

Homeless/Unaccompanied Youth



Addressing the needs of homeless and unaccompanied youth is crucial for their well-being and educational success. Here's a structured approach to understanding and supporting these students



Identifying Homeless/Unaccompanied or Highly Mobile/At-Risk Students

In Ghana, the term "street children" often refers to homeless or unaccompanied youth.

These are individuals for whom the street has become their habitual abode and/or source of livelihood, lacking adequate protection or supervision by responsible adults. Factors contributing to this situation include

Family Disruption: Disorganized or broken homes can lead children to seek refuge on the streets.

Migration: Some children follow family members to urban areas in search of better opportunities.

Desire for Autonomy: A wish for freedom from parental control can drive some youth to leave home.

Resources Available for These Students

Several organizations in Ghana provide support to homeless and unaccompanied youth:

1. Chance for Children (CFC)

- *Provides education, family reunification, and preventive services to street-connected children.*
- **Address:** Number 25, Head Office, Block 1 Street, Abose Okai Close, Link, Accra, Ghana
- **Phone:** +233 24 420 2881
- **Email:** info@chance-for-children.org
- **Website:** www.chance-for-children.org

2. Future of Africa (FOA)

- *Offers holistic wellness programs, technical education, and entrepreneurial skills to transform the lives of homeless youth*
- **Address:** P.O. Box BG 487, Yikene, Bolgatanga, Ghana
- **Phone:** +233 24 528 3051
- **Email:** info@future4afrika.org
- **Website:** www.future4afrika.org

3. National Youth Authority (NYA)


- *Implements policies and programs aimed at youth development, which can benefit at-risk youth*
- **Address:** Azumah Nelson Youth and Sports Complex, Kaneshie, Accra, Ghana
- **Digital Address:** GA-172-6005
- **Phone:** +233 302 221 246
- **Email:** admin@nya.gov.gh
- **Website:** www.nya.gov.gh




The school where I work is a private institution and one of the top schools in Ghana. As such, we currently do not have any students identified as homeless, nor do we have a specific policy addressing the needs of homeless students. However, there are several organizations in Ghana actively working to support and provide resources for homeless youth. I have highlighted some of these organizations and the assistance they offer in this presentation

Counselor's Role in Supporting Homeless/Unaccompanied Youth


Identification: Recognize students who may be homeless or unaccompanied by observing signs such as irregular attendance, lack of parental involvement, or signs of neglect.




Advocacy: Ensure these students have access to education and necessary services, advocating for their rights within the school system.



Collaboration: Work with local organizations and social services to provide comprehensive support, including housing, healthcare, and counseling.



Emotional Support: Offer a safe space for students to discuss their challenges, providing guidance and support to build resilience. Resource



Connection: Link students and their families to community resources that can assist with basic needs and stability.

Reference

1. *National Center for Homeless Education. (n.d.). The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Retrieved from [https://nche.ed.gov/mckinney-vento/](<https://nche.ed.gov/mckinney-vento/>)*
2. *National Center for Homeless Education. (n.d.). Resources for schools and educators: Supporting homeless youth. Retrieved from [https://nche.ed.gov/](<https://nche.ed.gov/>)*
3. *American School Counselor Association. (n.d.). The school counselor and homeless and highly mobile students: Position statement. Retrieved from [https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Homeless-and-Highly-Mobil](<https://www.schoolcounselor.org/Standards-Positions/Position-Statements/The-School-Counselor-and-Homeless-and-Highly-Mobil>)*



In schools like Galaxy International School, where there is no dedicated Special Education (SPED) program but accommodations are made for students with special educational needs, the identification process often follows these general steps:

Special Education Identification Process at Galaxy International School

Observation and Concerns

- Teachers or parents identify academic, behavioral, or social challenges that may require special support.

Preliminary Assessment

- Teachers document observations and evaluate classwork, tests, or behaviors indicating potential needs.

Referral to Counselor

- Concerns are referred to the school counselor or administration for review and discussion.

Parent Collaboration

- The school works with parents to gather history, previous assessments, and additional insights.

Professional Evaluation

- Students may be referred for external evaluations, including cognitive, speech, or medical assessments.

Wiseful Collaboration

- The school partners with Wiseful Coaching Center for expert testing and comprehensive evaluations.

Individualized Plans

- Tailored plans are developed with input from parents and professionals to meet the student's needs.

Monitoring and Feedback

- Progress is tracked, and regular updates are shared with parents to ensure ongoing support.

What resources are available for these students within the school?

1. Individualized Support Plans

- Customized learning strategies and accommodations tailored to the student's needs.

2. Collaboration with Wiseful Coaching Center

- Access to professional assessments and expert recommendations for targeted support.

3. Dedicated Support Staff

- Special teachers may be assigned to track progress and provide additional guidance.

4. Parent-School Partnership

- Regular meetings with parents to align on strategies and provide updates.

5. Flexible Curriculum

- Adaptations in teaching methods, lesson delivery, and assessments to support learning.

6. Access to External Resources

- Information on specialized organizations in Ghana for further assistance, when needed.

7. Counseling Services

- Emotional and social support through the school counselor for students and families.

8. Teacher Training

- Staff trained in differentiated instruction and strategies for special needs students.

These resources ensure a supportive environment for students with diverse needs.

COUNSELOR'S ROLE

The counselor at Galaxy International School plays a key role in supporting students with special educational needs by working with teachers, parents, and external professionals to identify challenges and develop tailored support plans.

They provide emotional and social counseling to build confidence, improve interpersonal skills, and help students navigate their school experience. Acting as an advocate, the counselor ensures students receive necessary accommodations and guidance while supporting teachers with inclusive strategies. They collaborate closely with parents, sharing updates and aligning on interventions. Additionally, the counselor facilitates referrals to external resources, including Wiseful Coaching Center, monitors students' progress, and promotes awareness among staff to foster a supportive and inclusive environment within the Galaxy school community.

Special Education Institutions in Accra, Ghana

New Horizon Special School

- **Focus:** A private, non-profit institution catering to children and adults with intellectual disabilities and autism. Offers educational programs for children aged 5-18 and vocational training for adults.
- **Contact:** +233 302 772 878 / +233 50 623 0600
- **Email:** nhorizongh@gmail.com
- **Website:** newhorizonspecialschool.org

Woodfield Manor Autism & Special Needs School

- **Focus:** A specialized school for children with autism and other special needs. Focuses on improving communication, social interaction, and life skills.
- **Contact:** +233 30 393 0832 / +233 50 874 0965 (WhatsApp)
- **Email:** woodfieldmanor.gh@gmail.com
- **Website:** woodfieldmanorgh.org

REFERENCE

- New Horizon Special School. (n.d.). *Welcome to New Horizon Special School. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://newhorizonspecialschool.org>
- Woodfield Manor Autism & Special Needs School. (n.d.). Home. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://woodfieldmanorgh.org>
- Dzorwulu Special School. (n.d.). About Dzorwulu Special School. Retrieved December 4, 2024, from <https://patstune.org/2024/09/03/top-10-best-special-needs-schools-in-ghana>

504



In Ghana, Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 does not apply, as it is a U.S. federal law. However, similar identification processes for students needing accommodations due to disabilities can be aligned with international practices or the school's internal policies.

The school that I am working , Galaxy International School, where specific programs for students with disabilities are limited and we have almost no students who are disable.However identification and support might follow these general steps:

How are students identified for 504 resources?

Students may be identified for a 504 Plan through the following steps:

- **Referral:** Referrals can be made by parents, teachers, counselors, or other school staff who notice that the student is struggling due to a disability or health issue.
- **Evaluation:** The school evaluates the student's needs. This may include reviewing medical records, academic performance, teacher observations, and input from parents. Testing may also be conducted to determine the impact of the disability on the student's learning.
- **Eligibility Determination:** A team of school staff, including administrators, teachers, counselors, and parents, meets to decide if the student qualifies for a 504 Plan. The key criterion is whether the student has a physical or mental impairment that substantially limits one or more major life activities, such as learning, reading, walking, or concentrating.

What resources are available for these students within the school?

The resources available under a 504 Plan are accommodations and supports designed to address the student's specific needs. These may include:

- **Academic Accommodations:**

- Extended time on tests and assignments
- Preferential seating
- Use of assistive technology (e.g., laptops, text-to-speech software)
- Modified assignments or reduced workload

- **Physical Accommodations:**

- Elevator access
- Modified physical education requirements
- Adapted classroom furniture

- **Behavioral Support:**

- Positive behavior intervention plans
- Social skills training

- **Health and Medical Accommodations:**

- Permission to take medication during school hours
- Access to the school nurse
- Emergency action plans for conditions like asthma or diabetes

What is the counselor's role while working with these students?

The school counselor plays a critical role in supporting students with 504 Plans:

- **Advocacy:** Ensures the student's rights are upheld and that they receive the accommodations outlined in their 504 Plan.
- **Collaboration:** Works with teachers, parents, and administrators to develop, implement, and monitor the 504 Plan.
- **Monitoring Progress:** Tracks the student's academic and social-emotional progress and adjusts accommodations as needed.
- **Support:** Provides individual or group counseling to address the emotional, social, or behavioral challenges that may arise from the student's disability.
- **Crisis Management:** Assists in emergencies, such as ensuring medical protocols are followed for health-related disabilities.
- **Professional Development:** Educates staff on the implications of 504 Plans and how to provide appropriate accommodations in the classroom.

By fulfilling these roles, counselors ensure that students with disabilities have equitable access to education and the support they need to succeed academically, socially, and emotionally

Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD)

- **Description:** Established in 1987, GFD serves as the national umbrella organization for persons with disabilities, advocating for their rights and inclusion in national policies.
- **Address:** Accra Rehabilitation Centre, Accra, Ghana
- **Phone:** +233 30 224 9079
- **Email:** info@gfdgh.org
- **Website:** gfd.org.gh

National Council on Persons with Disability (NCPD)

- **Description:** Established under the Persons with Disability Act, 2006 (Act 715), NCPD proposes and evolves policies to enable persons with disabilities to participate in mainstream national development.
- **Address:** P.O. BOX MBO 186, Ministries, Accra, Ghana
- **Phone:** +233 302 688181 / 7 / 4
- **Website:** mogcsp.gov.gh

Inclusion Ghana

- **Description:** Aims to promote the rights and inclusion of persons with intellectual disabilities, ensuring they have access to education, health, and social services.
- **Address:** House No. 3, 4th Norla Street, Labone, Accra, Ghana
- **Phone:** +233 302 797 208
- **Email:** info@inclusion-ghana.org
- **Website:** inclusion-ghana.org

Sparklers Foundation Ghana

- **Description:** Provides inclusive and holistic education for individuals with special educational needs and disabilities, offering term-time schooling, family support, and bespoke homeschooling packages.
- **Address:** No. 2 Nii Sai Street, East Legon, Accra, Ghana
- **Phone:** +233 24 482 2000
- **Email:** info@sparklersfoundation.org

1. Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations. (n.d.). Ghana Federation of Disability Organisations (GFD). Retrieved from <https://gfd.org.gh>
2. National Council on Persons with Disability. (n.d.). National Council on Persons with Disability (NCPD). Retrieved from <https://www.mogcsp.gov.gh/national-council-for-persons-with-disabilityncpd/>
3. Inclusion Ghana. (n.d.). Inclusion Ghana. Retrieved from <https://inclusion-ghana.org>

Gifted/Talented



My school does not have a formalized program specifically for gifted and talented (GT) students. However, as an institution striving to achieve international standards, we have developed specialized approaches to support high-achieving students, whom we refer to as the "high achievement group."

Identifying gifted and talented students involves multiple steps to ensure a fair and accurate understanding of their abilities. The process includes:

1. Standardized Testing:

Assessments like the Cognitive Abilities Test (CogAT) measure reasoning and problem-solving skills in verbal, quantitative, and nonverbal areas.

2. Teacher and Parent Feedback:

Teachers and parents share insights about a child's exceptional abilities or potential, adding valuable context to test results.

3. Rating Scales and Checklists:

Tools like the Gifted Rating Scales (GRS) help teachers assess traits such as creativity, motivation, and intellectual ability.

4. Portfolios and Performances:

Reviewing a student's work or observing their performances in areas like art, music, or leadership showcases their unique talents.

5. Observations:

Watching students in different settings helps identify behaviors and skills that reflect their giftedness.

At Galaxy International School, resources available for high-achieving students, often referred to as the "high achievement group," include:

1. Differentiated Curriculum:

Tailored instruction is provided to meet the unique needs of high-achieving students. This approach ensures that classroom content is adjusted in depth, pace, and complexity to match their advanced capabilities.

2. Additional Lessons and Support:

Extra lessons are organized for students to further develop their strengths. These lessons are strategically designed to help them excel in competitive categories, both nationally and internationally.

3. Extracurricular Activities:

The school offers a variety of extracurricular programs aimed at nurturing students' abilities and potential. These activities provide a platform for students to explore their talents and interests beyond the classroom.

4. Professional Development for Teachers:

Through its Cambridge affiliation and partnership with the British Council, the school accesses training on strategies for managing classrooms with diverse needs, including those of high-achieving and gifted students. These professional development opportunities help teachers implement effective approaches to support gifted learners.

5. Opportunities for Competitions:

The school encourages students to participate in local, national, and international competitions. This helps them showcase their skills and gain recognition while also challenging themselves intellectually and creatively.

At Galaxy International School, the counselor's role in supporting gifted and talented students includes:

- 1. Academic Guidance:** Helping students set challenging yet realistic academic goals, improve time management, and monitor their progress. Collaborating with teachers to ensure differentiated instruction meets their unique learning needs.
- 2. Emotional Support:** Addressing challenges like stress, perfectionism, or feelings of being misunderstood. Providing a safe space for students to express themselves and teaching coping strategies to handle pressure effectively.
- 3. Social Development:** Encouraging teamwork and helping students build healthy peer relationships. Supporting them in developing social skills and navigating feelings of isolation.
- 4. Career and Future Planning:** Guiding students to explore their strengths, interests, and long-term career aspirations. Offering information about scholarships, competitions, and advanced educational opportunities.
- 5. Advocacy:** Acting as an advocate for gifted students by working closely with parents, teachers, and school leadership to ensure their needs are understood and met.
- 6. Program Development:** Assisting in creating tailored programs, extracurricular activities, and mentorship opportunities that foster their talents and potential.

1. African Science Academy (ASA)

- Focus: A leading all-girls STEM school in Africa, specializing in advanced-level Mathematics, Further Mathematics, and Physics.
- Address: RP/6/21/2, Obetsebi Lamptey Street, Community 6, Tema, Ghana
- Email: info@africangifted.org
- Website: www.africanscienceacademy.org

2. SOS-Hermann Gmeiner International College (SOS-HGIC)

- Focus: A Pan-African school offering the International Baccalaureate program, fostering academic excellence and leadership among gifted students across Africa.
- Address: Private Mail Bag, Community 6, Tema, Ghana
- Phone: +233 (0)243 690197; +233 (0)303 204267; +233 (0)303 202907
- Email: secretary_to_princip@soshgic.edu.gh
- Website: www.soshgic.edu.gh

These institutions provide exceptional opportunities for gifted students, focusing on leadership, innovation, and academic excellence.

Here are three APA-style references that align with the context:

1. VanTassel-Baska, J., Cross, T. L., & Olenchak, F. R. (2009). ****Social-emotional curriculum with gifted and talented students****. Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
2. Renzulli, J. S., & Reis, S. M. (2014). ****The Schoolwide Enrichment Model: A how-to guide for talent development**** (3rd ed.). Waco, TX: Prufrock Press.
3. Sternberg, R. J., & Davidson, J. E. (Eds.). (2005). ****Conceptions of giftedness**** (2nd ed.). Cambridge University Press.
<https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511610455>

Special Health Needs

At Galaxy International school, we have some number of students who need special health needs. Students may have a variety of special health needs requiring special attention in the school setting. These include:

1. Chronic Medical Conditions

Asthma: Requires monitoring and access to inhalers, as well as an action plan for emergencies.

Diabetes: Needs regular blood sugar monitoring, insulin administration, and awareness of signs of hypo- or hyperglycemia.

Epilepsy: May involve seizure management plans and staff training on how to respond during a seizure.

2. Allergies

Severe food allergies, insect stings, or environmental allergies may require epinephrine auto-injectors and emergency protocols.

3. Mental Health Conditions

Anxiety Disorders: Support for managing triggers and stress, and accommodations for relaxation or sensory breaks.

Depression: Regular check-ins with counselors and creating a supportive environment.

ADHD: Classroom adjustments for focus and attention, including breaks and structured routines.

4. Physical Disabilities

Mobility Issues: Access to ramps, elevators, or adaptive physical education.

Visual Impairments: Materials in braille or large print, and orientation and mobility training.

Hearing Impairments: Use of hearing aids, sign language interpreters, or assistive listening devices.

5. Developmental Disorders

Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD): Sensory-friendly environments, structured routines, and social skills support.

Speech or Language Disorders: Access to speech therapists or communication devices.

6. Acute Health Needs

Students recovering from surgeries, injuries, or illnesses may require temporary adjustments like modified schedules, physical support, or medication administration.

7. Medication Needs

Students requiring daily or emergency medications need a secure system for medication storage and administration, often overseen by trained staff.

8. Nutritional and Dietary Needs

Specialized diets for conditions like celiac disease, lactose intolerance, or phenylketonuria (PKU) require close collaboration with cafeteria staff and parents.

9. Life-Threatening Conditions

Conditions such as congenital heart defects or cancer may need ongoing medical attention, frequent monitoring, and emotional support.

Supporting these students requires collaboration among teachers, counselors, parents, and healthcare providers to ensure their needs are met effectively within the school environment

At Galaxy International School, students with special health needs are supported through:

- 1. School Clinic:** A clinic with nurses to handle health issues and emergencies.
- 2. Individual Health Plans (IHPs):** Plans created with parents and doctors to manage specific conditions like asthma or diabetes.
- 3. Counseling Services:** Emotional support for students dealing with health challenges.
- 4. Trained Staff:** Teachers and staff trained to respond to emergencies like allergies or seizures.
- 5. Flexible Academic Support:** Adjustments for students who miss school due to health issues.
- 6. Parent Collaboration:** Regular communication to ensure consistent care.

These resources ensure that all students receive the support they need to succeed.

The counselor's role in working with students with special health needs includes:

1. Emotional and Social Support

- Helping students cope with the emotional challenges of their health conditions, such as stress, anxiety, or feelings of isolation.
- Promoting self-confidence and social skills to help them build healthy relationships with peers.

2. Advocacy

- Ensuring the school provides necessary accommodations, such as flexible schedules or accessible facilities.
- Acting as a liaison between parents, teachers, and medical professionals to coordinate care and support.

3. Crisis Management

- Responding to health-related emergencies and ensuring that Individualized Health Plans (IHPs) are followed.
- Training staff to recognize and respond appropriately to medical crises.

4. Education and Awareness

- Educating teachers and classmates about the student's condition (with consent) to foster understanding and inclusivity.
- Providing resources and guidance to staff on supporting these students effectively.

5. Monitoring Academic Progress

- Helping students manage missed classes or assignments due to health issues.
- Working with teachers to provide additional support or alternative learning options.

6. Encouraging Independence

- Supporting students in understanding and managing their health needs, such as medication schedules or self-advocacy.

7. Parental Support

- Offering guidance and emotional support to parents in managing their child's educational and health needs.
- Keeping open communication to address concerns and share updates.

8. Collaborating with Specialists

- Coordinating with healthcare providers, therapists, and external agencies to provide comprehensive care.

The counselor ensures that students with special health needs feel supported, included, and empowered to thrive both academically and socially

1. Sparklers Foundation Ghana

- **Address:** Sparklers House, Adjasco Junction, Bortianor, Accra, Ghana, P.O. Box 8887, Accra-North
- **Phone:** +233 53 418 7951; +233 50 421 7996 (WhatsApp)
- **Email:** contact@sparklersfoundation.org
- **Website:** www.sparklersfoundation.org
- **Services:**
 - Inclusive education for early years, primary, and secondary levels.
 - Assessments and referrals for special educational needs.
 - Family support programs.
 - Holiday programs and bespoke homeschooling packages.
 - Training courses for professionals in education and healthcare services.

Center for Learning and Childhood Development (CLCD) Ghana

- **Address:** Ashaley Botwe, Accra, Ghana
- **Phone:** +233 20 062 3966; +233 24 874 4751
- **Email:** clcdghana@gmail.com
- **Website:** www.clcdghana.org
- **Services:**
 - Research and advocacy in early childhood development.
 - Family support services for children with developmental disabilities.
 - Capacity development and training for caregivers and professionals.
 - Development of educational materials and resources.
 - Collaboration with institutions to address early childhood development needs.

1. Adelman, H. S., & Taylor, L. (2010). ***Mental health in schools: Engaging learners, preventing problems, and improving schools*. Corwin Press.

- *Discusses the counselor's role in addressing emotional and social challenges in schools.*

2. American School Counselor Association. (2019). *The ASCA national model: A framework for school counseling programs (4th ed.)*. Alexandria, VA: Author.

- *Provides a comprehensive framework for school counselors, including supporting students with diverse needs.*

3. Cowan, K. C., Vaillancourt, K., Rossen, E., & Pollitt, K. (2013). *A framework for safe and successful schools*. Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists.