

Access to Identity Documents for Youth Experiencing Homelessness

This legislation will allow youth aged 15-24 experiencing homelessness, as verified by their school or a provider, to obtain a copy of their birth certificate and a state ID for free. The legislation specifies a definition of homelessness consistent with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

The Need for Youth Services

The estimated 7,800 youth experiencing homelessness and housing instability in Connecticut are not likely to stay in a formal shelter. Of those youth age 17 and under, 696 were estimated to be literally homeless in 2020.

According to the 2018 & 2019 Youth Counts, youth are more likely to seek support from friends, relatives and sadly, unsafe contacts. They are also more likely to move around frequently.

It is critical that this population, perhaps more than any other, given their particular vulnerabilities, have access to supportive services and other benefit programs.

Why is an Identity Document Critical for Accessing Services?

Access to identity documents is a significant barrier for youth and young adults, including minors, who are experiencing homelessness and housing instability.

One critical barrier is the fee associated with securing a birth certificate or a state identity card. Current CT law only allows individuals who are residents of a homeless shelter or facility for homeless persons to receive a fee waiver for a state ID. There is currently no fee waiver for a person to get a birth certificate.

States including FL, TX, MD, IL, and CA all provide fee waivers specifically for *youth* experiencing homelessness. These states define homelessness consistent with the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act which includes youth who are “doubled up” with others- the most common form of youth homelessness.

The result is that many young people are unable to work, participate in community-based programs (eg: workforce development programs, violence prevention programs), unable or delayed access to employment opportunities, delays in housing, and difficulties in accessing supports such as mental health, supportive benefits, or athletic activities.

58%

Approximate percentage of homeless & housing unstable youth & young adults who reported not being employed in 2020. Many employers require identity documents (such as state ID cards) as a precondition for employment.

“Without an ID, you are nobody, you don’t exist.”

-Sharday Hamilton