

Articulation Coordinating Committee

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Utilization of the State Tuition and Fee Exemption for Matriculating Homeless High School Graduates

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PreK-12 Matriculation Goals

Short-term Homeless Education Program Goal: To double the use of Florida's postsecondary tuition and fee exemption (s. 1009.25(1)(f), F.S.) by matriculating high school seniors experiencing homelessness from the fall semester of 2015 to the fall semester of 2017.

Long-term Homeless Education Program Goal: To identify and remove barriers and challenges to a path to a postsecondary degree or certificate for matriculating high school seniors experiencing homelessness.

What we know

- **Homeless High School Seniors/Standard Diploma**
 - 2014-2015: 3,857/2,308 (60%)
 - 2013-2014: 3,662/2,171 (59%)
 - 2012-2013: 3,483/1,994 (57%)
- **State Tuition and Fee Exemption Utilization for Homeless High School Graduates (Fall 2015)**
 - SUS: 16
 - FCS: 67

Definitions

- Homeless – PreK12 Federal
- Homeless – PreK12 State
- Homeless – Postsecondary Federal
- Key Terms
 - Fixed
 - Regular
 - Adequate

Who is homeless? Florida Statutes

1009.25 Fee exemptions. —

(1) The following students are exempt from the payment of tuition and fees, including lab fees, at a school district that provides workforce education programs, Florida College System institution, or state university:

- (f) A student who **lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence** or whose primary nighttime residence is a public or private shelter designed to provide temporary residence for individuals intended to be institutionalized, or a **public or private place not designed for, or ordinarily used as, a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings**.

Actions to Date

- **February 2016:** State Board of Education (SBE) requested an update on the utilization of the state tuition and fee exemption by graduating homeless high school seniors.
- **March 2016:** Formed a State Leadership Team on Postsecondary Education for Homeless Students to coordinate action around this issue.

Actions to Date

- **May 2016:** Bureau of Federal Educational Programs (BFEP) met with LEA and postsecondary representatives to identify barriers and challenges to accessing the state tuition and fee exemption and progressing through to a degree or certificate.
- **June 2016:** BFEP met with college registrars to discuss current practices for awarding the tuition and fee exemptions to students experiencing homelessness
- **August 2016:** Division of Florida Colleges asked each colleges to identify a single point of contact (SPOC) for students experiencing homelessness.

Actions to Date

- **October 2016:** Career and Adult Education asked each technical colleges to identify a SPOC for students experiencing homelessness.
- **February 2017:** BFEP conducted LEA Performance Review pilots in Dade and Santa Rosa counties to identify current and best practices for preparing homeless high school students for postsecondary education and for securing the state tuition and fee exemption for matriculating homeless high school graduates.

Findings

- All postsecondary institutions want to assist students experiencing homelessness
- A growing number of institutions include outreach and support services for students experiencing homelessness
- The position in an institution that determines qualification for the state exemption (Registrar) is usually different than the position that determines student qualification for a designation of homeless for federal financial aid (Financial Aid Administrator).
- S.1009.25(1)(f), F.S., is the only beneficiary group that can lose its benefit in the middle of the postsecondary education process.
- Technical colleges are enthusiastic about becoming more active in assisting the homeless population.

Findings

- Varying institution-level application of s.1009.25(1)(f), F.S.
 - Initial exemption awards are one semester or one year
 - Many institutions require documentation from a shelter for continued award
 - Most institutions accept a letter from a school district's designated Homeless Education Liaison as adequate for initial exemption award
 - Some institutions interpret 1009.25(2) as a limit on the total number of exemptions they can award across all benefiting populations listed in 1009.25(1)

Next Steps

- Seeking data that shed light on the number of homeless high school graduates who:
 - matriculate directly and receive the tuition & fee exemption
 - continue enrollment and receive the tuition & fee exemption
 - earned a degree or industry certificate within four/five years of HS graduation
- Prepare high school students who are homeless with information about their rights so they can be better self advocate
- Create training for Single Points of Contact
- Seek input from the Articulation Coordinating Committee, the State Board of Education, and the Board of Governors.

Thank you!