

Youth Homelessness (Department of Education)

Problem: Homelessness affects a growing number of students nationwide.

The number of homeless students nationwide has nearly doubled from about 680 thousand homeless children and youths enrolled in public schools in 2006-07, to more than 1.3 million during the 2013-14 school year. Over the same period, the number of unaccompanied homeless youths (not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian) has more than doubled to nearly 100,000 students. Young children constitute a substantial proportion of children experiencing sheltered homelessness in families (about 250,000 in total) – in FY 2015, about half of all such children were under age 6.

Homelessness can significantly affect students' success in school: homeless students are much less likely to graduate. Homeless students experience greater mobility between schools as well as chronic absenteeism, which can interrupt their education and are associated with lower school achievement and a higher risk of dropping out. Leaders at all levels can benefit from better understanding this challenge and how we serve such students.

Use Case: National, state, and local policymakers, educators, and service agencies could benefit from better understanding where our homeless preK-12 students are enrolled and how well we are serving them.

Areas of need for digital resources include:

- Supporting communities addressing youth homelessness as they consider educational needs. For example, the HUD Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program is providing \$33 million in funding to 10 communities committed to ending youth homelessness. The Program requires communities to commit to collaborate with a broad array of partners, develop a coordinated community plan to prevent and end youth homelessness, and participate in a program evaluation.
 - This tool could help communities perform needs assessments and plan for success with an emphasis on education. For example, the tool could focus on specific educational needs, including data such as age and grade breakdown and unaccompanied status.
- Mapping data related to homeless student enrollment, contributing factors, and federally-funded programs/resources. Geographic representation of where homeless students are enrolled by school district; for instance, to understand where services might be most needed.
 - The tool could also include national data on fair market rents (which illustrate housing costs for geographic areas), as well as local data regarding evictions and foreclosure rates to understand potential factors contributing to student homelessness.
 - The tool could also include location and program type data for federally-funded programs and resources that serve vulnerable students. For example, the tool might include publicly available grant award data for HUD Continuum of Care (CoC) funded programs, HHS Runaway and Homeless Youth funded programs, and DOL funded programs such as YouthBuild and Job Corps. Capturing publicly available contact information for local CoC planning bodies, which are required by HUD to address homelessness within their geography, and local school districts—relationships



between education liaisons and CoCs vary significantly in strength across communities– could help these stakeholders build relationships and common understanding.

- Comparing relationships between funding and need. The tool could help local leaders to understand how funding for homeless-related programs compares geographically and by number/percent of homeless students served.
- Comparing outcomes. Help users better understand the relationship between outcomes and homelessness at varying levels. Service providers, for instance, could learn examples of best practices.
 - Comparing the academic outcomes of homeless students to those of their non-homeless peers, potentially identifying schools with best practices for serving homeless students.
 - Comparing characteristics and outcomes of schools/LEAs with high homeless populations to those with low homeless populations.

