Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program 2020-21 State Evaluation Report

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Introduction

MCKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ACT OVERVIEW

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act was signed into federal law in 1987, requiring states to review and revise residency requirements for the enrollment of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The McKinney Act was amended in 1990, requiring states to eliminate all enrollment barriers and provide school access and support for academic success for students experiencing homelessness. McKinney Act funds could then be used to provide direct educational services to eligible students. In 1994, the education portion of the McKinney Act was included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), adding preschool services, greater parental input, and emphasis on interagency collaboration. In 2001, when the law was reauthorized as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act, Title X, Part C of the ESEA), it strengthened legislative requirements by requiring all local educational agencies (LEAs) to appoint a local liaison to ensure the law is implemented effectively at the local level. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) again amended the McKinney-Vento Act in December 2015 with changes taking effect in October 2016. This report covers programming between July 1, 2020 and June 30, 2021 and reflects the legal requirements outlined in the latest revision that began in 2016.

The McKinney-Vento Act outlines how state educational agencies must ensure that each child of an individual experiencing homelessness and each youth experiencing homelessness have equal access to the same free and appropriate public education as other children and youth, including a public preschool education. The McKinney-Vento Act uses the following definition for "children and youth experiencing homelessness."

Homeless children and youth:
1. Means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (within the meaning of section 103(a)(1)); and
2. Includes--
   a. 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;
   b. 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));
   c. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
   d. 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 (a) through (c).

Children and youth who meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homeless may also be identified as an "unaccompanied homeless youth," meaning they are not in the physical custody of their parent or legal guardian. There is no age range specified for an unaccompanied youth in the federal law. The upper age range is determined by what a state defines as school age,

unless the child is in special education, in which case the upper age range is 21 years old. There is no lower age range.

The McKinney-Vento Act also outlines the rights of students experiencing homelessness, including:
1. Immediate enrollment even when records are not present;
2. Remaining in the school of origin if in the student's best interest;
3. Transportation to the school of origin; and
4. Provision of support services that promote academic success.

EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM

PDE implements the McKinney-Vento Act through its ECYEH Program. PDE created a state plan that outlines Pennsylvania's implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act and a Basic Education Circular to offer guidance to LEAs regarding implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. PDE's website provides information regarding homelessness and the ECYEH Program: www.education.pa.gov/homeless. Updates, as they occur to align with ESSA, are posted there as well.

Instead of providing federal McKinney-Vento Act funds directly to LEAs, Pennsylvania employs a regional model for dispersing funds. Pennsylvania is divided into eight regions with each region having one regional coordinator whose primary responsibility is to implement the goals and objectives of the program. The regional coordinator position is filled by competitive bid on a three-year cycle. In some cases, the regional coordinators subcontract for additional program staff within their region or identify intermediate unit staff to support student identification and program activities. The regional model ensures that all children and youth experiencing homelessness have the opportunity to receive services or supports through the ECYEH Program.

The ECYEH state coordinator, based at PDE, is responsible for program coordination and collaboration at the state level and manages dispute resolutions among LEAs, should they occur. PDE contracts with the CSC, a subsidiary of the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, to provide technical assistance to the regions and LEAs. As part of that technical support the CSC maintains a website that includes statewide directories of the ECYEH Program staff, LEA homeless liaisons, and Pennsylvania shelters for families, victims of domestic violence, and runaway youth, in addition to other relevant resources. PDE and the CSC conduct technical assistance visits for the regions and prepare a comprehensive report of each region's results for continuous program improvement.

Additionally, the state office, through the CSC, contracts with external educational professionals who monitor LEA implementation and compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act and ESSA and submit their reports back to the CSC and PDE.

The goals of Pennsylvania's ECYEH Program are to:
1. Ensure that all children and youth experiencing homelessness enroll, participate, and have the opportunity to succeed in school;
2. Ensure children and youth experiencing homelessness receive a free and appropriate public education on an equal basis with all other children in the state; and
3. Eliminate and/or reduce educational barriers through local best practices and the authorized activities of the McKinney-Vento Act.

The main objectives of Pennsylvania's ECYEH Program are to:
1. Reduce the disruption in the educational lives of children and youth experiencing homelessness;
2. Increase awareness about the nature and extent of the problems children and youth experiencing homelessness have enrolling in and gaining access to educational programs and services;
3. Explain laws and policies already in place that help students overcome these barriers to education;
4. Build on laws and policies already in place that help students overcome these barriers to education;
5. Build the capacity of others to assist in identifying, enrolling, and ensuring the educational success of children and youth experiencing homelessness; and
6. Provide opportunities to collaborate with other statewide initiatives to improve academic achievement of students experiencing homelessness.

The regional coordinators' primary role is to make sure the McKinney-Vento Act is being followed in every Pennsylvania public school. Coordinators educate, troubleshoot, intervene, support, and collaborate with LEAs, shelters, agencies, and organizations to eliminate and/or reduce educational barriers and ensure that all children and youth experiencing homelessness receive a free and appropriate public education on an equal basis with all other children in the state. With the advent of LEA monitoring by external professionals in 2017-18, coordinators also prepare LEAs for monitoring and conduct monitoring follow-up as needed to support LEAs in complying with the McKinney-Vento Act.

The following map illustrates Pennsylvania's eight ECYEH regions.

Figure 1. ECYEH Program Regional Map
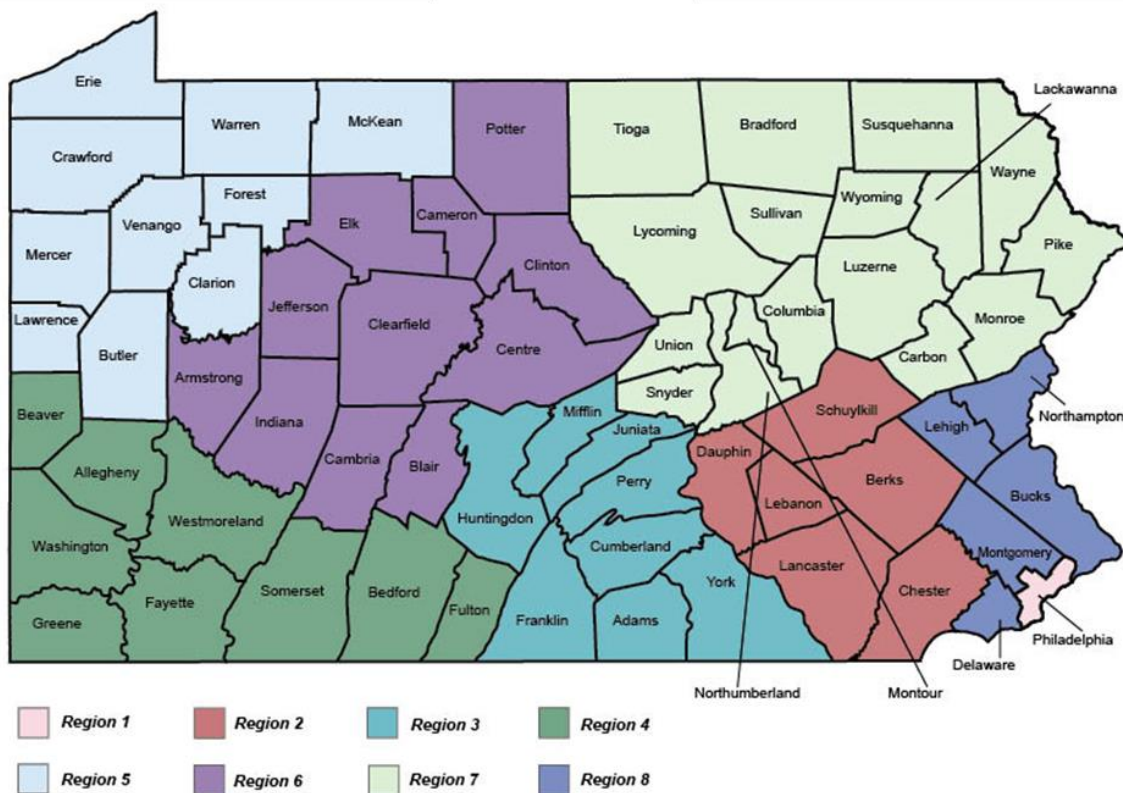
The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in the United States in March 2020, continued to influence the implementation of the ECYEH program for the 2020-21 program year. In-person events and services, including academic programs, were postponed, canceled, or adapted to remote implementation to reduce the spread of the disease. During the disruption, the ECYEH Program transformed operations to achieve the same goals and objectives listed above.

EVALUATION DESIGN AND ACTIVITIES

PDE's Bureau of School Support contracts with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit to conduct a comprehensive external evaluation of the ECYEH Program to fulfill the federal evaluation requirement. This requirement is laid out in subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) amended to read as follows:
SEC. 724. SECRETERIAL REPSONSIBILITES. (d) EVALUATION AND DISSEMINATION - The Secretary shall conduct evaluation and dissemination activities of programs designed to meet the educational needs of homeless elementary and secondary school students and may use funds appropriated under section 726 to conduct such activities.

The 2020-21 program evaluation was the 11th year of program evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation of Pennsylvania's ECYEH Program is to:
1. Examine the extent to which regions are providing support to LEAs to meet the goals and objectives of the program;
2. Examine the extent to which those students identified as experiencing homelessness receive services and support;
3. Identify the types of services and supports students received;
4. Examine the extent to which students identified as experiencing homelessness attend and succeed in school;
5. Build capacity within each region to examine results and make improvements based on data; and
6. Provide recommendations for overall program improvement.

In addition to program evaluation, evaluators work with PDE to prepare the portions of required annual federal reporting related to children and youth experiencing homelessness. Evaluators used the U.S. Department of Education *EDFacts* file formats and the Comprehensive State Performance Report to identify the required federal reporting data elements. Evaluators also used the National Center for Homeless Education's quality standards and evaluation guidance to ensure adequate data was included in the evaluation. Evaluators then worked with PDE to ensure that all data elements needed for federal reporting and program evaluation were identified and the most appropriate sources of data were used. Some data were collected at the program level and other data were collected at the state level; whenever possible, existing data sources were used, such as the Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS), PA-MEP database (MIS2000)[1], and Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).[2] Evaluators also used publicly available data for Title I, poverty, and urbanicity. The use of existing data sources

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[1] Migrant Education Program staff receive ongoing training related to ECYEH eligibility to support this process and collaboration. Migrant Education Program staff document, in the state migrant education database, criteria to determine those children and youth who meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness. All children and youth eligible for migrant services during the ECYEH program year are incorporated into the homeless identification and verification process.
[2] PDE contracted with Allegheny Intermediate Unit to conduct the statewide evaluation. As such, the evaluation team completed the necessary confidentiality protocols for data collection at the state level.

was intended to reduce the burden on LEAs and other organizations required to report on their homeless populations.

Data collection procedures at the program level rely on a web-based reporting system that promotes more secure and accurate data collection through an easier data reporting interface. Improvements to the data collection process reduced data management by ECYEH staff while providing ECYEH staff continuous access to monitor information reported by entities in their region.

The homeless liaison in LEAs where students were enrolled, prekindergarten program staff, representatives from shelters where children and youth resided, and regional or program staff provided the requested information. In some cases, ECYEH staff worked with shelters in their region to provide information at the county level instead of individual shelters reporting information.[3] Shelters receiving direct or indirect services from the ECYEH Program are required to be included in McKinney-Vento Act reporting.

To adhere to confidentiality in reporting afforded to domestic violence shelters,[4] evaluators used a separate data collection instrument and procedure for children and youth residing in domestic violence shelters. Evaluators developed this instrument and procedure in 2010-11 in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence. As domestic violence shelters now have their own data collection systems, evaluators also accept extracts with the same agreed-upon fields for McKinney-Vento Act reporting. Domestic violence shelters receiving direct or indirect services from the ECYEH Program are required to be included in McKinney-Vento Act reporting.

The PAsecureID[5] was a key data element for all individuals enrolled in school. The PAsecureID was used to pull data from other existing sources and to match data across multiple sources. Ultimately, the ECYEH Program is responsible for verifying children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness. Given this responsibility, PDE, ECYEH Program staff, evaluators, and PIMS staff worked together after the first year of the evaluation to secure permission for the ECYEH evaluation data collection to serve as the official source for flagging students experiencing homelessness in Pennsylvania. To accomplish this, evaluators conduct an extensive cross-referencing and follow-up process using data collected through the ECYEH Program, PIMS, MIS2000, and HMIS. After the cross-referencing and follow-up process is complete, evaluators compile a unique, comprehensive list of children and youth and their accompanying information. From this information, evaluators:
1. Prepare the homeless *EDFacts* files and information for the annual federal Comprehensive State Performance Report;
2. Provide the homeless flag for the PIMS system for all other PDE state and federal reporting for this population; and
3. Prepare the annual evaluation report.

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[3] Shelters have their own reporting requirements and are required to report information in HUD's HMIS. In regions where data sharing agreements are in place, applicable data was extracted from the HMIS and provided to the coordinator or directly to evaluators depending on the agreement, thus eliminating duplicate reporting.
[4] Domestic violence shelters are exempt from reporting in HMIS due to program confidentiality.
[5] PAsecureID is a unique, permanent, anonymous statewide student identification number assigned to all students upon their first entry into Pennsylvania's public school system.

In addition to data collected about identified children and youth, evaluators collect information on the work of the ECYEH Program staff. This data is also collected via the web-based system and includes details on the professional development and technical assistance ECYEH Program staff provide to LEAs, shelters, or other community organizations and agencies that address homelessness. Reporting also includes information regarding ECYEH Program staff participation in and contributions to homeless-related boards, consortia, or other meetings during which they educate on behalf of McKinney-Vento Act implementation in Pennsylvania.

HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

The state evaluation of the ECYEH Program for 2020-21 examined information about children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness, the services these children and youth received, and the work of the ECYEH Program staff. The Executive Summary provides a condensed representation of the findings explained throughout this report. Prior year evaluation reports are available on PDE's website: www.education.pa.gov/homeless.

The targeted audiences for this report are the program management at PDE, the state technical assistance providers, and ECYEH Program regional staff. The results can also be useful for other groups. The findings and results provided within this report should be used to guide program management and to assist the state program team in providing technical assistance and support to regional staff in order to improve implementation, outcomes, and results.

Findings presented in this report are provided for the state and delineated by region – as the regions are the sub-grantees and the means by which the McKinney-Vento Act is implemented in Pennsylvania. This report provides an overall picture of implementation, outcomes, and impacts of the ECYEH Program and addresses statewide and regional issues. Detailed information aggregated – at the county, LEA, or school level, when appropriate – is provided to the regional coordinators and PDE program staff to assist with needs assessment, internal program implementation, program improvement, and decision making.

Evaluators have included graphical representations of results along with supporting data tables. Pertinent percentages and counts are provided in the narrative sections. Throughout this report, for ease of reading, percentages may be rounded and as such, may not total 100 percent. Furthermore, evaluators have eliminated any instances of zero in tables (shown as a dash) or "0%" in graphs where the result represents no instances. In cases where zero percent is included in a graph, it means less than 1 percent.

This report should be used to highlight especially positive and successful implementation, outcomes, and programs as models. Care should be taken to avoid making comparisons across regions, as each region has differing numbers of LEAs, numbers of collaborating entities, reporting practices, ECYEH Program staff, and total child and youth counts. Additionally, regions have differing areas of focus based on regional need within the population experiencing homelessness. That said, differences among the regions can guide program improvement and technical assistance at the state level.

This report highlights findings regarding the ECYEH Program based on available data from the 2020-21 program year.

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Executive Summary

The Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program exists to ensure that each child and youth experiencing homelessness has equal access to the same free and appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youth. As such, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) created a state plan that outlines Pennsylvania's implementation of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 and issued a Basic Education Circular to offer guidance to local educational agencies (LEAs) regarding implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. The current state plan and Basic Education Circular, as well as other basic education circulars related to homelessness, are available on PDE's website: www.education.pa.gov/homeless.

The ECYEH Program structure is designed so that every child and youth identified as experiencing homelessness has an opportunity to receive needed support and services. Pennsylvania is divided into eight regions, each with a regional coordinator. Eight regional coordinators and their staffers provide outreach, training, and technical assistance to LEAs and connect children, youth, families, and LEAs to additional services and resources for individuals experiencing homelessness. The Center for Schools and Communities (CSC), a subsidiary of the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, provides statewide technical assistance to regions and LEAs. The statewide technical assistant monitors the regions to ensure compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act and maintains a resource website: https://homeless.center-school.org/resources/. The state coordinator, based at PDE, is responsible for program coordination and collaboration at the state level and manages dispute resolutions among LEAs should they occur. Additionally, the state office, through the CSC, contracts with external monitors who monitor LEA implementation and compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

The COVID-19 pandemic, which began in the United States in March 2020, continued to influence the implementation of the ECYEH program for the 2020-21 program year. In-person events and services, including academic programs, were postponed, canceled, or adapted to remote implementation to reduce the spread of the disease. During the disruption, the ECYEH Program transformed operations to achieve the same goals and objectives listed above.

Evaluators collected and analyzed data for the state evaluation from several sources to provide an assessment of homelessness as it relates to the McKinney-Vento Act in Pennsylvania. The purpose of the evaluation is to:
1. Examine the extent to which regions provide support to LEAs to meet the goals and objectives of the ECYEH Program;
2. Examine the extent to which children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness receive services and support;
3. Identify the types of services and supports children and youth received;
4. Examine the extent to which students identified as experiencing homelessness attend and succeed in school;
5. Build capacity within each region to examine results and make improvements based on data; and
6. Provide recommendations for overall program improvement.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION FINDINGS

Evaluators examined the extent to which the ECYEH Program offered outreach, professional development, technical assistance, and support to LEAs or other entities that serve the homeless population or on behalf of the families, children, and youth experiencing homelessness.

A total of 730 unique entities participated in some type of ECYEH-provided training, professional development, or workshop in 2020-21. Approximately 8,666 individuals participated, though this may include duplicates, as some individuals may have attended more than one event; and in some cases, regions were not able to provide event participant counts. A unique participant count is not available. LEAs and liaisons were the most represented entity and participant type. This is not surprising as LEAs are the largest entity group and are the first priority of the ECYEH Program, with LEA liaisons being directly involved with this population.

While ECYEH offers professional development or training to various entities, technical assistance is most often "request-based help" initiated by the LEAs, shelters, prekindergarten programs, agencies and organizations, or other groups. Individual entities may be counted in more than one of the technical assistance categories. Of the 754 entities receiving technical assistance:
1. 62 percent (468) were LEAs; 12 percent (90) were shelters; 23 percent (172) were groups, agencies, or organizations; and 3 percent (24) were prekindergarten programs; and
2. 73 percent (549) received child-specific technical assistance; 70 percent (527) received non-child specific technical assistance; 87 percent (654) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials; and 60 percent (455) received bulk supplies, such as bus passes, backpacks, school supplies, clothing, or hygiene items.

In addition to providing technical assistance and conducting trainings, presentations, and workshops, ECYEH staff members spend a portion of their time collaborating with other agencies, organizations, or groups as part of committees, boards, meetings, or consortia. Events were at the county- or regional-level with other entities that address homelessness, such as children and youth agencies, shelters, housing-related organizations or groups, prekindergarten programs, runaway and trafficking prevention groups, mental health agencies, social workers, drug and alcohol agencies, or food pantries. For 2020-21, ECYEH staff reported participating in 262 unique events. These events occurred annually (49 events), monthly (127 events), quarterly (51 events), or bi-monthly (35 events). ECYEH staff members' role was typically regular attendee. In 101 instances, staff held a leader/facilitator role in the event.

PROGRAM OUTCOME FINDINGS

Outreach and increased awareness regarding the McKinney-Vento Act and the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness are addressed in the objectives of the ECYEH Program and are the primary focus of program implementation. The program's success in meeting these objectives is reflected in the number of entities represented in reporting and also the number of children and youth who were identified, served, and reported. Program outcomes include child and youth characteristics for those served by the ECYEH Program and details describing the reporting entities.

Per federal reporting requirements, all public LEAs are required to report on students attending their schools who experience homelessness. LEAs are also encouraged to report younger siblings of enrolled students. Additionally, all entities that receive training, professional development, technical assistance, or resources from the ECYEH Program are required to report on children and youth experiencing homelessness who reside in their facility or attend their prekindergarten programs.

Public LEAs include school districts, charter schools, intermediate unit-operated prekindergarten programs,[6] and full-time (comprehensive) career and technical centers.[7] In the 2020-21 academic year, there were 499 school districts,[8] 177 charter and cyber charter schools, and 10 comprehensive career and technical centers.

Based on the unique, comprehensive list of identified students from across Pennsylvania, nearly all LEAs were represented. There were 18 school districts and 19 charter or cyber charter schools for which no students meeting the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness were reported. Of these 37 LEAs, three school districts and six charter or cyber charter schools indicated that they had no McKinney-Vento Act-eligible students to report. LEAs were notified of their reporting responsibilities routinely, and the regional coordinators frequently followed up with non-reporting LEAs to reinforce these obligations.

As a result of the coordinators' outreach and ongoing collaboration work, 32,666 children and youth were identified as experiencing homelessness in 2020-21. This is a decrease from 37,930 identified children and youth in 2019-20. Likely contributing to this decrease was the closure of physical school buildings and many provider spaces, including shelters, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of students enrolled in school identified as experiencing homelessness also decreased from 31,876 in 2019-20 to 27,235 in 2020-21. Students experiencing homelessness comprised 1.6 percent of the total Pennsylvania public school population during the 2020-21 school year; a decline from the prior year's 1.9 percent, highlighting the increased difficulty in identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness presented by the remote learning response to the pandemic itself. The latest national percentage of the enrolled population experiencing homelessness is from 2015-16 and is approximately 2.5 percent.[9]

Of the 27,235 children and youth in LEA prekindergarten through grade 12, 66 percent were doubled-up;[10] 22 percent were in shelters or transitional housing; 10 percent were in hotels or motels; and 2 percent were unsheltered. Nighttime status was not required for the birth to age 2 population or for children ages three to five and not enrolled in an LEA-operated prekindergarten program.

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[6] Not all intermediate units offer all prekindergarten programs (Early Intervention, Early Head Start, Head Start, Pre-K Counts). Additionally, Pittsburgh-Mt. Oliver IU2 and Philadelphia IU26 are incorporated into Pittsburgh and Philadelphia school districts, respectively. Students in kindergarten through grade 12 who attend intermediate unit schools or classrooms for instruction are attributed and reported by their home district, even if the student receives instruction in another school in the district or in another school district.
[7] Students who attend part-time career and technical centers are attributed to their home school for data and reporting purposes. Students who attend full-time career and technical centers are attributed to the career and technical center.
[8] Pennsylvania has 500 school districts; however, one very small district in suburban Philadelphia enrolls no students: Bryn Athyn School District, http://www.brynathynschooldistrict.org/.
[9] Appendix B of the Getting to Graduation Toolkit: https://nche.ed.gov/getting-to-graduation/
[10] Doubled-up is defined as children and youth who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.

Key findings about the 32,666 children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness include the following.

1. 17 percent were also identified as unaccompanied youth.[11]
2. 64 percent were classified as economically disadvantaged, though it is likely that many of those with unknown[12] status (29 percent) may have been economically disadvantaged as well.
3. 32 percent were Black or African American; 33 percent were White; 21 percent were Hispanic/Latino (any race); and 8 percent were classified as American Indian or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more races. Race could not be determined for 6 percent.
4. 8 percent were identified as English learners.
5. 3 percent were identified as migrant per Pennsylvania's Migrant Education Program.
6. 26 percent were identified as having a disability, with 36 percent of those identified categorized as having a "specific learning disability."

For the 27,235 enrolled students experiencing homelessness, 63 percent attended LEAs categorized as city or suburb and 67 percent attended high-poverty LEAs (i.e., LEAs that enroll 40 percent or more of students classified as low income). This information was unknown for the 12 percent of the enrolled population only identified by shelters that did not provide LEA information.

PROGRAM IMPACTS

Program impacts include findings that document the extent to which the anticipated outcomes of the ECYEH Program occur, including reducing or eliminating enrollment or education barriers, remaining in enrolled students' school of origin, and receiving services aligned with the authorized activities outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act. Student academic outcomes are also included.

Barriers are defined as situations that interfere with a child or youth's school enrollment, attendance, or educational success. Overall, 12 percent of enrolled students were reported as having one or more barriers to enrollment, attendance, and/or academic success. The most common barrier was determining if a student was eligible for homeless services, followed by transportation. Transportation issues remain high especially in light of LEA financial constraints or logistical challenges in arranging transportation.

One of the rights guaranteed to enrolled students by the McKinney-Vento Act is to remain in their school of origin if it is determined to be in their best interest. Of the 27,235 enrolled students identified as experiencing homelessness, LEA/school mobility[13] could be determined for 88 percent, of which 84 percent remained in their LEA/school combination during the program year. Nearly two percent had more than two LEA/school combinations.

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[11] An unaccompanied youth is any person age 21 or younger who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
[12] Children and youth with 'unknown' status include children in the birth to age 2 category, ages 3 to 5 and not enrolled in prekindergarten, those residing in shelters, and migrant children for whom this information was unavailable.
[13] LEA/school mobility measures the movement of an enrolled child or youth among multiple LEAs or between school buildings within an LEA during the program year.

Students experiencing homelessness also have the right to support services that promote academic success. Overall, 76 percent of the 32,666 children and youth were documented as receiving service at the individual level. Tutoring or other instructional support was, by far, the most prevalent service received.

State academic assessment data for 2020-21 includes the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), and the Keystone Exams. State assessment data were available for approximately 52 percent of students experiencing homelessness in grades where the assessments are given. Overall, 26 percent scored in the proficient or advanced level in reading/literature, 13 percent scored proficient or advanced in math/Algebra I, and 36 percent of students scored proficient or advanced in science/biology.

School attendance data was available for 83 percent of enrolled students, of which 47 percent of students attended 90 percent or more of the days enrolled.

Of the 12,147 students enrolled in grades 7-12, 3.4 percent dropped out of school, with grade 12 having the highest dropout percentage at 7.7 percent, followed by grade 11 at 4.5 percent, and grade 10 at 3.3 percent.

Of 2,157 grade 12 students for whom graduation status was known, 73.0 percent graduated. Additionally, 26 grade 11 students (1.6 percent) graduated or obtained a high school equivalency diploma.

REFLECTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Reporting accuracy and consistency increases each year. Furthermore, reporting by new entities, notably Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and prekindergarten programs, offers the ECYEH Program a more complete understanding of homelessness. As reporting has improved, several themes have emerged.
1. Regional staff provide a wealth of training, technical assistance, and coordination of services to LEAs and entities that serve children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness.
2. Most children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness (76 percent for 2020-21) receive individual support or services.
3. Children and youth experiencing homelessness are predominately economically disadvantaged and attend LEAs that have high levels of poverty.
4. Transportation remains one of the two most common barriers statewide.
5. Most students remain in their LEA/school of origin.
6. Despite some consistency for a large portion of children and youth, there are students who experience extreme mobility or experience barriers to enrollment.
7. Homeless counts vary considerably across the regions.
8. The ECYEH Program is focusing more on the under-five population, yet prekindergarten identification protocols and McKinney-Vento Act reporting guidance does not align.
9. Regional staff have expanded responsibilities to meet the needs of an increasing number of children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness and an increasing list of collaborating entities.

Considering these themes, evaluators recommend that:
1. Regional staff should continue to improve documentation of ECYEH-offered professional development, technical assistance, and engagement activities conducted by, or with, other entities that work with or support homelessness to accurately represent the work that is occurring on behalf of the ECYEH Program.
2. State and regional ECYEH staff continue to explore creative transportation options to support LEAs with common barriers.
3. Regional staff continue to work with local Continuum of Care contemporaries.
4. Regional staff continue to explore options for instructional support to students outside of the standard LEA instructional period, including but not limited to, afterschool/summer programs or students residing in shelters.
5. Regional staff consider professional development or technical assistance to LEAs related to examining prekindergarten programming options for younger siblings of enrolled students; students' school attendance, dropout, and graduation rates; and participation in academic support activities.
6. Regional staff continue to reach out to non-reporting LEAs to ensure that the LEA(s) understands their McKinney-Vento Act obligations and how their LEA's reporting contributes to the ECYEH ecosystem and also that the LEA(s) have protocols in place to identify and report eligible children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Findings

Findings are grouped into three sections: program implementation, program outcomes, and program impacts including student outcomes. As described in the Evaluation Design and Activities section of this report, evaluators compiled data from several sources to provide an assessment of child and youth homelessness in Pennsylvania as it relates to the McKinney-Vento Act. In all cases, children and youth identified by more than one type of entity or a non-LEA entity are reported with their LEA(s) whenever LEA information is provided.

Program implementation findings reveal the extent to which the ECYEH Program offered professional development, technical assistance, or support to LEAs, other entities that serve the homeless population, or on behalf of the families, children, and youth experiencing homelessness. Information on trainings and workshops, technical assistance and bulk supplies, and meetings, consortia, and board participation is collected at the regional level via a web-based data collection system. The process by which this information is collected has been refined each year to better capture services provided by the ECYEH staff.

Program outcomes findings reveal information about the children and youth identified and served through the ECYEH Program and information about LEAs and schools identified students attended. Children and youth information is collected through ECYEH Program data collection, PIMS, MIS2000, HMIS, individual shelter extracts, and non-LEA prekindergarten reports. LEA and school information comes from data made publicly available by PDE, the National Center for Education Statistics, and LEAs.

Program impact findings reveal the extent to which the anticipated outcomes for children and youth served by the ECYEH Program occurred. Anticipated child and youth outcomes include reducing or eliminating enrollment or education barriers, remaining in the school of origin, and receiving services aligned with the authorized activities outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act. Student attendance and academic outcomes are also included in this section. This information comes from the service delivery portions of the ECYEH student-level data collection, the bulk supplies portion of the technical assistance web-based reporting process, PIMS, MIS2000, and shelter reporting.

PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Coordinators train, troubleshoot, intervene, support, and collaborate with LEAs, shelters, prekindergarten programs, agencies, and organizations to eliminate or reduce educational barriers and ensure that all children and youth experiencing homelessness receive a free and appropriate public education on an equal basis with all other children in the state.

Professional Development, Technical Assistance, and Collaboration

Professional development and technical assistance to LEAs, parents and caregivers, shelters, and organizations serving the homeless population command a large portion of the ECYEH Program's staff time and play an important role in implementing the McKinney-Vento Act as outlined in the state plan.

Outreach to LEAs and shelters has been a longstanding priority for the ECYEH Program. In recent years, there has been increased focus on outreach to non-LEA prekindergarten

programs. Likewise, there has been a more systematic focus on regional coordinators' collaboration with agencies and organizations that work directly with individuals experiencing homelessness to increase awareness of the McKinney-Vento Act and to align service delivery.

Each year, evaluators work with regional coordinators to improve data collection, which more precisely captures their and their staffers' and improves the consistency of reporting across regions. A web-based tracking system was implemented in the 2016-17 program year. As with any new system, there were growing pains in how regions classified the differing services they offered. Though efforts in consistency are improving, variations among the regions should be viewed with caution as they may reflect differences innate to the natural variations of the region. The intent of this section is to highlight the scope and depth of the McKinney-Vento Act outreach provided across the state.

Recipients of ECYEH Services

Evaluators examined ECYEH-offered trainings, professional development, and workshops. Professional development captured here was categorized as liaison training, McKinney-Vento 101, ECYEH 101, and McKinney-Vento special topics, which included transportation or training geared to specific audiences such as special education directors or various educational or community groups. Preparing LEAs for external monitoring or conducting monitoring follow-up is also reported in special topics under professional development.

Professional development could have been provided at the regional, county, LEA, entity, or individual level. Likewise, the same event could have occurred once at the regional level or multiple times at LEA or county levels. Furthermore, as liaisons change throughout the year, liaison training at the individual level also occurs. To mediate the variations in the number of events offered, professional development is examined by who received the professional development.

Figure 2 on the following page shows attendance by entity type: LEAs (including LEAs with prekindergarten programs); non-LEA prekindergarten programs or services; shelters, emergency, or transitional housing; and agencies, organizations, or groups.

There were 730 unique entities that participated in one or more ECYEH-provided trainings, professional development, or workshops during the 2020-21 program year.

Figure 2. Professional Development Attendance by Entity Type

Entity Receipt of ECYEH-Provided Trainings, Workshops, and Presentations by Entity Type

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
■ Agency/organization	112	23	4	12	6	34	3	21	9
■ Prekindergarten programs	11	1	3	-	-	6	-	-	1
■ Shelter	34	8	-	-	1	10	-	11	4
■ Local education agency	573	60	87	54	130	74	3	81	84
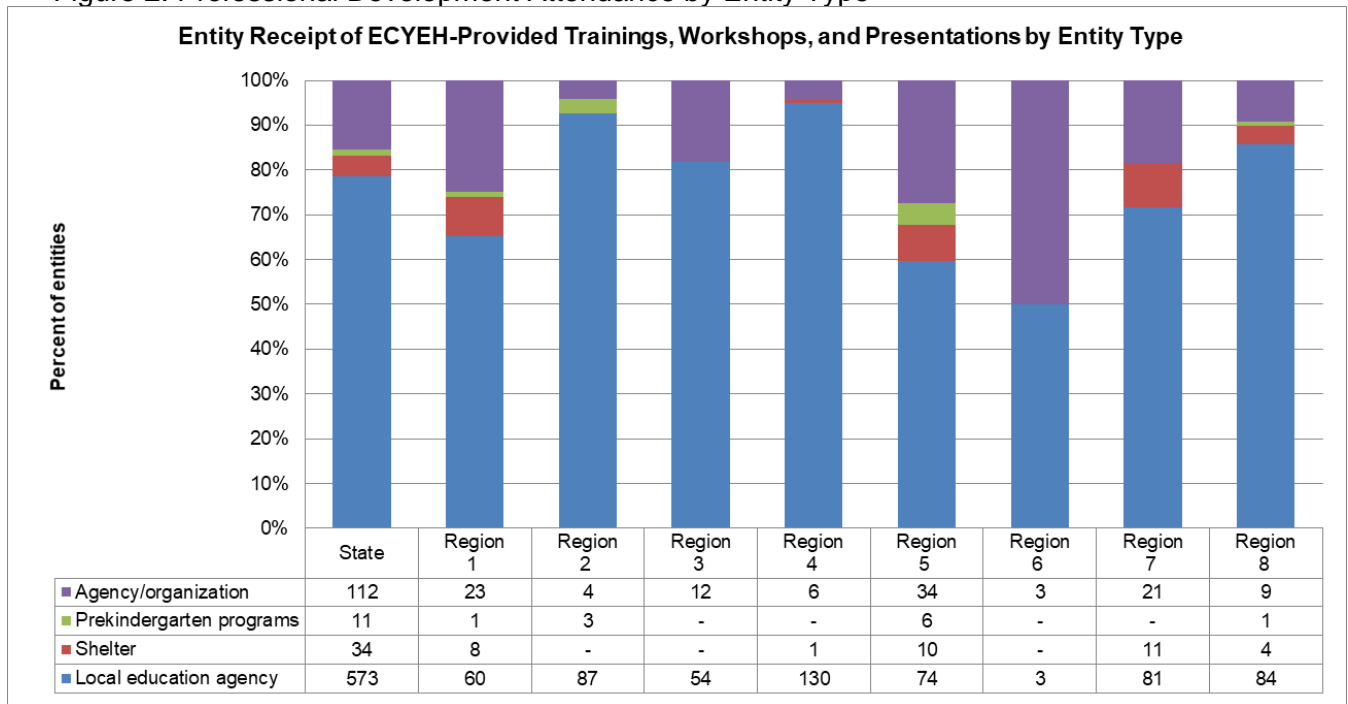
Figure 3 below shows participation by individual participant count and role. Overall, 8,666 individuals participated, though this may include duplicates, as some participants may have attended more than one event. In some cases, attendees held more than one of the designated roles though only one role was selected to represent that attendee. A unique participant count is not available.

Figure 3. Professional Development Attendance by Participant Role

Participant Receipt of ECYEH-Provided Trainings, Workshops, and Presentations by Participant Type

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
■ Other staff	5,728	2,321	819	173	244	1,025	20	988	138
■ Administrative staff	1,013	613	46	16	44	183	2	95	14
■ Title I staff	39	-	15	-	5	9	2	5	3
■ Special education staff	477	227	170	-	5	58	2	11	4
■ Liaisons	1,409	206	159	103	359	255	3	128	196

Overall, LEAs were the most represented group and their liaisons were the largest of the defined participant types. This is not surprising as LEAs are the largest entity group and are the priority of the ECYEH Program, with LEA liaisons being directly involved with the McKinney-Vento eligible population. Some LEAs, especially those with large numbers of students experiencing homelessness, have a separately designated liaison in each of their buildings and this building-level liaison works in collaboration with the required LEA-wide liaison. As such, liaison counts may look inflated. Regional coordinators and their staff typically hold at least two trainings specifically for LEA liaisons. They also supported LEAs that were scheduled to be monitored. In 2020-21, 1,409 liaisons (duplicate count) were reported as attending one or more trainings held by ECYEH staff, and 80 liaisons were reported as participating in a session that focused on LEA monitoring preparation and/or follow-up.

While ECYEH provides professional development or training to various entities, technical assistance is most often request-based help initiated by the LEAs, shelters, prekindergarten programs, agencies and organizations, or other groups. Technical assistance categories included child/family-specific, child/family non-specific, McKinney-Vento Act-related materials, or supplies. Child/family-specific and child/family non-specific technical assistance typically occurred through phone calls or emails. Technical assistance frequency to an entity was captured as once, occasionally, or often. Receipt of McKinney-Vento Act-related materials or resources was documented as 'yes' or 'no' and in many cases, these were materials or resources provided in bulk to the entity. If applicable, child/family-specific technical assistance resulting in services provided to an individual child/youth or family is then documented in service delivery for that child/youth.

A particular entity may have received all four kinds of technical assistance over the course of the program year. As such, an individual entity may be counted in more than one of the technical assistance categories. Regions reported a total of 754 unique LEAs, shelters, prekindergarten programs, and groups, agencies, or organizations as receiving support through one or more of the technical assistance categories. Of the 754 entities receiving technical assistance, 62 percent (468) were LEAs; 12 percent (90) were shelters; 23 percent (172) were groups, agencies, or organizations; and three percent (24) were non-LEA prekindergarten programs.

Of the 468 LEAs that received technical assistance:
- 359 LEAs (77 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, of which 193 LEAs received this type of technical assistance 'often,' 134 LEAs received this type of technical assistance 'occasionally,' and 32 received this child specific technical assistance 'once.'
- 340 LEAs (73 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 250 LEAs received this type of technical assistance 'often,' 74 LEAs received this type of technical assistance 'occasionally,' and 16 received this type of technical assistance 'once.'
- 448 LEAs (96 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials.
- 351 LEAs (75 percent) received bulk supplies such a backpacks, school supplies, bus passes, clothing, toiletries, or blankets.

Of the 90 shelter, emergency, or transitional housing facilities that received technical assistance:
- 61 facilities (68 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, of which 20 facilities received this type of technical assistance 'often' and 41 facilities received this type of technical assistance 'occasionally.'
- 59 facilities (66 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 46 facilities received this type of technical assistance 'often' and 13 facilities received this type of technical assistance 'occasionally.'
- 78 facilities (87 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act related materials.
- 49 facilities (54 percent) received bulk supplies.

Of the 172 agencies, organizations, or groups that received technical assistance:
- 121 entities (70 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, of which 21 entities received this type of technical assistance 'often,' 98 entities received this type of technical assistance 'occasionally,' and two entities received this type of technical assistance 'once.'
- 120 entities (70 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 53 entities received this type of technical assistance 'often' and 67 entities received this type of technical assistance 'occasionally.'
- 104 entities (60 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials.
- 54 entities (31 percent) received bulk supplies.

Of the 24 non-LEA prekindergarten programs that received technical assistance support:
- 8 entities (33 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, all eight of which received this type of technical assistance 'occasionally.'
- 8 entities (33 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which one entity received this type of technical assistance 'often' and seven entities received this type of technical assistance 'occasionally.'
- 24 entities (100 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials.
- 1 entity (4 percent) received bulk supplies.

Meetings, Boards, Consortia and Committees

In addition to facilitating professional development and providing technical assistance, ECYEH staff members spend a portion of their time collaborating with other agencies, organizations, or groups by participating in meetings, boards, consortia, or committees. The number of entities that work with children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness varies greatly among the regions, though there are some commonalities.

In 2020-21, ECYEH staff reported participating in 262 unique events. These events occurred annually (49 events), monthly (127 events), quarterly (51 events), or bi-monthly (35 events). Typically, ECYEH staff members' role was regular attendee. In 101 instances, staff held a leader/facilitator role in the event. Event attendees ranged from two to 110 people, with 38 people being the average number of people at an event.

Generally, events were county or regional-level meetings with other entities that work with homelessness, such as children and youth agencies, shelters, housing-related organizations or groups, prekindergarten programs, runaway and trafficking prevention groups, mental health agencies, social workers, drug and alcohol agencies, or food pantries.

ECYEH Program efforts for outreach through training, technical assistance, or collaboration not only spread the word about the McKinney-Vento Act and the ECYEH Program, but also assisted in the identification of children/youth and families. Increasing counts of children and youth experiencing homelessness are a direct result of ECYEH staff outreach and collaboration. Likewise, the focused preparation of and follow-up with LEAs regarding monitoring has also increased identification and reporting of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

State Technical Assistance

In 2020-21 the Center for Schools and Communities ECYEH program staff provided two regional technical assistance visits virtually for the Fall 2020 and Spring 2021 to provide support, guidance, and recommendations to each of the eight regional offices. ECYEH program staff conduct these two technical assistance visits to every region each year, while the PDE program officer annually monitors each region to ensure program compliance to the state plan and implementation of the regional contracts. Findings from these visits contribute to statewide staff meetings and the state conference.

ECYEH technical assistance staff also coordinate and facilitate state-level professional development activities, often in collaboration with regional coordinators or other state personnel throughout each program year. These state-level professional development activities support regional coordinators, and additionally, provide outreach and information to other programming and services that work with children, youth and families. ECYEH State highlighted activities for the 2020-21 program year include:

1. Summer 2020 COVID-19/pandemic-specific support resources, updates, webinars, and trainings:
   a. National Network for Youth Homeless Youth Service Provider Call with United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH), Centers for Disease Control (CDC) & Administration for Children and Families (ACF) to obtain COVID-19 updates to better serve youth experiencing homelessness.
   b. National Safe Place Network (NSPN), National Network for Youth (NN4Y) and National Runaway Safeline (NRS) Host National Discussion COVID-19
   c. USICH presentations from federal partners regarding homelessness and the pandemic.
   d. SchoolHouse Connection/National Network for Youth webinar "Coronavirus Funding and Policy on Child and Youth Homelessness" to identify possible resources and information for distribution.
   e. Regular SchoolHouse Connection's virtual conversations to keep abreast of legislative changes, COVID-19 resources and specific strategies for students experiencing homelessness.
   f. "Our Names are Destiny, Lorinda, and Jose: Navigating Homelessness During COVID-19" to identify potential strategies for student success.
   g. NN4Y webinar "COVID-19 Federal Partners Call with Youth Homelessness Service Providers" to assess program relevance and identify potential resources for ECYEH regional offices/LEAs.
   h. Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) coordinated online conversation regarding ECE services during the pandemic.
   i. Listening session for state's youth virtual town hall to hear about PA's youth development efforts during the pandemic.

     j.   National Law Center for Homelessness and Poverty's "Racial Equity, Homelessness, & COVID-19" webinar to assess program relevance and potential trainers.

     k.   "Homelessness & COVID-19: A Merger of Two Epidemics" coordinated by the National Institute for Health Care Management Foundation to assess program relevance and identify potential presenters.

     l.   NN4Y/SHC webinar "Family and Youth Homelessness in the Wake of COVID-19: A Virtual Congressional Briefing Series 1, 2, 3, and 4 (providers) to assess potential resources/program relevance.

     m.   "Providing Services to Domestic Violence Victims During COVID-19" sponsored by the Housing Alliance of Pennsylvania to assess program relevance and possible presenters.

     n.   Philadelphia's Children's Work Group Early Childhood Discussion to learn how the School District of Philadelphia will address academic needs of students in shelters through virtual learning provided by the school district for the 2020-21 school year.

2. Participation in National Listening Session – Preventing Online Child Sexual Exploitation organized by the national Office on Trafficking on Persons.

3. Participation in July 2020 A Way Home America/Youth Collaboratory State of the Movement to End Youth Homelessness 2020: Strengthening Our Shared Strategy Toward Liberation.

4. Participation at additional SchoolHouse Connection trainings including:

     a.   "Back-to-School 2020: Challenges and Strategies for Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness";

     b.   Supporting High School Students Experiencing Homelessness: Lessons from Reading, PA (SchoolHouse Connection); and

     c.   McKinney-Vento Voices: Capturing the Voices of our Youth and Families, National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAECYH).

5. Co-facilitated October 2020 Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference with approximately 1,000 individuals registered. Topics included exemplary homeless liaisons, mental health, school counselor partnerships, early childhood coordination, legal issues for unaccompanied homeless youth, the McKinney-Vento Act law, self-care, dropout prevention, housing instability, racial equity, and human trafficking.

6. Provided ECYEH LEA Monitor Training for all monitors for the 2020-21 program year.

7. PDE co-coordinated and co-facilitated American Rescue Plan (ARP)/ Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief Fund (ESSER) focus group/stakeholders sessions June 2021.

There is also consistent support, training, and technical assistance for the ECYEH regional coordinators and their offices. Regular email and phone contact is encouraged for technical assistance support and bi-monthly regional meetings organized by the ECYEH program staff give regional coordinators and their support staff the opportunity to hear state team updates, engage with each other, and learn, discuss, brainstorm and problem solve complicated situations across various regions in the state. These meetings were held both virtually and in-person throughout the 2020-21 program year due to COVID 19.

ECYEH program staff also coordinate, facilitate and present at the statewide Paving the Way to Educational Success conference and encourage the regional offices to also present and facilitate workshops and networking spaces throughout the event. ECYEH program staff also

attend the annual national conference to both promote the PA State ECYEH Program as well as enhance their own professional development.

All venues of program implementation – ECYEH-offered outreach, support, training, technical assistance; ECYEH-received, training, technical assistance, and monitoring; and LEA monitoring – are designed with the intention of improving outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness.

PROGRAM OUTCOMES

Outreach and increased awareness regarding the McKinney-Vento Act and the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness are addressed in the objectives of the ECYEH Program and are the primary focus of program implementation. The program's success in meeting these objectives is reflected in the number of entities represented in reporting and also the number of children and youth who were identified, served, and reported. Program outcomes include child and youth characteristics for those served by the ECYEH Program and details describing the reporting entities.

Per federal reporting requirements, all public LEAs are required to report on students attending their schools who experience homelessness. LEAs are also encouraged to report younger siblings of enrolled students. Additionally, all entities that receive training, professional development, technical assistance, or resources from the ECYEH Program are required to report on children and youth experiencing homelessness who reside in their facility or attend their prekindergarten programs.

Public LEAs include school districts, charter schools, intermediate unit-operated prekindergarten programs,[14] and full-time (comprehensive) career and technical centers.[15] In the 2020-21 academic year, there were 499 school districts,[16] 177 charter and cyber charter schools, and 10 comprehensive career and technical centers.

Based on the unique, comprehensive list of identified students from across Pennsylvania, nearly all LEAs were represented. There were 18 school districts and 19 charter or cyber charter schools for which no students meeting the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness were reported. Of these 37 LEAs, three school districts and six charter or cyber charter schools indicated that they had no students to report. LEAs were notified of their reporting responsibilities routinely, and the regional coordinators frequently followed up with non-reporting LEAs to reinforce these obligations.

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[14] Not all intermediate units offer all prekindergarten programs (Early Intervention, Early Head Start, Head Start, Pre-K Counts). Additionally, Pittsburgh-Mt. Oliver IU2 and Philadelphia IU26 are incorporated into Pittsburgh and Philadelphia school districts, respectively. Students in kindergarten through grade 12 who attend intermediate unit schools or classrooms for instruction are attributed and reported by their home district, even if the student receives instruction in another school in the district or in another school district.
[15] Students who attend part-time career and technical centers are attributed to their home school for data and reporting purposes. Students who attend full-time career and technical centers are attributed to the career and technical center.
[16] Pennsylvania has 500 school districts; however, one very small district in suburban Philadelphia enrolls no students: Bryn Athyn School District, http://www.brynathynschooldistrict.org/.

Further exploration of the LEAs with no identified students or reporting zero students[17] revealed that many of the LEAs were small (19 LEAs had fewer than 500 students), served a subset of the total K-12 population (20 LEAs), and/or enrolled few students from low-income families (15 LEAs).[18] In fact, many (19 LEAs) had a combination of these conditions. Each of these conditions provides a plausible rationale as to why an LEA did not have or identify any students experiencing homelessness. Each year regional coordinators make it a priority to reach out to LEAs where no students are identified, and the number of entities not included in reporting or reporting zero students consistently declines due to their efforts. However, outreach to charter schools remains a challenge. Liaison turnover appears to be more pervasive in charter schools and affects accurate and timely reporting. With new charter schools established each year, outreach to these LEAs is especially challenging. In an effort to identify liaison changes in a timely fashion, evaluators began sending automated email reminders for reporting identified children and youth. These reminders provided undeliverable notifications that regional staff used to follow up. Evaluators also conducted periodic checks throughout the year and notified regional staff of LEAs that had not identified students at the time of the check. Furthermore, LEA monitoring has increased LEA awareness of the federal requirement. Each of these strategies has contributed to fewer LEAs reporting zero students experiencing homelessness or not reporting at all each year. Since 2016-17 the total number of LEAs with no students identified decreased by nearly half (69 to 37); though there were only 32 in 2019-20, once again reflecting the increased difficulty in identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness presented by the remote learning response to the pandemic itself.

As a result of ECYEH Program outreach to non-LEAs, primarily shelters and prekindergarten programs, there is a substantial portion of children and youth reported only by such entities. Children and youth identified by a non-LEA and an LEA are always reported with the LEA. Children and youth identified by a non-LEA only but with LEA information are also reported with the LEA. Children and youth are only reported with a non-LEA entity if that entity is the only source of homeless identification and no LEA information can be verified. In the 2020-21 year, evaluators collected shelter data from all counties.

With increased awareness and more accurate and complete reporting, more children and youth identified by shelter entities could be matched to their LEA and were reported with their LEA.

In 2020-21, 95 non-LEA entities[19] reported 7,620 children and youth (23 percent of identified children and youth) who could not be tied to an LEA. Many of the children and youth (4,442) reported by these facilities were birth to age 2, ages 3 to 5 (not enrolled in prekindergarten), or attending non-LEA prekindergarten programs. Non-LEA facilities reporting increases with ongoing coordinator outreach, state level collaboration, and increased awareness of reporting responsibilities of these entities.

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[17] Even if an LEA did not identify any students, students experiencing homelessness may have attended that LEA at some point during the program year either before a precipitating event or after becoming housed. Likewise, students identified in a shelter with no identifying LEA and students in domestic violence shelters may have also attended a non-reporting LEA.
[18] The LEA's percent of low-income families was less than 40 percent.
[19] In every case, non-LEA entities are reported at the aggregate county level. As such, one non-LEA entity may be reporting several different sites within a county.

Children and Youth Characteristics

In alignment with federal reporting requirements, children and youth experiencing homelessness are identified by their nighttime status (fixed, regular, adequate) and are reported based on their age or grade category. As a result of ESSA, the definition for who is eligible for homeless identification and services under the McKinney-Vento Act shifted. While the under-five population is still captured in the same way, as of December 2016, awaiting foster care was no longer considered eligible and the out-of-school population – youth who are age 21 or younger, have not graduated, and meet the definition of McKinney-Vento Act homelessness – are no longer reported unless they are enrolled in an LEA-operated high school in college (grade 13) program.

In 2020-21, 32,666 children and youth were identified as experiencing homelessness. This is a decrease when compared to the 37,930 identified children and youth in 2019-20 and a decrease from the 39,221 identified children and youth in 2018-19. The ECYEH Program typically identifies more children and youth experiencing homelessness with each additional year of operation. This continued growth in identified children and youth is a direct result of the ECYEH Program outreach to LEAs, shelters, and prekindergarten programs. Moving away from the pandemic, it will be interesting to learn if the trend in increasing identification will resume beyond the 2020-21 program year.

The ECYEH program identified a decrease in enrolled students experiencing homelessness: 31,876 in 2019-20 and 27,235 in 2020-21. **The decline in the overall count is fairly uniform across all age/grade categories, indicating that the impact of the pandemic presented difficulties in identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness regardless of the age/grade category.**

The sections that follow provide homeless information and demographics for identified children and youth experiencing homelessness based on all reported children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness at any point during the ECYEH Program year (July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021).

PDE reports for 2020-21 year showed a public school (school districts, charter/cyber charter schools, comprehensive technical centers) October 1 enrollment count of 1,692,999 students.[20] In 2020-21, 27,235 of the 32,666 children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness were enrolled in school. Students experiencing homelessness made up 1.6 percent of the total public school enrolled population; a decline from the prior year's 1.9 percent, highlighting the increased difficulty in identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness presented by the remote learning response to the pandemic itself. The latest national percentage of the enrolled population experiencing homelessness is from 2015-16 and is approximately 2.5 percent.[21]

Homeless information and demographics in this section reflect the required federal reporting elements: age/grade categories, nighttime status, unaccompanied youth status, disability categories, English learner status, migrant status, race/ethnicity, and economic disadvantaged status. Demographic information is not available for every individual identified. What exists is based upon the data source from which the information was collected. Each section that follows will indicate the population included in the demographic data element.

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[20] https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/Enrollment
[21] Appendix B of the Getting to Graduation Toolkit: https://nche.ed.gov/getting-to-graduation/

Figure 4 below shows the age/grade breakdown of the 32,666 children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness. The federal reporting categories include: birth to age 2, ages 3 to 5 (not enrolled in prekindergarten), prekindergarten (LEA or non-LEA prekindergarten programs), and kindergarten through grade 12 (including ungraded). No grade 13 students were identified as experiencing homelessness.

The ECYEH Program's focus continues to increase on the reporting of under-five children (not yet in kindergarten). Differences among regions in the prekindergarten categories are most likely reflective of differing migrant populations, differing numbers of prekindergarten programs (both LEA and non-LEA), differing numbers of shelters among the regions, the extent to which each of these reporting entities reported on children in the under-five categories, and the extent to which LEAs report on non-enrolled siblings of identified students.

Figure 4. Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Age/Grade Category

2020-21 Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Age/Grade Category

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
Grade 12	2,457	309	615	214	363	225	149	207	375
Grade 11	1,842	209	451	172	301	143	96	162	308
Grade 10	1,921	234	533	187	265	148	81	151	322
Grade 9	2,054	243	584	183	303	138	85	158	360
Grade 8	1,914	228	493	212	282	151	90	157	301
Grade 7	1,959	263	458	219	286	148	97	165	323
Grade 6	2,077	232	555	211	314	158	94	174	339
Grade 5	2,043	282	467	222	291	146	129	163	343
Grade 4	2,077	282	521	213	333	136	97	154	341
Grade 3	2,127	308	505	219	295	171	101	185	343
Grade 2	2,302	343	538	248	341	155	127	185	365
Grade 1	2,226	355	585	185	306	158	97	169	371
Kindergarten	1,628	333	415	146	193	139	95	113	194
Pre-kindergarten	1,290	205	266	40	62	48	258	355	56
Age 3-5, not pre-kindergarten	1,935	564	367	102	347	129	36	117	273
Birth to age 2	2,814	866	561	64	424	223	54	203	419

Nighttime status determines if a child or youth is identified as eligible for services under the McKinney-Vento Act. Nighttime status is a required federal reporting category for students enrolled in public prekindergarten through grade 12 schools. Nighttime status was not required for the birth to 2 population or for children ages 3 to 5 and not enrolled in an LEA-operated prekindergarten program; therefore, while collected and used for program implementation and management purposes, inclusion in the report is limited to the federally required nighttime status age/grade categories.

Nighttime status reporting categories include doubled-up, hotel or motel, shelter and transitional housing, and unsheltered. Per federal requirements, the first nighttime status category is reported; children and youth may experience different nighttime statuses throughout the year.

Figure 5 below shows the nighttime status for the 27,235 students who were enrolled in school, prekindergarten programs through grade 12.

Overall, 66 percent of students had a nighttime status of doubled-up and 22 percent of students had shelter as their nighttime status category. Despite the increased consistency in data collection from shelters, these proportions are similar to prior years when fewer shelters received services and therefore shared data with the ECYEH program. This similarity suggests that students being identified by shelters are, for the most part, also being reported by the LEAs they attend.

Region 1, though lower than might be expected with regard to doubled-up numbers, continues to implement specific strategies to better identify the doubled-up population and their efforts are showing in the steady increase each year in the reporting of that population. Child and youth doubled-up counts have increased from 402 students in 2010-11 to 1,961 students in 2020-21. However, the total doubled-up population in 2019-20 was 4,002, further emphasizing the difficulty identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness presented in the presence of the remote learning response to the pandemic itself, especially in a major urban center like Philadelphia. Prior to 2010-11, the focus in this region had been with shelters.

Figure 5. Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness by Nighttime Status

2020-21 Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness by Nighttime Status

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
Hotel/motel	2,671	151	820	387	271	143	81	229	589
Unsheltered	599	83	233	60	69	67	12	33	42
Shelters/transitional	6,045	1,576	850	354	1,036	382	182	625	1,040
Doubled-up	17,920	1,961	5,053	1,869	2,557	1,459	1,082	1,277	2,662
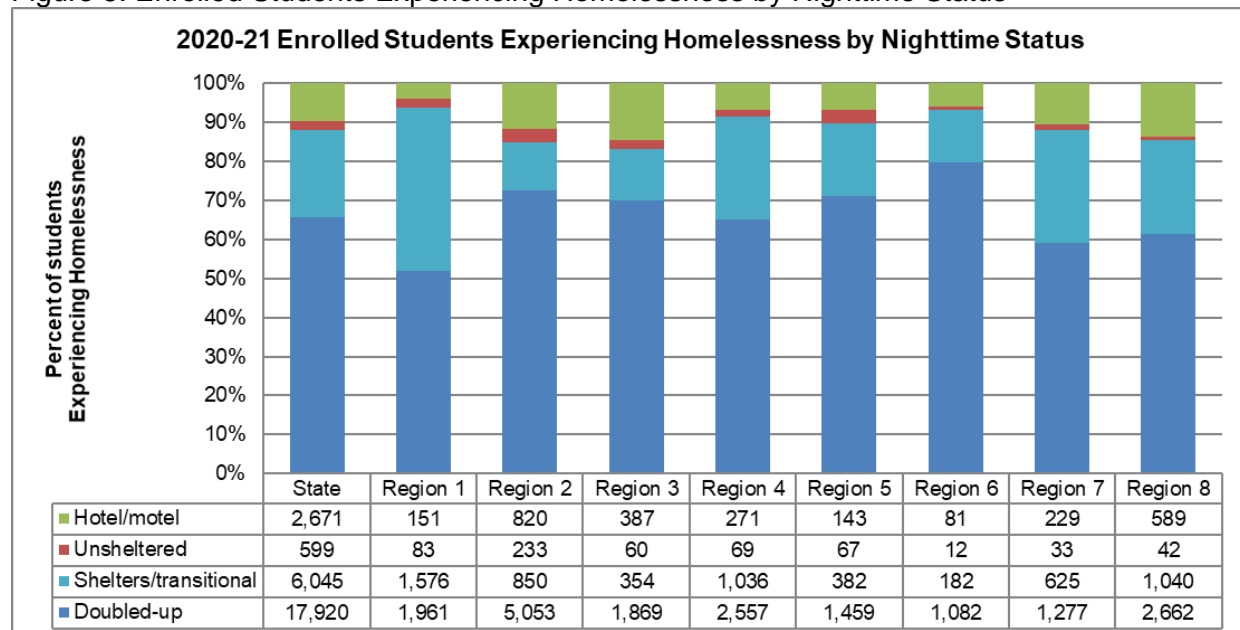
Unaccompanied youth is a federally defined term. Children or youth who meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness may also be identified as an "unaccompanied youth," meaning the child is not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian. An unaccompanied youth can be any age, birth to 21 years old.[22]

Overall, 5,444 (17 percent) of the 32,666 children and youth were identified as being an unaccompanied youth. The proportion that are unaccompanied has stayed the same the past few years. Figure 6 below shows the age/grade breakdown of the 5,444 children and youth identified as unaccompanied and experiencing homelessness.

Figure 6. Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Age/Grade Category

2020-21 Unaccompanied Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Age/Grade Category

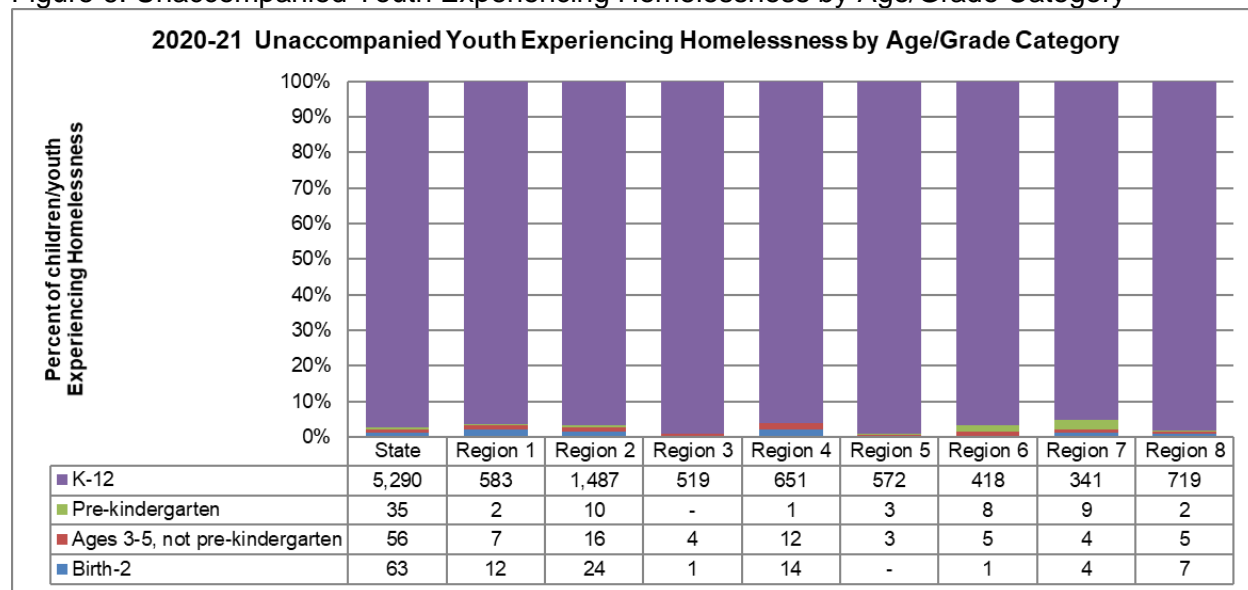|	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
■ K-12	5,290	583	1,487	519	651	572	418	341	719
■ Pre-kindergarten	35	2	10	-	1	3	8	9	2
■ Ages 3-5, not pre-kindergarten	56	7	16	4	12	3	5	4	5
■ Birth-2	63	12	24	1	14	-	1	4	7

Specific special education status information was collected from the PIMS extract for students enrolled in school. Additionally, evaluators coded children identified in early intervention programs as receiving special education services. They are included in either the developmental delay or the infant/toddler designation depending on the age/grade category. Students identified only in HMIS (shelter) reporting with a designation of disability are included; however, this designation in most cases did not specify the type of disability.

Of the 32,666 identified children and youth, 8,505 (26 percent) were identified as having a disability. Of the 8,505 children and youth designated as having a disability, the largest percentage of individuals (36 percent) was categorized as having a "specific learning disability." Both the proportion of children and youth identified as having a disability and the proportion of those categorized as having a "specific learning disability" are similar to the prior year - 24 percent and 37 percent, respectively. Table 1 on the following page shows the breakdown by disability type using the federal reporting categories. In categories for which 10 or fewer children or youth were identified, the values and corresponding proportions are suppressed and represented by an asterisk (*) to comply with PDE confidentiality protocols. Because of small numbers in several of the categories, regional findings are not included.

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[22] This definition of unaccompanied youth differs from the HUD definition, which extends to under 25 years of age http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/changes-in-the-hud-definition-of-homeless.

Table 1. Disability Category for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Disability Category	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Specific learning disability	3,028	36%
Other health impairment	1,516	18%
Emotional disturbance	1,023	12%
Speech or language impairment	807	10%
Disability type unknown	687	8%
Intellectual disability	577	7%
Autistic/autism	456	5%
Developmental delay	121	1%
Infants and toddlers with disabilities	109	1%
Multiple disabilities	94	1%
Hearing impairment including deafness	46	1%
Traumatic brain injury	15	<1%
Visual impairment including blindness	15	<1%
Orthopedic impairment	11	<1%
Deaf-Blindness	*	*

Evaluators collected English learner information through PIMS for all enrolled students and through MIS2000 for migrant children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness. English learner information was not collected for children and youth only identified through the HMIS (shelter) system or for the non-enrolled under-five population, excepting migrant children also designated as experiencing homelessness. English learners comprise 8 percent of the children and youth experiencing homelessness. Region 2 had the most English learners, followed by Region 1 and then Region 8. Each of these regions reflects migrant patterns and consistently have the highest numbers of English learners.

Figure 7. Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by English Learner Status

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
ELL Status Unknown	9,070	2,346	1,384	378	1,574	550	404	1,141	1,293
Never ELL	20,717	2,491	4,999	2,185	3,038	1,807	1,232	1,564	3,401
Exited ELL	201	12	94	20	11	2	1	13	48
Current ELL	2,678	407	1,437	254	83	57	49	100	291
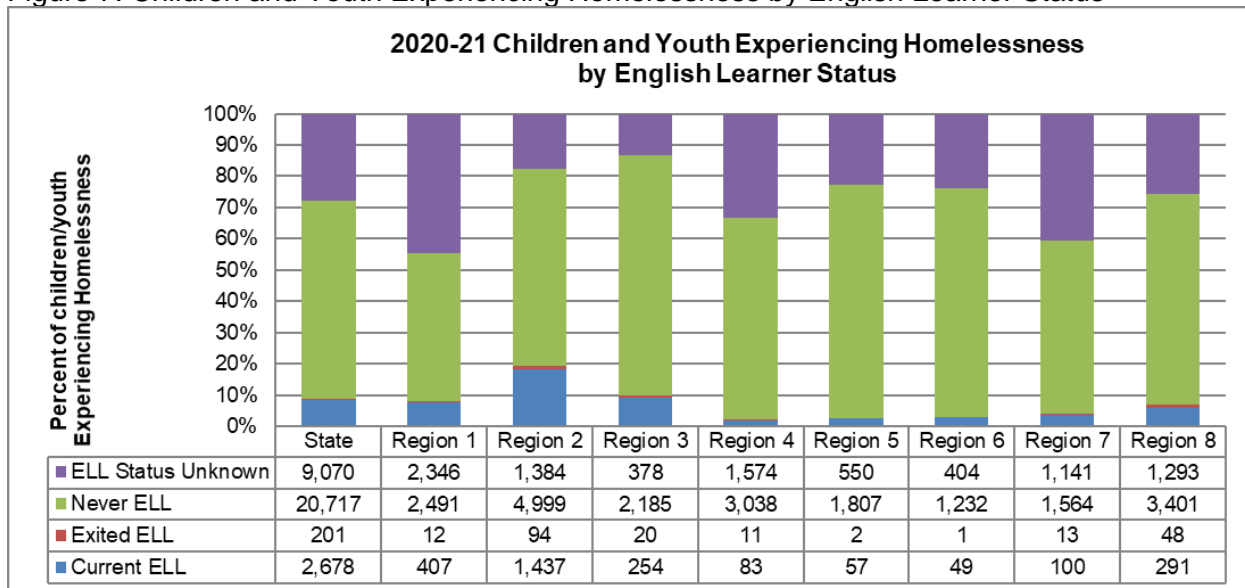
Migrant status can be determined for all children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness. Pennsylvania's Migrant Education Program (PA-MEP) captures homeless eligibility information in their comprehensive needs assessment. Evaluators receive these

details in the MIS2000 extract provided to the ECYEH Program. As such, the migrant status of all eligible children and youth experiencing homelessness is documented.

Of the 32,666 identified children and youth, 3 percent (1,060 children and youth) were identified as eligible for services through PA-MEP. This number and percentage are very similar to the prior year of 3 percent (1,130 children and youth).
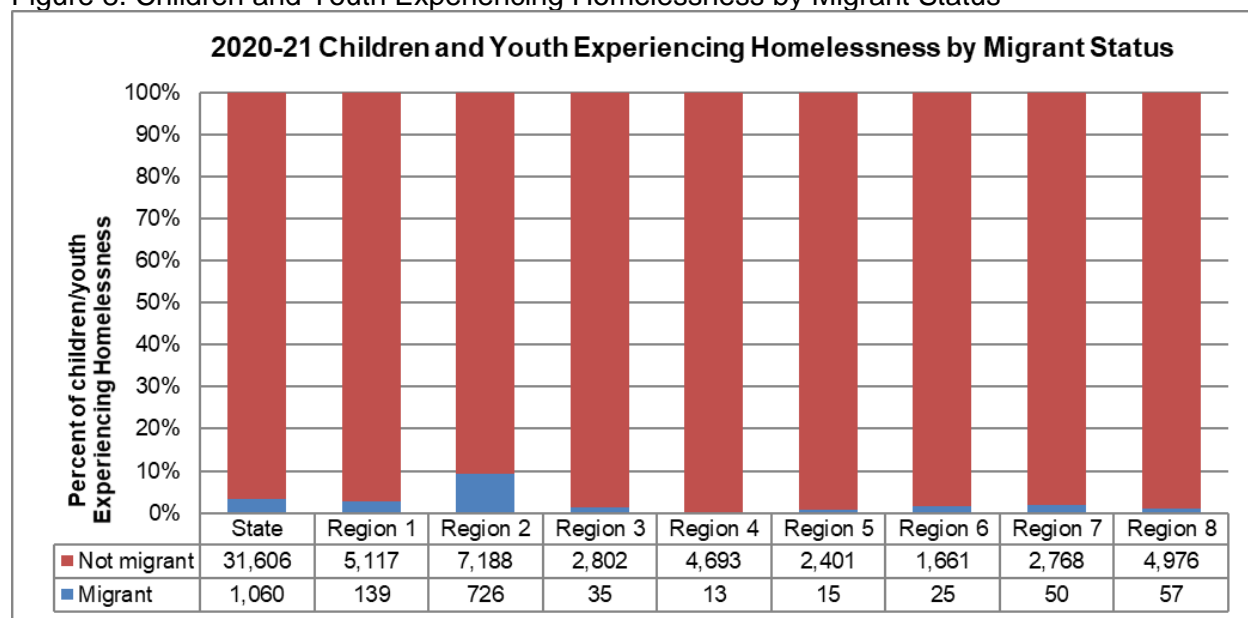
The numbers of migrant children and youth vary considerably across Pennsylvania depending on where qualifying migrant work is located. While migrant children and youth only make up 3 percent of the total homeless served population, it is important to note the differences among the ECYEH regions. Migrant status may also influence other demographics such as English learner status, mobility, or economic status, especially in the regions where there is a larger migrant population.

Figure 8 below shows that Region 2 has the largest numbers of migrant children and youth. There are greater migrant-qualifying work opportunities in the eastern half of Pennsylvania (Regions 2, 1, 8, and 7). As such, the numbers of migrant youth experiencing homelessness are greater in these regions than in the rest of the state.

Figure 8. Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Migrant Status

2020-21 Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Migrant Status

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
■ Not migrant	31,606	5,117	7,188	2,802	4,693	2,401	1,661	2,768	4,976
■ Migrant	1,060	139	726	35	13	15	25	50	57

Information about race and ethnicity was collected through the PIMS extract for all enrolled students and through the MIS2000 extract for migrant children and youth also identified as experiencing homelessness. In most cases, HMIS extracts also provided race and ethnicity information. Race and ethnicity information is available for 94 percent of the identified children and youth. It is likely that the unknown population would reflect the ethnic and racial composition of their region, though it cannot be assumed.

Evaluators present federal race reporting categories in Figure 9 on the following page. The proportions of children and youth experiencing homelessness in the federal race categories have remained relatively consistent each year, though disaster-displaced children and youth

elevated the Hispanic/Latino percentage in 2017-18 to 24 percent. In 2020-21 Hispanic/Latino individuals comprised 21 percent of children and youth experiencing homelessness, which may indicate a shift back to previously lower percentages – the Hispanic/Latino percentage was 17 percent in 2016-17. Black or African American comprised 32 percent and White comprised 33 percent of identified children and youth. Race varies by region, reflecting the population of each region. For example, Regions 1 (Philadelphia) and 4 (Pittsburgh) have large urban areas with greater diversity; Regions 5 and 6 (northwest and north central PA) are more rural and homogeneous; and Region 2 (southeastern PA) has large Hispanic/Latino communities.

Figure 9. Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Race

2020-21 Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Race

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
■ Information not available	2,112	413	549	109	98	156	294	383	110
■ White	10,705	209	2,115	1,389	1,829	1,562	1,100	1,177	1,324
■ Two or more races	2,251	106	482	244	520	189	79	244	387
■ Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	27	3	7	7	4	-	-	1	5
■ Hispanic/Latino	6,814	853	3,195	568	263	139	90	538	1,168
■ Black or African American	10,433	3,577	1,479	501	1,963	344	120	460	1,989
■ Asian	248	86	72	12	16	12	2	10	38
■ American Indian or Alaska Native	76	9	15	7	13	14	1	5	12

Economic disadvantage information was collected from PIMS for all enrolled students. It is also an eligibility criterion for all children who attend Early Head Start or Head Start programs. As such, evaluators were able to code prekindergarten children known to attend Head Start or Early Head Start programs as being economically disadvantaged.

Of the 32,666 identified children and youth, 64 percent were designated as economically disadvantaged, and 8 percent were reported as not economically disadvantaged. Nearly three-quarters of the 29 percent of children and youth whose economic status is unknown were identified in shelters. While some portion, or even a majority, of such children and youth may be economically disadvantaged, because the information is not collected for these populations, it cannot be assumed.

Figure 10. Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Economic Status

2020-21 Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Economic Disadvantaged Status

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
Unknown	9,312	2,371	1,527	391	1,580	556	414	1,162	1,311
No	2,534	377	643	203	402	177	104	197	431
Yes	20,820	2,508	5,744	2,243	2,724	1,683	1,168	1,459	3,291
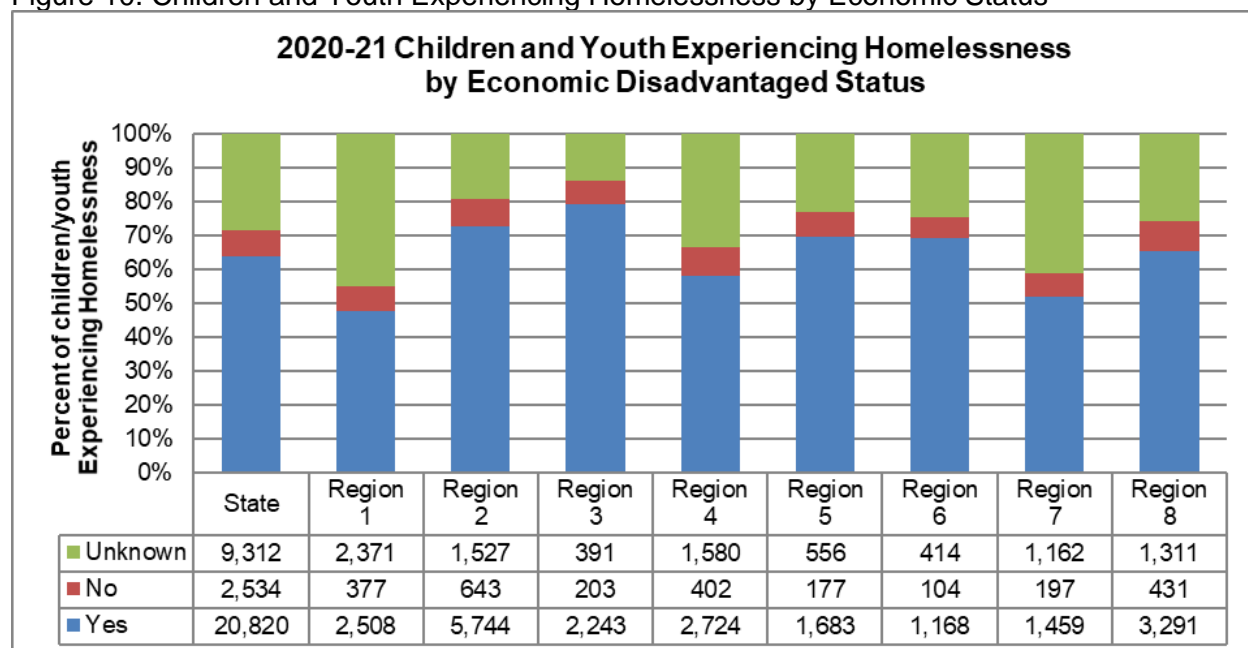
LEA Demographics

Enrollment from low-income families and urban-centric locale of the LEA provide further information regarding the communities of the schools that identified students attended. PDE produces a public report that delineates LEA enrollment by low-income families.[23] This report is based on LEA enrollment of economically disadvantaged students by October 1, 2020 and shows the number and percentage of total enrollment from low-income families in each LEA and in each school building.
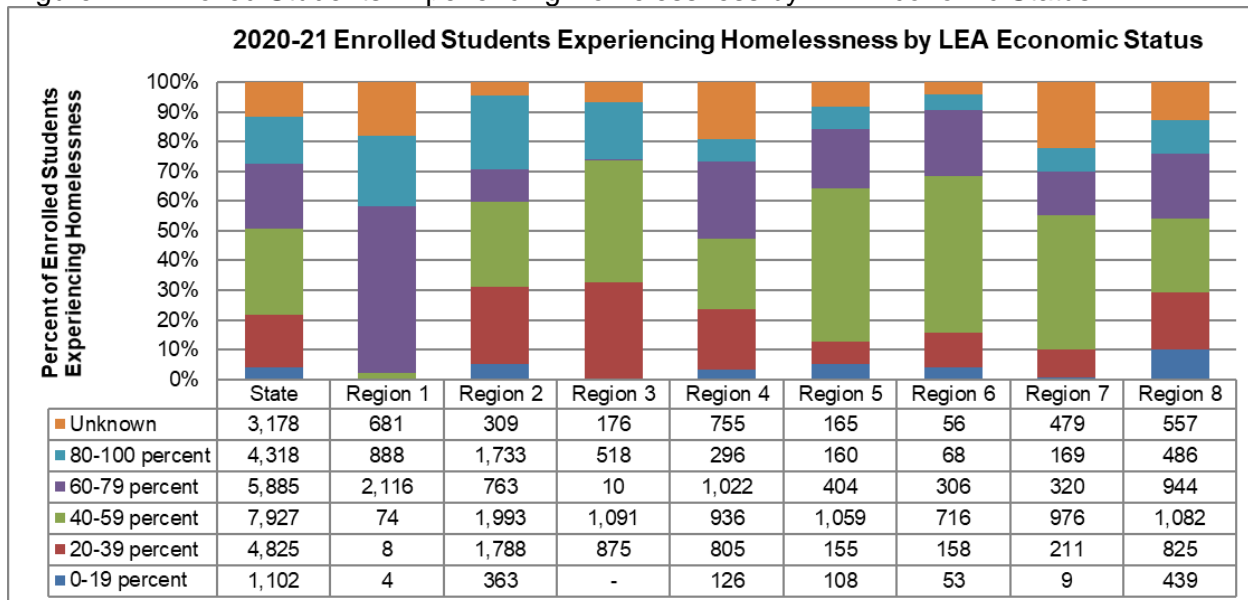
Evaluators examined the percentage of low-income families in the LEAs enrolled students attended to determine the percentage of the identified students who attended higher poverty schools. For this analysis, the evaluators grouped LEAs into low-income bands: 0-19 percent low-income enrollment, 20-39 percent, 40-59 percent, 60-79 percent, and 80-100 percent. Figure 11 on the following page shows the proportion and count of enrolled students experiencing homelessness attending LEAs in each band.

LEAs with a low-income identification rate of 40 percent or more are considered high-poverty LEAs. Overall, 67 percent of enrolled students experiencing homelessness (18,130) attended LEAs that had 40 percent or more of the total student population described as low income or high poverty. This information was unknown for the 12 percent of the enrolled population (3,178) only identified by shelters that did not provide LEA information. Region 1 had 82 percent of students attending high-poverty LEAs with Region 6 having 80 percent and Region 5 having 79 percent of students attending high-poverty LEAs. Regions 7, 2, and 3 had 68, 65, and 61 percent, respectively, of identified students attending high-poverty LEAs. Regions 8 and 4 had the lowest percentage of students, 58 and 57 percent, respectively, attending high-poverty LEAs.

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[23] https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/LoanCanLowIncome/Pages/PublicSchools.aspx

Evaluators note that poverty is a factor for the student body and the community at large where students identified as experiencing homelessness attended school. Evaluators also note that, while pervasive poverty is a factor, 22 percent of students experiencing homelessness (5,927) attended LEAs with lower rates of low-income enrollment.

Figure 11. Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness by LEA Economic Status

2020-21 Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness by LEA Economic Status

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
Unknown	3,178	681	309	176	755	165	56	479	557
80-100 percent	4,318	888	1,733	518	296	160	68	169	486
60-79 percent	5,885	2,116	763	10	1,022	404	306	320	944
40-59 percent	7,927	74	1,993	1,091	936	1,059	716	976	1,082
20-39 percent	4,825	8	1,788	875	805	155	158	211	825
0-19 percent	1,102	4	363	-	126	108	53	9	439

In 2009-10, the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) Common Core of Data (CCD) used an urban-centric locale code system to classify LEAs.[24] The urban-centric locale code system uses 12 categories to designate region type and population size and replaced the previously used eight metro-centric locale codes. The 12 category descriptions can be found on the NCES website.[25] Evaluators further collapsed these 12 categories to gain a simplified picture of the key categories: city, suburb, town, rural, and unknown.

Figure 12 on the following page shows enrolled students experiencing homelessness by their LEA's locale code. The 'could not be determined' category includes 1,511 students (six percent) who attended an LEA that served multiple geographic areas, most typically intermediate unit prekindergarten programs and cyber charter schools. Each cyber charter school may serve students across the commonwealth; their regional designation is only an indicator of the location of their central office. Again, 12 percent of enrolled students (3,178) were only identified by shelters that did not provide LEA information. These students are captured in the 'unknown' category.

Overall, 28 percent of enrolled students experiencing homelessness (7,722) attended LEAs categorized as city and 35 percent (9,571) attended LEAs categorized as suburb. This is notably different than the overall proportions of enrolled students attending LEAs designated as city (22 percent) and suburb (54 percent) in Pennsylvania. LEAs located in city locales identify significantly higher numbers of students experiencing homelessness in total and as a proportion of all enrolled students.

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[24] https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/SchoolLocale
[25] https://nces.ed.gov/programs/handbook/data/pdf/appendix_d.pdf

Distinct variations can be seen across the regions, with Region 1 being almost exclusively city; Regions 2, 4, and 8 having large suburban populations; Regions 5, 6, and 7 having more town and rural populations; and Region 3 serving a mix of locale types. The variations across the regions contribute to differences in the numbers and types of agencies and resources that exist to support children, youth, or families experiencing homelessness and also needs to be considered when examining regional outcomes.

Figure 12. Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness by LEA Locale

2020-21 Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness by LEA Locale

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
Unknown	3,178	681	309	176	755	165	56	479	557
Could not be determined	1,511	49	847	34	304	18	5	16	238
Rural	3,253	-	550	471	388	711	531	502	100
Town	2,000	-	214	370	125	605	392	294	-
Suburb	9,571	-	2,979	914	1,839	335	92	400	3,012
City	7,722	3,041	2,050	705	529	217	281	473	426
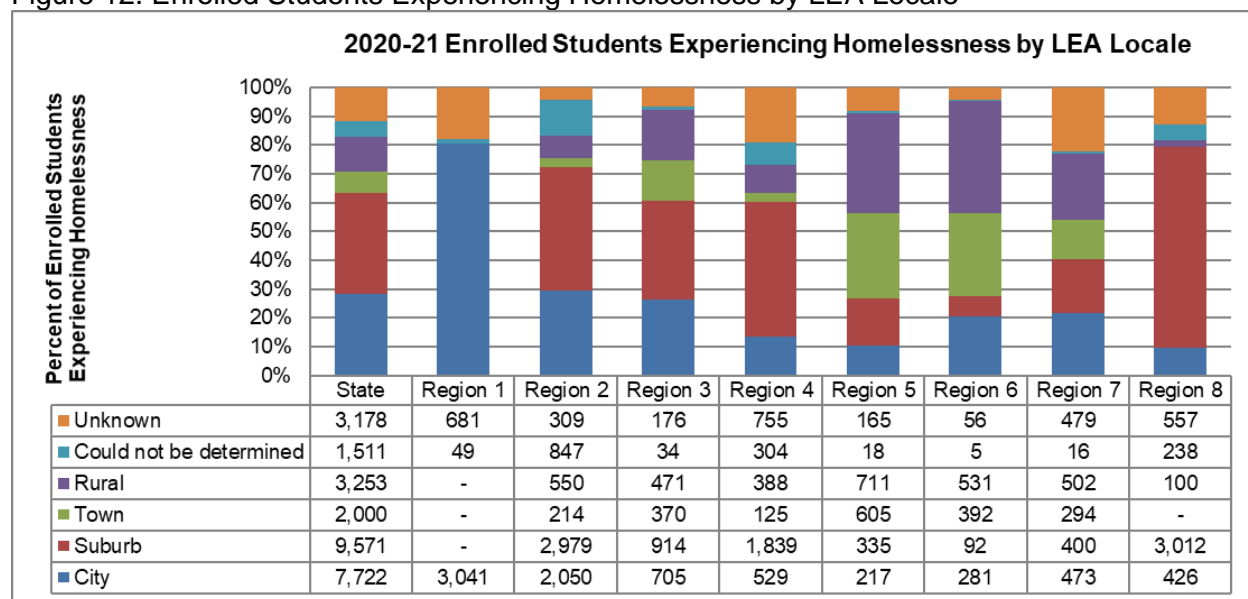
PROGRAM IMPACT

This section of the report examines the extent to which the anticipated outcomes of the ECYEH Program occurred. Included are reducing or eliminating enrollment or education barriers, remaining in the school of origin, and receiving services aligned with the authorized activities outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act offered through the ECYEH Program, the LEA they attended, PA-MEP, and/or the shelter in which they resided.

Barriers

Barriers are situations that interfere with children and youth's enrollment, attendance, and/or educational success. Barrier information is only reported by LEAs or ECYEH staff that worked to resolve a barrier situation. Understanding of barriers has increased as has reporting of such barriers, though this still varies considerably by LEA. Of the enrolled children and youth, 68 percent (18,619 of 27,235) had barrier data, of which 12 percent (2,227) were reported as having barriers to enrollment, attendance, and/or academic success.

Table 2 on the following page shows the prevalence of barriers that LEAs or ECYEH Program staff reported statewide and by region.

The most common barrier was determining if a student met the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness and was, therefore, eligible to receive services and support from the ECYEH

Program. Identification and eligibility can become a barrier because there is sometimes confusion among schools or agencies over the applicable definition of homelessness; McKinney-Vento Act's definition of homelessness is different from the HUD definition. This is why ECYEH outreach, awareness, and building understanding is ongoing. Also, families and youth are sometimes reluctant to share accurate information about their housing situation, which is necessary to determine ECYEH eligibility.

Transportation is the second most-indicated obstacle. Transportation becomes a challenge particularly when a child or youth moves to a new location within or outside their original school and/or a child or youth makes frequent moves. As transportation to their school of origin is a right of identified children and youth experiencing homelessness, each time a child or youth moves to a new location, new transportation arrangements need to be made. When a child or youth moves outside their district of origin, the district of origin and the district of residency need to work together to accommodate transportation needs. Transportation issues may also arise because of unique family situations and unaccompanied youth circumstances.

Other barriers reported included school breaks or holidays, hospitalization between identification and attendance, securing childcare, incomplete disclosure of information during enrollment, or family-initiated delays in attendance. Determining if a student is eligible for homeless service and transportation have consistently been the top two barriers.

In some cases, items reported as barriers are actually rights regarding school enrollment for students experiencing homelessness. Those rights include immediate enrollment without medical or immunization records. This continues to be an ongoing effort of educating LEAs to the rights of students under the Mc-Kinney-Vento Act and is addressed via ongoing professional development, on-call LEA technical assistance, and annual monitoring visits.

Table 2. Barriers to School Enrollment for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Barriers	State	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8
Determining eligibility for homeless services	1,593	288	244	237	246	92	72	133	281
Transportation	768	86	129	72	141	123	32	85	100
Obtaining other medical records	166	40	12	4	6	21	1	11	71
Immunization records	194	47	18	9	12	21	2	12	73
School records	229	53	12	8	23	35	4	19	75
School selection	209	35	20	6	28	29	7	10	74
Other	563	174	96	10	122	31	19	12	99
Any barriers	2,227	363	408	270	391	176	92	199	328
Total youth for whom data was available	18,619	1,067	5,448	2,249	2,527	1,697	1,044	1,310	3,277
Percentage of youth with any barrier	12%	34%	7%	12%	15%	10%	9%	15%	10%

There has been ongoing interest related to barriers for the under-five population yet a considerable portion (79 percent) of the under-five age group (6,039 children) are children birth to age 2 (2,814 children) or children ages 3 to 5 not enrolled in prekindergarten (1,935 children) for whom barriers to enrollment do not apply. Program access could be the issue that needs addressed for those children ages 3 to 5, identified as experiencing homelessness, and not enrolled in any prekindergarten programming; coordinators continue to support coordination and collaboration for this population.

LEA prekindergarten is the only group where barrier information is collected unless an ECYEH staff actively worked to remove a barrier for a child attending a non-LEA prekindergarten program. Of the 1,290 children identified as experiencing homelessness who attended a

prekindergarten program (LEA and non-LEA), 45 percent (577 children) had barrier data. Of those 577 children, 35 children (6 percent) were identified as having one or more barriers. Similar to the enrolled population, determining eligibility for services was the primary barrier indicated.

Student Mobility

Eligible students have the right to remain in their school of origin if it is determined to be in their best interest. To examine student mobility, evaluators identified every school in which a student attended during the program year, July 1, 2020 through June 30, 2021, regardless of whether every LEA they attended identified the student as experiencing homelessness.

Of the 27,235 enrolled students identified as experiencing homelessness, LEA/school mobility could be determined for 24,057 students (88 percent). The 'unable to determine' group (3,178 students) represents students who were reported as being enrolled in school but did not have enough information to be able to determine their mobility.

Table 3 below shows the number and the percentage of enrolled students grouped by number of LEA/school combinations. Seventy-four percent of enrolled students remained in their LEA/school combination during the program year, 12 percent of students enrolled in two LEA/school combinations, and 2 percent enrolled in three or more LEA/school combinations.

While a majority of students (20,258) remained in one LEA/school combination, there are many students (3,799; 14 percent) who changed their LEA/school during the program year. Evaluators note this slight decrease when compared to the prior year; during the 2019-20 program year, 5,733 (18 percent of enrolled students) enrolled in more than one LEA/school combination. It is also possible that students for whom mobility could not be determined (3,178) experienced at least one move during the year.

Table 3. Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness by Mobility

	Total	1 LEA-School	2 LEA-Schools	>2 LEA-Schools	Unable to Determine	% 1 LEA-School	% 2 LEA-Schools	% >2 LEA-Schools	% Unable to Determine
Region 1	3,771	2,879	194	17	681	76%	5%	0%	18%
Region 2	6,956	5,653	871	123	309	81%	13%	2%	4%
Region 3	2,670	1,982	438	74	176	74%	16%	3%	7%
Region 4	3,933	2,585	534	59	755	66%	14%	2%	19%
Region 5	2,051	1,482	340	64	165	72%	17%	3%	8%
Region 6	1,357	971	300	30	56	72%	22%	2%	4%
Region 7	2,164	1,363	283	39	479	63%	13%	2%	22%
Region 8	4,333	3,343	403	30	557	77%	9%	1%	13%
State Total	**27,235**	**20,258**	**3,363**	**436**	**3,178**	**74%**	**12%**	**2%**	**12%**

Service Delivery

Students experiencing homelessness have the right to support services that promote academic success. As such, the McKinney-Vento Act outlines authorized activities for which funds can be used. This section of the report addresses services provided to eligible children and youth. Services reported in this section may have been provided through multiple sources including the ECYEH Program directly or through the use of McKinney-Vento Act funds, LEAs, prekindergarten programs, PA-MEP, or shelters. Documentation of these services was reported through the service delivery section of the ECYEH data collection process, PIMS, MIS2000, and domestic violence shelter reporting.

Information was compiled for every child and youth and categorized by McKinney-Vento Act authorized activity. Those categories include: tutoring or other instructional support; expedited evaluations; referrals for medical, dental, and other health services; transportation; early childhood programs; assistance with participation in school programs; before school, afterschool, mentoring, and summer programs; obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment; coordination between schools and agencies; counseling; addressing needs related to domestic violence; clothing to meet school requirements; school supplies; referrals to other programs and services; emergency assistance related to school attendance; and other services not previously listed. Other services included hygiene items, clothing donations, or gift cards. A relatively new and increasing service is providing afterschool or weekend backpacks filled with food items.

Many children and youth were designated as receiving instructional support services. These included children who were identified as attending federal, state, or locally funded prekindergarten programs, receiving services from the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning, or identified as receiving special education or Title III services. Likewise, any student attending a Title I school-wide school was identified as having received instructional support because school-wide schools may use Title I funds to upgrade curriculum of the school; all students in a school-wide building benefit from Title I funds and services. Children and youth identified by a domestic violence shelter were designated as receiving services that addressed needs related to domestic violence. ECYEH staff report on direct and indirect services they provide to a child, their family, LEAs, and other service providers. This information is reported in the program implementation section of the report. Services in each category were documented by the funding source for the service: Title I, McKinney-Vento, or other funds. Other funds included services or programming offered by the LEA, prekindergarten programs, PA-MEP, shelters, collaborating agencies and organizations, or donations.

All services documented here were reported at the individual level. Although service delivery documentation has improved each year, the table should be read with caution as there is no way to ensure that those who report indicate all services provided or select the correct funding option. Additionally, each region has varying levels of other funding resources available, and each region has varying collaborations with entities that work with children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness. The purpose of this section is to demonstrate that a majority of children, youth, and families identified as experiencing homelessness are receiving supports in one or more of the designated areas.

Overall, 76 percent (24,709) of the 32,666 identified children and youth were documented as receiving service at the individual level. Region 2 showed the largest proportion of children and youth receiving services followed by Regions 6, 3, and 5.

Table 4 below shows state level results for the designated services and the funding sources for those services. Tutoring or other instructional support was by far the most prevalent service children and youth received. This is influenced by the number of students attending school-wide Title I schools and the number of children and youth who received additional educational services such as prekindergarten programs, special education, or Title I services. Transportation, school supplies, and clothing to meet a school requirement were the next largest cluster of services children and youth received when all funding categories were examined.

When examining individual funding sources, tutoring and instructional support remained the number one service provided under Title I and other funds. For Title I funds, school supplies and transportation were the next most common services provided. McKinney-Vento Act funds were most frequently used to buy school supplies. Assistance with participation in school programs, before-school, after-school, mentoring, and summer programs, and coordination between schools and agencies were the next most common services offered. For other funds, transportation and referrals for medical, dental, and other health services were the second and third most common services provided.

Table 4. Children and Youth Served by Service Type and Funding Source

Service	Title I	McKinney-Vento	Other
Tutoring or other instructional support	18,665	99	12,295
Clothing to meet a school requirement	800	262	863
Transportation	948	238	2,627
School supplies	1,826	837	1,805
Other Services	581	138	1,916
Expedited evaluations	343	128	408
Assistance with participation in school programs	675	630	1,607
Counseling	447	127	1,164
Coordination between schools and agencies	730	271	1,162
Referral to other programs and services	698	125	1,489
Before-, after-school, mentoring, summer programs	345	329	1,449
Referrals for medical, dental, and other health services	273	113	1,878
Early childhood programs	153	156	627
Obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment	346	107	298
Emergency assistance related to school attendance	252	84	265
Addressing needs related to domestic violence	197	98	1,248
Unique count of children/youth receiving Title I services	18,910		
Unique count of children/youth receiving MV services		1,943	
Unique count of children/youth receiving Other services			16,375

Table 5 below provides counts of children and youth served by funding source, where each child or youth is counted once within that funding source category, statewide and by region. For context, the number of unique children and youth receiving individual services, the total number of children and youth, and the percentage of children or youth receiving individual services is also provided.

Table 5. Children and Youth Served by Region and by Funding Source

	State	R1	R2	R3	R4	R5	R6	R7	R8
Unique count of children/youth receiving Title I services	18,910	2,860	5,744	1,827	2,585	1,196	825	1,072	2,801
Unique count of children/youth receiving MV services	1,943	1,045	218	2	191	309	17	52	109
Unique count of children/youth receiving Other services	16,375	2,092	4,855	1,372	2,177	1,420	950	1,254	2,255
Total children/youth receiving services	24,709	3,623	6,862	2,265	3,305	1,875	1,369	1,836	3,574
Total children/youth from whom data was available	32,666	5,256	7,914	2,837	4,706	2,416	1,686	2,818	5,033
Proportion of children/youth with any services	76%	69%	87%	80%	70%	78%	81%	65%	71%

Some services listed in Table 4 on the prior page are provided by the ECYEH Program using McKinney-Vento Act funds and are not captured at the individual student level: bus passes, clothing, hygiene items, school supplies (backpacks, college preparation materials, curriculum materials), fees for school activities, or recreational, social, or holiday activities and events. These services were typically provided in bulk; the individual recipient was unknown. This information is captured in the Technical Assistance and Bulk Supply section of the web-based data collection system. Details regarding technical assistance and bulk supplies provided by the ECYEH Program are detailed earlier in the report.

Title I Services

All students identified as experiencing homelessness are automatically eligible for Title I services, regardless of whether their school is a Title I school or the student has an academic need.[26] LEAs must reserve (or set aside) the funds necessary to serve children and youth experiencing homelessness who do not attend Title I schools, including educational-related support services. Before ESSA, if all schools in an LEA received Title I funds then the LEA was not required to set aside funds. However, beginning with the 2017-18 academic year, all LEAs receiving Title I funding must set aside funds for students experiencing homelessness. As described in the service delivery section previously, receipt of Title I services is collected or designated in several ways. And, as indicated in Table 4 on the prior page, 18,910 students (69 percent of 27,235 enrolled students) were documented as receiving Title I services. Those services were mostly tutoring or other instructional support.

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[26] When school enrollment from low-income families reaches or exceeds 40 percent of total enrollment, the school is eligible to apply for school-wide Title I funds. These school-wide schools may use funds to provide support and services available to all enrolled students regardless of their economic status. When enrollment from low-income families is below 40 percent, Title I programs are designed to help specific children and are targeted assisted programs.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Academic outcomes highlighted in this section include school attendance, graduation, and drop-out results. As noted in the Evaluation Design and Activities section of this report, evaluators provide the homeless flag to PDE for all enrolled students and requests available data for those students. Evaluators examine all available data for students experiencing homelessness. Evaluators do not have the capacity to identify students to exclude or include based on various reporting criteria for PSSA, school attendance, graduation, or drop out. This analysis provides an overall snapshot of academic outcomes for students experiencing homelessness.

For federal reporting, the designated PDE departments use the homeless flag to prepare their department's *EDFacts* files. *EDFacts* homeless subgroup reporting outcomes are available on the *EDFacts* website.[27]

State Academic Assessments: PSSA/PASA and Keystone Exam

State academic assessment data for 2020-21 includes the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), and the Keystone Exams. The PSSA is given in reading, math, science, and writing. The reading and math assessments are given in grades 3-8; the science assessment is given in grades 4 and 8; and the writing assessment is administered in grades 5 and 8. The PASA assesses students with the most severe cognitive disabilities in four grade level spans (grades 3 and 4, 5 and 6, 7 and 8, and 11). Students can re-take the Keystone Exams until they demonstrate proficiency. Once they score at the proficient level, their scores are banked and used for grade 11 state and federal assessment and accountability reporting. This means that students taking the Keystone Exams who are not yet in grade 11 are being tested on grade 11 standards and content. As such, Keystone Exam data may not be used for accountability or reporting until they are enrolled in grade 11. All students enrolled in public school in these grades should participate in the appropriate state assessments unless they meet one of the exemption criteria.

For the purposes of this program, evaluators analyzed reading, math, and science PSSA data; reading, math, and science PASA data; and literature, Algebra I, and biology Keystone Exam data.

During the 2020-21 school year, 14,039 students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in grade levels eligible to take the reading PSSA (grades 3-8), the literature Keystone Exam (grade 11), or the reading PASA (grades 3, 8, or 11), of which 6,194 students (44 percent) had PSSA, PASA, or Keystone Exam results available.[28] Figure 13 on the following page shows student results in reading/literature by the performance level categories: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced, overall and by grade level.

Overall, 26 percent of students scored in the proficient or advanced level. This percentage varied by grade level with grade 6 having the greatest percentage of students (28 percent) scoring proficient or advanced and grade 7 having the smallest percentage of students (24 percent) scoring proficient or advanced.

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[27] https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts
[28] English Learner students who have not been in the United States for at least one year are exempt from taking the Reading/Literature Exam.

Figure 13. Reading/Language Arts/Literature PSSA, PASA, or Keystone Exam Performance by Grade

2020-21 Reading/Language Arts/Literature PSSA, PASA, or Keystone Exam Performance Level Results by Grade

	All students	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 11
■ Below basic	1,669	422	328	296	216	108	232	67
■ Basic	2,896	429	469	459	525	558	379	77
■ Proficient	1,448	276	236	255	248	185	202	46
■ Advanced	181	30	54	15	34	25	19	4

During the 2020-21 school year, 14,039 students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in grade levels eligible to take the math PSSA (grades 3-8), the Algebra I Keystone Exam (grade 11), or the math PASA (grades 3, 8, or 11), of which 6,796 students (48 percent) had PSSA, PASA, or Keystone Exam results. Figure 14 below shows student results in math/Algebra I by the performance level categories: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced, overall and by grade level.
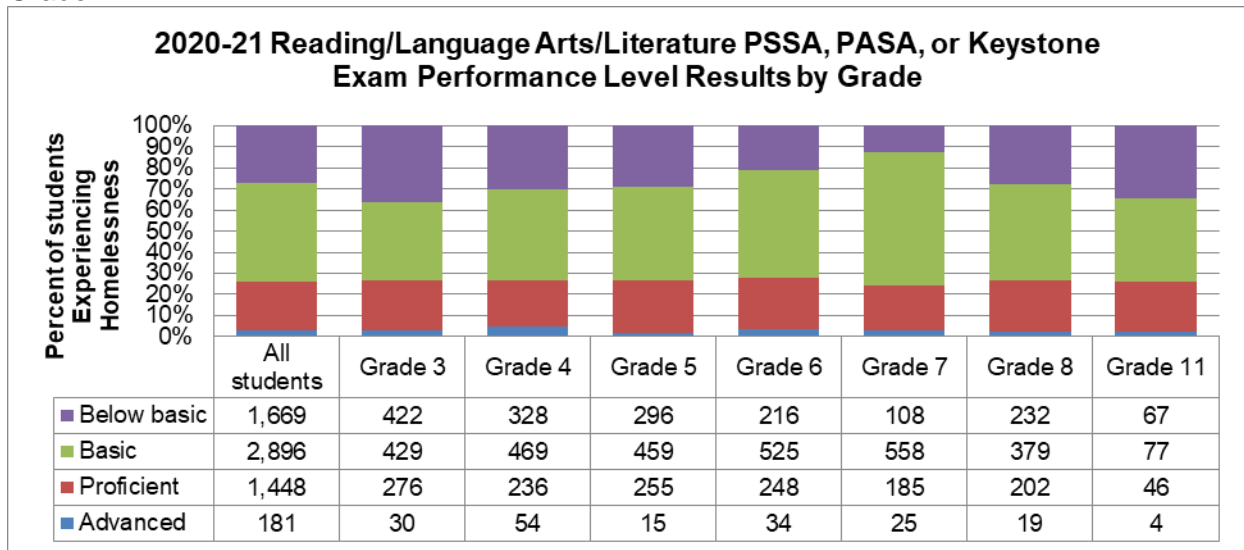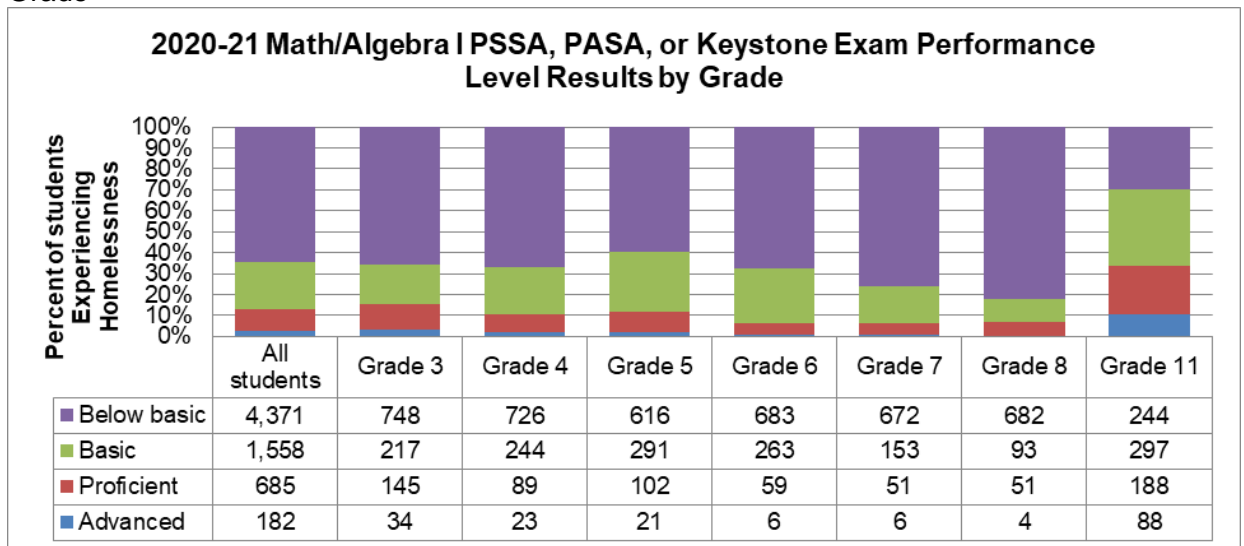
Overall, 13 percent of students assessed scored in the proficient or advanced level. This percentage varied by grade level, with grade 11 grade having the greatest percentage of students (34 percent) scoring in the proficient or advanced level and grade 6 having the smallest percentage of students (6 percent) scoring proficient or advanced.

Figure 14. Math/Algebra I PSSA, PASA, or Keystone Exam Performance Level Results by Grade

2020-21 Math/Algebra I PSSA, PASA, or Keystone Exam Performance Level Results by Grade

	All students	Grade 3	Grade 4	Grade 5	Grade 6	Grade 7	Grade 8	Grade 11
■ Below basic	4,371	748	726	616	683	672	682	244
■ Basic	1,558	217	244	291	263	153	93	297
■ Proficient	685	145	89	102	59	51	51	188
■ Advanced	182	34	23	21	6	6	4	88

During the 2020-21 school year, 5,833 students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in a grade level eligible to take the science PSSA (grades 4 and 8), the science PASA (grades 4, 8, and 11), or the biology Keystone Exam (grade 11), of which 2,326 students (40 percent) had results available. Figure 15 below shows student results in science/biology by the performance level categories: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced, overall and by grade level.

Overall, 36 percent of students scored in the proficient or advanced level, with grade 4 having the largest percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced (48 percent) and grade 8 having the smallest percentage of students who scored proficient or advanced (23 percent).

Figure 15. Science/Biology PSSA, PASA, or Keystone Exam Performance Level Results by Grade

2020-21 Science/Biology PSSA, PASA, or Keystone Exam Performance Level Results by Grade

	All students	Grade 4	Grade 8	Grade 11
Below basic	822	206	442	174
Basic	677	340	188	149
Proficient	649	403	155	91
Advanced	178	105	35	38
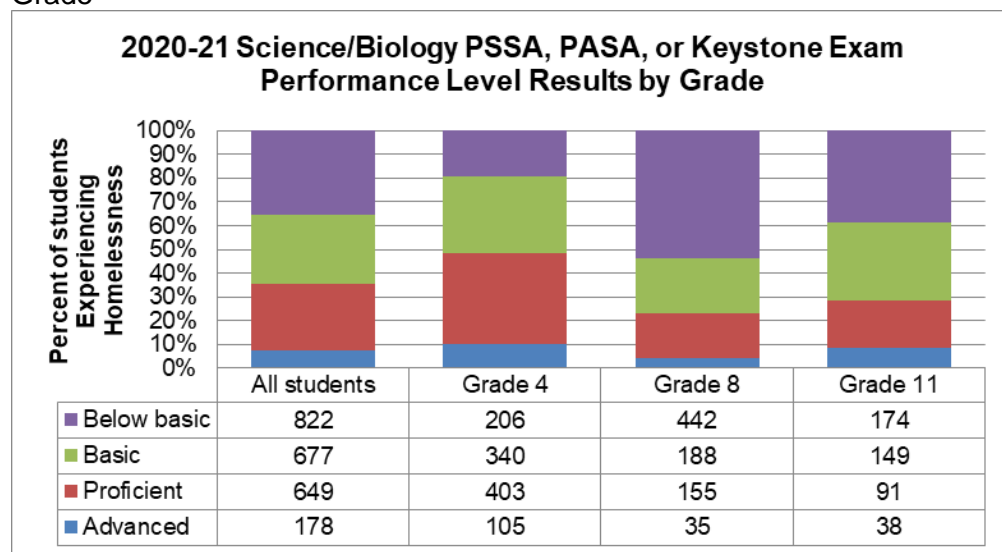
Overall, the percentage of students experiencing homelessness taking the state assessments is lower than the state's designated criteria of 95 percent. The nature of homelessness itself, coupled with mobility and transportation issues and their effects on attendance, is the most likely factor that contributes to not attaining the PSSA participation criteria.

Furthermore, students experiencing homelessness in Pennsylvania typically score far below their peers and about 10 percentage points lower than the historically underperforming population[29] in all grades and content areas. This has been a consistent pattern each year.

School Attendance

McKinney-Vento Act recipients became a subgroup for chronic absenteeism in federal reporting (*EDFacts*) as a part of ESSA changes and was added as a data element to the evaluation report in 2017-18. Student absence is defined as: "a student was absent if he or she was not physically on school grounds and was not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for at least half the school day."[30]

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[29] **Historically Underperforming Students** are defined as a non-duplicated count of **students** with disabilities, economically disadvantaged **students**, and English Learners enrolled for a full academic year taking the PSSA/PASA/Keystone Exams.
[30] FS195-Chronic Absenteeism File Specifications v16.0

Chronic absenteeism for *EDFacts* reporting is defined as: "the unduplicated count[31] of students absent 10 percent or more of school days during the year." Students (K-12) should be counted in the chronic absenteeism data once they have been enrolled in a school for a minimum of 10 school days.

Evaluators examined attendance data for all students in grades kindergarten through grade 12. Evaluators looked at a student's total days attended across all schools so that each student had one complete record for the academic calendar as opposed to each school attended. This provides for a more accurate picture of a student's school attendance in a given year than within each school attendance and takes into consideration attendance gaps between school enrollments.

Of the 26,627 identified enrolled K-12 students, 83 percent (22,166) of students had school attendance data, 16 percent (4,243) did not have attendance data, and 1 percent (218) were not enrolled in an LEA for 10 or more days.
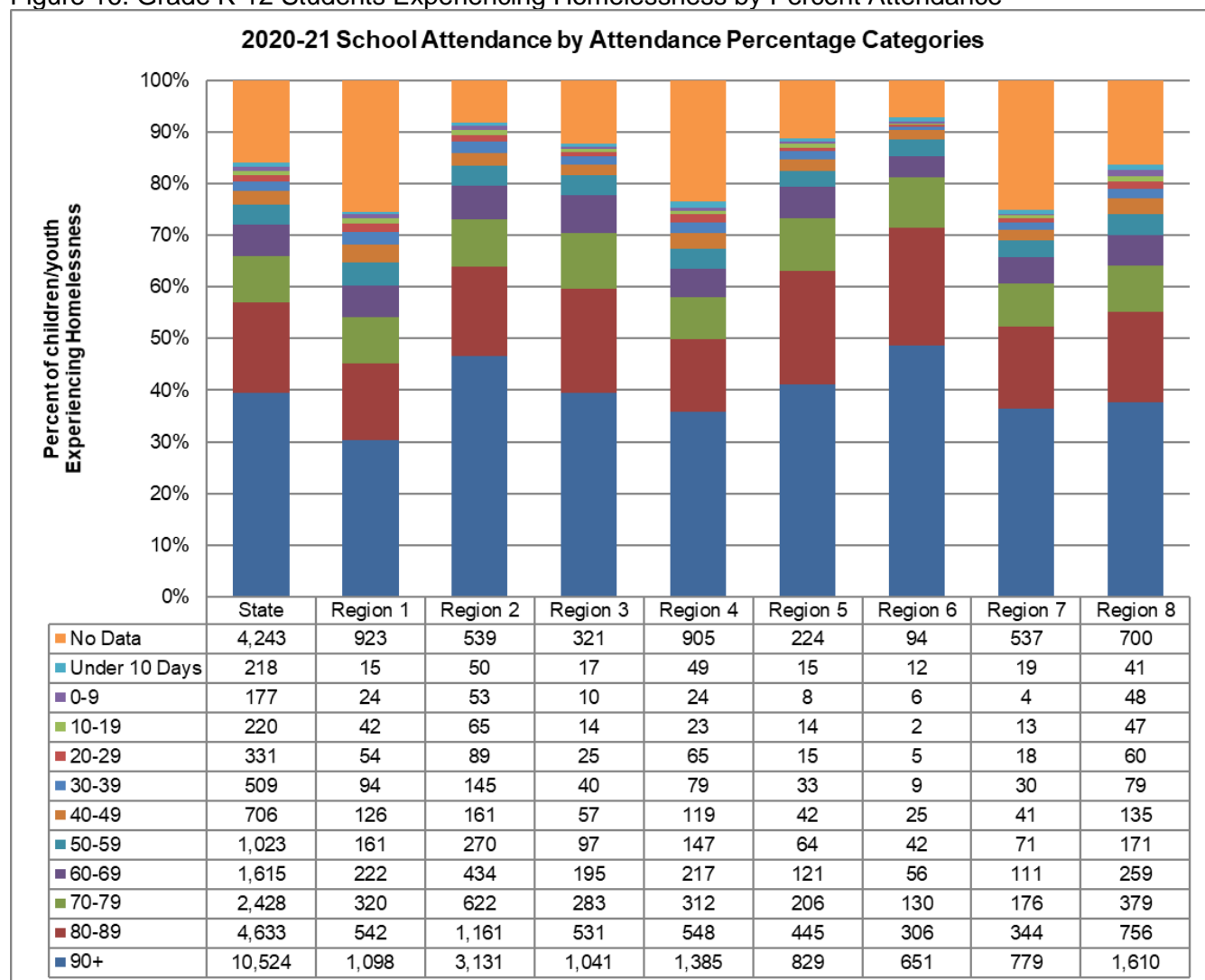
Of the 22,166 students with data, 47 percent (10,524) attended school 90 percent or more of the days in which they were enrolled, 21 percent (4,633) attended 80-89 percent of days enrolled, and 11 percent (2,428) attended 70-79 percent of days enrolled. The remaining 21 percent of students (4,581) attended 69 percent or less of the days in which they were enrolled. Based on these data, 53 percent of students would be considered chronically absent. Figure 16 on the following page shows school attendance by the attendance percentage categories.

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[31] Students should be counted once at each school he/she attends. For example, a student is enrolled in school A for half the school year and school B for the other half of the school year. This student should be counted at both school A and B.

Figure 16. Grade K-12 Students Experiencing Homelessness by Percent Attendance

2020-21 School Attendance by Attendance Percentage Categories

	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
No Data	4,243	923	539	321	905	224	94	537	700
Under 10 Days	218	15	50	17	49	15	12	19	41
0-9	177	24	53	10	24	8	6	4	48
10-19	220	42	65	14	23	14	2	13	47
20-29	331	54	89	25	65	15	5	18	60
30-39	509	94	145	40	79	33	9	30	79
40-49	706	126	161	57	119	42	25	41	135
50-59	1,023	161	270	97	147	64	42	71	171
60-69	1,615	222	434	195	217	121	56	111	259
70-79	2,428	320	622	283	312	206	130	176	379
80-89	4,633	542	1,161	531	548	445	306	344	756
90+	10,524	1,098	3,131	1,041	1,385	829	651	779	1,610

Graduation and Dropout

McKinney-Vento Act recipients are a subgroup for graduation and dropout in federal reporting (*EDFacts*) and as such evaluators examined all available graduation and drop-out data. Drop-out data is examined for students in grades 7-12 and graduation data is examined for grade 12 students, though grade 11 students who graduated are noted as well.

There were 13,357 students identified as experiencing homelessness and enrolled in grades 7-12, of which 3.6 percent dropped out of school, which is slightly lower than the prior year's 4 percent. State drop-out data for 2019-20, the most current available for comparison, showed a dropout rate of 1.44 percent. [32]

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[32] https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/Dropouts/Pages/default.aspx

Grade 12 had the highest percentage of students dropping out at 7.7 percent (190 of 2,457 students); grade 11 had the next highest rate at 4.5 percent (83 of 1,842 students); and grade 10 had a rate of 3.3 percent (63 of 1,921 students).

In terms of graduation, there were 2,457 grade 12 students, of which 2,157 (88 percent) had graduation status information. Of these 2,157 whose status was known, 1,574 graduated or obtained a high school equivalency diploma (73.0 percent), 190 dropped out (8.8 percent), and 393 (18.2 percent) did not graduate.

It is unknown how the pandemic and remote instruction affected these data. It should also be noted that 26 students designated as being in grade 11 either graduated or obtained a high school equivalency diploma. This is the same as the prior year.

Reflections, Implications, and Recommendations for Improvement

The Pennsylvania regional model to implement the McKinney-Vento Act provides an opportunity for every child or youth identified as experiencing homelessness to access needed resources or services, especially related to school enrollment, including prekindergarten, and academic success.

Regional coordinators and their staffers train, troubleshoot, intervene, and collaborate on behalf of children and youth and their families, the schools they attend, or the shelters in which they reside. The nature of their work and the differences among the regions create unique challenges for each region to address. There are differences in geographic territory and urban-centric locale of communities and schools in their region. There are differences in the numbers of LEAs (including the growing number of charter and cyber charter schools), shelters, prekindergarten programs, and kinds of organizations that provide services to children, youth, or families experiencing homelessness. Additionally, there are differences in the numbers and roles of ECYEH Program staffers within the regions. These challenges and differences contribute to the recommendations that follow.

Each year, LEA identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness is more complete and accurate and there is a positive trend in reporting by LEAs overall, for non-enrolled younger siblings of enrolled students, for children enrolled in LEA prekindergarten programs, and by non-LEA entities, especially through HMIS reporting. This represents a laudable commitment on the part of the ECYEH Program.

As a result of the coordinators' outreach and ongoing collaboration work, 32,666 children and youth were identified as experiencing homelessness in 2020-21. This is a decrease from 37,930 identified children and youth in 2019-20. Likely contributing to this decrease was the closure of physical school buildings and many provider spaces, including many shelters, as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The number of enrolled students identified as experiencing homelessness also decreased from 31,876 in 2019-20 to 27,235 in 2020-21.

There are several trends that remain consistent for this population.

1. Children and youth experiencing homelessness are predominately economically disadvantaged.
2. A majority of students experiencing homelessness attend LEAs that have high levels of poverty.
3. The majority of students remain in their LEA/school of origin.
4. Despite some consistency for a large portion of enrolled students, there are some who experience mobility and/or barriers to enrollment.
5. Transportation remains one of the most common barriers statewide.
6. About half of students experiencing homelessness exhibit chronic absenteeism. This was true for 2020-21 as well, even with the year being mainly remote/hybrid instruction for many LEAs. Regardless of contributing factors, chronic absenteeism most likely directly contributes to lower outcomes on Pennsylvania academic assessments, on-time graduation, and high drop-out rates, especially in grades 10-12. Identifying and addressing chronic absenteeism needs to be a priority for the state office as well as the individual LEAs.

Despite the ECYEH Program's increased focus on supporting children younger than age five in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in prekindergarten programs, there is a complete disconnect between prekindergarten program reporting and the McKinney-Vento Act reporting criteria. Few LEAs operate or fund prekindergarten programs and non-LEA prekindergarten programs are only required to report if they receive direct or indirect services from the ECYEH Program. ECYEH staff, while charged with reaching out to all prekindergarten programs, many of which are non-LEA, also have a primary priority to support LEAs and their liaisons. This provides an incomplete picture of homelessness for children not yet enrolled in an LEA.

At this time, evaluators offer the following specific recommendations to optimize program implementation at the regional and local levels.

1. Transportation for students experiencing homelessness remains a challenge among the regions. Continue to explore creative transportation options and engage the state office to identify or support solutions that may be helpful to LEAs struggling with transportation issues.
2. Continue to maintain relationships and data sharing agreements with local, regional, or state Continuum of Care contemporaries to ensure that HMIS reporting returns for all 57 counties.
3. Continue to educate and support LEAs in the requirement of reporting their under-five population, be it those children who attend their prekindergarten programs, or non-enrolled younger siblings of enrolled students.
4. Continue to build collaborations with prekindergarten partners at the state and regional levels and ensure that all LEAs know the prekindergarten programs in their area and have the capacity to make referrals when they enroll students who have under-five siblings not enrolled in prekindergarten programs. Connections between shelters and prekindergarten programs may need to be established or strengthened.
5. Students experiencing homelessness have high chronic absenteeism and drop-out incidences and a lower graduation rate. Continue to collaborate and explore interventions that offer additional instructional support – such as tutoring in shelters by college students, priority for service in LEA or community after-school or summer programs, or inclusion in other state or federally funded programs such as Migrant Education, English as a second language, or 21st Century Community Learning Centers. Use LEA outcomes to identify struggling LEAs and consider increasing professional development or technical assistance opportunities designed to assist LEAs with examining students' experiencing homelessness school attendance, participation in academic support activities, and assessment data. LEAs should examine their homeless students much like they examine other subgroups of students in their schools.
6. Given the increased needs, collaboration, or services resulting from increased reporting of children and youth experiencing homelessness in recent years, increased outreach to non-LEA entities, and the addition of LEA monitoring preparation and follow-up, consideration may need to be given to restructuring of ECYEH staff duties. Consider the most time-effective delivery methods for training, technical assistance, and outreach, such as more regional, county, or IU located trainings, the utilization of technology for 1:1 or small group technical assistance, or participation in only the most critical meetings, boards, and consortiums.
7. Continue to improve documentation of ECYEH-offered professional development, technical assistance, and engagement activities conducted by or with other entities that work on or support homeless populations to accurately represent the work that is occurring on behalf of the ECYEH Program. Utilize state technical assistance to monitor and assure that regions are accurately reporting the services they provide.

8. Continue routine follow-up with all non-reporting LEAs to more accurately capture the total number of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

The evaluation of the ECYEH Program is intended to provide a statewide and regional picture of program implementation, outcomes, and impacts. These findings, along with detailed information at the county, LEA, or school level, when appropriate, are provided to the regional coordinators and PDE program staff to assist with internal program implementation, improvement, and decision making. Additionally, regions received individual child and youth information from the data collection process. Results are based upon the data available.