



Milbank

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Legal Aid, Milbank LLP Secure Settlement to Ensure That Homeless Students Have Access to Working WiFi at 200+ City Shelters

Settlement Binds City to Complete All Installation Within Months - Over 75% of Shelters Now Equipped With Working WiFi

Residents Will Now Have a Streamlined Process to Resolve Any Internet Connection Issues

(NEW YORK, NY) – **The Legal Aid Society and Milbank LLP** announced a settlement in the E.G. et al. v. The City of New York et al. - class action litigation, which was filed last year on behalf of the Coalition for the Homeless and shelter residents with school-age children against the de Blasio Administration for its failure to provide students who reside in City shelters access to reliable internet service so they can attend school remotely.

The settlement requires the City to install wireless internet in over 200 shelters housing more than 11,000 school-aged children across the City, so that these children can participate in remote education during the COVID-19 pandemic and beyond.

As of April 1, 2021, the City has installed wireless internet in the vast majority of shelters - roughly 75 percent. For those shelters where installation remains incomplete, the City will undertake significant interim measures and support designed to ensure that all children housed in shelters have adequate remote educational access, and substantially complete installation by August 31, 2021.

The settlement also ensures that:

- when families report a tablet-related issue, the New York City Department of Education (DOE) will:
 - reach out to those families within one school day of receiving the report;
 - undertake “best efforts” to determine if there is a need to exchange a City-provided SIM card, tablet, or individual hotspot, within two school days of speaking with the families;
 - and, if there is such a need, undertake “best efforts” to schedule the exchange within three school days of determining there is a need;
- shelter providers must continue to affix prominent signage in all shelters alerting residents, in all Local Law 30 languages, about the availability of this dedicated helpdesk and technical support;
- shelter providers must give each shelter resident a fact sheet containing the same information as part of the intake and arrival process for new residents; and to discuss the status of residents’ internet connectivity during regularly scheduled meetings with shelter case managers.

The full settlement can be found here: <https://tinyurl.com/ns37k54e>

“Before we brought this litigation, the City had no viable plan to enable thousands of homeless students living at local shelters to reliably attend school remotely during an unprecedented pandemic. Too many families have struggled with unreliable cell phone service on DOE tablets, with zero guidance from the City on how to address those issues,” said **Susan Horwitz, Supervising Attorney of the Education Law Project at The Legal Aid Society**. “This settlement not only requires the City to make good on its promise to wire all shelters, but also provides interim solutions for students who would otherwise be unable to connect to school while waiting in the WiFi installation line. Legal Aid and Milbank will closely monitor the City’s progress in implementing these measures to ensure that lack of internet access will no longer exacerbate the stark educational inequities that have plagued so many of our clients in the shelter system.”

“This was a hard fought case, and we’re proud that it has brought concrete results for the thousands of children living in the City’s homeless shelters,” said **Grant Mainland, a litigation partner at Milbank LLP**. “These kids face tremendous challenges on a good day; expecting them to navigate the new world of remote education without adequate internet access is unacceptable. Fortunately that day is behind us. We look forward to working with Legal Aid and the Coalition to ensure compliance with the settlement terms so that no child living in a homeless shelter faces the kind of technological isolation that has been all too common during much of the pandemic.”

“We are grateful to The Legal Aid Society, Milbank LLP, and our dedicated staff for helping to bring this important litigation to a successful settlement. We first objected to the City’s failure to ensure that homeless students have the same educational access as their permanently housed peers nearly a year ago as the lack of internet access kept so many children in shelters from participating in online learning. Now, an accelerated timeline for WiFi installation in family shelters will help thousands of children gain internet access more quickly. We will continue to fight for their right to learn and succeed academically,” said **Deborah Diamant, Director of Government Relations and Legal Affairs at Coalition for the Homeless**.

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For 145 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org