

Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS)

Frequently Asked Questions

What is the STLS Department?

“STLS” stands for Students in Temporary Living Situations and is the name of the Chicago Board’s department that provides support and services to children and youths enrolled in a Chicago Public Schools (CPS) school and are experiencing housing instability. The STLS Department is headquartered at CPS main office, which currently is located at 125 S. Clark Street, with coordinators located throughout the City. The CPS main office will be moving November 7, 2014 to 42 W. Madison. The STLS Department ensures schools and school-based staff have the knowledge, training and resources necessary to enforce the educational rights of students in temporary living situations. They are also available to assist and advocate for families in need of additional support or resources. Students and families should feel free to contact the STLS department (773) 553-2242 (phone), (773) 553-2182 (fax) or email at STLSInformation@cps.edu with any questions or concerns.

Who is eligible for services from the Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS) Department?

Students in many different situations are eligible for services through STLS. If a student lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night time residence then he or she is eligible for STLS services. This includes:

- sharing housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship or similar reason
- living in emergency or transitional shelters
- living in motels, hotels, trailer parks or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate housing
- are abandoned in hospitals
- living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations or similar setting
- migratory students in any of the above situations
- youth not in the custody of a parent or a guardian (unaccompanied youth), of any age, in any of the above situations

How do I enroll my child for STLS services?

Each Chicago Public School, including charter schools, has an STLS Liaison and Clerk. If you or someone you know may be eligible for STLS services, be sure to ask to speak with your school's STLS Liaison or Clerk. In order to receive STLS services, the school's STLS Liaison or Clerk must know about your situation and will ask questions to determine your child’s eligibility for the program. You have the right to be treated with dignity and can expect your personal information to remain private. If no clerk or liaison is available at the time you seek to enroll, other school staff will be available to enroll your student. A youth in a temporary living situation may enroll him/herself. You are required to complete the STLS Service Initiation form which you can find here and print out. Doing so ahead of time may speed the process.

Where will my child go to school?

A student in a temporary living situation has a right to choose to enroll at:

- the school – whether traditional, charter, selective enrollment, military, magnet or contract - he/she attended upon becoming homeless (school of origin)
- the last school – whether traditional, charter, selective enrollment, military, magnet or contract - at which he/she was enrolled (school of origin)

- the attendance area school for the area in which the STLS student resides

Where will my child go to school if s/he is in preschool?

If your child is aged 3 but not 5 by September 1st and eligible for the STLS program, upon request, he/she will be placed in an appropriate and available CPS school. Click [here](#) for information on preschool programs. Your STLS eligible preschooler is also eligible for transportation through the STLS program. You and your child will receive CTA Ventra cards if eligible. Click [here](#) for more transportation information.

When will my child go to school?

On-time attendance to school on the first day, and each and every school day is very important for the student's ability to succeed. For this reason, students in a temporary living situation will be immediately enrolled and have a right to full participation in school activities, even without proof of address, proof of immunization, transcripts, or *any other documents*.

How long can an STLS-eligible student remain at the same school?

Students enrolled in the STLS program have the right to continue attending the school of origin for as long as they lack permanent housing or, if they become permanently housed, until the end of the academic year in which housing is acquired. High school students who become permanently housed in another CPS school's attendance area may remain in their school of origin until graduation if they desire to do so, provided the distance factor does not adversely influence the students' safety, attendance or academic progress.

Do I need to provide documents to prove where I stay?

No. Students in temporary living situations are not required to present the documentation necessary to enroll in school; however, school staff can ask that you provide information regarding where you are currently living, your contact information and emergency contact information.

How does my child qualify for transportation?

If you choose to continue your child's education in his/her school of origin, the Chicago Board will provide transportation to and from the school of origin and school-related activities as long as your child is in a temporary living situation, or if he/she becomes permanently housed, until the end of the academic year. Requests for transportation services should be made to the STLS Liaison or Clerk at your child's school or by calling the STLS Department at 773-553-2242.

There are two forms of transportation generally available to STLS-eligible students - CTA and the yellow school bus. For preschool age children through 6th grade, both the student and his/her parents or caregivers transporting the STLS-eligible student will be provided with CTA Ventra cards. From 7th grade through high school, students only will be given CTA Ventra cards. If a parent of a child in 6th grade or below is unable to accompany the STLS-eligible child to school for reasons of "hardship," such as having to transport more than one child to differing locations, having to work or attend employment training, court-ordered services or treatment, inability due to a disabling condition, being required by your shelter program to participate in services at the same time or for "other good cause," you may apply for "hardship" transportation which is a school bus. You should apply as soon as you are able. Click [here](#) for the hardship transportation form. CTA Ventra cards will be provided pending approval of the hardship application and the bus can be arranged.

For the CTA, students are typically given CTA Ventra cards which are worth 2 fares and 2 transfers during the hours of 5:00 a.m. and 8:00 p.m. *only*. If the card is used outside of those hours, then it cannot be

used again. It is, therefore, very important that your student understand this. If he/she needs more fares to come and go to student related activities outside of those hours, the school will arrange for additional fare cards. To ensure daily attendance, some students may receive fare cards only on a daily, rather than weekly, basis.

Can my child apply for a CPS magnet, charter and/or selective enrollment school?

Yes. Students who are eligible for STLS services can apply to charter schools, selective enrollment schools, magnet schools, and all other CPS programs in the same manner as all other students. If you need assistance in the application process, ask the STLS Liaison or Clerk at your child's school to help you complete the forms.

Can my child who is high school age enroll in a CPS alternative school?

Yes. Any student eligible for STLS services, who is high school age and have left school can re-enroll in a CPS alternative school. Please contact the Student Outreach and Re-Engagement (SOAR) Center if you need assistance getting your student re-enrolled in school. You can send an email to SOAR@cps.edu or call the Parent Hotline at (773) 553-3223.

Can my child participate in sports?

Students who are eligible for STLS services have the right to try-out and/or sign-up for sports teams in the same manner as all other students. Fees for participation in sports programs, including uniforms and equipment, can be waived. Students who qualify for transportation through the STLS program can receive supplemental transportation assistance as needed to accommodate participation in athletic events.

What if the school charges fees or I have overdue fees?

Students in temporary living situations qualify to have fees for participation in many school activities and the use of school property waived, including overdue fees. This includes, for example, fees for textbooks, instructional fees, uniforms, lockers, graduation fees, and school records.

Will my child stand out because he/she doesn't have things like a uniform or a backpack?

Upon request, students in temporary living situations will receive items necessary for their participation in school such as uniforms, school supplies, and other items. If lack of clothing, shoes or school supplies is keeping you from enrolling your child, please seek assistance at the nearest school or contact the STLS Department at 773-553-2242

What if my student is having difficulty attending school each day or being on time?

Attendance at school each day is critical to a child's learning. Daily attendance is a stronger indicator of student success than high test scores. Your child's school should welcome your participation as a parent and your involvement with your child's education. It is especially important during a period of housing instability to make sure your child can get to school. If there are health issues, conflict with other students or adults at school, child care problems, transportation problems, or a family crisis that interferes with a student's attendance, please request help from the STLS Liaison or other appropriate person at your child's school. Be sure to talk with your child to understand what might affect his/her willingness to attend school. Every school is required to have a program to help families and youth who need it address issues of non-attendance. School staff are dedicated to making sure students are made to feel welcome.

Will my child receive meals at school?

Yes. Students in temporary living situations qualify for free school meals.

What if I become permanently housed during the school year – will we still qualify for support from the STLS Department?

Yes. Students receive STLS services through the end of the school year during which they become permanently housed.

My nephew recently came to stay with me because his parent lost their housing. I don't know how long I'll take care of him and I am not the legal guardian. Can he still go to school?

Yes. Your nephew would be considered a student in a temporary living situation and should be enrolled immediately even if you cannot provide documentation of guardianship. Remember, he has the right to return to his school of origin. Staying in the school of origin contributes to educational and emotional stability for most students.

I am 17 years old and do not live with a parent or guardian. I move around a lot and stay at different friends' houses. Can I still go to school?

Yes. Students who do not live with a parent or guardian have a right to immediate enrollment even if they cannot provide documentation of guardianship.

We participate in a refugee re-settlement program, is my child eligible for STLS services?

Yes, if your housing situation meets any of those outlined above in the first question.

What if I disagree with a decision made by the school related to my student's enrollment or right to transportation?

When a school official denies a student in a temporary living situation enrollment or transportation to the school of origin, the parent or student may file a complaint with the CPS STLS Department. The STLS Department will attempt to resolve the dispute in a timely manner. Every Chicago Public School, including charter schools, has an STLS Liaison who will assist you in completing the dispute resolution forms and refer you to low-cost legal assistance if necessary. If the family or student disagrees with the Board of Education of the City of Chicago's decision, then an appeal may be made to an Ombudsperson appointed by the Illinois State Board of Education who will issue a written decision. If the family or student disagrees with the decision of the Ombudsperson, then an appeal may be made to the Illinois State Board of Education's Homeless Education Coordinator who will review the Ombudsperson's decision for compliance with applicable law and submit a recommendation to the Superintendent of the Illinois State Board of Education. At any time during the process, a parent, guardian, caregiver, or unaccompanied youth may seek the support or advice of attorneys, advocates, or the Illinois State Board of Education Homeless Education Program. While the dispute and/or appeal process are taking place, the student has the right to enroll and receive transportation.

For more information or assistance, call Chicago Public Schools Students in Temporary Living Situations (773) 553-2242.