



Lillian M. Lowery, Ed.D.
State Superintendent of Schools

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August 8, 2014

TO: Local Superintendents *Lillian M. Lowery*
FROM: Dr. Lillian Lowery, State Superintendent of Schools
RE: Immigrant Children

In 2014, over 30,000 Central American children seeking refuge from violence in their home countries have arrived in the United States. After completing perilous journeys, these children are enduring trauma, separation from family, isolation and uncertainty.

Although decisions regarding their care and placement remain with the federal government, according to the federal Office of Refugee Resettlement, more than 2,200 of these children have been placed with individual families in Maryland between January and July of this year. The Office of Refugee Resettlement provides additional information about this placement process and answers to frequently asked questions at:

<http://www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/orr/programs/ucs/about#FAQs>

Governor O'Malley and state agencies, including MSDE, are supporting the efforts of the federal government by ensuring children placed in Maryland are treated with compassion, kept safe, and afforded due process as they make their way through federal legal proceedings. Faith leaders, service providers and health and legal professionals are being convened in a series of meetings to pool resources and develop a list of services available to children placed in Maryland.

A webpage was created in order to harness this outpouring of support and the offers of assistance from around the state. This page, which can be found through Maryland.gov, gives individuals and organizations a place to sign up to donate services, provides additional information about becoming a foster parent, and answers frequently asked questions.

In addition, while the immigration status of these children is resolved, children placed with Maryland families should be encouraged to register in our schools. Under federal law, state and local educational agencies (LEAs) are required to provide all children with equal access to public education at the elementary and secondary levels. The U.S. Supreme Court decision in Plyler v. Doe states that school systems are prohibited from asking about immigration status at any point and must protect the confidentiality of any information regarding a student's immigration status, even if it is acquired unintentionally.

On May 8, 2014, Secretary Arne Duncan and Attorney General Eric Holder announced updated guidance to ensure that enrollment practices are consistent with the law and implemented with flexibility in accepting documents to prove the child's age and show that the child resides within a school's attendance area:

<http://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/secretary-duncan-and-attorney-general-holder-issue-guidance-school-districts-ens>

The documents included in this link have been shared with each LEA's supervisor for school counseling, pupil personnel, school social work, homeless education, and Title III/ELL. In addition, supporting the education of Central American children who are also English language learners is an appropriate use of local Title III funds. Staff at the Maryland Department of Education can provide technical assistance to support LEAs regarding the enrollment and education of these students.

If you would like technical assistance, please contact:

Valerie Ashton-Thomas, Homeless Education Specialist at vashton-Thomas@msde.state.md.us

Michael Linkins, School Counseling Specialist at mlinkins@msde.state.md.us

John McGinnis, Pupil Personnel and School Social Work Specialist at jmcginnis@msde.state.md.us

Laura Hook and Ilhye Yoon, Title III/ELL Specialists at lhook@msde.state.md.us and iyoon@msde.state.md.us

Thank you in advance for your support and collaboration in ensuring that all enrolled students have equal access to support and education in Maryland's schools.

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