

Serving Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

What Schools and School Districts Need to Know



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(Activity 1)

Imagine yourself as a child or youth experiencing homelessness.



A person is sitting in a chair, looking out of a window. The window shows a view of green trees and foliage. The person is in silhouette, and the room is dimly lit. The text "Here's What Some Children Have Said" is overlaid on the left side of the image.

Here's What Some Children Have Said

"I was really scared because I didn't know what was going on. I had no idea." Brianna

"Other kids have all the things they need and you have to have the right thing but you don't have it. You have to wait to get it." Carmechia

"People make fun of me every day because I go to school. I wear almost the same clothes." Chery

Quotes from "My Own Four Walls," a documentary filmed and produced by Diane Nilan, [HEAR US](#), 2007

Homelessness Creates Educational Barriers

- Educational disruption due to changing schools often multiple times
- High rates of absenteeism and dropping out
- Undiagnosed learning or special education needs
- Inability to focus on studies due to
 - The trauma of losing their home, belongings, routines
 - Lacking basic needs: food, clothing, health care
- Feeling embarrassment and shame

(Activity 2 and 3)



Why are People Homeless?

Many people are:

- One reduced paycheck
- One illness
- One disaster
- One job loss away from losing their home.

Only 39% of Americans have enough savings to cover a \$1,000 emergency.

69% of Americans have less than \$1,000 in total savings.

34% of Americans have no savings at all.

(Activity 4 and 5)

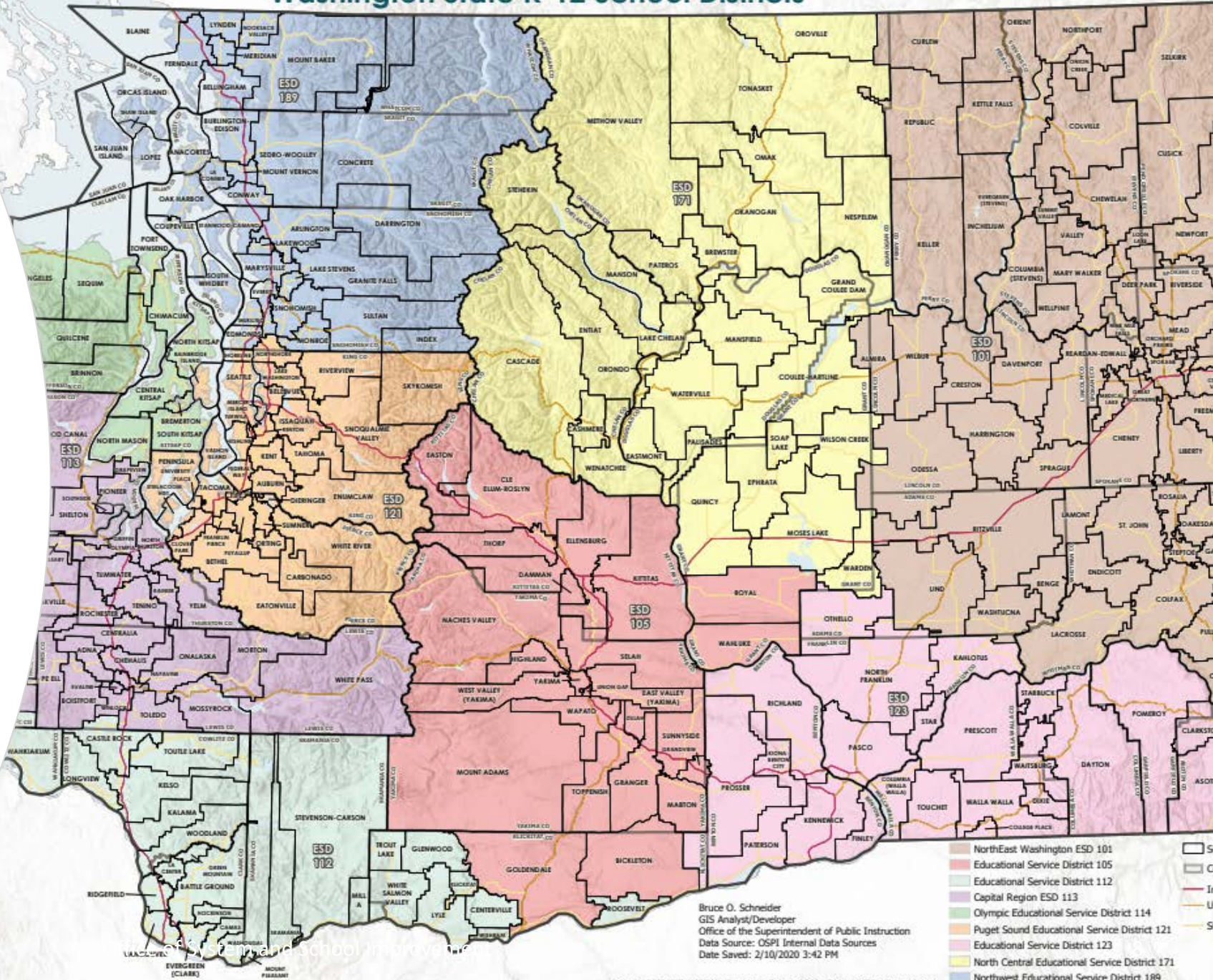
Martin, E. (2018, January). [Money: 2016 GOBankingSurvey](#).

How Many Students Experiencing Homelessness are Enrolled in Washington Schools?

Number of children and youth experiencing homelessness in public schools in Washington state in 2018–2019:

39,972

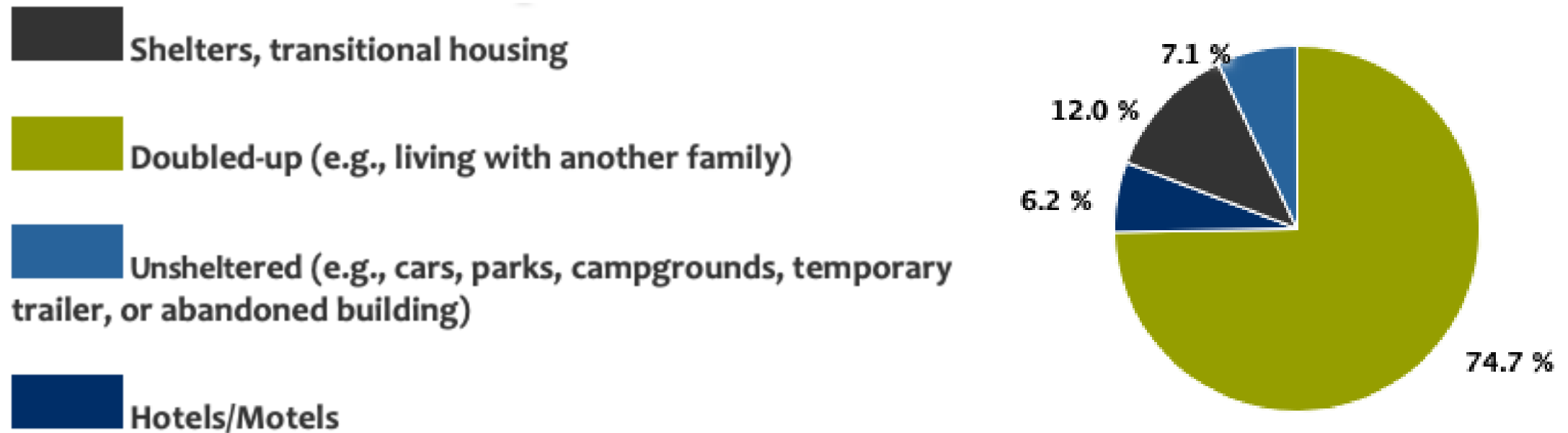
National Center for Homeless Education, [State Profiles](#)



Where do Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Stay?

Washington State

SY 2018-2019



National Center for Homeless Education, [State Profiles](#)

Disproportionality: Racial/Ethnic Groups Experiencing Homelessness in Washington State

Students of color are disproportionately more likely to experience homelessness.

Almost two-thirds (62%) of students experiencing homelessness are students of color, even though they make up only 46% of all K-12 public school students.

Black/African American students have the highest rate of homelessness with nearly one in 11 (9.1%) experiencing homelessness in 2018.

Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific and American Indian/Alaska Native students also have rates well above that for all students (3.5%) in 2018.

Lemon, M. (2019). [Students Experiencing Homelessness in Washington's K-12 Public Schools](#)



Disproportionality: Students Experiencing Homelessness and Housed Students

Mathematics Proficiency Rate by Housing Status and Income, 2018, Washington State

Homeless Students	Housed, Low-Income	All Housed Students
25%	35%	51%

9th Graders On-Track* by Housing Status and Income, 2018, Washington State

Homeless Students	Housed, Low-Income	All Housed Students
42%	60%	74%

*Percentage of students who passed all their 9th grade classes; associated with higher likelihood of high school graduation

Disproportionality: Students Experiencing Homelessness and Housed Students (cont.)

Suspensions* for Students Experiencing Homelessness by Housing Status and Income, 2018, Washington State

Homeless	Housed, Low-Income	All Housed Students
10%	6%	4%

*Percentage of students suspended at least one time in 2018

Four-Year (On-time) Graduation Rate by Housing Status and Income, 2018, Washington State

Homeless	Housed, Low-income	All Housed Students
56%	75%	83%

Lemon, M. (2019). [Students Experiencing Homelessness in Washington's K-12 Public Schools](#)

Disproportionality: Attendance

Fewer than two-thirds (62%) of Washington's students experiencing homelessness attended school regularly in 2018, compared to 86% of housed students.

Attendance Rates of Racial/Ethnic Groups of Students Experiencing Homelessness in 2018, Washington State

Black/African American	Hispanic/Latino	American Indian/Alaska Native	Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	White
62%	65%	49%	54%	62%

Lemon, M. (2019). [Students Experiencing Homelessness in Washington's K-12 Public Schools](#)



The Education Definition of Homeless



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Who is Considered Homeless?

As defined in the McKinney-Vento Act:

- Children or youth who lack a **fixed, regular, and adequate** nighttime residence
 - **Fixed** (Stationary, permanent, not subject to change)
 - **Regular** (Used on a predictable, routine, consistent basis)
 - **Adequate** (Lawfully and reasonably sufficient to meet physical and psychological needs typically met in a home environment)

(Activity 6 and 7)

McKinney-Vento Definition (cont.)

Includes:

- Sharing the housing of other persons *due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason*
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or campgrounds *due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations*
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Abandoned in hospitals



McKinney-Vento Definition (cont.)

- Living in a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children *living in the above circumstances*
- Unaccompanied youth *living in the above circumstances*

(Activity 8)



What is the Definition of an *Unaccompanied Homeless Youth*?

An unaccompanied youth is a child or youth not in the physical custody of (not living with) a parent or guardian; to be eligible for services, the youth must also meet the definition of homeless.



(Activity 9 and 10)



The McKinney-Vento Act



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What is the McKinney-Vento Act?

- The McKinney-Vento Act is Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act of 2015 (ESSA).
- Provides a legislative framework for how states, school districts, and schools must remove educational barriers for students experiencing homelessness.
- Requires states, local educational agencies (LEAs) or school districts, and schools to comply or risk losing funds.
- Requires a local homeless liaison in every school district and a state coordinator for the homeless education program in every state.



The McKinney-Vento Act: Immediate Enrollment

Enroll and enrollment include “attending classes and participating fully in school activities.”

Enrollment for students experiencing homelessness must be immediate, even if a student lacks proof of residency; school or medical records; or other documentation normally required.

- The enrolling school must immediately contact the child’s or youth’s former school to obtain records.
- Local liaisons must help parents, guardians, and unaccompanied homeless youth obtain required health records, needed immunizations, or health screenings.

(Activity 11)

McKinney-Vento Act: School Selection

Students experiencing homelessness may attend either the:

- **Local attendance area school**

- Any public school that students living in the same attendance area are eligible to attend, or

- **School of origin**

- School attended when permanently housed; or
- School in which the student was last enrolled.
- Includes:
 - Public preschool programs and receiving (feeder) schools at the next grade level.



McKinney-Vento Act: School Selection

Schools and LEAs must:

- Presume that remaining in the school of origin is in the student's best interest, unless it's contrary to the request of a parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness.
- Consider student-centered factors including those related to the impact of mobility on the achievement, education, health, and safety of children and youth experiencing homelessness.
- Give priority to the request of the parent, guardian, or unaccompanied youth.

(Activity 12 and 13)

McKinney-Vento Act: Transportation

LEAs must provide the following transportation:

- To and from the school of origin
 - When requested by a parent or guardian of a student experiencing homelessness, or the local liaison on behalf of an unaccompanied homeless youth
 - Until the end of the school year after a homeless student obtains permanent housing
- Transportation that is comparable to what is provided to other students
- Transportation to extracurricular activities



McKinney-Vento Act: School Success

LEAs and schools must:

- Connect students to school district support, such as academic assistance and free school meals.
- Ensure appropriate credit for full or partial coursework satisfactorily completed while attending a prior school.
- Support participation in academic and extracurricular activities.
- Coordinate the provision of services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).
- Refer students to community agencies for extra services.

McKinney-Vento Act: Disputes

If a disagreement occurs between the school and a parent, guardian, or youth about eligibility, enrollment, or school selection under the McKinney-Vento Act, the school must:

- Provide a written explanation of its decision.
- Immediately enroll the student in the school in which enrollment is sought (local school or school of origin), pending resolution of the dispute.
- Refer the parent/guardian/youth to the local liaison to carry out the dispute resolution process as quickly as possible.
- Provide all services for which students are eligible until the final resolution of all disputes and appeals.

(Activity 14)





Title I, Part A Supports for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness



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Coordination with Title I, Part A

- Children and youth experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for services under Title I, Part A.
- An LEA receiving Title I, Part A funds must include in its local plan a description of how the plan is coordinated with the McKinney-Vento Act and what services are provided to children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Setting Aside Title I, Part A Funds

- LEAs must reserve sufficient Title I, Part A funds to provide services to students experiencing homelessness who attend non-Title I schools that are comparable to those students in Title I schools.
- The homeless set-aside may be used to provide services to students experiencing homelessness in Title I schools that are not ordinarily provided to other Title I students.
- Funds must be used to assist students experiencing homelessness with educational support and opportunities and be used only when funds are not available from other sources.



Examples of Allowable Expenditures for the Title I, Part A Homeless Set-aside

- Clothing, particularly uniforms or gym clothes
- Student fees for participation in the general education program
- Personal school supplies
- Birth certificates necessary to enroll in school
- Immunizations
- Medical and dental services
- Eyeglasses and hearing aids
- Counseling services

Examples of Allowable Expenditures for the Title I, Part A Homeless Set-aside

- Outreach to students living in shelters, motels, or other temporary residences
- Extended learning time
- Tutoring services
- Transportation
- Fees for AP and IB testing
- Fees for college entrance exams, such as the SAT or ACT
- GED testing for school-aged students

(Activity 15)



Good Practices for Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness

Identification

For students enrolling in a new school:

- Ask families to complete a housing questionnaire that lists several types of living situations that may indicate homelessness. ([OSPI Sample Form](#))
- Ensure that the front office staff provides a friendly and trusting atmosphere so that struggling families would feel safe in disclosing sensitive information.
- Prominently display awareness posters, in various languages as needed, to inform parents experiencing homelessness that their children may qualify for services. (Order or download [OSPI posters and parent brochures](#) for free.)

Identification

For students who become homeless while attending the same school:

- Look for changes in behavior, attendance, or grades.
- Note students who are
 - Extraordinarily tired or anxious,
 - Wearing the same clothes each day or have hygiene problems, or
 - Fearful of coming to school or going home.
- Provide a trusting, supportive environment so all students feel safe to discuss personal issues.
- Have bus drivers note students who are picked up or dropped off at a different bus stop.

Enrollment

- Create a welcoming school culture in the front office and in the classroom.
- Provide new students with school supplies and clothing as needed.
- Ensure that the process to determine eligibility for services is efficient and non-threatening.
- Ensure that students attend classes and receive free lunch on the day they enroll.

School Selection

- Discuss with students, parents, and guardians their wishes for which school is in the student's best interest to attend (local attendance area or school of origin).
 - Use the questions in NCHE's brief [Guiding the Discussion on School Selection](#) to help determine what is in the best interest of the student.
- Arrange transportation to and from the school of origin quickly so that a student's education is not disrupted.

Academic Support

- Assess the student's academic needs or gaps upon enrollment and provide supports expeditiously.
 - Determine any unique educational barriers the student is facing – all homeless situations are different.
- Ensure that students don't fall "under the radar."
 - Someone should keep track of academic performance, discipline, and attendance.
 - The student should receive ongoing support.

Academic Support

- Link students to counseling and mental health support.
- Ensure that discipline is positive and restorative; avoid out-of-school suspensions.
- Provide any needed support for participating in extracurricular activities.
- Provide support above and beyond what all students receive, particularly to those student groups who are disproportionately impacted by homelessness.

(Activity 16)

Academic Support

- Encourage teachers to build supportive relationships with students.
 - Teachers should receive training in trauma support.
 - Teachers should look for reasons why a student appears to be lazy or oppositional.
- Provide youth with creative ways to accumulate credits so that they can graduate on time.
- Provide youth with information on and support for pursuing post-secondary opportunities, both higher education and career and technical education.

(Activity 17 and 18)



Why School Is Important to Children Experiencing Homelessness

In many ways, I had always seen school as an opportunity to increase my self-worth, my self-esteem, and better my chances of uplifting myself in life, but I eventually came to see school as an exit plan. Through education, I have created a better life for myself and I am now in a position to help my siblings do the same.

-Danny

[Schoolhouse Connection, Guest Blog](#)

Contact Us!

Local Liaison

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[Homeless Education | OSPI \(www.k12.wa.us\)](http://www.k12.wa.us)

National Center for Homeless Education Helpline

homeless@serve.org Phone: 800-308-2145



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