



Supporting Younger Children Experiencing Homelessness: *Requirements and Best Practices*

**California Statewide Homeless
Education Conference**



"A Sea of Change"
May 7-9, 2025 | San Diego

Presenters

- Erin Patterson,
Senior Director
Strategic Initiatives &
Partnerships



- Karmina Barrales,
Education Programs Consultant for
Homeless Education program



There's nothing
more calming in
difficult
moments than
knowing there's
someone
fighting with
you.

-Mother Teresa



Overview

- Data
- Facts and Figures
- Outcomes and consequences of homelessness
- Definition and types of homelessness
- Requirements, Roles, and Responsibilities
- Key Strategies
- Resources



Data

About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education.

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:

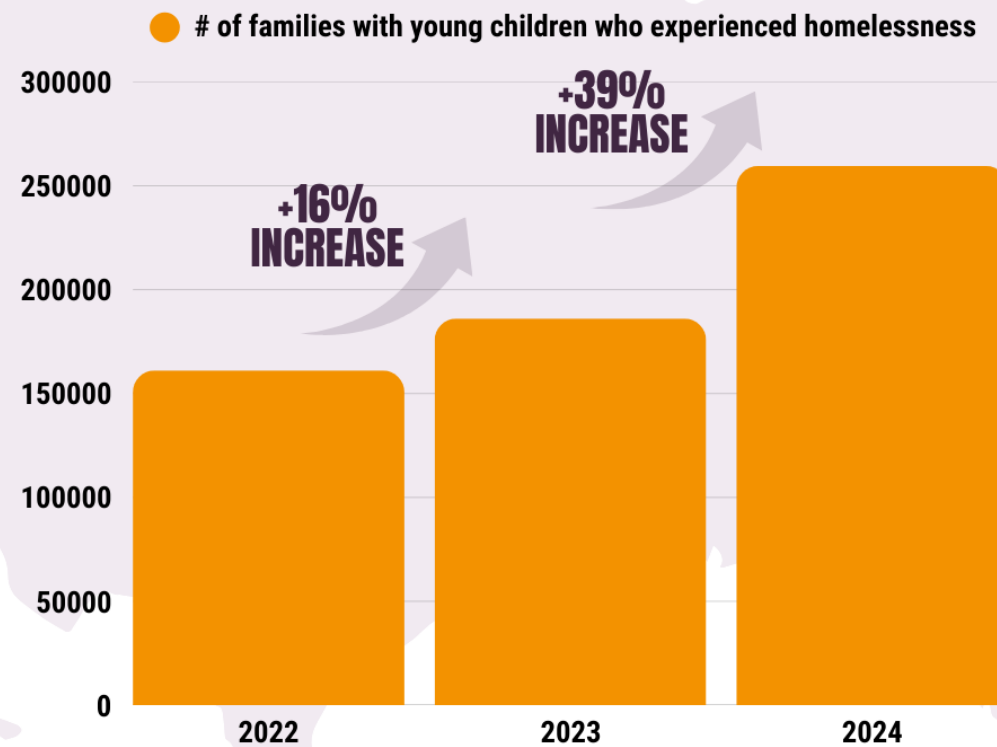
schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up

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

Increase in families staying in shelters and visibly homeless (HUD data)



CHILD & FAMILY HOMELESSNESS IS CLIMBING FAST: +16% IN 2023, +39% IN 2024 (HUD)



How many infants and toddlers experience homelessness?



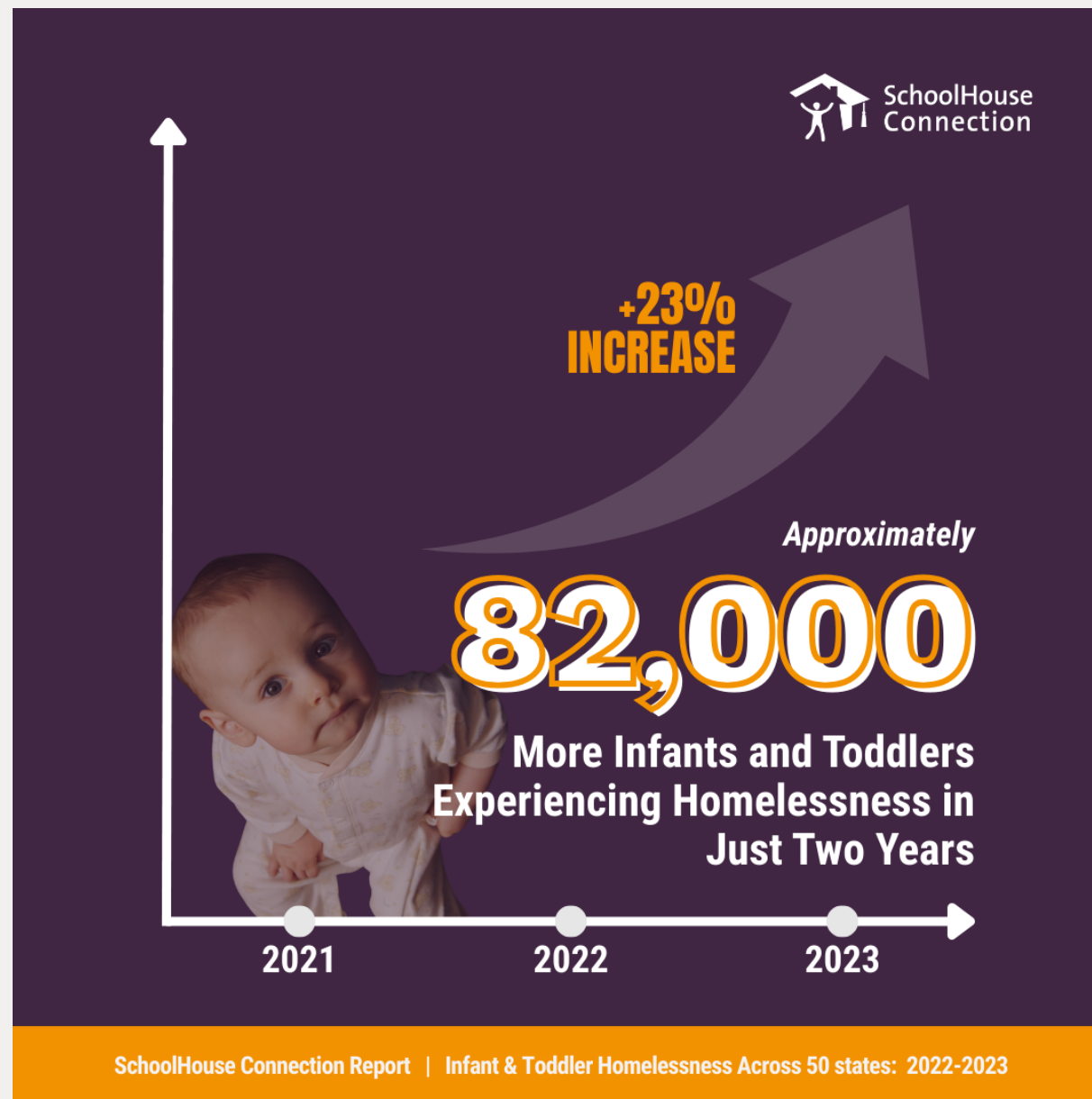
In 2022-23, approximately

450,000

infants and toddlers **ages birth through three** experienced homelessness across the US.



Infant and toddler homelessness is increasing



**Infants and toddlers
need access to *both*
early childhood
development *and*
housing – and for
many families, safe
shelter**



**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%)

Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness in California

California

The period of life from prenatal to age three is critical for physical and social-emotional development, but the experience of homelessness jeopardizes healthy growth and has potential long-term consequences. Access to early childhood development programs can mitigate the impacts of homelessness, and these data profiles should be used to understand how many infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness are enrolled in programs and services in each state, and where greater opportunities for access are needed.



Total Population Birth Through Age Three:
1,665,223



Estimated Total Population Birth Through Age Three Experiencing Homelessness:
74,076, or 4.45% of all infants and toddlers

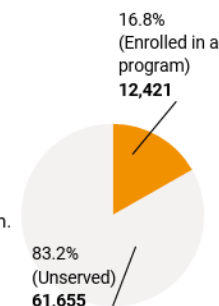


Total population Birth Through Age Three experiencing homelessness enrolled in a program:
12,421

Only 1 in 6 infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness is enrolled in a program.



Among the 74,076 infants and toddlers identified, only 12,421, which accounts for a mere 16.8%, are currently enrolled in a program.



Prioritizing Children Experiencing Homelessness through State Policies

Automatic or streamlined eligibility for children experiencing homelessness?	YES
Priority for children experiencing homelessness to receive child care subsidies?	YES
Exemptions from work requirements for parents experiencing homelessness?	YES
Co-payments waived for parents experiencing homelessness?	NO
Exemption or grace period for children experiencing homelessness to submit eligibility/enrollment documentation?	30 Days
Grace period for children experiencing homelessness to meet immunization requirements?	30 Days
State laws to prioritize children experiencing homelessness for preschool?	NO

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



Home Visiting (805)



Early Head Start (2,662)



Identified & Served by an LEA (8,964)



Unserviced (61,655)

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.



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

Homelessness Also Has Long- Term Consequences



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.



High school students who experience homelessness are **10x more likely to become pregnant or get someone pregnant**.



In addition to the academic impacts, homelessness in the early years can cause **developmental delays, social-emotional challenges, and long-term trauma**.



What does it mean to be Homeless Eligible?

Homeless Definition (1 of 3)

- Individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence
 - A **fixed** residence is one that is stationary, *permanent*, and not subject to change.
 - A **regular** residence is one that is used on a normal, standard, and *consistent* basis.
 - An **adequate** residence is one that is *sufficient* for meeting both the physical and psychological needs typically met in home environments.

Homeless Definition (2 of 3)

Examples of homelessness include children and youth living in:

- Shared housing due to economic hardship, loss of housing, or natural disasters
- Motels or hotels

Homeless Definition (3 of 3)

Examples cont.

- Public or private places not designed for sleeping
- Trailer parks or campgrounds
- Cars, parks, and abandoned buildings
- Emergency, transitional or any other shelters



"Life Without a Home:" Voices from the Tents, Shelters, Cars, Motels, and Couches of America
New York Times
February 20, 2024

A Couch Is Not a Home

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 due to space and safety. Parents may stay with abusive/exploitive people, or trade sex in order to have a place to stay.





Barriers can Education
help?

Homelessness Creates Barriers to Accessing Early Childhood Programs

- **High Mobility** of families moving in and out of motels, staying with others, living in cars, etc.
- **Lack of documentation** and other enrollment barriers, including child immunization and parent work requirements
- **Lack of transportation** to and from programs
- **Lack of awareness** among early care providers of both the definition of homelessness and the best ways to reach families

Homeless Education Federal Requirements

FEDERAL REQUIREMENTS ON EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT AND HOMELESSNESS				
EARLY HEAD START	EARLY INTERVENTION/ CHILD FIND	CHILD CARE	HUD HOMELESS ASSISTANCE	MATERNAL, INFANT, AND EARLY CHILDHOOD HOME VISITING (MIECHV)
Homeless families are categorically eligible. Also requires proactive outreach, grace periods for immunizations, and prioritized enrollment. Allows programs to reserve slots for homeless infants and toddlers	States must make early intervention services available to homeless infants/toddlers; LEAs must identify and evaluate children with disabilities experiencing homelessness.	Requires lead agencies to prioritize children experiencing homelessness and use funds for outreach and enrollment of homeless families and expedited enrollment. Lead agencies also must use some grants/contracts to expand the supply of child care for all infants and toddlers.	Requires programs serving families experiencing homelessness to designate a staff person to ensure that young children (including infants and toddlers) are enrolled in early childhood programs.	Some data collection on homelessness is required by the Health Resource and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services





Coordination with Homeless Liaisons

Homeless Liaisons (1)

- All LEAs must designate a homeless liaison to assist homeless children and youth with identification, enrollment, accessibility, and success in school.
 - A list of all homeless liaisons can be found on the CDE Homeless Education web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>.
- LEA liaisons must ensure that:
 - Homeless children and youth are identified including infants, toddlers, and preschool age children.

Homeless Liaisons (2)

- Access is provided for enrollment and retention
- Families are informed of and receive educational opportunities and services
- Children and youth who do not have immunizations are assisted

Homeless Liaisons (3)

- Ensure that educational rights are at each “parent area” within each early education program
- Public notice of educational rights should be posted in locations frequented by parents and guardians of such children and youth, including schools, shelters, libraries, and soup kitchens, in a form understandable to the parents and guardians. Like the You Can Enroll in School Poster.



Overview of CA ECE programs

Early Education Programs (1)

- There are different names and types of public preschool programs. Here are some that are administered in California:
 - California State Preschool Programs
 - State-funded Early Education Programs
 - Federal Head Start
 - Federal Early Head Start



Early Education Programs (2)

- American Indian Early Childhood Education Programs
- State and Tribal Quality Improvement System
- Federal Title I Preschools
- State Alternative Payment Programs





Key Service Strategies for Early Childhood Education (ECE)

Key Service Strategies ECE (1)

- Incorporate questions on housing status on enrollment applications. Housing Questionnaire can be accessed at the CDE Resources for Homeless Children and Youths web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cyl/>.
- Immediately enroll a child in an SEA- or LEA-run program, even if documentation is lacking

Key Service Strategies ECE (2)

- Be flexible with policies that may serve as a barrier such as enrollment, attendance, and parent participation
- Invite Homeless Liaisons to participate in various “events” such health fairs, job fairs, parent activities, etc.

Key Service Strategies ECE (3)

- Coordinate and collaborate with the homeless liaison
- Attend trainings hosted by LEAs about homeless rights and provisions
- Include the homeless liaison's contact information on preschool applications as a resource for families without proof of address



Key Strategies Homeless Ed. (HE)

Key Strategies for HE (1)

- Post notice of rights under EHCY in places that homeless families with young children frequent and in a manner that they can understand
 - One simply way to ensure that these posters are at each “parent area” within each early education program

Key Strategies for HE (2)

- Incorporate questions on housing status on enrollment applications. Housing Questionnaire can be accessed at the CDE Resources for Homeless Children and Youths web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cyl/>.
- Immediately enroll a child in an SEA- or LEA-run program, even if documentation is lacking
- Train early intervention staff, regional centers, and LEAs about homeless rights and provisions

Key Strategies for HE (3)

- Ensure that families receive information about preschool programs such as, Head Start, Early Head Start, and state-funded preschool programs
- Identify all infant/toddler programs, both public and private, within the community
- Continuously connect with homeless families prior to enrollment to build the relationship

Key Strategies for HE (4)

- Work with school personnel, including registrars, enrollment coordinators and liaisons, in identifying children under five years of age in the community
- Visit homeless shelters in your community to better gain awareness and reach out to the community
- Adjust program schedules to accommodate homeless families, particularly parents who work

Key Strategies for HE (5)

- Coordinate and collaborate with the homeless liaison
- Make sure that the preschool programs are part of kindergarten transition and enrollment activities
- Be flexible with policies that may serve as a barrier such as enrollment, attendance, and parent participation
- Participate in various “events” such health fairs, job fairs, parent activities, etc.

Key Strategies for HE (6)

- Include the homeless liaison's contact information on preschool applications as a resource for families without proof of address
- Work with
 - Shelters to refer families with young children
 - Medical outreach programs, especially in rural areas
 - Programs serving parenting homeless youth

Key Strategies for HE (7)

- Be familiar and a part of the California Child Care Resource & Referral (R&R) Network.
- This is a coordinating entity that provides support, technical assistance, training, and a unified voice to the local R&Rs. For more information, please visit their web site at <https://rrnetwork.org/>

California Child Care Resource & Referral



Management Bulletin 18-04 (1)

- The Early Learning and Care Division released Management Bulletin (MB) 18-04 in July 2018 which can be accessed on the CDE web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/cd/ci/mb1804.asp>.
- It provided the changes to the definition of homeless children and youth.
- These directives are in alignment with the Child Care and Development Block Grant regulations.

For More Information and Resources

- SchoolHouse Connection (Early Childhood Resources):
<https://schoolhouseconnection.org/earlychildhood/>
- California Department of Education, Homeless Education website:
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>
- California Homeless Education, Technical Assistance Centers: Early Care and Education for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness
<https://www.hetac.org/resources/ece>
- NCHE brief: Early Care and Education for Young Children Experiencing Homelessness <https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Early-Care-and-Education-for-Young-Children-Experiencing-Homelessnesspdf>



Homeless Education Poster (1)

Posters must be posted in areas frequented by parents, guardians, and unaccompanied homeless youth, in a manner and form understandable to them and include the Homeless Liaison contact information. To find the homeless education poster visit our website at the link provided.
<https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/cy/>

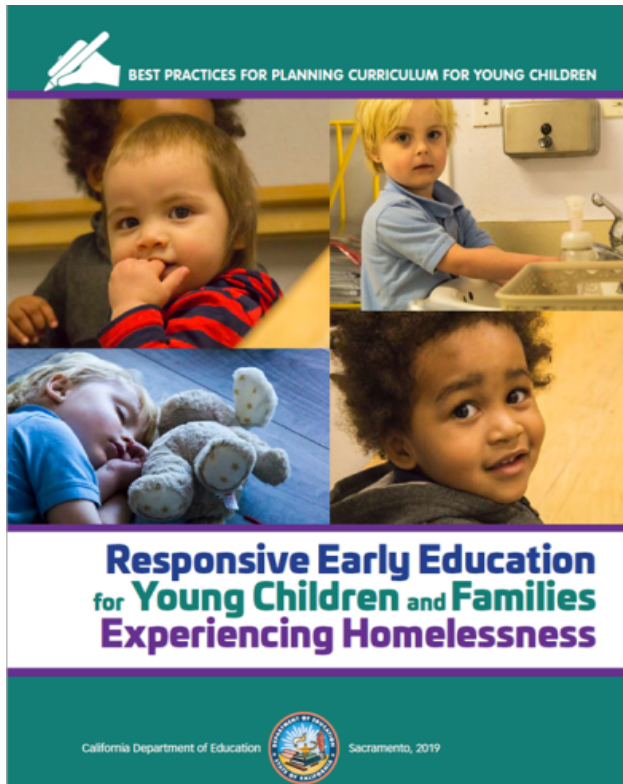


Homeless Education Poster (2)



- You can obtain free Spanish and English posters that will be mailed to you.
- You can download and print the poster in more than 8 languages.
- Visit the CDE Homeless Education Program page or contact us directly by email at HomelessED@cde.ca.gov.

Connecting to Early Childhood



[Download this resource](#)

Chapter 1: Definitions and Policies Related to Homelessness

Chapter 2: Learning about the Families with Young Children Experiencing Homelessness

Chapter 3: The Impact of Homelessness on Young Children's Development and Learning

Chapter 4: The Important Role of Early Childhood Programs in Supporting Children Experiencing Homelessness

Chapter 5: Responsive Relationships and Partnership with Families

The final sections of the book include a conclusion, glossary, references, and a list of recommended children's books.



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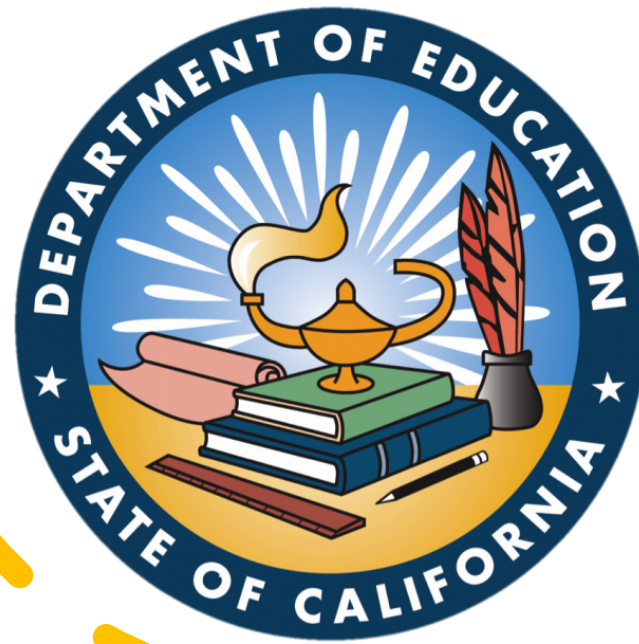
Questions?



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"A Sea of Change"

Contact the Presenters



- CDE Homeless Education web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/sp/hs/>
- CDE Homeless Education Program's Toll-free Number is 1-866-856-8214 and the general email is HomelessED@cde.ca.gov



Contact the Presenters



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