



Advocates for Children of New York
Protecting every child's right to learn

How to Support Students in Domestic Violence Shelters:

What Families, Providers, and Schools Need to Know



SCHOOL SELECTION AND ENROLLMENT

Students in temporary housing can:

- **STAY IN THE SAME SCHOOL** (or the school the student attended when last permanently housed) or
- **TRANSFER TO THE LOCAL SCHOOL** zoned for where the shelter is located (or any other school that permanently housed students in the same zone can attend).

NOTE:

Schools and shelter providers **can't make parents transfer** their children to a different school.

Where should families go to enroll their child in school or transfer their child to a new school?

For **high school**: call, email, or go to the [Family Welcome Center](#) closest to the shelter or call 311.

For **elementary and middle school**: go to the school zoned for the shelter, or call/email/visit the Family Welcome Center, or call 311.

For **District 75 placements**: contact the D75 Placement at D75Placement@schools.nyc.gov.

For **students in specialized programs** (bilingual programs, gifted & talented): contact Anthony Harrison in the Office of Student Enrollment at aharrison7@schools.nyc.gov.

Students in temporary housing are entitled to **immediate enrollment** even if they don't have the documents normally needed (birth certificate, proof of immunizations) when they enroll or transfer. This means they can start school the same day. If schools do not allow students to immediately start school, contact the [Students in Temporary Housing \(STH\) Regional Manager](#).

What should parents share with the school?

- **Shelter Residency Letter**, which should include the shelter's P.O. Box and the District where the shelter is located;

- [Housing Questionnaire](#); and
- **Order of Protection**, if there is one.

Parents should make sure to **share these documents with the school even if they have already shared them** with the Family Welcome Center or another Department of Education office. Schools should make sure that a [Housing Questionnaire](#) is completed by the parent (also available in [additional languages](#)).



TRANSPORTATION

Busing is available to younger students in shelter. MetroCards are available to students who aren't bused and to their parents.

Busing is available to students in shelter:

- In **grades K-6**
- In **grades 7-8 if the student has an Individualized Education Program (IEP)** even if it doesn't include transportation
- With **IEPs that include transportation**
- In **Pre-K**, in certain circumstances

NOTE:

Students who become permanently housed can get busing for the remainder of the school year, if a route is available; otherwise, MetroCards are available.

How do students in DV shelters get busing?

- Complete the [Transportation Exceptions Request Ticket](#). *Enter the PO Box for the shelter as the address.* If the PO Box is used for more than one shelter location, include the name of the shelter in the Request too.
- Busing should be set up in roughly 1-2 weeks. If there are delays, make sure the school has updated the address in ATS to the PO Box. Schools should update the student's address when they get the shelter residency letter.
- If busing is not set up after 10 school days, email busingexceptions@schools.nyc.gov and the [transportation liaison](#) and ask for prepaid rideshare.
- Schools can give parents and students MetroCards while waiting for busing. Schools can get parent MetroCards by completing the [DOE's form](#). For help, contact the [STH Regional Manager](#).

MetroCards for students in shelter

Students who aren't bused can get full-fare MetroCards. Their parents can also get free MetroCards.

- **Student MetroCards:** full fare student MetroCards are available regardless of distance; students can ask for one at school.

- **Parent MetroCards:** weekly or monthly cards are available; parents can ask the transportation coordinator or the STH school-based liaison at their child's school for one. For help, contact the STH Regional Manager.



MAINTAINING FAMILY SAFETY AND CONFIDENTIALITY

NOTE:

Schools should **NOT** ask providers or parents to share the address of the DV shelter. DV shelter locations are confidential and cannot be shared with schools.

What steps should schools take to make sure students impacted by domestic violence are safe?

- **Update housing status and address information in ATS:** If a student is in a shelter, the school must change the student's housing status to "S" and update the student's address in ATS as soon as they receive the housing questionnaire or shelter residency letter. *Delays in updating a student's address lead to delays in getting busing set up!* If the student is in a DV shelter, the school should enter in the P.O. Box on the shelter residency letter as the student's address in ATS. For example, P.O. Box 3126 should be entered in ATS as:
 - **House No:** DV
 - **Street:** PO Box 3126
- **Flag abusers in ATS:** Schools must *immediately* update a student's profile in ATS if a person is barred from contacting the student and/or accessing records. Schools should update the Parent/Adult (PARU) function in ATS by:
 - Input the name of the person if not already entered.
 - Enter **07** for the Authorization Code
- **Update the Blue Card:** Schools should immediately update the student's Blue Card if a person is barred from contacting the student and/or accessing the student's records. Parents can include contact information for the shelter caseworker as an alternative contact if the parent is not available.
- **Do a School-Based Safety Plan:** Where the abuser is not to have contact with the student, the parent and the school should complete a School-Based Safety Plan describing who should have contact with the student and who should not, and what steps should be taken if the abuser contacts or comes to the school.
- **Don't release student information to non-custodial parents:** If a parent who does not live with the student asks the school for information about the student, the school *must* do the following *before* releasing any information:
 - Tell the parent whom the student lives with about the request **and**

- Give the parent whom the student lives with **45 days** to give the school an order of protection or other document limiting the non-custodial parent's access to the student's records.
- If the parent with physical custody does not give the school such a document within 45 days, the schools may release the student's records to the non-custodial parent.

FOR MORE HELP OR INFORMATION...

Contact the [STH Regional Manager](#) for the borough where the shelter is located

For transportation-related questions or issues, contact the [transportation liaison](#). *Do not call OPT's customer service line; they do not have information related to students in DV shelters.*

Call **Advocates for Children of New York's Helpline (866) 427-6033** or email **AFC's Project LIT: ProjectLIT@afcny.org**

You can also visit [AFC's website](#) for more helpful guides, tip sheets, and other and resources.

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