



April 2010

TO: District Superintendents
Superintendents of Schools
Principals of Public, Nonpublic, and Charter Schools

FROM: David Abrams, Assistant Commissioner *David Abrams*
Office of Standards, Assessment and Reporting

Roberto Reyes, Director *Roberto Reyes*
Title I School and Community Services

SUBJECT: Issues Facing Homeless Students

On February 10, 2010, Commissioner David M. Steiner issued a press statement expressing his concerns about the issues facing homeless students in our schools and the potential barriers confronting them when they are required to take state assessments. We concur with Commissioner Steiner that our system needs to support all of our children, and that homelessness should never be a barrier to educational achievement.

Accordingly, we have taken immediate steps to ensure that all of the appropriate state agencies charged with providing services to homeless students and their families are all informed about our state testing requirements and test schedules. We are pleased to have secured the support of Acting Commissioner Beth Berlin, head of the State Office of Temporary and Disability Assistance, and of Commissioner Robert Hess, who administers homeless programs in New York City, in making sure that all of the respective direct service offices are supplied with the most current information regarding our testing programs and schedules. The Office of State Assessment will be supplying them with all state testing dates and test-related information, and both Commissioners have assured us that they will take the necessary steps to share this information with their field offices.

As school administrators, you also have a vital role to play in making sure that all students in your schools, including homeless students, are well informed and aware of all testing requirements. They should all be aware of the testing procedures and type of assistance available to them well in advance of any test administration period. Every effort should also be made to make certain that parents, guardians, or persons in parental relationship to homeless students are also informed and aware of the New York State Testing Program requirements and schedules.

Regents Examinations are required for graduation and are administered three times a year. Under no circumstances should homeless students be denied access to these

examinations. Every effort must be made to ensure that these students are scheduled to take the appropriate Regents Examination during any of the three test administration periods.

The following web site provides information regarding examination dates and times: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/schedules/home.html>. The 2008 edition of the School Administrator's Manual provides all other information needed to administer examinations. This manual is available on the Department's web site at: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/osa/sam/secondary/home.html>. In addition, the Department maintains complete and up-to-date electronic information concerning the New York State Testing Program which may be accessed at: <http://www.emsc.nysed.gov/sar/>. Please share this information with your liaisons for the homeless and encourage them to use any of the referenced supports as they work with homeless students and their families.

Please direct any questions that arise in connection with homeless students and the New York State Testing Program to: emscassessinfo@mail.nysed.gov. We look forward to working cooperatively with you in the provision of services to homeless students in our schools.

c: David M. Steiner
John B. King, Jr.
Ira Schwartz