

Supporting Families and Students Seeking Asylum

Resource Document

This resource document was created to support you and your team with responding to and meeting the diverse needs of the growing vulnerable population of families seeking asylum within your respective school communities and districts. Anchored in the key action items for schools, it includes information, resources, and contact information for support personnel who can answer any additional questions.

Action Items for Schools

Action Item #1: *Work closely with Superintendents and school staff to identify those families and students who may be newly arrived families seeking asylum in need of additional supports.*

Action Item #2: *Coordinate with local community partners and service providers to ensure timely and efficient linkages for families and students to needed supports.*

Action Item #3: *Connect with your [Students in Temporary Housing Regional Manager](#) within the next few weeks to gauge current enrollment status, to assess unmet and emerging enrollment needs, and to assist with any enrollment issues that remain outstanding.*

Guidance and Resources for Action Item 1

Brief Your Team on What We Know About Newly Arrived Families Seeking Asylum

Family Demographics

- Largely two-parent households with multiple children
- Almost all are Spanish-speaking
- Brand new to NYC, meaning limited knowledge of the metro system and/or free resources

Shelter Amenities

While families seeking asylum are being placed in family shelters across the city, we know that many are residing in commercial hotels that are acting as shelters. This means that a family will:

- Share a single room
- Rely solely on food provided by shelter or local school
- Have limited access to microwaves (no other cooking resources available)
- Have limited access to laundry services

Understand the Current Limits Around the Identification of Families Seeking Asylum

Neither the Department of Homeless Services (DHS) nor Department of Education (DOE) asks families for their immigration status or to identify themselves as families seeking asylum. Therefore, we may not always know which of our newly enrolled students or students in temporary housing have that status due to seeking asylum. District and school teams working to support these newly arrived families and students should be flexible and understanding of these challenges while tailoring supports to meet each family's and/or student's unique needs.

Prioritize Cultural and Trauma Sensitivity in All Interactions

DOE provides equal educational opportunities and prohibits discrimination based on protected classifications, including but not limited to actual or perceived race, color, ethnicity, national origin, alienage, and citizenship status.

Schools should ensure that staff engage with and provide support to families in a sensitive and unbiased manner, using culturally responsive-sustaining education principles and resources.

The following is a resource to support combating bias in conversations: [Community Guide: Anti-Racist Approaches to Housing Convos](#).

Guidance and Resources for Action Item 2

Brief Your Team on Known and Anticipated Needs

The Students in Temporary Housing (STH) team in the DOE has been working closely with DHS and other community partners to provide donations at specific shelter locations and enrollment sites. Based on interactions with these families, the most common needs include:

- Non-perishable food to compensate for meals being offered
- Shoes, socks, and underwear
- T-shirts and other clothing (including winter clothing to prepare for colder weather)
- Train maps
- Hygiene items (deodorant, shampoo, sanitary napkins/tampax, toothbrushes and toothpaste, laundry soap)
- Diapers and all things related to care for babies (clothing, wipes, bottles, formula)
- School supplies / Backpacks
- School uniforms

Use Title I STH Funds to Support Immediate Needs

Title I STH funds are funds specifically allocated to support the academic and emergency needs of students in temporary housing. Using the list of known needs above as a guide, schools should use their Title I STH funds to purchase items or services that their students seeking asylum might need.

For more information on allowable and unallowable uses, refer to [the Title I STH Funds Toolkit](#). If necessary to serve students, requests for budgetary support to hire teachers should be shared with your [budget and HR directors](#).

Develop a Plan for Supporting Social-Emotional Well-Being

In addition to the universal social-emotional supports available to all students, students seeking asylum may benefit from personalized small group or individual supports. Schools are encouraged to consider the following strategies to proactively assess and support students' social-emotional well-being.

- Meet weekly at the start of the school year to discuss student progress and refer students to support staff if/when areas of need emerge. During these check in's, school leaders and staff can review attendance and DESSA data, share observations and reports of student functioning, discuss supports currently in place, and/or reach out to families to learn more.
- Closely monitor student attendance, as school absences may be an indicator of needs, for which schools can activate systems of support and follow up.
- Administer the DESSA social-emotional screener and analyze data to identify social-emotional strengths and areas of need, and to escalate a referral pathway to support.
- For students who demonstrate social-emotional challenges, schools can leverage internal mental health resources (i.e. Counselor, Social Worker, School Based Mental Health Clinic, etc.) and/or refer students to CBO partners. School professionals should make every effort to connect students to services in their preferred language, leveraging strategies used for other multilingual learners attending DOE schools.
- Bridging the Gap social workers can be leveraged as a resource to support the unique social-emotional needs of this population.
- For students requiring support beyond what is available in school, families can be referred to [NYCWell](#), which is a free, confidential service available in over 200 languages via text or call.

Connect with the Office of Multilingual Learners' Resources

Resources have been shared with shelter providers and families through the STH team including guides, videos, and locations of bilingual education programs. In addition, the [Resources for Newly Arrived Multilingual Learners and Immigrants Students](#) document consolidates instructional, policy, and family-facing resources that support newly arrived multilingual learners/English language learners (MLs/ELLs) and immigrant students, including newcomer MLs/ELLs and MLs/ELLs in temporary housing. It also includes public-facing resources that you can share with your students and families when they first enroll.

For questions on ML/ELL policy and guidance, schools, superintendents, and district teams should reach out to [their ML/ELL Director](#) or DML@schools.nyc.gov.

There are also [CBOs that support our linguistically and culturally diverse families](#) by connecting them to benefits, resources, education, and more!

Connect with Translation and Interpretation Services

The Office of Language Access (OLA) provides free written translation and connects schools and central offices with free Over-the-Phone Interpretation services as needed. On-Site and Online-Remote Interpretation services are also available.

For more information on services, visit <https://infohub.nyced.org/OLA>.

Support Access to Transportation

The Office of Pupil Transportation (OPT) is prioritizing routing for all students in temporary housing including those in the 13 DHS emergency shelters and all busing exceptions requests. The STH Team is also coordinating with OPT's Access and Eligibility team to understand the transportation needs of students in the newly-opened shelters and families seeking asylum.

For students in DHS shelters (including the 13 newly opened emergency shelters):

- Students in temporary housing in grades k-6 are eligible for busing.
- STH team and OPT are working closely with DHS to monitor shelter provider support in arranging transportation.
- While in the process of being assigned transportation, the Parent/Guardian can get a MetroCard from their child's school to take their children to and from school.

For students not in DHS shelters (including DV/HPD shelters, doubled up students, and other STH):

- Students in temporary housing in grades K-6 are eligible for transportation.
- We are ensuring staff have familiarity with the [Busing Exceptions Form](#), which may be required to arrange transportation.
- Families should work with their shelter staff or school staff to submit the request form.
- No additional documentation is required.
- While in the process of being assigned transportation, the Parent/Guardian can get a MetroCard from their child's school to take their children to and from school.

Reminder, a Busing Exception request form is not required for students in DHS shelters. Families in DHS shelters should work with their shelter or DOE staff who can support them in arranging transportation.

Guidance and Resources for Action Item 3

Review Policy on Immediate Enrollment Rights

All students in temporary housing have the right to immediate enrollment. This includes not needing records (birth certificates, immunization records, address affidavit) in order to enroll. This is particularly important for these families who likely do not have records on hand.

[Find more information about the right to immediate enrollment here](#) and in [Chancellor's Regulation A-780](#).

Review Safe School Protocols with ICE

Non-local law enforcement officers, including Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) personnel, are not allowed to enter DOE schools except when required by law, and only after the school has consulted with DOE lawyers.

In addition, under FERPA, schools will not share student information unless absolutely required by law. Information should only be shared after consulting with DOE lawyers.

[Click here for what to do if an ICE officer shows up at your school](#).

Connect with your STH Regional Manager re: Enrollment

The STH team, Office of Student Enrollment (OSE), and Office of Multilingual Learners (OML) have made coordinated efforts to enroll all newly arrived students in school. Special effort has been made to connect families with bilingual education programs (dual language and transitional bilingual education).

We encourage you to work closely with your [STH Regional Manager](#) to ensure your district and/or school is prepared to meet the needs of this growing population of students seeking asylum.

Review Contact Information for New Emergency Shelters

While all schools and districts should anticipate being affected by this situation, we do know that emergency shelters have opened in the following districts. These impacted districts are currently seeing the largest increases in their zoned elementary and middle schools. We encourage you to work closely with your [STH Regional Manager](#) on what has already been done and what is needed.

Impacted Districts	STH Regional Manager	STH Regional Manager Email
2	Iris Gersten	IGersten@schools.nyc.gov
3	Iris Gersten	IGersten@schools.nyc.gov
10	Stephanie Dyer	SDyer@schools.nyc.gov
14	Wayne Harris	WHarris22@schools.nyc.gov
24	Cecilio (Bo) Diaz	CDiaz@schools.nyc.gov
27	Fahmeeda Saleem	FSaleem@schools.nyc.gov

List of Resources

[STH Regional Manager Contact Information](#)

Temporary Housing Supports

- [Community Guide: Anti-Racist Approaches to Housing Convo](#)s
- [Title I STH Funds Toolkit](#)
- [Chancellor’s Regulation A-780](#)

Newly Arrived Multilingual and Immigrant Student Supports

- [Resources for Newly Arrived Multilingual Learners and Immigrants Students](#)
- [CBOs that Support Our Linguistically and Culturally Diverse Families](#)
- [City Services for NYC Residents, Regardless of Immigration Status](#)