



This summer, the DeKalb County School District Homeless Program held a summer tutorial program for homeless students who attended Non Title I schools at the International Student Center. The program ran for approximately four weeks from 8:00 am to 12:00 pm. Students were able to receive free meals as well as individualized and small group instruction. The teachers that assisted in the program were enthusiastic about teaching the children. The students enjoyed learning so much that some days they did not want to leave!

In addition, School Social Workers visited social service agencies in the metropolitan area and schools located in DeKalb County to inform them about the McKinney Vento legislation in addition to services available to those who fit the criteria for homelessness. Kudos to Mrs. Carolyn Gaither, School Social Work Coordinator and the rest of the staff for all of their hard work.



# School Social Worker Spotlight

By DeKalb County School District's Social Workers

August 2014

## Welcome Back!



## WHO ARE SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKERS?

Welcome back students, families, and staff! The DeKalb County School District Social Workers are excited about the new school year and the opportunity to assist our students in excelling. School Social Workers have a very important role in the educational system and bring a unique professional knowledge and skill to the district. They are hired to enhance the school district's ability to meet its academic mission, especially where a priority on home-to-school and community collaboration is key to achieving that mission.

School Social Workers function as a link between the home, school, and community by bringing people together to promote the educational success of students; intervene when there is a social, familial, or economic challenge that impacts the learning process of students strengthen students' learning opportunities, achievements, and socio-emotional functioning by providing many services to students, families, and school staff. Please take a moment and review some very important information about the profession:

### Frequently Asked Questions (Georgia Department of Education)

■ What is a school social worker?

School social workers are distinct from other school personnel in their contributions to the assessment and intervention with students at risk. School social workers are itinerant and may serve several schools. They work with different students for different problems at different times in different places. They also deal in fundamental human needs in a real social context. School social workers are a bridge between community and family.

■ Does a school social worker need certification?

Yes. A school social worker must have at Master's Degree and a T5 certification. For more information, contact the Professional Standards Commission, 1452 Twin Towers East, Atlanta, Georgia 30334, or call (404) 657-9000.

■ Are school social workers employed by the school or the school system?

School social workers are employed by the system because they serve various schools in the system.

■ What is the funding formula that determines the number of school social workers?

The funding formula is: 1 school social worker for every 2,475 students.





### **Myths about Homelessness**

- 1 ) They are all men.
- 2 ) They are all lazy.
- 3 ) Homelessness is a single issue.
- 4 ) They are all from someplace else.
- 5 ) Build it and they will come.
- 6 ) Ignore the problem and it will go away.
- 7 ) Homeless people do not work.
- 8 ) Homelessness is usually a long-term condition.
- 9 ) It is a lifestyle choice.
- 10 ) It will never happen to me.
- 11) Shelters are a humane solution to homelessness.



Parents interested in receiving assistance should contact their school's region homeless school social worker:

Dr. Meertins at 678-676-2015  
or Ms. Jones at 678-676-2000.

The DeKalb County School District's Homeless Program was able to provide services to 1785 students for the 2013-2014 school year under the guidance of the McKinney Vento legislation. The McKinney Vento legislation states that students that are homeless have a right to continue to attend the schools that they attended before they became homeless or attend the school that their current address is zoned for. The McKinney-Vento Act defines homeless children as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." The act provides examples of children who would fall under this definition:

- Children and youth sharing housing due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason
- Children and youth living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camp grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- Children and youth living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Children and youth abandoned in hospitals
- Children and youth awaiting foster care placement
- Children and youth whose primary nighttime residence is not ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation (e.g. park benches, etc)
- Children and youth living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations
- Migratory children and youth living in any of the above situations

### **Eligibility**

Students who fit the definition of homelessness are eligible for certain services under the law;

- Transportation via school bus
- Transportation via MARTA Breeze cards
- Enrollment assistance
- Food Assistance
- Payment for Senior Dues
- Uniforms
- Payment for Georgia Virtual Academy
- Payment for extracurricular fees
- Free meals
- Rental of a band instrument and uniform
- Payment of educational field trips
- Clothing
- School Supplies
- Referral to community agencies for housing assistance
- Immunizations needed for school enrollment
- Referral to community agencies for utility assistance

### **Facts about Homelessness**

How Many Children and Youth Experience Homelessness?

In the 2011-2012 school year, 1,166,339 homeless children and youth were enrolled in public schools. This is a 71 percent increase since the 2006-2007 school year. It is important to note that this number is not an estimate of the prevalence of child and youth homelessness; in fact, it is an underestimate, because not all school districts reported data to the U.S. Department of Education, and because the data collected represents only those children identified and enrolled in school. Finally, the number does not include all preschool-age children, or any infants and toddlers.

### **Resources**

United Way 211

Partnership for Community Action 404 929 2502

Decatur Cooperative Ministry 404 377 5365

<http://www.naehcy.org/>

<http://center.serve.org/nche/>

<http://www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org/>

<http://www.nn4youth.org/>