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## A HOME FOR THE HOLIDAYS

### FIVE THINGS YOUR CAMPUS CAN DO TO HELP HOMELESS AND FOSTER YOUTH

Most homeless students and students from foster care don't have families to return to during academic breaks. Instead of enjoying the warmth of home and family, they scramble for a place to stay, often hiding their situation due to embarrassment. The fear of homelessness during breaks creates tremendous stress, preventing students from focusing on schoolwork. Be part of the solution by helping your community develop a plan for assisting these vulnerable youth with housing over breaks.

### **1. Allow youth to stay in their dorms without having to pay.**

Some colleges and universities allow students to reside on campus during academic breaks, but they charge a fee for each day a student resides in the dorms. These fees can pose barriers for homeless and foster youth, as they may not be able to afford the housing cost. Homeless and foster youth should be allowed to reside in the dorms, with fees waived, in order to ensure that they will have a place to stay during breaks.

### **2. Open up international student housing for homeless and foster youth.**

Many colleges and universities allow international students to reside in their dorm rooms during holiday closure and semester breaks. Without this allowance, many international students would have nowhere to stay. Like international students, many homeless and foster care youth have no place to go during breaks and closures. Colleges and universities should allow homeless and foster youth to remain in their dorm rooms, or to reside in the international dorms during breaks.

### **3. Use Student Support Services dollars for housing during breaks.**

The Higher Education Opportunity Act of 2008 allows Student Support Services programs to secure temporary housing during breaks in the academic year for homeless students and students from foster care. Colleges and universities should work with Student Support Services programs on their campuses to find the best way to utilize these dollars for housing for homeless and foster youth. If there are no Student Support Services programs on campus, colleges and universities should work agencies that can supplement the cost of housing during school breaks. For example, in Massachusetts, the Department of Children and Family Services pay for housing for foster care youth during college/university breaks.

### **4. Create a web-site where youth can confidentially disclose their status and what services they need.**

Colleges and universities should use an online application where students can self-identify their homeless or foster care status and indicate what services they need, including housing during breaks. Offices such as Student Housing and Financial Aid can then work together to better assist the student with securing housing during breaks. Please see the following website to see how this has been implemented at Michigan State University. <http://www.finaid.msu.edu/fyas/AppMain.asp>

### **5. Designate a Single Point of Contact on Campus.**

A SPOC is a point person who can help homeless and foster youth navigate housing resources on and off campuses. Two states (CO and NC) have designated SPOCs at every institution of higher education; four other states are in the process of making this happen. In addition to housing assistance, SPOCs help homeless youth and foster youth successfully navigate the college-going process. SPOCs implement a streamlined process to facilitate communication and quick referral among departments and services on their campus. To find out more about the SPOC model please contact Cyekeia Lee, NAEHCY's National Higher Education Liaison at [clee@naehcy.org](mailto:clee@naehcy.org).