such as the District's homeless liaison, a local shelter director, or a runaway and homeless youth service provider.
- Documentation of free meal eligibility must consist of the child's name (or a list of names), the effective date(s) and the person's signature. **No application is required. The law's intent is to expedite the process and provide meals as quickly as possible.**
- If there is a delay in receiving necessary information from the liaison or provider, the school should determine who best knows the child's situation and have that person provide the documentation stated above.
- A child experiencing homelessness who is declared eligible for free meals remains eligible for the rest of the school year even if homeless status changes. Thus, no tracking is necessary.

Contact Al Quarles, Philadelphia's Regional Coordinator, or Colleen Landy, Assistant Director, with any questions or concerns you may have at 215-400-6045 or e-mail [ECYEH@philasd.org](mailto:ECYEH@philasd.org).