



Washington Office of Superintendent of
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

REPORT TO THE LEGISLATURE

UPDATE: Data on Students Experiencing Homelessness

2023

Authorizing Legislation: [RCW 28A.300.540](#)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The federal McKinney-Vento Act defines homelessness broadly 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 addition to the McKinney-Vento Act requirements, the Washington State Legislature passed Senate Bill 6074 in 2014. This bill aims to improve educational outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness by increasing student homelessness identification and establishing further data reporting requirements.

Due to the COVID-19 school building closures, school districts had difficulty identifying and serving students experiencing homelessness during the 2020–21 school year. Many districts indicated that students previously enrolled under the protections of the McKinney-Vento Act did not connect to remote instruction and were not in contact with the districts during the building closure. The number of students experiencing homelessness identified and enrolled in districts declined significantly during the 2020–21 school year. Since that time, student identification improved in many districts as students returned to in-person learning in the 2021–22 school year. The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) continues to support districts' identification efforts to improve data collection and reporting.

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

BACKGROUND

During the 2020–21 school year, there were nearly 1.3 million children and youth experiencing homelessness who were enrolled in schools across the nation (National Center for Homeless Education, 2022). According to current research, students experiencing homelessness are more likely to suffer academically and are more likely to drop out of school when compared to their housed peers. Similarly, students experiencing homelessness have higher absence rates and lower test scores (ED Data Express, n.d.).

Legislation

State law (Revised Code of Washington [RCW] 28A.300.540) 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 data on students experiencing homelessness than is currently required by the U.S. Department of Education under the federal McKinney-Vento Act. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, certain data are not available.

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 federal Every Student Succeeds Act) 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;*
- 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).*

The federal McKinney-Vento Act was reauthorized in December 2015 under the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) and fully implemented in all public schools on October 1, 2016. The McKinney-Vento Act serves to provide school stability for students experiencing homelessness, as

each change of school may cause a delay in a student's academic progress. The Act promotes the academic success of students experiencing homelessness 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, transportation, and other academic supports. Washington currently provides approximately \$1.4 million in federal McKinney-Vento grant funding to two multi-district consortium programs and 27 school district programs.

In 2016, the Legislature passed the Homeless Student Stability and Opportunity Gap Act (House Bill 1682) to amend state laws related to improving educational outcomes for homeless students through increased identification services, in-school supports, and housing stability. The resulting State Homeless Student Stability program complements the Federal McKinney-Vento program, providing additional support and resources for districts beginning with the 2016–17 school year. This grant program was designed to improve identification of students and build local education agency (LEA) capacity to provide support to students experiencing homelessness, particularly unaccompanied homeless youth.

In 2021, \$800 million was awarded to states through the American Rescue Plan-Homeless Children and Youth fund (ARP-HCY). This grant provides a one-time funding opportunity through 2024 to support learning recovery, as impacted 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 school districts, most of which had never received Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) funding in the past.

UPDATE STATUS

Table 1: Number of Washington Students Experiencing Homelessness by School Year

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

Source: Comprehensive Education Data and Research System (CEDARS), pulled on November 4, 2022.

Enrollment

Table 2: Student Enrollment by Student Group, School Year 2021–22

Student Group	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness	Total Student Population	Percent of State Population Experiencing Homelessness
All Students	37,337	1,144,712	3.3%
Gender			
Male	18,475	591,210	3.1%
Female	18,486	549,095	3.4%
Gender X	376	4,407	8.5%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaskan Native	964	14,522	6.6%
Asian	796	96,840	0.8%
Black/African American	3,210	55,052	5.8%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	13,487	289,893	4.7%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	1407	15,665	9.0%
Two or More Races	4,261	105,357	4.20%
White	13,212	567,383	2.3%
Student Group			
Unaccompanied Youth	5,539	6,480	85.5%
Students with Disabilities	8,056	176,492	4.6%
English Learners	8,785	146,041	6.0%
Students from Low-Income Families	35,673	55,493	6.4%

Student Group	Number of Students Experiencing Homelessness	Total Student Population	Percent of State Population Experiencing Homelessness
Students in the Learning Assistance Program	8,642	174,125	4.7%
Students who are Migratory	2,014	23,676	8.5%
Students with 504 Plans	1,305	51,193	2.5%
Students in the Highly Capable Program	375	73,728	0.5%
Students Participating in Running Start*	280	31,929	0.9%

Source: CEDARS, pulled on November 4, 2022.

*Counts of students participating in Running Start reflect data from 2020–21. Data from 2021–22 for Running Start enrollment have not yet been released.

Table 3: Student Enrollment by Grade Level, School Year 2021–22

Grade Level	Enrollment Count of Students of Experiencing Homelessness*	Percent of Students Experiencing Homelessness	Total State Enrollment	Percent of State Enrollment
Pre-K	953	2.6%	32,724	2.9%
Kindergarten	2,755	7.4%	83,315	7.3%
1st	2,658	7.1%	78,221	6.8%
2nd	2,750	7.4%	82,129	7.2%
3rd	2,672	7.2%	82,788	7.2%
4th	2,624	7.0%	82,226	7.2%
5th	2,650	7.1%	83,460	7.3%
6th	2,567	6.9%	83,406	7.3%
7th	2,550	6.8%	86,323	7.5%
8th	2,752	7.4%	88,696	7.7%
9th	2,808	7.5%	90,799	7.9%
10th	2,668	7.1%	87,658	7.7%
11th	3,012	8.1%	88,175	7.7%
12th	3,918	10.5%	94,792	8.3%

Source: CEDARS, pulled on November 4, 2022.

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

Table 4: Student Enrollment by Nighttime Residence Type, School Year 2021–22

Nighttime Residence	Description	Number of Homeless Students
Doubled-Up	Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason.	27,830
Hotels/Motels	Living in hotels/motels due to lack of alternate adequate accommodations.	2,638
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.)	4,115
Unsheltered	Includes living situations such as cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailers, abandoned buildings, and substandard housing.	2,669

Source: CEDARS, pulled on November 4, 2022.

Student Outcomes

During the 2020–21 school year, 3,618 students experiencing homelessness graduated with their adjusted four-year cohort, which amounted to 59.2% of students experiencing homelessness in the Class of 2021 cohort. The adjusted four-year graduation rate for students experiencing homelessness is about half that of students in Washington state who did not experience homelessness.

Table 5: Class of 2021 Homeless Student Graduation Rates by Student Group, 4-Year Adjusted Cohort

Student Group	Adjusted 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Continuing Rate	Rate of Students who Left School without Graduating
Statewide (All Students)	82.5%	8.0%	9.5%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	59.2%	16.1%	24.7%
Gender			
Female	64.1%	15.3%	20.7%
Gender X	35.5%	47.4%	17.1%

Student Group	Adjusted 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Continuing Rate	Rate of Students who Left School without Graduating
Male	54.7%	16.1%	29.2%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaskan Native	53.6%	23.0%	23.5%
Asian	72.7%	14.2%	13.1%
Black/African American	63.6%	14.9%	21.5%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	59.1%	16.1%	24.8%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	70.3%	10.5%	19.2%
Two or More Races	57.1%	18.2%	24.7%
White	57.5%	15.9%	26.6%
Student Groups			
Students with Disabilities	51.9%	23.0%	25.1%
Multilingual/English Learners	56.1%	17.2%	26.7%
Students from Low-income Families	59.5%	15.8%	24.7%
Students who are Migratory	59.4%	15.8%	24.7%
Students with 504 Plans	58.2%	18.5%	23.3%

Source: CEDARS, pulled on December 1, 2022.

Table 6: Class of 2021 Homeless Student Graduation Rates, 5-Year Adjusted Cohort

Student Group	Adjusted 5-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Continuing Rate	Rate of Students who Left School without Graduating
Statewide (All Students)	85.6%	3.2%	11.2%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	64.5%	6.4%	29.1%
Gender			
Female	69.0%	6.1%	25.0%
Gender X	57.3%	24.4%	18.3%
Male	59.8%	6.3%	33.9%
Race/Ethnicity			
American Indian/Alaskan Native	61.9%	6.4%	31.7%
Asian	72.9%	7.9%	19.2%
Black/African American	64.4%	8.2%	27.4%
Hispanic/Latino of any race(s)	64.8%	6.3%	28.8%
Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander	75.4%	4.7%	19.9%
Two or More Races	66.4%	7.3%	26.3%

Student Group	Adjusted 5-Year Cohort Graduation Rate	Continuing Rate	Rate of Students who Left School without Graduating
White	62.8%	5.9%	31.4%
Student Groups			
Students with Disabilities	55.1%	11.7%	33.2%
Multilingual/English Learners	63.4%	7.3%	29.3%
Students from Low-income Families	64.7%	6.3%	29.0%
Students who are Migrant	70.2%	6.8%	23.0%
Students with 504 Plans	58.3%	8.9%	32.7%

Source: CEDARS, pulled on December 1, 2022.

Table 7: Homeless Student Attendance and Truancy by Student Group, School Year 2021–22

Student Group	Number of Students Regularly Attending*	Percent of Students Regularly Attending	Number of Students Reported as Truant**	Percent of Students Reported as Truant
Statewide (All Students)	866,726	80.1%	101,437	8.9%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	15,643	51.9%	9,765	26.0%
Gender				
Female	7,892	53.1%	4,883	26.0%
Male	7,582	50.4%	4,788	26.0%
Gender X	169	75.8%	94	25.0%
Race/Ethnicity				
American Indian/Alaskan Native	389	42.5%	343	36%
Asian	487	76.8%	145	18%
Black/African American	1,358	48.1%	1,056	32%
Hispanic/Latino	5,478	51.9%	3,350	25%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	333	38.2%	461	33%
Two or More Races	1,582	45.4%	1,356	32%
White	6,016	55.5%	3,027	23%
Student Group				
Students with Disabilities	3,264	48.2%	2,253	28%
Multilingual/English Learners	3,400	52.6%	1,890	22%
Students from Low-Income Families	15,070	51.4%	9,485	27%
Students who are Migratory	973	57.7%	378	19%
Students with 504 Plans	542	51.0%	390	29%

Source: CEDARS, pulled on December 1, 2022.

*Students are considered to be regularly attending if they have an average of fewer than two absences per month. 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.

Table 8: Homeless Student Suspensions and Expulsions by Student Group, School Year 2019–20

Note: Table 8 has not been updated with more recent data because 2021 data was withheld due to COVID-19 data interruptions that led to limited reporting and 2022 data has not yet been prepared or released publicly.

Student Group	Number of Students that were Suspended or Expelled*	Percent of Subgroup that were Suspended or Expelled
Statewide (All Students)	45,522	3.8%
Students Experiencing Homelessness (All)	2,255	6.3%
Gender		
Female	715	4.1%
Male	1,538	8.5%
Gender X	Suppression: N<10	Suppressed: N<10
Race/Ethnicity		
American Indian/Alaskan Native	73	6.9%
Asian	11	1.5%
Black/African American	354	9.2%
Hispanic/Latino	612	5.1%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	75	6.9%
Two or More Races	272	7.4%
White	861	6.4%
Student Groups		
Students with Disabilities	833	11.1%
Multilingual/English Learners	313	4.3%
Students from Low-Income Families	2,198	6.3%
Students who are Migratory	73	3.8%
Students with 504 Plans	129	10.6%

Source: CEDARS, pulled on September 28, 2021.

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

CONCLUSION & 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. 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.

Currently, the Homeless Student Stability Grants fund 17 local school districts and will be used for a range of locally determined priorities. Federal ARP-HCY funds will be used to support the identification, enrollment, and school participation of children and youth experiencing homelessness, including through wraparound services.

OSPI will continue to report data collected on students experiencing homelessness.

REFERENCES

Department of Education. (n.d.). ED Data Express. <https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/>

National Center for Homeless Education. (2022). Student Homelessness in America: School Years 2018-19 to 2020–21. University of North Carolina at Greensboro. Greensboro, NC. Extracted on November 30, 2022, from: <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Student-Homelessness-in-America-2022.pdf>

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