



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

Data on Students Experiencing Homelessness

2025

Authorizing Legislation: RCW 28A.300.540

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act broadly defines homelessness in an effort to provide protections and supports for students living in a variety of unstable housing situations. This ensures school stability and continued enrollment at a time when a student's nighttime residence may be constantly changing. In Washington, the number of children and youth experiencing homelessness has increased since 2001 when the McKinney-Vento Act began requiring all school districts to annually report the number of students experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in schools.

In 2014, the Washington State Legislature passed [Senate Bill 6074](#), which aims to improve educational outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness by bolstering student homelessness identification and establishing further data reporting requirements. [RCW 28A.300.540](#) requires the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) to report this data every other year.

BACKGROUND

The National Center for Homeless Education's December 2023 publication reported that in school year (SY) 2021–2022, there were more than 1.2 million children and youth experiencing homelessness who are enrolled in schools across the nation. [Decades of research](#) show that students experiencing homelessness are more likely to suffer academically and are more likely to drop out of school when compared to their housed peers. Students experiencing homelessness are less likely to engage in school, have higher absentee rates, and have lower achievement test scores.

Legislation

The 2014 Washington State Legislature passed Senate Bill 6074 (RCW 28A.300.540) which requires OSPI to report data on student homelessness to the Governor and the Legislature every other year starting January 10, 2015. This report provides a more in-depth analysis of homeless student data than is currently required by the U.S. Department of Education under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (per Title IX, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)) defines **homeless** as follows:

The term "homeless children and youths"—

- (A) means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and
- (B) includes—
 - (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals;¹
 - (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings (within the meaning of section 103(a)(2)(C));
 - (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
 - (iv) migratory children (as such term is defined in section 1309 of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965) who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

¹ *Per Title IX, Part A of the ESSA, "awaiting foster care placement" was removed from the definition of homeless on December 10, 2016.

The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (the Act) was reauthorized in December 2015 under ESSA and fully implemented in all public schools on October 1, 2016. The Act ensures that school districts provide identification, enrollment, and access to children and youth experiencing homelessness and serves to provide school stability for students in homeless situations as each change of schools may cause a significant delay in a student's academic progress. The Act promotes the academic success of homeless students and ensures that children and youth experiencing homelessness can enroll and participate fully in all school activities, ensuring a free, appropriate education. Provisions of the Act include immediate enrollment even if a student lacks records, the right to remain in their school of origin when in the student's best interest, access to transportation, and other academic supports. Washington currently provides approximately \$2 million in federal McKinney-Vento grant funding to multi-district consortium grants and 41 individual school district grants.

In 2021, in an unprecedented action by Congress, \$800 million was awarded to states through the American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth fund (ARP-HCY). This grant provided a one-time funding opportunity through 2024 for the remediation of learning loss created by COVID-19 and to address the particular impacts of the pandemic on students experiencing homelessness. Washington received \$12 million in ARP-HCY funding, which was provided to 203 local school districts, most of which had never received Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) funding in the past. These funds are used to support the identification, enrollment, and school participation of children and youth experiencing homelessness, including through wraparound services.

In addition to McKinney-Vento and ARP-HCY grant funding, in 2016, the Washington State Legislature passed the Homeless Student Stability and Opportunity Gap Act, creating funding and a collaboration between OSPI and the Washington Department of Commerce to improve educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness through increased identification, school-based services, community-based resources, and housing stability. The resulting program complements the Federal McKinney-Vento Act by providing grant funding to 32 school districts, to be used for a range of LEA-determined priorities.

UPDATE STATUS

Enrollment

During the 2023–24 school year, the number of students statewide that experienced homelessness rose by 14% from the previous year to the highest level seen in the past decade. For the 2024–25 school year, the record number has remained basically unchanged (Figure 1). While COVID-19 disruptions in the 2020–21 school year resulted in a temporary decline in the number of students experiencing homelessness, these numbers have risen in subsequent school years as districts continued to enroll an increasing number of students experiencing homelessness.

Figure 1: Change in the Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness

School Year	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness
2014–15	33,642
2015–16	37,661
2016–17	39,189
2017–18	40,085
2018–19	39,888
2019–20	36,996
2020–21	32,335
2021–22	37,337
2022–23	42,375
2023–24	48,504
2024–25	48,252

Source: CEDARS, 11/17/2025

In the 2024–25 school year, the number of students experiencing homelessness accounted for 4.2% of the total student population in Washington state (Figure 2). This percentage is unchanged from 2023–2024. Students who identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander were the most likely to experience homelessness compared to their peers (13.6%), followed by Black/African American students (8.9%) and American Indian/Alaska Native students (6.8%). Students who identified as Asian were the least likely to experience homelessness compared to their peers (1.1%). Most students identified as being unaccompanied youth also experienced homelessness (84.8%; Figure 2).

Homelessness impacts students from multiple different student groups (Figure 2). For example, 10.1% of students with migratory lifestyles and 8.4% of English Language Learners also experience homelessness (Figure 2). This overlap of student experiences across multiple groups emphasizes the need for nuanced supports that account for students' diverse life experiences, such as providing assistance in multiple languages. Students experiencing homelessness are identified at

higher rates for academic support compared to accelerated learning programs. In SY 2024–25, students experiencing homelessness accounted for 9.0% of all students receiving various Learning Assistance Program (LAP) services; 5.6% of Students with Disabilities also experienced homelessness. In contrast, students experiencing homelessness accounted for only 0.6% of students in the Highly Capable Program and 1.3% of students enrolled in Running Start. This may be an area of opportunity for districts and schools to review if their processes that identify students for accelerated learning opportunities account for the unique conditions that students experiencing homelessness face.

Figure 2: Student Enrollment by Student Group, SY 2024–25

Student Group	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness*	Total Student Population	Percent of State Population that is Experiencing Homelessness
Statewide (All Students)	48,252	1,146,772	4.2%
Gender			
Female	23,480	549,426	4.3%
Male	24,481	592,564	4.1%
Gender X	291	4,782	6.1%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/ Alaska Native	905	13,317	6.8%
Asian	1,197	104,834	1.1%
Black/African American	5,129	57,428	8.9%
Hispanic/ Latino of any race(s)	19,172	307,848	6.2%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	2,422	17,828	13.6%
Two or More Races	4,716	104,824	4.5%
White	14,703	540,653	2.7%
Student Group			
Unaccompanied Youth	6,354	7,496	84.8%
Students with Disabilities	10,751	192,627	5.6%
English Language Learners	14,506	173,773	8.4%
Students from Low-income Families	46,724	573,442	8.2%
Students who are Migrant	2,513	24,815	10.1%
Students with 504 plans	1,668	60,916	2.7%
Students in the Highly Capable Program	575	89,179	0.6%

Source: CEDARS, 11/17/2025

*Count of students enrolled at any point in the school year.

The proportion of students experiencing homelessness was consistent across all grade levels at around 4% (Figure 3). The grade level with the smallest percentage of students experiencing homelessness was transitional Kindergarten, which may indicate that students experiencing homelessness do not have the same access to transitional Kindergarten instruction as their housed peers, though it should be noted this is the first year for this data collection. The most students experiencing homelessness in the 2024–25 school year were in the twelfth grade. The rate (4.8%) is unchanged from the previous year.

Figure 3: Student Enrollment by Grade Level, SY 2024–25

Grade Level	State Enrollment	Homeless Enrollment*	Percent of Students Experiencing Homelessness in Each Grade Level
Pre-K	34,857	1,390	4.0%
Transitional Kindergarten (TK)	6,768	239	3.5%
Kindergarten	74,351	3,211	4.3%
1st	76,980	3,506	4.6%
2nd	81,567	3,764	4.6%
3rd	85,240	3,612	4.2%
4th	81,451	3,400	4.2%
5th	83,766	3,389	4.1%
6th	84,020	3,432	4.1%
7th	83,825	3,357	4.0%
8th	84,631	3,312	3.9%
9th	87,292	3,503	4.0%
10th	89,576	3,551	4.0%
11th	92,523	3,765	4.1%
12th	99,925	4,821	4.8%

Source: CEDARS, 11/17/2025

*Count of students enrolled at any point in the school year.

During the 2024–2025 school year, the most common nighttime residence type was “Doubled-Up,” with 76.8% of students experiencing homelessness sharing housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons (Figure 4). The next most common nighttime residence type was “Shelters” that provided temporary living accommodations (10.0% of students experiencing homelessness).

Figure 4: Student Enrollment by Nighttime Residence Type, School Year 2024–25

Nighttime Residence	Description	Number of Homeless Students*	Percent of Students Experiencing Homelessness
Doubled-Up	Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason.	35,509	76.8%
Hotels/Motels	Living in hotels/motels due to lack of alternate adequate accommodations.	2,569	5.6%
Shelters	Supervised publicly or privately operated facilities designed to provide temporary living accommodations. (This category included children and youth who were “awaiting foster care” during the data collection period. As of December 10, 2016, the term “awaiting foster care” was removed from the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless.)	4,640	10.0%
Unsheltered	Includes living situations such as cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailers, abandoned buildings, and substandard housing.	3,506	7.6%

Source: CEDARS, 11/17/2025

**These numbers are based on the total number of students experiencing homelessness for which residence data is available and differs from the total number used in Figure 2.*

Student Outcomes

Graduation data for students experiencing homelessness (and for all students) are lagged by one year due to data availability, so the following graduation rates are for the class of 2024. In the 2023–2024 school year, 61.9% of students experiencing homelessness graduated with their adjusted four-year cohort, which was about 20 percentage points lower than the state graduation rate of 82.8% (Figure 5). This difference in graduation rate is fairly consistent from the previous year. Of the students experiencing homelessness who did not graduate, 14.6% continued to be enrolled in school while 23.5% left school. Students identifying as Asian and Black/African American had the highest 4-year graduation rates of students experiencing homelessness (72.7% and 64.8%, respectively). However, both of these rates showed an approximate 7 percentage point drop from the previous year. Students identifying as American Indian/Alaska Native had the lowest adjusted 4-year cohort graduation rate (50.2%); however, this student group was also the most likely to continue being enrolled in school (19.9% continuation rate) compared to other student groups experiencing homelessness as well as all students statewide (14.6% continuation rate).

Figure 5: Adjusted Four-Year Cohort Graduation Rate for Students Experiencing Homelessness, Class of 2024

Student Group	Adjusted 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Continuing Rate	Rate of Students who Left School without Graduating
Students Experiencing Homelessness	61.9%	14.6%	23.5%
Gender			
Female	65.7%	13.8%	20.5%
Male	58.1%	15.3%	26.6%
Gender X	50.5%	19.3%	30.3%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaska Native	50.2%	19.9%	29.9%
Asian	72.7%	14.0%	13.3%
Black/African American	64.8%	15.3%	19.9%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	61.8%	15.1%	23.1%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	61.7%	14.9%	23.4%
Two or More Races	62.8%	14.4%	22.8%
White	60.9%	13.5%	25.4%
Student Groups			
Students with Disabilities	52.6%	20.9%	26.5%
English Learners	59.4%	17.1%	23.5%
Students from Low-income Families	62.2%	14.5%	23.3%
Students who are Migrant	66.9%	14.0%	19.0%
Students with 504 Plans	64.0%	15.0%	21.0%

Source: CEDARS, 11/17/2025

In the adjusted five-year cohort for the Class of 2023, 65.8% of students experiencing homelessness graduated (Figure 6). This number is unchanged from the previous year. Female students experiencing homelessness had an adjusted five-year cohort graduation rate that was seven percentage points higher than male students, (69.8% and 62.4%, respectively). Male students were also more likely to leave school without graduating compared to female students (32.1% and 24.8%, respectively).

Figure 6: Adjusted 5-Year Cohort Graduation Rate for Students Experiencing Homelessness, Class of 2023

Student Group	Adjusted 5-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Continuing Rate	Rate of Students who Left School without Graduating
Students Experiencing Homelessness	65.8%	5.5%	28.7%
Gender			
Female	69.8%	5.3%	24.8%
Male	62.4%	5.5%	32.1%
Gender X	47.3%	10.1%	42.6%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaska Native	60.7%	6.1%	33.2%
Asian	81.7%	6.8%	11.5%
Black/African American	73.6%	4.0%	22.4%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	66.1%	5.5%	28.4%
Native Hawaiian/ Pacific Islander	67.7%	3.6%	28.7%
Two or More Races	64.2%	4.5%	31.4%
White	62.8%	6.2%	31.0%
Student Groups			
Students with Disabilities	59.0%	9.5%	31.5%
English Learners	65.6%	5.4%	29.0%
Students from Low-income Families	66.3%	5.2%	28.5%
Students who are Migrant	71.9%	5.6%	22.6%
Students with 504 Plans	60.6%	8.1%	31.3%

Source: CEDARS, 11/17/2025

In the 2023–2024 school year, 98,930 students were truant, or 8.6% of all the state’s public school students. By comparison, 12,113 students experiencing homelessness, or 25.1% were reported as truant (Figure 7). The relatively high truancy rates for students experiencing homelessness compared to their housed peers suggests factors that influence students’ ability to get to school on time, such as transportation availability, may be an important area to address to ensure these students have equitable access to education like their housed peers.

Figure 7: Attendance and Truancy for Students Experiencing Homelessness by Student Group, SY 2023–24

Student Group	Number of Students Regularly Attending*	Percent of Students Regularly Attending	Number of Students Reported as Truant**	Percent of Students Reported as Truant
Students Experiencing Homelessness	22,207	48.9%	12,113	25.1%
Gender				
Female	10,790	48.9%	5,862	25.0%
Male	11,250	48.9%	6,086	25.0%
Gender X	167	44.3%	165	36.9%
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaska Native	404	41.4%	338	32.9%
Asian	717	66.2%	183	15.9%
Black/African American	2,056	46.9%	1,499	31.9%
Hispanic/Latino	9,063	50.8%	4,319	23.0%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	790	36.8%	812	36.1%
Two or More Races	1,897	42.3%	1,656	32.6%
White	7,277	50.0%	3,306	21.7%
Student Group				
Students with Disabilities	4,340	43.6%	2,791	27.3%
English Learners	7,355	54.8%	2,804	20.0%
Students from Low-income Families	21,252	48.3%	11,845	25.7%
Students who are Migrant	1,432	58.0%	419	15.8%
Students with 504 Plans	734	42.5%	475	27.4%

Source: CEDARS, 11/17/2025

*Students are considered to be regularly attending if they have fewer than two absences per month on average. It does not matter if the absences are excused or unexcused.

**Students are considered truant if they have one of the following: Seven or more unexcused absences in a 30-day period or 15 or more unexcused absences during a school year. Truancy rates are based on reported absences, not if a truancy petition was filed.

In the 2023–2024 school year, the suspension and expulsion rate for all students was 3.7%. The rate for students experiencing homelessness was 9.4%, or more than 2.5 times higher (Figure 8). The student group with the highest rate of suspension and expulsion based on percentage were students identifying as Gender X at 19.2%. Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander students and Black and African American students were the most likely to be suspended or expelled when disaggregating by racial and ethnic group, at 19.0% and 15.7% respectively.

Figure 8: Suspensions and Expulsions for Students Experiencing Homelessness by Student Group, SY 2023–24

Student Group	Number of Students that were Suspended or Expelled*	Percent of Students that were Suspended or Expelled
Students Experiencing Homelessness	3,887	9.4%
Gender		
Female	1,381	11.2%
Male	2,486	8.7%
Gender X	37	19.2%
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaska Native	87	9.6%
Asian	39	3.7%
Black/African American	610	15.7%
Hispanic/Latino	1,217	9.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	200	19.0%
Two or More Races	493	10.8%
White	1,312	7.9%
Student Groups		
Students with Disabilities	1,337	10.6%
English Learners	733	10.1%
Students from Low-income Families	3,820	12.3%
Students who are Migrant	167	12.3%
Students with 504 Plans	228	7.5%

Source: CEDARS, 11/17/2025

*Students that received one or more of the following: short-term suspension, long-term suspension, or expulsion.

CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

There is growing recognition that schools are often the safest, most stable, and supportive places for students experiencing homelessness and that stability is critical to the academic success of those students. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) provides training, technical assistance, and opportunities for grant funding to local school districts as they work to serve the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

For more information related to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and the education of homeless youth, please visit the [OSPI Homeless Children and Youth](#), the [National Center for Homeless Education](#), [SchoolHouse Connection](#), or the [National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth](#) websites.

REFERENCES

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