

# HOW...WHEN...WHERE



Information for homeless and relocated families in New York City  
July-August 2011

Number of families in the shelter system: 9,239

## SHELTER STAY – A JUMP START FOR A GOOD LIFE

Elena Rosario was homeless in 1996. She had three little boys but no money, no job, and no home when she came to Concourse House, a family shelter.

Today, 2011, she's living in Ohio and looking forward to waving her youngest son off to Harvard University.

What happened between those years? It's a story of her personal strength – and also how a shelter staff helped her learn to become a good parent.

"When I came from Puerto Rico, I had no place else to go." Elena says. "I stayed there at Concourse House for one year and eight months."

Concourse House offered classes in parenting skills and independent living skills. Manuela Schaudt, Executive Director, remembers, "We had a lot of resources with people coming in doing workshops on topics like healthcare and substance abuse."

She put her boys in the day care, which was run by Maria Torres then, as it has been since 1995 and still is today. (She keeps in touch with Maria by phone two or three times a week – other former residents call her, too, though not so often.)



Raymond on his way up

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### 2011 NYC PUBLIC SCHOOL CALENDAR

- Sept 8 .....School sessions begin for all students. Early dismissal for non-District 75 kindergarten students only
- Sept 9 .....Early dismissal for non-District 75 kindergarten students only
- Sept 12 .....First full day for non-District 75 Kindergarten public school students
- Sept 13 .....First full day for all Prekindergarten public school students

#### WHEN SCHOOLS CLOSE

- Sept 29-30 .....Rosh Hashanah
- Oct 10, .....Columbus Day
- Nov 8 .....Election Day
- Nov 11 .....Veterans Day
- Nov 24-27 .....Thanksgiving recess
- Dec 26 thru  
(including) Jan 2 ....Winter Recess (including Christmas and New Year's Day).  
Students return to school on Tues January 3, 2012

#### 2012

- Jan 16 .....Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- Jan 27 .....Prekindergarten Non-Attendance day
- Feb 20-24 .....Midwinter Recess (including Washington's Birthday)
- March 23 .....Prekindergarten Non-Attendance Day
- April 6-13 .....Spring Recess (including Good Friday, Easter and Passover),  
students return to school Monday April 16
- May 28 .....Memorial Day Observed
- June 7 .....Chancellor's Conference Day in all five boroughs. Students in all  
five boroughs WILL NOT BE IN ATTENDANCE.
- June 22 .....In non-District 75 high schools having to administer Regents  
Exams from June 13 through June 21, students will not be in  
attendance on Regents Rating Day, June 22
- June 27 .....LAST DAY OF SCHOOL FOR ALL STUDENTS. Early dismissal of  
students to be scheduled.

## LAW GIVES RIGHTS TO KIDS IN TEMPORARY HOUSING

For more detailed information about the educational rights of students in temporary housing, contact NYS-TEACHS (New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students) at 800-388-2014 or check their website at [www.nysteachs.org](http://www.nysteachs.org).

A Federal law called the McKinney-Vento Act guarantees that your children have important rights to an education.

"Temporary housing" means any of several different situations they might be staying in such as:

- A shelter, emergency or transitional housing
- Shared housing due to loss of housing or economic hardship
- A motel, hotel, trailer park or camp grounds due to lack of other housing.

By law, all students in temporary housing situations are entitled to immediate enrollment and transportation to school. Your child has the right to attend either:

- 1) The zoned school where you are currently living; OR
- 2) The school where your child was last enrolled; OR
- 3) The school your child attended when you were last permanently housed

Say, for example, your child attended school in Brooklyn and now your family is staying temporarily in a shelter in Manhattan. Your child can keep going to the same school in Brooklyn until he graduates. He's entitled to transportation to and from that school and he's entitled to receive free meals without filling out an application.

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Or you and he can decide he would do better to move to a school nearby.

Here are some questions to think about while you make that decision.

- Does your child have friends in her old school that will help your child during this difficult time?
- Is your child doing well in his or her current school?
- Would his or her credits transfer to his or her new school?
- Is your child close to his/her teachers?

### **DID YOU KNOW?**

Students who transfer schools a lot do worse in school. They are more likely to repeat grade and to drop out of high school. Often it's hard for children to catch up with the work being done in the new classroom and they fall behind. Also, many children have a hard time without their friends and former teachers. In most cases, children do better if they stay in their same school.

How far would your child have to travel to school?

You should also try to get as much information as possible about the new school before you make your decision. If you have access to the internet, you should read about the local school on [www.insideschools.org](http://www.insideschools.org) (if you don't know the name of the local school, you should ask the Department of Education Family Assistant at the shelter, or you can look up the name of the school zoned for the shelter by entering the shelter address into the "Find a School" box on the Department of Education's website: [www.schools.nyc.gov](http://www.schools.nyc.gov)). If possible, try to visit the school for a tour or go to a PTA meeting. Talk to parents about what they like and don't like.

You should think about this fact, too. Under the current administration, the city is encouraging families to move out of the shelter system as quickly as possible. If you can imagine a stay as short as a few months at your current address, moving your child to a new school might make less sense.

### **ENROLLING YOUR CHILD IN SCHOOL**

**If your child has never been enrolled in school before, it's recommended that you find the school zoned for the address where you are temporarily living and enroll your child in that school.**

NYC's Department of Education places workers known as Family Assistants in some shelters to guide families with kids in school but there are fewer now that budgets are tight. If there is no Family Assistant in the shelter where you are staying, or if he/she cannot help you, you can contact the Students in Temporary Housing (STH) Content Expert for your borough (see below for contact information).

Children in temporary housing can enroll in school and start attending classes even if they are missing records. But if you have them, you should bring the following documents with you when you register your child for school:

- 1) Proof of your child's age (original birth certificate, Baptismal certificate, or passport).
- 2) Record of your child's immunizations and medical exam. All children attending a NYC school for the first time must have a complete physical exam. To find a clinic for your child's exam and shots, call 311 or the STH content expert for your borough.

- 3) Proof of address (if you're in the shelter system, take a residency letter from the shelter where you are staying)

**Note:** Your child should be enrolled in school the same day you take your child to register at the new school. If there are any problems, immediately contact the STH Content Expert for your borough (see below for contact information).

### **PRE-KINDERGARTEN (PRE-K)**

If your child is 4 years old by December 31, your child is eligible for pre-kindergarten, also known as pre-k. To enroll in pre-k, you and your child should visit your local school. If there is no room at your local school, talk to the Department of Education worker at your shelter or the STH Content Expert for your borough (see below for contact information) for help enrolling your child in pre-k at another school in the area.

### **TRANSPORTATION HELP**

After requesting busing, you should find out within a couple of days whether it is available. If it is available, your child should be given a bus route 3-5 days after your request. If you haven't heard after 3-5 days, contact the Office of Pupil Transportation (718) 784-3313 and the STH Content Expert for your borough (see below for contact information).

If there is an available bus route, students in temporary housing in grades K-6 can get yellow busing. Contact the Department of Education worker at the shelter or the STH Content Expert for your borough to check if a bus route is available and to set up transportation (see below for contact information).

If there is NOT an available bus route or the student is NOT in grades K-6, the student should ask for a full-fare Student MetroCard from his or her school or from the Department of Education worker at the shelter. In addition, parents who must accompany their children on the subway or the public bus should get a MetroCard for themselves from the Department of Education worker at the shelter or from the STH Content Expert for your borough (see below for contact information). There is no time limit on how long parents who are homeless may receive MetroCards to accompany their children to school.

If the student has to travel a far distance to school, families may be able to transfer to a shelter that is closer to the child's school, depending on whether there are beds available in that closer shelter. To request a shelter transfer, talk to your shelter caseworker, the family assistant at your shelter, or the STH Content Expert for your borough (see below for contact information).

### **CONTACT INFORMATION**

To find the STH Content Expert for your borough – or if you continue to face problems with your child's enrollment or transportation – contact either

- New York State Technical and Education Assistance Center for Homeless Students (NYS-TEACHS) at (800) 388-2014, or
- NYC Department of Education STH Senior Program Manager Susana Vilardell at (212) 374-2530 or STH Program Coordinator Marygrace Ponzio at (212) 374-0860.

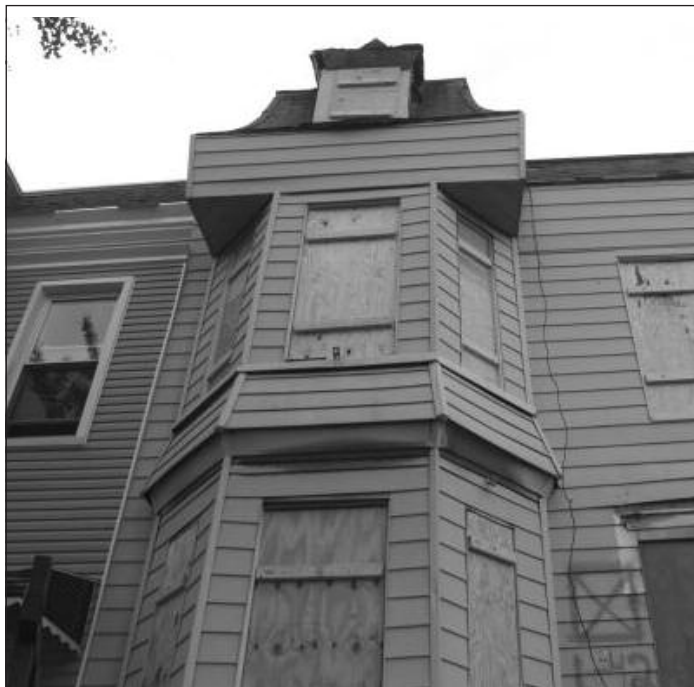
## Know Your Rights at Fair Hearings with Help from Project FAIR

by Esperanza Colón,  
Project FAIR Co-Director &  
Senior Staff Attorney, Legal Aid Society

Every weekday, hundreds of poor and low-income New Yorkers from all five boroughs pass through the main waiting room of 14 Boerum Place in downtown Brooklyn, the New York State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance (OTDA) city-wide fair hearing site. They come to 14 Boerum to appeal decisions made by the New York City Human Resources Administration (HRA) to deny, discontinue, or reduce needed benefits such as food stamps, cash assistance, medical assistance, or temporary shelter.

And, every weekday, Project FAIR-trained volunteers are there at their Legal Help Desk to provide individuals with access to information about public benefit programs, help with the fair hearing process, and, referrals for legal representation, in an effort to make sure these individuals gain access to and are able to keep benefits to which they are entitled.

Project FAIR's Help Desk hours are 12:00 PM to 3:00 PM Monday through Friday. Individuals are seen on a first come-first served basis. The Help Desk volunteers also have useful forms and informational brochures available to all of those seeking help with their fair hearings.



Summer underway, energetic advocates at **Picture the Homeless** in collaboration with Hunter College launched an attack on homelessness by conducting a "first ever count of vacant buildings and lots throughout the five boroughs." Like to help? Call Adrian Antonio Paling at (646) 314-6423.

## PARENTS INVOLVED WITH THE NYC CHILD WELFARE SYSTEM

Here is a message from the Child Welfare Organizing Project (CWOP):

Are you feeling stressed, confused, disrespected, and frustrated?

You are not alone!

At CWOP parent support and self-help meetings, parents involved with the NYC child welfare system meeting with each other and with professionals gain strength and understanding for themselves and work for positive changes in the system.

Ashley Brewster, a CWOP "Parent Leader" in training, says "I came to CWOP when I was six months pregnant because I was afraid I might get another ACS case due to my past child welfare system involvement. I've learned how to plan for my child and how to be prepared if ACS comes into my life again."

Maxine King, a CWOP "Parent Leader" in training, agrees: "I think it's important that parents assist other parents to tap into their power and advocate for themselves and others to change their situations. A lot of times parents just want to blame others for their situation without having a clear sense of the power they have themselves. After sitting in support group, they begin to identify that they do have rights. They learn about their rights from other parents and the handbook that CWOP gives to parents."

A CWOP parent support and self help group meets every Wednesday from 11 am to 1 pm in East Harlem at 80 East 110th Street at Park Avenue, Suite 1E, in Manhattan. For more information call (212) 348-3000.

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## SHELTER STAY *Continued from page 1*

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Elena herself had never finished high school. Without an education, she discovered she couldn't get a good job. "I was not thinking right," she says.

Now, she says, "what I learned at Concourse House was how to get a better future for the boys. I learned how to take more responsibility for my children. I learned how to help them get ahead in life."

Education, she knew, was the key.

Elena and her sons moved from Concourse House to an apartment in the Bronx, and two years later she took them to live in Ohio near relatives. "I used to get them up every morning early to go to school so they didn't have to go through what I did."

Her oldest son Eddie, 22, finished high school and joined the Navy.

Her second son Victor, 19, just graduated from high school.

Of her youngest son Raymond, 17, she says, "He's on a great soccer team. He has great grades. He has one more exam to take to be accepted at Harvard. He's interested in studying to be an accountant, but he's also interested in being a soccer player."

## WATCH FOR THE ROVING MILK-VAN

A few months ago **Homes for the Homeless** launched a new program to distribute free milk to low income families in neighborhoods where fresh milk isn't readily available. Here's the new schedule of times and places where you can find the Milk from the Heart van and pick up your FREE milk:

### Mondays

9 am Frederick Douglass Blvd between 133 and 134th Streets, (HCZ Baby College), Manhattan  
 1:30 pm the intersection of Broadway, Hamilton Place, and the corner of 136th Street, Manhattan  
 3 pm at the corner of Lenox Ave. and 111th Street, Manhattan

### Tuesdays

9 am 207 Lenox Ave., (HCZ Family Support Center), Manhattan  
 2:20 pm near MS 206 at 2280 Aqueduct Ave., Bronx  
 4:30 pm near the intersection of East 196th Street and Grand Concourse, Bronx

### Wednesdays

9:30 am near the intersection of Amsterdam Avenue and 159th Street, Manhattan  
 2:20 pm near P.S. 96, 216 East 120th Street, Manhattan  
 3:30 pm 237 East 104th Street (Union Settlement), Manhattan

### Thursdays

9 am at 176th Street and Wadsworth Avenue (NMIC), Manhattan  
 11:30 am 140 West 140th Street, between 7th and Lenox Avenues (Single Stop), Manhattan  
 1:30 pm 127th Street between 7th and 8th Avenues (St. Nicholas Houses), Manhattan  
 4 pm near the intersection of Evelyn Place and Jerome Avenue, Bronx

### Fridays

8:30 am 184 Eldridge Street (University Settlement), Manhattan  
 10 am 197 East Broadway (Educational Alliance), Manhattan  
 4:30 pm in front of Boys & Girls Republic, 888 East 6th Street, Manhattan

## HOPE = FIRST STEP TO A REAL JOB

by Reginald M. Dawson, Work Readiness Instructor, The HOPE Program

A graduate of The HOPE Program and shelter resident, Frantz Joseph is gaining his life back, step by step. Since graduating from HOPE in February of this year, Frantz has secured a job with a HOPE employer and passed the general equivalency examination for his GED with the State of NY.

The HOPE Program is a full-time work readiness, job placement and career advancement program centrally located in downtown Brooklyn. Frantz chose to apply after learning about one of the hallmarks of the program: the unpaid work internship. Frantz came to the HOPE Program like many have – he needed a job. Once in class, he learned that HOPE is not your typical program – but much more.

HOPE's training phase is 12 weeks, 9am-5pm, Monday through Friday. Services include computer instruction, classes in conflict resolution and customer service, job search and interview skills, GED preparation for those who need it, financial literacy, and individual and group counseling.

In the 8th week of the 12-week training, students begin an unpaid work internship. Students gain practical work experience, references, and networking opportunities. HOPE's internship partners also offer valuable, constructive feedback on job performance.

At HOPE, Frantz placed getting a job (and a GED) high on his priority list. (Frantz graduated from secondary school in his native Haiti, but since the devastating earthquake, getting the official documents has been impossible.) HOPE teaches not only getting a job, but retaining a job and advancing on it.

Frantz and I hit it off immediately. As he began to share his goals, he saw more and more how HOPE could help. In the

near future, he seeks advancement at his current employer the Eastern Athletic Fitness Center (and possibly an additional part time job). Further aspirations include taking college courses, obtaining his own residence, saving money, and ultimately reuniting with his children, who are currently temporarily in the foster care system.

To learn more about The HOPE Program and to apply, you can attend an all-morning information session any Tuesday or Thursday at 8:45 am at #1 Smith Street, in Brooklyn. To apply, you must be 18 years or older, have ID to show you can work in the US, and be ready to participate in full-time training and employment. For more information, visit [www.thehopeprogram.org](http://www.thehopeprogram.org) or call (718) 852-9307.



Frantz at the HOPE PROGRAM

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