Education and Housing:
Working Together to Identify and Connect Children 0-5 Experiencing Homelessness for Success

May 8, 2025

5 Minute Survey on FAFSA
bit.ly/SHC-FAFSA

SCOE — Sacramento County Office of Education — EDUCATION EMPOWERS

Project Teach — Sacramento County Office of Education

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HETAC — CALIFORNIA HOMELESS EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS

Los Angeles County Office of Education

Department of Education State of California

Together our action steps are:

1. Brief overview of the McKinney-Vento Act

2. Understand the impact of homelessness on families and children and the prevalence

3. Discover how cross-system collaboration in Sacramento led to a 134% increase in the identification of children ages 0-5

4. Learn how Project Teach increased visibility and identification through outreach and training

5. Share resources!

Poll:
Who's in the room?

About
SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through early care and education.

From prenatal through postsecondary, we provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

WEBSITE:
schoolhouseconnection.org

NEWSLETTER:
schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up

- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships

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Overview

Homelessness Defined:

Children and youth who **lack a fixed, regular, and adequate** nighttime residence.

➔ Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons.

➔ Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.

➔ Living in emergency or transitional shelters.

➔ Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.

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Why We Use the Phrase "Experiencing Homelessness"

We Use:

Experiencing Homelessness

Because of the many children, youth, and parents who have told us that homelessness is something that happened to them – it does not define them. It is something they went through, it is not who they are.

Instead of:

✗ Unhoused

✗ Houseless

✗ Housing Insecurity

Families often stay with others temporarily because of lack of shelter availability, and the fear of having children removed from their custody.

Staying with others puts families, infants, and toddlers in vulnerable, harmful situations, and, conditions that may contribute to developmental delays. Parents may stay with abusive/exploitive people, or trade sex in order to have a place to stay.

Infants, Toddlers, & Families
Experiencing Homelessness

15.2%

Of infants and toddlers live in crowded housing, which is known to jeopardize child development. 2.9% of babies and toddlers have moved three or more times since birth.

State of Babies Yearbook 2023 (Zero to Three)

Pregnancy and parenthood may increase the risk of youth homelessness

Young parents—especially those unmarried—had three times the risk of experiencing homelessness compared to non-parenting peers. This is the second highest risk factor for young adult homelessness, second only to lacking a high school diploma or GED and high school students who experience homelessness are 10x more likely to become pregnant or get someone pregnant.

Homelessness among Families with Children is On the Rise

39.4%

Increase in **families staying in homeless shelters or visibly unsheltered** in 2024, according to HUD (following a **16%** increase in 2023)

Babies

Are the age group at **greatest risk of eviction,** followed by children under the age of five, according to research from Eviction Lab. About a quarter of Black babies and toddlers in rental households face the threat of eviction in a typical year

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Homelessness Has Serious Consequences for Young Children

→ Homelessness in infancy has been found to be associated with **delays in language, literacy, and social-emotional development**, putting children at risk for later academic problems.

→ The younger and longer a child experiences homelessness, the **greater the cumulative toll of negative health outcomes**.
   ◆ Early childhood homelessness is linked to higher rates of asthma and wheezing.

→ The impacts of homelessness on young children are **long-lasting, even once families are housed**, including on children's school readiness.

→ **The high school graduation rate for students experiencing homelessness is 68% compared to 85% for all students.** This is the lowest graduation rate of any student sub-group, including economically disadvantaged.

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Homelessness Creates Barriers to Accessing _both_ Housing and Early Childhood Programs

→ **Different definitions mean many families are not eligible for housing assistance,** specifically those who are doubled-up or staying in hotels/motels

→ **High mobility** of families moving in and our of motels, staying with others, living in cars, etc.

→ **Lack of documentation** and other enrollment barriers, including child immunization records and parent work requirements

→ **Lack of transportation** to and from programs and services

→ **Lack of awareness** of the best ways to reach families

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Liaison Duties: Early Childhood Referrals

The liaison must be able to carry out the ten duties outlined in the law, including:

➔ **Identify** McKinney-Vento students

➔ Post **public notice** of McKinney-Vento rights to parents and youth

➔ Provide **professional development** and support on McKinney-Vento to school staff

➔ Ensure children and youths have **access to and receive educational services including services through Head Start programs** (including Early Head Start programs) under the Head Start Act (42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.), early intervention services under part C of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (20 U.S.C. 1431 et seq.), and other preschool programs administered by the local educational agency
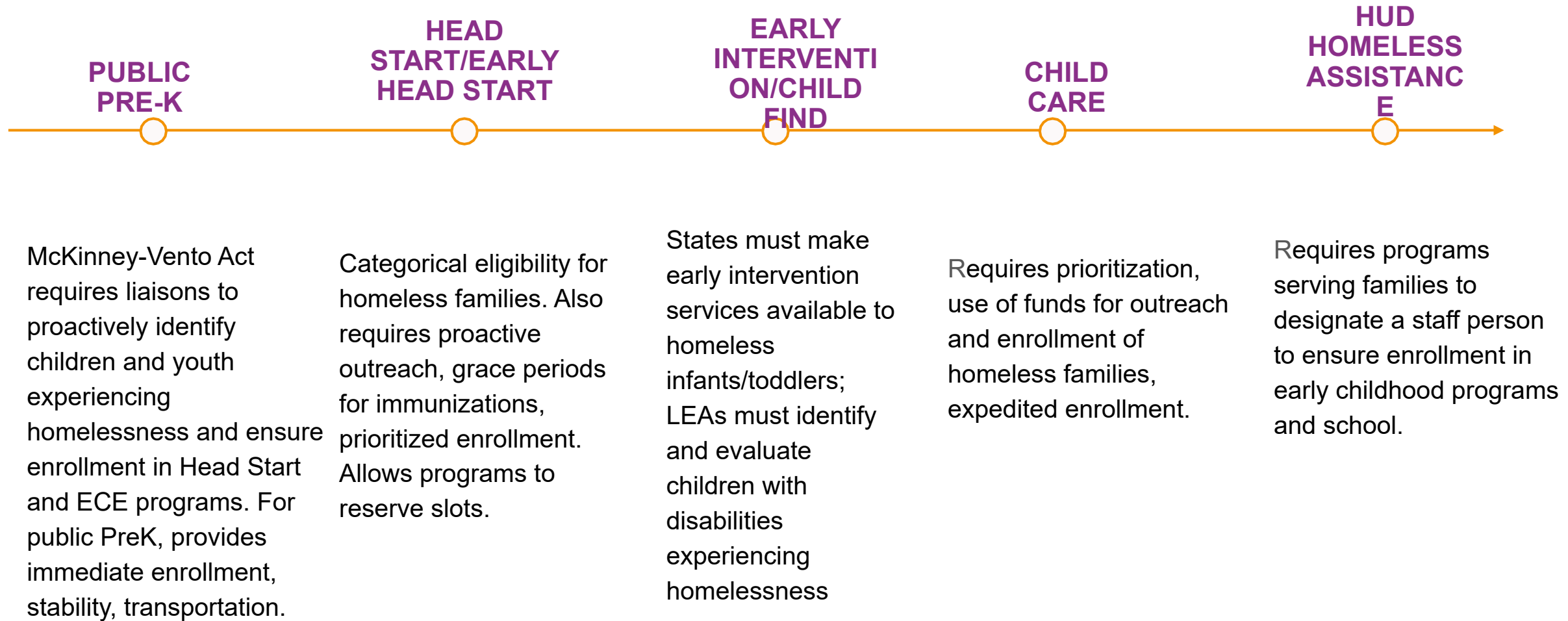
What is "Early Childhood"?

➔ **Maternal Infant Early Childhood Home Visiting** (expectant parents/caregivers of children up to age 5)

➔ **Early Head Start** (prenatal to age 3)

➔ **Head Start** (ages 3-5)

➔ **Early Intervention** (ages 0-3)

➔ **Preschool** (ages 3-4)

➔ **Child Care** (ages 6 weeks - 12 years)

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CROSS-SECTOR FRAMEWORK

PUBLIC PRE-K — **HEAD START/EARLY HEAD START** — **EARLY INTERVENTION/CHILD FIND** — **CHILD CARE** — **HUD HOMELESS ASSISTANCE**

McKinney-Vento Act requires liaisons to proactively identify children and youth experiencing homelessness and ensure enrollment in Head Start and ECE programs. For public PreK, provides immediate enrollment, stability, transportation.

Categorical eligibility for homeless families. Also requires proactive outreach, grace periods for immunizations, prioritized enrollment. Allows programs to reserve slots.

States must make early intervention services available to homeless infants/toddlers; LEAs must identify and evaluate children with disabilities experiencing homelessness

Requires prioritization, use of funds for outreach and enrollment of homeless families, expedited enrollment.

Requires programs serving families to designate a staff person to ensure enrollment in early childhood programs and school.

What about MIECHV? Requires data collection on homelessness; HRSA uses broader definition for data collection, but not exactly aligned
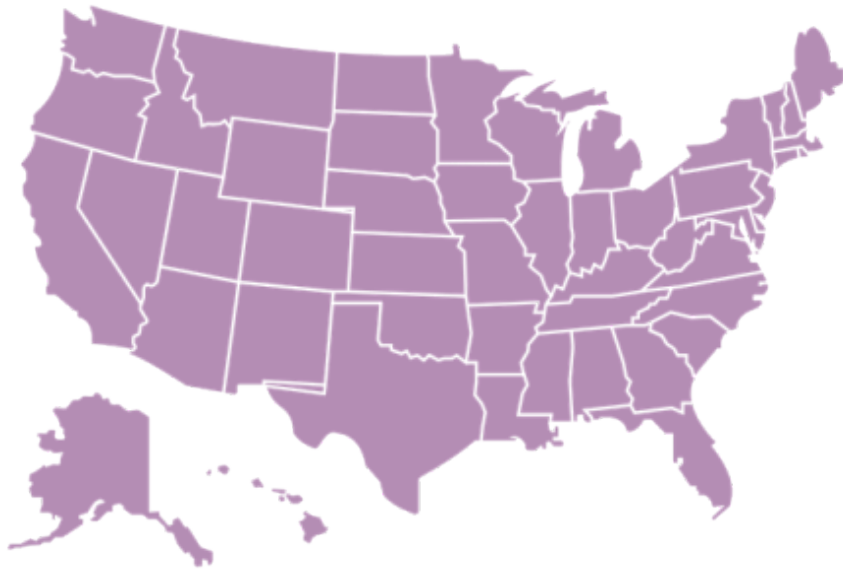
Poll: How have you supported families with young children under age six experiencing homelessness?

Data

Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

➔ Across 50 states, there are approximately **680,732** children under age six experiencing homelessness (2022-2023).

➔ **126, 331 or 18.56%** of all children under age six experiencing homelessness are currently identified and served by an early childhood program (EHS, HS, LEA, HV).

➔ That means **82%** of children under age six experiencing homelessness are **not identified and/or enrolled in an early childhood program**

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446,696 Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness Across the US

Just 10% of infants & toddlers experiencing homelessness were served in 2022–23 — a drop from 11.5%.

These babies are being left behind.

2% are served by Home Visiting programs

4% are served by Early Head Start programs

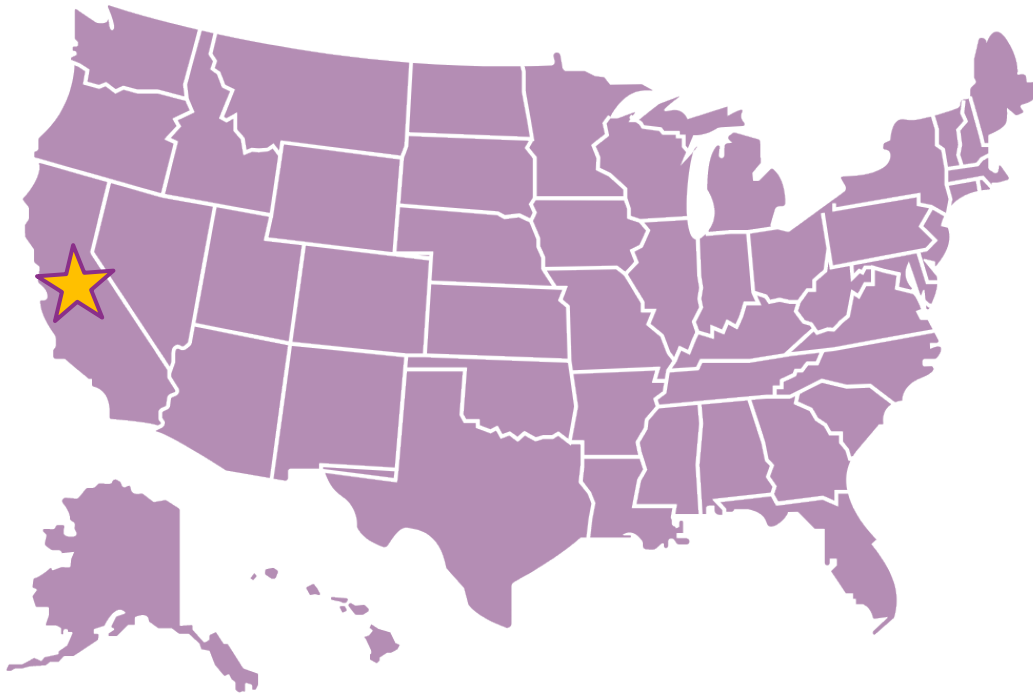4.4% are served by a Local Education Agency

Unserved (89.6%)

SchoolHouse Connection Report | Infant & Toddler Homelessness Across 50 states: 2022-2023

Homelessness among Infants, Toddlers, and their Families is Increasing

⬆️ **39%** - homelessness among families with young children (HUD)

⬆️ **84,000** - increase in homelessness among infants and toddlers ages birth through three from 2021-22 to 2022-23 (SHC and Poverty Solutions)

⬇️ Only **33%** of federal housing resources go to families with children, and **only 1 in 4** families that qualify for housing assistance actually receive it

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Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

➔ Across **California**, there are approximately **113,060** children under age six experiencing homelessness (2022-2023).

➔ **17,252 or 15.26%** of all children under age six experiencing homelessness are currently identified and served by an early childhood program (EHS, HS, LEA, HV).

➔ That means **85%** of children under age six experiencing homelessness are **not identified and/or enrolled in an early childhood program**

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Infants & Toddlers
Experiencing Homelessness in California

Infant and Toddler Homelessness Across 50 States: 2021-2022 | United States

United States

The period of life from prenatal through age three is critical for physical and social-emotional development, but the experience of homelessness jeopardizes healthy growth and can have long-term consequences. Early childhood development programs can mitigate the impacts of homelessness on child development, and connect families to housing and services. These data profiles are intended to create greater awareness of the prevalence of infant and toddler homelessness, and gaps in access to early childhood development programs.

Total Population Birth Through Age Three:
14,786,455

Estimated Total Population Birth Through Age Three Experiencing Homelessness:
364,390 (2.5%) of all infants and toddlers

Total population Birth Through Age Three experiencing homelessness enrolled in a program:
41,767

Only 1 in 9 infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness is enrolled in a program.

Among the 364,390 infants and toddlers identified, only 41,767, which accounts for a mere 11.4%, are currently enrolled in a program.

41,767 (11.5%): Enrolled in a program

323,623 (88.5%): Unserved

Prioritizing Children Experiencing Homelessness through Federal Law

Congress included specific requirements to identify and remove barriers to enrollment caused by homelessness in both the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007 and the Child Care and Development Block Grant Act of 2014. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) strengthened these policies in regulations for both federal programs in 2016, and proposed additional regulations in 2023. Federal law (the McKinney-Vento Act) also requires public schools who receive subgrant funds to collect data on infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness.

Estimated Total Population of Children Birth Through Age Three Experiencing Homelessness Enrolled in an Early Childhood Program:

Home Visiting (8,064)

Early Head Start (18,098)

Identified & Served by an LEA (15,605)

Unserved (323,623)

https://schoolhouseconnection.org/infant-and-toddler-homelessness/

➔ In **California**, an estimated **74,076** infants and toddlers ages birth through three are experiencing homelessness.

➔ **Only 12,421, or 16.77% of infants/toddlers** are currently identified and served by an early childhood program (EHS, LEA, HV).

➔ That means **83%** of infants, toddlers, and young children experiencing homelessness are **not identified and/or enrolled in an early childhood program**

0-6 Enrollment Across 50 States

Head Start & Early Head Start

Enroll an estimated 7.6% of children experiencing homelessness

Local Education Agencies

Serve an estimated 9.7% of children experiencing homelessness ages 0-5

Home Visiting

Serve an estimated 1.3% of children experiencing homelessness ages 0-5

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0-6 Enrollment
In California

Head Start & Early Head Start

Enroll an estimated 6.6% of children experiencing homelessness

Local Education Agencies

Serve an estimated 7.9% of children experiencing homelessness ages 0-5

Home Visiting

Serve an estimated 0.7% of children experiencing homelessness ages 0-5

0-3 Enrollment Across 50 States

Early Head Start

Enrolls an estimated 4% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness

Local Education Agencies

Serve an estimated 4.4% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness

0-3 Enrollment In California

Early Head Start

Enrolls an estimated 3.6% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness

Local Education Agencies

Serve an estimated 12.1% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness

California: Sacramento County Child and Youth Homelessness

2022-2023

SchoolHouse Connection

POVERTY SOLUTIONS — UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN

Sidebar

School Year
2022-2023

State
California

County
Sacramento County

- **Overview**
- **National**
- **State**
- **County**
- **School District**
- **U.S. Congressional**
- **State Legislatures**
- **Trends Over Time**
- **Graduation Rate**
- **Chronic Absence**
- **Under Identification**
- **Youth On Their Own**

Print

Summary Statistics

11,496
Pre K - 12
Children Were Identified As
Experiencing Homelessness

4.7%
Of All Pre K - 12
Children Were Identified As
Experiencing Homelessness

16.33%
Of School Districts
Received Annual
Funding

Chronic Absenteeism Rate
Pre K though 12, SY22-23

- Homeless: 48.7%
- All: 31.4%
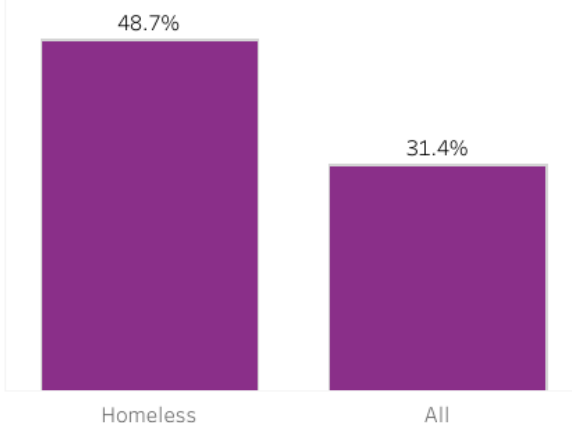
Where Student Was Staying When Identified As Homeless
Pre K - 12, SY22-23 (Percentages do not sum to 100% due to redacted data)

- Staying In A Hotel/Motel: 7.0%
- Staying In A Shelter: 5.8%
- Staying With Others (Doubled-Up): 81.4%
- Unsheltered: 3.8%
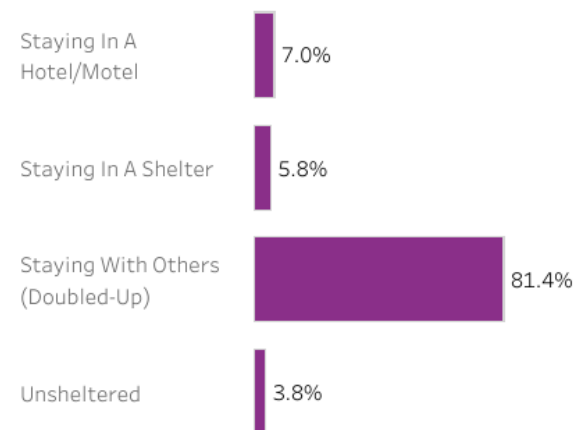
Race and Ethnicity Of Students Experiencing Homelessness
Pre K - 12, SY22-23 (Percentages do not sum to 100% due to redacted data)

- Black or African American: 21.9%
- White: 19.8%
- Hispanic: 38.0%
- Native American: 0.8%
- Asian & Pacific Islander: 8.4%
- Two or More: 10.1%
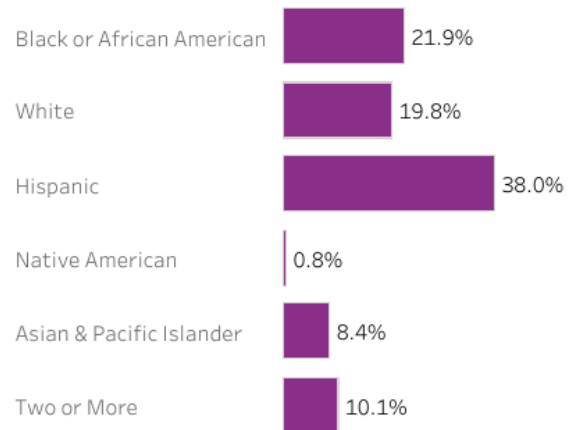
Other Support Needs Among Students Experiencing Homelessness
Pre K - 12, SY22-23

- Rural Students: 0.0%
- Special Education Students: 17.8%
- Youth On Their Own: 6.5%
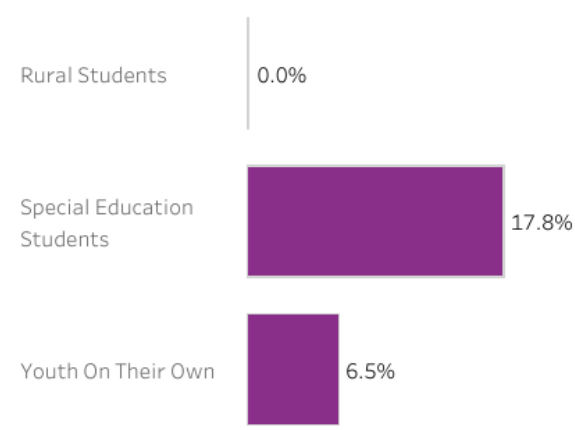
School District Map

% Homeless Students

© Mapbox © OSM
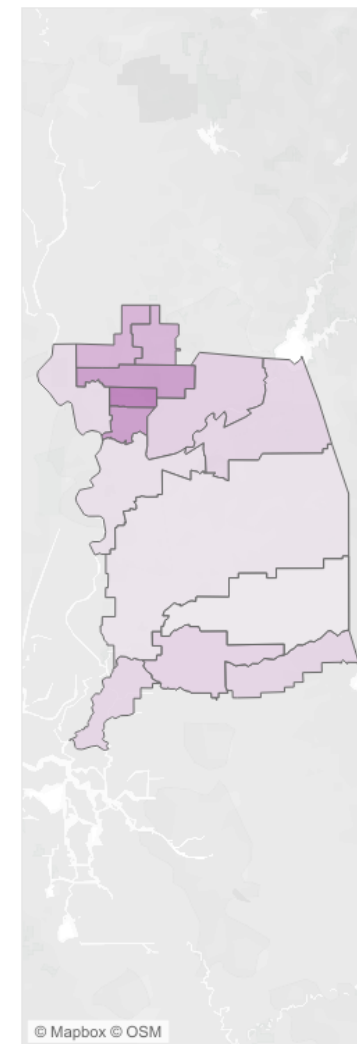
% Homeless Students
0.00% — 31.88%

Sacramento County Office of Education
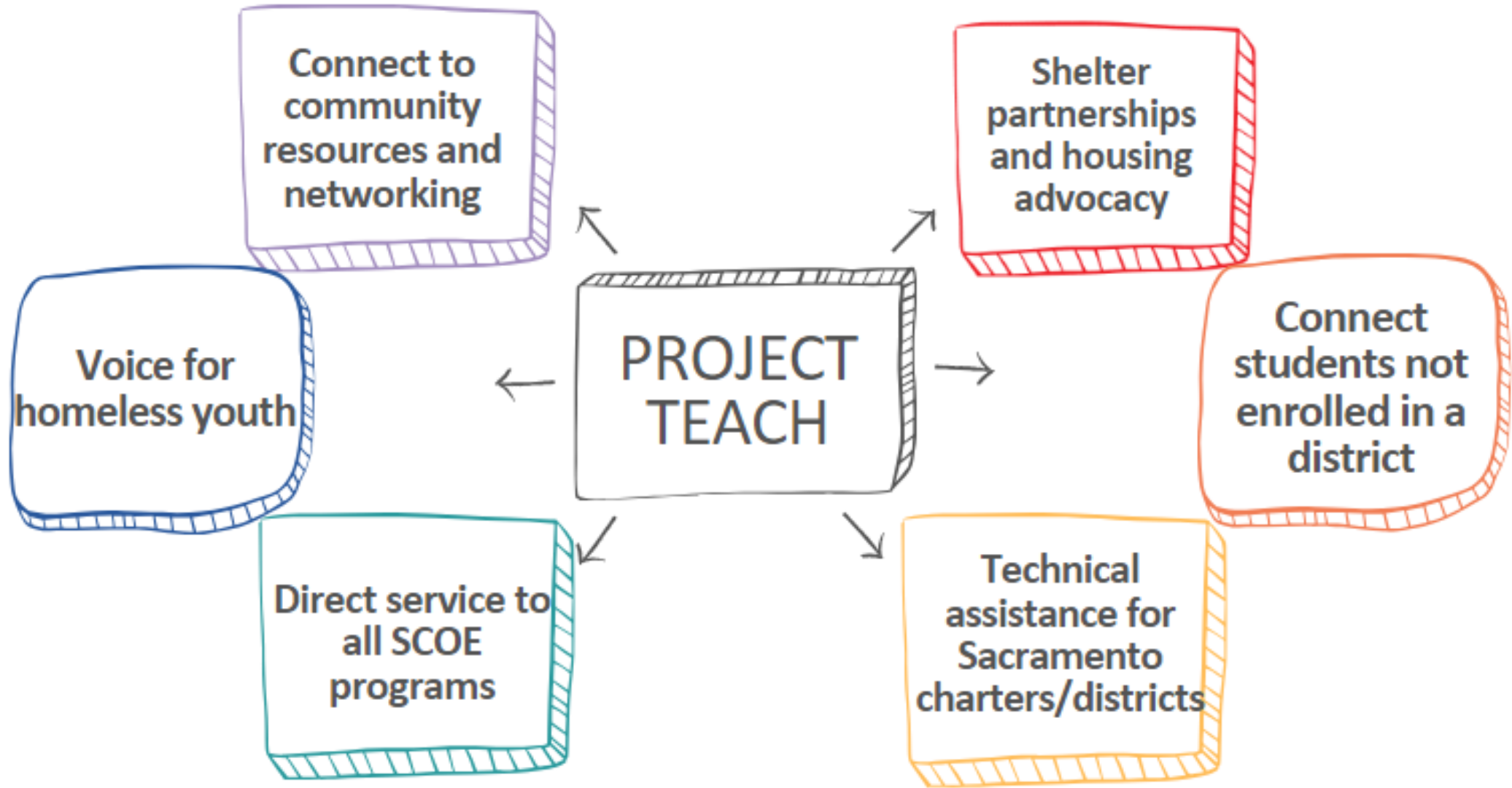## Project Teach

About
Project Teach

Project Teach is the homeless services program at the Sacramento County Office of Education.

We promote the educational success of children experiencing homelessness.
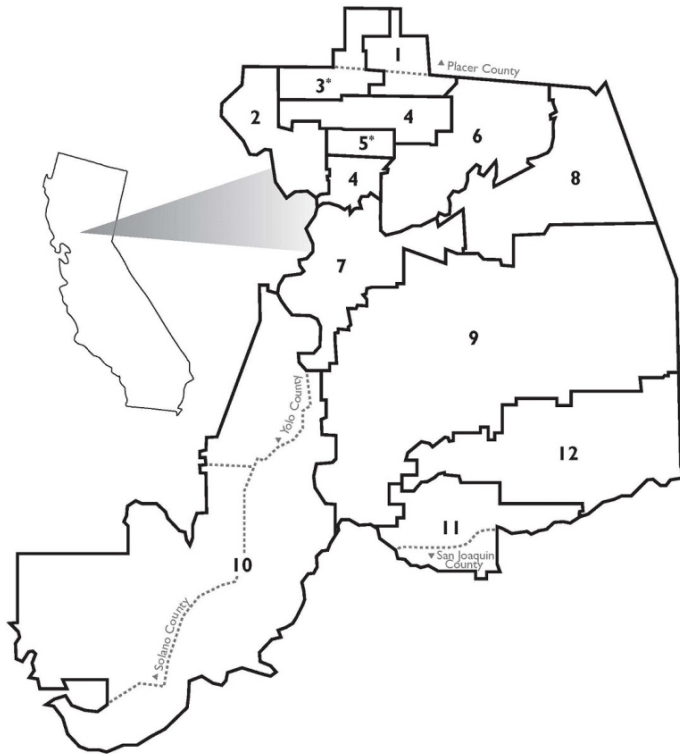
WEBSITE:
scoe.net/projectteach

Project Teach
Sacramento County Office of Education

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Sacramento County LEA Overview

Public School Districts
Within Sacramento County

- Sacramento County Office of Education

- **13** School Districts

- **53** Charter Schools

2023-24 School Year

- **278,746**-Total Students Enrolled

- **15,447**-Students Identified as Homeless

Shift to Focus on Children Ages 0-5

- 50% decrease in identification during COVID

- American Rescue Plan funds allocated

- HETAC/CDE released an outreach tool

Local Early Care and Education Programs:
A Resource for Families in Transition

- Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program
  - Supported Sacramento's grant
  - Project Teach participated in the Coordinated Community Plan

1,538

775

2019-2020   2020-2021
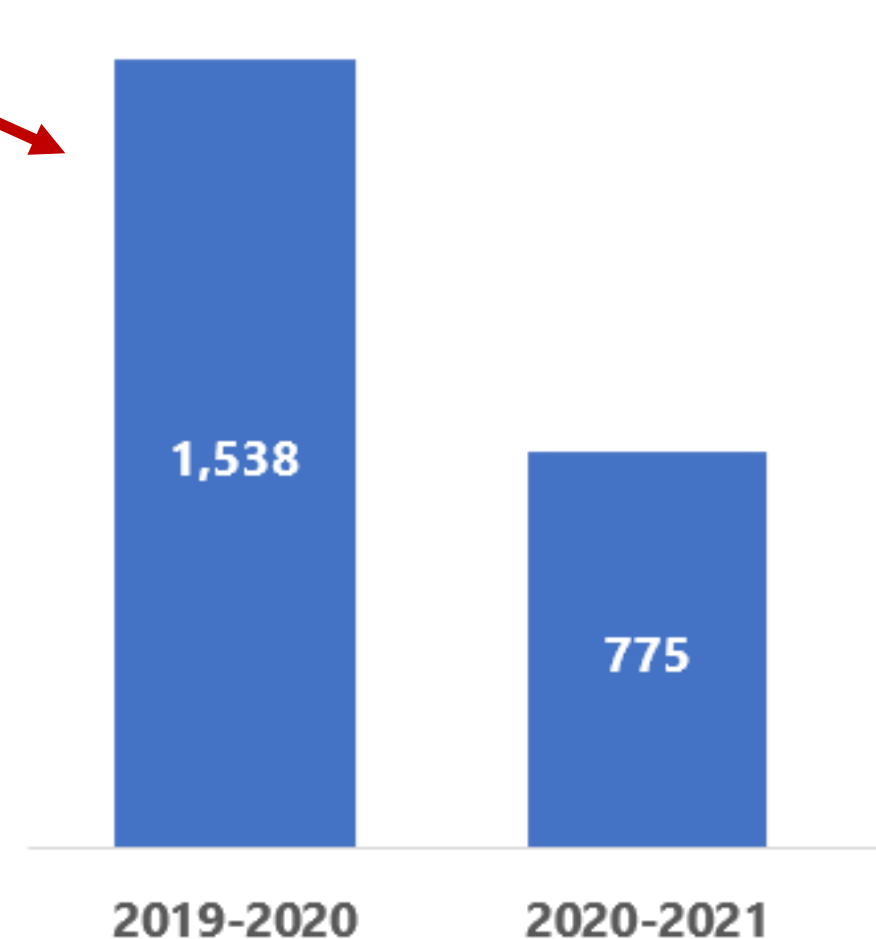
Plan for System Level Change

- Find the children ages 0-5
  - Focus on shelters
  - Partner internally
  - Partner with LEAs

Outreach everywhere; train everyone

Address Systemic Challenges

Problem:

- Student Information Systems do not track ages 0-5

- No HMIS questions

- Education and housing siloed

Goal: Create Systemic Change

- Liaisons share tracking tools

- Advocacy for ages 0-5 questions

- Webinar with Schoolhouse Connection to train housing and homeless liaisons

Continuum of Care (CoC) Partnership

Coordination

- Appointed CoC Education Board seat and Acting Secretary, we serve on committees and workgroups

- CoC funds a SCOE position to coordinate services

- YHDP funds a SCOE position to serve ages 0-5

Collaboration

- Mutual training with stakeholders

- Adding Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) questions

HMIS Questions

EDUCATION STATUS

Currently Enrolled in School

No

Last Grade Completed

Less than Grade 5

Is the Child Connected to the Homeless Liaison?

Select

Last Date of Enrollment

__ / __ / ____   📅 25

Barriers to Enrolling Child in School

Select

HMIS Questions

Barriers to Enrolling Child in School

Select ▼

PLEASE INDICATE ANY PROGRAMS THE CHILD IS C

Head Start

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Affiliated
Preschool

Home Visiting Program

Child Care

Dropdown options:
- Select
- None
- Residency requirements
- Availability of school records
- Birth certificates
- Legal guardianship requirements
- Transportation
- Lack of available preschool programs
- Immunization requirements
- Physical examination records

HMIS Questions

PLEASE INDICATE ANY PROGRAMS THE CHILD IS CONNECTED TO:

Head Start

Local Educational Agency (LEA) Affiliated Preschool

Home Visiting Program

Child Care

Early Intervention Services

Activities To Increase Identification

Outreach

Training

Resource Hub

A Focus on Developmental Resources

My Position:

- Project Specialist I

Funding:

- EHCY grant; Title I Part A Reservation; Continuum of Care

Focus:

- Implement the Shelter Outreach Program and represent education within the world of housing to increase visibility for children ages 0-5

Overview of Sacramento County Shelter System

- 60+ shelters in Sacramento County

- 30+ of those locations focus on serving **children and families**
  - 1 is for youth only (12-17)
  - 1 is for men with children only

Shelter Outreach Program

Goals:

1. To strengthen relationships between education and housing systems

2. To connect Homeless Liaisons and Early Learning Advocates to local shelters

3. To inform shelter agencies and their residents of their rights under McKinney-Vento

Educating for Visibility

- **Outreach** to shelters

- **Train** shelter staff and parents
  - Invite Homeless Liaisons and Early Learning Advocates

- Provide **resources**, including posters, brochures, and tangible items

- Create a community listserv

- Attend Family Case Conferencing
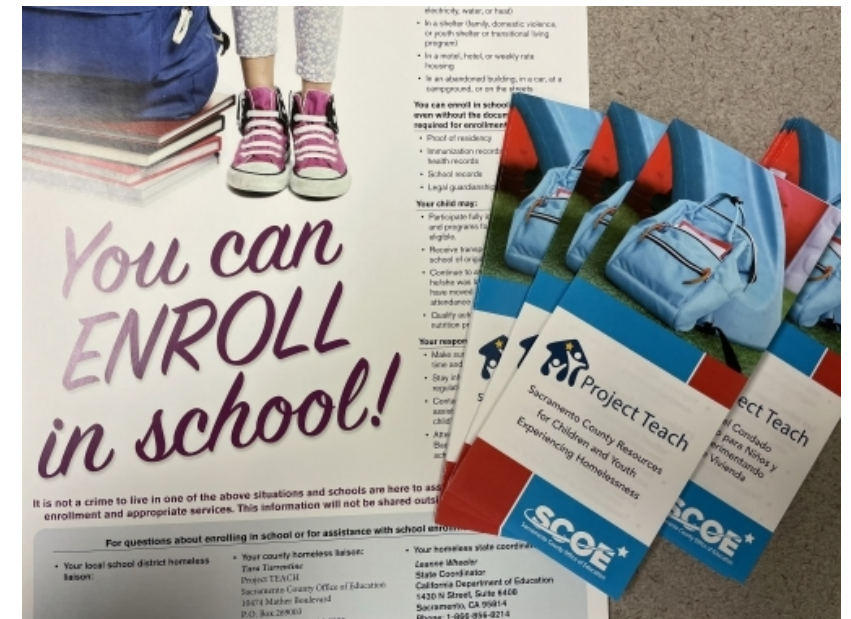
Housing Partners Trained

Shelters
- <u>All</u> Sacramento shelters serving children and families
- Weather respite centers

Coordinated Access System
(connects those experiencing homelessness with shelter and resources)
- 2-1-1 Sacramento
- "Frontline" workers
- Continuum of Care committees

County Services
- Department of Human Assistance
- Behavioral Health Services

My Position:

- Project Specialist I

Funding:

- YHDP funds a program that focuses on children ages 0-5 experiencing homelessness

Focus:

- The focus of College Initiative is to address the critical challenges faced by homeless transition-aged youth (TAY), identify their children ages 0-5, and connect them to education.

Education Partners Trained

SCOE Programs

- Help Me Grow

- SCOE Early Head Start

- Infant Development Program

Community Agencies

- CPS

- Crisis Nursery

- Family Resource Centers

- Public Health Nurse Partnership

Education

- School Districts

- Charter Schools

- Higher Education

Early Learning Programs

- Early Childhood Directors

- Early Head Start/Head Start

- State Preschool

- First 5 Sacramento

Cross-System Collaboration Within Education

- **Partner** with SCOE Early Learning Department staff

- Cross-departmental **referrals** for SCOE-enrolled students who are pregnant and/or parenting

- **Invite** early learning partners, including district LEAs, to our monthly meetings
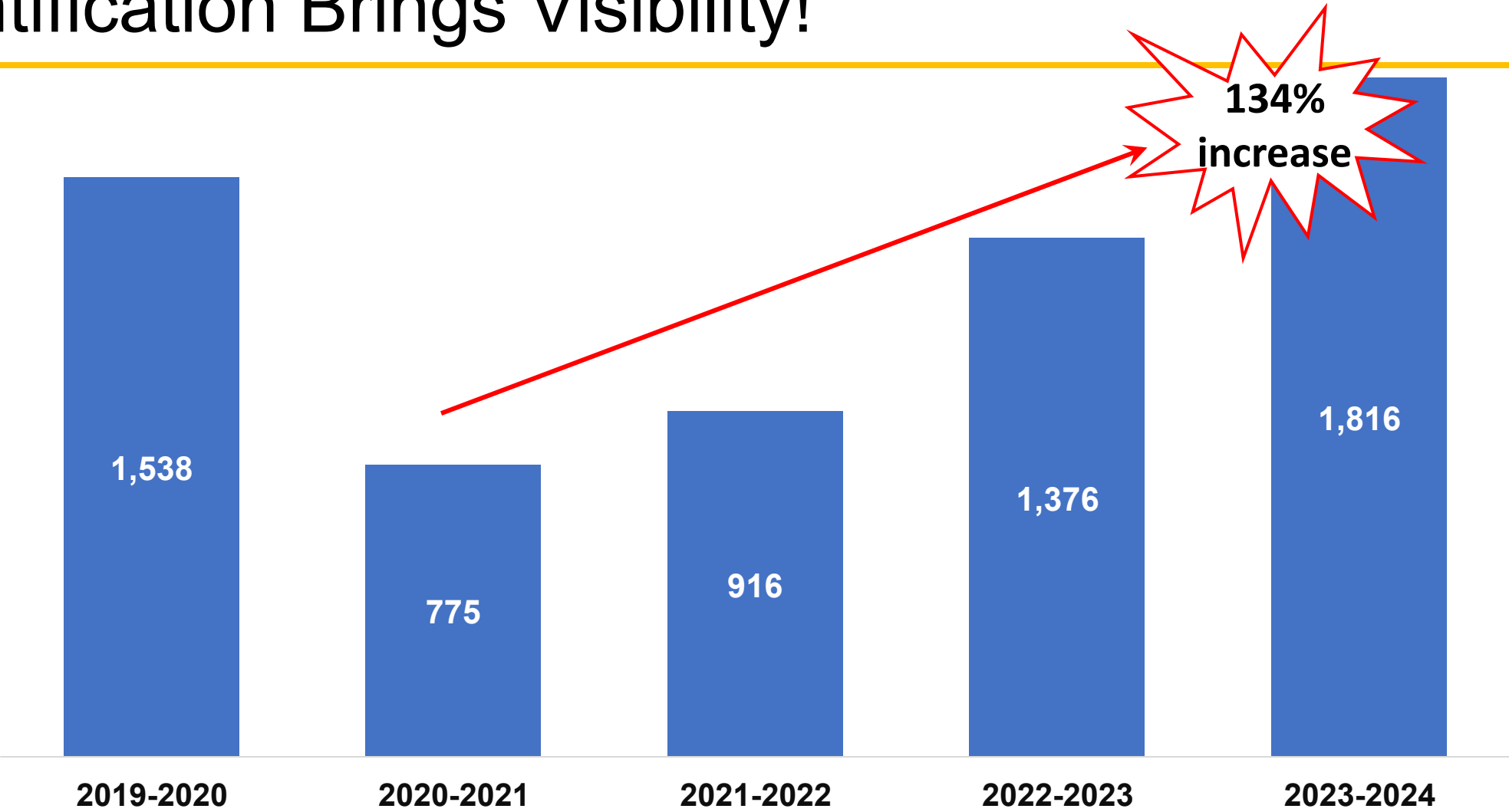
  – Dedicate a month to focus on ages 0-5

Focus on Development

- Approximately 75% of preschoolers who are homeless have at least one major developmental delay.

- Approximately 40% of preschoolers who are homeless have two or more major developmental delays.

Identification Brings Visibility!

134% increase

Year	Count
2019-2020	1,538
2020-2021	775
2021-2022	916
2022-2023	1,376
2023-2024	1,816

Ages 0-5 identified by K–12 local education agencies

Strategies for Increasing Identification & Enrollment

Goal: Increase the identification and enrollment of children under six experiencing homelessness

→ **Increase awareness of the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness among staff and families,** including how it impacts young children, and the services to which families are entitled.

→ **Increase collaboration with partner agencies and systems** serving families experiencing homelessness
  - Collaborative workshops, trainings, enrollment events

→ **Improve data collection and reporting** specific to young children and families experiencing homelessness

→ **Identify and advocate (when possible) for the removal of barriers** that prevent families experiencing homelessness from accessing programs

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Action

Strategies & Best Practices

➔ **Ask about children birth through age 5** on all enrollment forms, housing questionnaires etc., *and collect and report that data*

  ○ Are there any younger children in the household who are not yet school age?

➔ **Know who your local early childhood development providers are** and [use this checklist to make referrals.](#)

➔ **Develop outreach materials and strategies** to reach families where they might frequent, such as motels, laundromats, grocery stores, etc.

➔ **Develop formal partnerships with early childhood providers**, including through Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs)

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Strategies & Tips

- ❏ Understand the **early childhood requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act**, whether you are an EHCY sub-grantee or not

- ❏ Decide what tool you will use for **collecting and tracking data on children under six**

- ❏ Know your **local early childhood partners** AND your **McKinney-Vento Homeless Liaison**

- ❏ Ensure younger siblings are connected to early childhood programs and services by **making referrals**

- ❏ **Share and discuss your data** with partners (if appropriate!)

- ❏ Use your data to **understand the needs of families** experiencing homelessness in your community

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Poll: What is one activity you could do to increase the identification of children ages 0-5 experiencing homelessness in your county?

Resources

NEW REPORT!

Infant & Toddler Homelessness Across 50 states: 2022-2023

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New Tool! Updated Child & Youth Homelessness Data Files

SHC and Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan have updated **data profiles on child/youth homelessness** that are disaggregated by county, school district, Congressional district and state legislative district.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Child Care for Children Experiencing Homelessness: What States Need to Know and Do

Learn how states are meeting federal child care requirements for families experiencing homelessness. Explore key barriers, legal obligations, and state-by-state provisions on grace periods, co-payment waivers, and documentation requirements.

DOWNLOAD THE PDF ↗

An Unseen Reality: Infant and Toddler Homelessness

Homelessness And Its Impact On Expectant Parents, Infants, Toddlers, And Their Families

Homelessness in early childhood can lead to developmental delays, physical and mental health issues, and lasting effects on well-being.[1]

Homelessness during pregnancy or within the first three years of a child's life has lifelong consequences on physical health and mental well-being. These years are foundational to development, and trauma—including homelessness—can disrupt this growth, leading to long-lasting effects.[2] **Homelessness causes harm, and we must take action to address and prevent it.**

Each year, nearly **450,000** infants and toddlers experience homelessness in the US.[3]

~70,000 babies are born to parents who experienced homelessness during pregnancy.[3]

Just launched!
www.thrivefromthestart.org

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Additional Resources

- **Resources to Support Children and Youth Displaced by Disasters**

- **McKinney-Vento Act: Quick Reference**

- **Infant and Toddler Homelessness Across 50 States**

- **Case Studies in Supporting Infants and Toddlers**

- **Indicators of Homelessness: Awareness Building Tools for Staff**

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Additional Resources

- **Deeper Dives for Schools: Practical Strategies to Serve Young Children Experiencing Homelessness**

- **Connecting our Youngest Children to Early Childhood Partners**

- **Preschool Flow Chart**

- **Young Children Experiencing Homelessness: an Overview**

- **Why We Use The Phrase "Experiencing Homelessness"**

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Let's Connect!

Facebook: SchoolHouse Connection

Instagram: @SchoolHouseConnection

X: @SchoolHouseConn

Linkedin: SchoolHouse Connection

YouTube: @SchoolHouseConnection

SHC Community on Slack
✍️ **Sign up at bit.ly/SHC-slack**

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Your Voice Matters
Be an Advocate!

SchoolHouse Connection

SCAN ME

Join hundreds of **advocates making real change for children and youth experiencing homelessness** across the U.S. Get the resources you need to advocate for policy changes at state and federal levels.
Scan the QR code to learn more!

schoolhouseconnection.org/advocacy-network

HETAC — CALIFORNIA HOMELESS EDUCATION TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTERS

Los Angeles County Office of Education

DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION STATE OF CALIFORNIA

SchoolHouse Connection

Q & A

Thank you for joining us!

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