

Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program 2019-20 State Evaluation Report

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**COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION**

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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, 2019 and June 30, 2020 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.

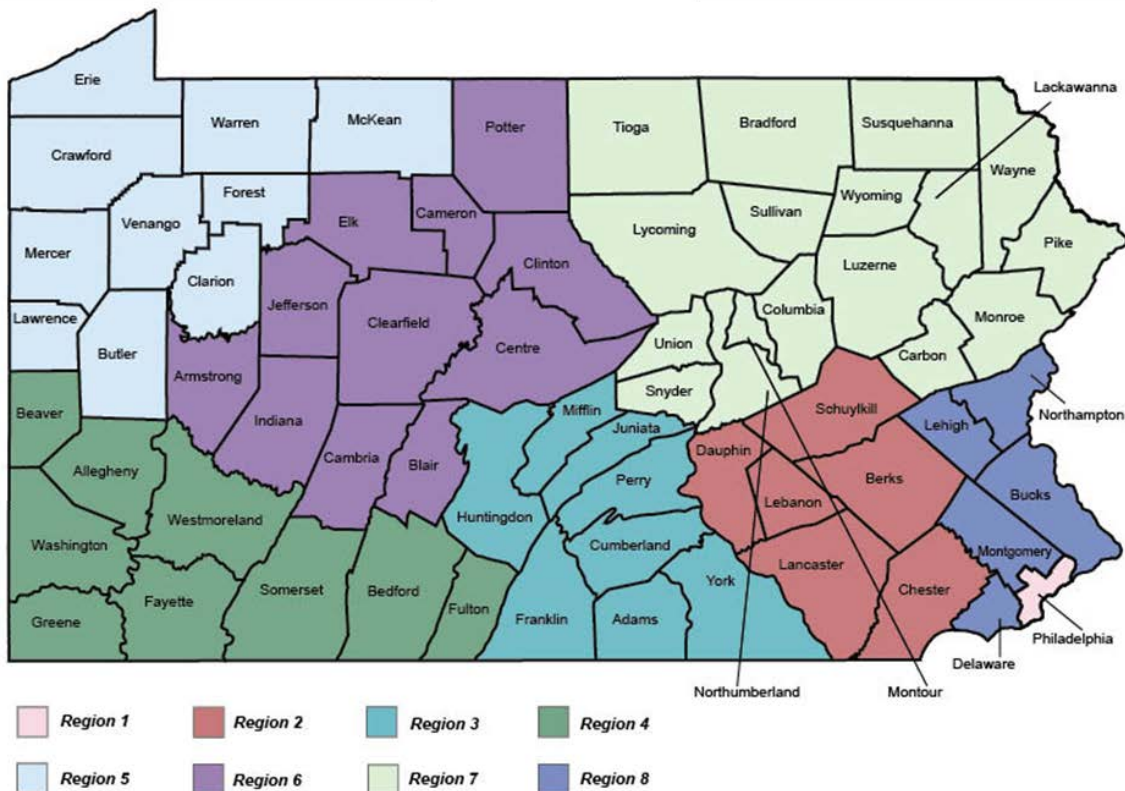
The main objectives of Pennsylvania's ECYEH Program are to:

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 the eight ECYEH regions in Pennsylvania.

Figure 1. ECYEH Program Regional Map



This ECYEH program year was extraordinary. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 as a pandemic. Soon thereafter, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the Pennsylvania Governor's Office recommended that all in-person events, including academic programs, be postponed or canceled to reduce the spread. 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 2019-20 program evaluation was the tenth 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

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.

used publicly available data for Title 1, poverty, and urbanicity. The use of existing data sources 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 PAsecureID⁵ 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.

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 2019-20 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 2019-20 program year.

Disclaimer: The Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program is authorized by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act (Title X, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), as amended. This document and all its

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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).

This ECYEH Program year (July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020) was extraordinary. On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization declared the outbreak of COVID-19 as a pandemic. Soon thereafter, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention as well as the Pennsylvania Governor's Office recommended that all in-person events, including academic programs, be postponed or canceled to reduce the spread. During the disruption, the ECYEH Program transformed operations to ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness maintained equal access to the same free and appropriate public education as their peers. Most educational facilities temporarily ceased in-person, in-facility operations on or about March 13, 2020.

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 748 unique entities participated in some type of ECYEH-provided training, professional development, or workshop in 2019-20. Approximately 11,242 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 751 entities receiving technical assistance:

1. 70 percent (523) were LEAs; 13 percent (97) were shelters; 14 percent (103) were groups, agencies, or organizations; and 4 percent (28) were prekindergarten programs; and
2. 58 percent (438) received child-specific technical assistance; 49 percent (370) received non-child specific technical assistance; 86 percent (643) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials; and 64 percent (482) 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 2019-20, ECYEH staff reported participating in 217 unique events. These events occurred annually (29 events), monthly (101 events), quarterly (47 events), or other (40 events). Other events were bi-annually, bi-monthly, or seasonal. ECYEH staff members’ role was typically regular attendee. In 73 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 2019-20 academic year, there were 499 school districts,⁸ 179 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 12 school districts and 20 charter or cyber charter schools for which no students meeting the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness were reported.

As a result of the coordinators' outreach and ongoing collaboration work, 37,930 children and youth were identified as experiencing homelessness in 2019-20. This is a decrease from 39,221 identified children and youth in 2018-19. 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. **Importantly, however, the number of students enrolled in school identified as experiencing homelessness slightly increased from 31,822 in 2018-19 to 31,876 in 2019-20.** Students experiencing homelessness comprised 1.9 percent of the total Pennsylvania population enrolled in public school during the 2019-20 school year. The latest national percentage of the enrolled population experiencing homelessness is from 2015-16 and is approximately 2.5 percent.⁹

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/>

Of the 31,876 children and youth in LEA prekindergarten through grade 12, 68 percent were doubled-up;¹⁰ 21 percent were in shelters or transitional housing; 8 percent were in hotels or motels; and 3 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.

Key findings about the 37,930 children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness include:

1. 16 percent were also identified as unaccompanied youth;¹¹
2. 65 percent were classified as economically disadvantaged, though it is likely that many of those with unknown¹² status (26 percent) may have been economically disadvantaged as well;
3. 32 percent were Black or African American; 30 percent were White; 22 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 8 percent;
4. 9 percent were identified as English learners;
5. 3 percent were identified as migrant per Pennsylvania's Migrant Education Program; and
6. 24 percent were identified as having a disability, with 37 percent of those identified categorized as having a "specific learning disability."

For the 31,876 enrolled students experiencing homelessness, 69 percent attended LEAs categorized as city or suburb and 72 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 10 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, 11 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.

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.

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.

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 31,876 enrolled students identified as experiencing homelessness, LEA/school mobility¹³ could be determined for 90 percent, of which 80 percent remained in their LEA/school combination during the program year. Nearly three percent had more than two LEA/school combinations.

Students experiencing homelessness also have the right to support services that promote academic success. Overall, 74 percent of the 37,930 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.

School attendance data was available for 82 percent of enrolled students, of which 57 percent of students attended 90 percent or more of the days enrolled.

Of the 13,357 students enrolled in grades 7-12, 3.6 percent dropped out of school, with grade 12 having the highest dropout percentage at almost 7.5 percent, followed by grade 11 at 6.6 percent, and grade 10 at 3.8 percent.

Of 2,237 grade 12 students for whom graduation status was known, 75.4 percent graduated. Additionally, 62 grade 11 students (3 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 with 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 (74 percent for 2019-20) 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 expanding its focus to include 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.

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.

Considering these themes, evaluators recommend that:

1. Regional staff and the state team should revisit how training, technical assistance, and collaboration are implemented across the state, specifically opportunities to connect virtually.
2. 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 represent accurately the work that is occurring on behalf of the ECYEH Program.
3. State and regional ECYEH staff continue to explore creative transportation options to support LEAs with common barriers.
4. Regional staff continue to work with local Continuum of Care contemporaries.
5. Regional staff continue to explore options for instructional support to students.
6. Regional staff consider professional development or technical assistance to LEAs related to examining prekindergarten programming options for younger siblings of students; students' school attendance, dropout, and graduation rates; and participation in academic support activities.

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 748 unique entities that participated in one or more ECYEH-provided trainings, professional development, or workshops during the 2019-20 program year.

Figure 2. Professional Development Attendance by Entity Type

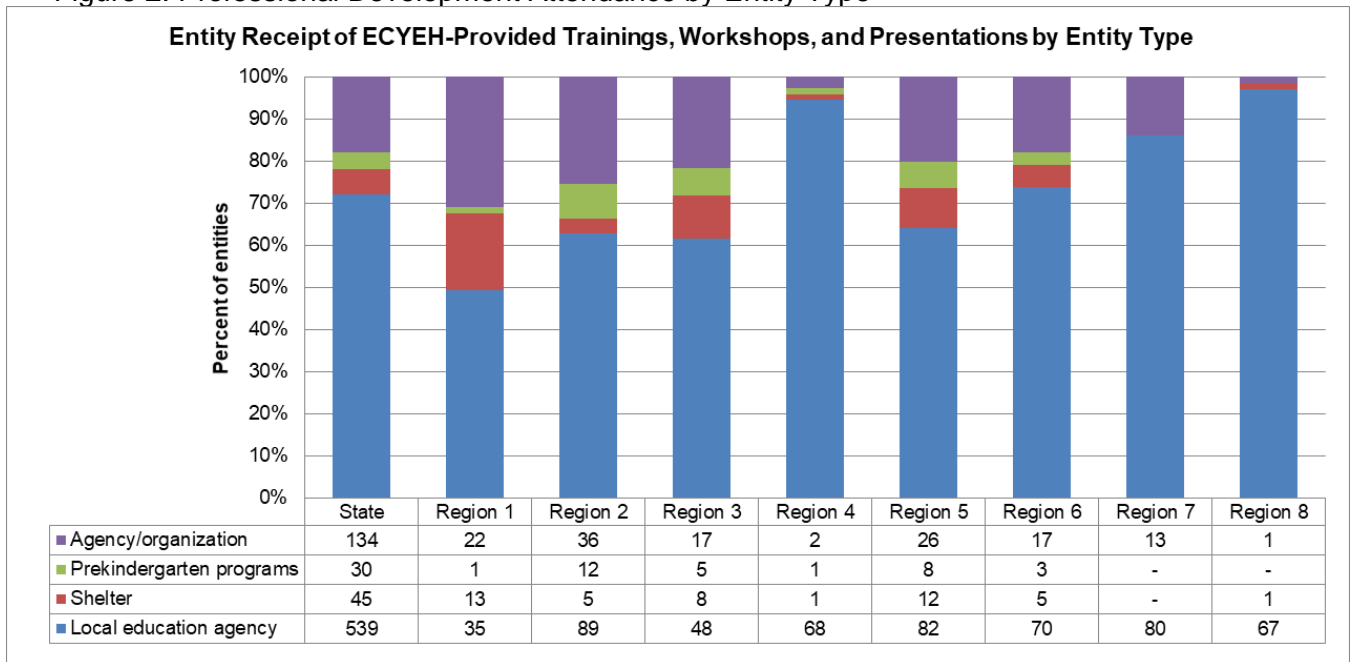
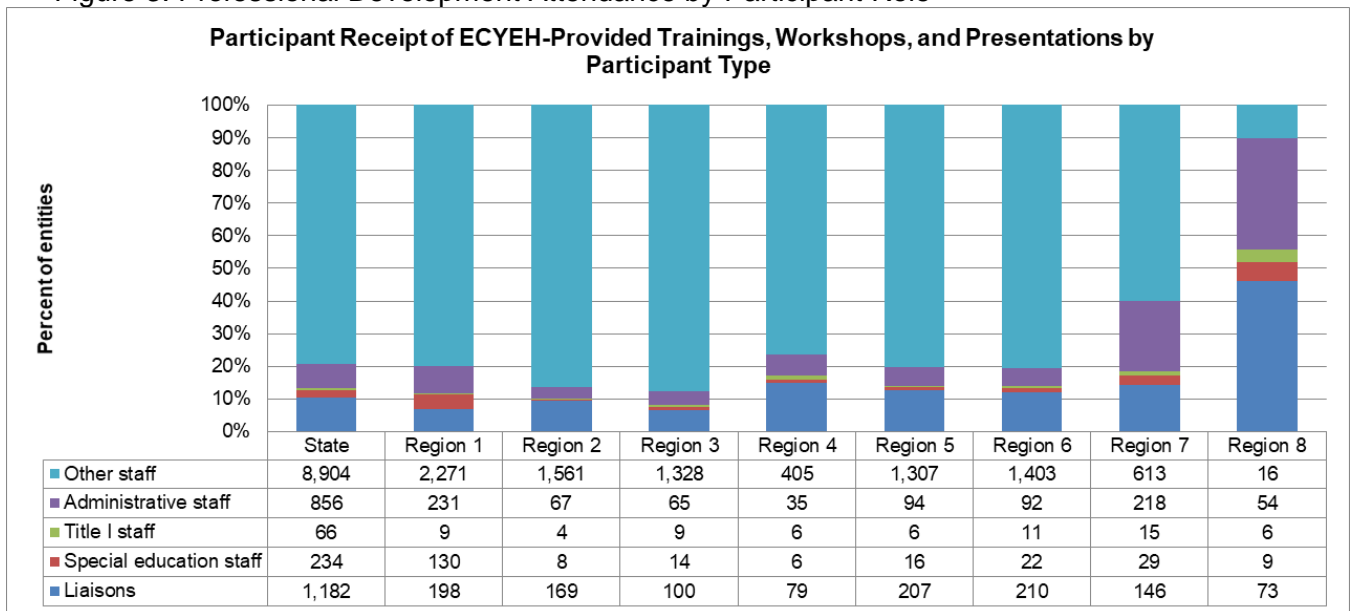


Figure 3 below shows participation by individual participant count and role. Overall, 11,242 individuals participated, though this may include duplicates, as some participants may have attended more than one event. In some cases, attendees held more than one of the designated roles though only one role was selected to represent that attendee. A unique participant count is not available.

Figure 3. Professional Development Attendance by Participant Role



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 2019-20, 1,182 liaisons (duplicate count) were reported as attending one or more trainings held by ECYEH staff, and 122 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 751 unique LEAs, shelters, prekindergarten programs, and groups, agencies, or organizations as receiving support through one or more of the technical assistance categories. Of the 751 entities receiving technical assistance, 70 percent (523) were LEAs; 13 percent (97) were shelters; 14 percent (103) were groups, agencies, or organizations; and four percent (28) were non-LEA prekindergarten programs.

Of the 523 LEAs that received technical assistance:

- 355 LEAs (68 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, of which 317 LEAs received this type of technical assistance 'often,' four LEAs received this type of technical assistance 'occasionally,' and 34 received this child specific technical assistance 'once.'
- 253 LEAs (48 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 227 LEAs received this type of technical assistance 'often' and 26 received this type of technical assistance 'once.'
- 423 LEAs (81 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials.
- 336 LEAs (64 percent) received bulk supplies such a backpacks, school supplies, bus passes, clothing, toiletries, or blankets.

Of the 97 shelter, emergency, or transitional housing facilities that received technical assistance:

- 33 facilities (34 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, of which 28 facilities received this type of technical assistance 'often,' one facility received this type of technical assistance 'occasionally,' and four facilities received this type of technical assistance 'once.'
- 47 facilities (48 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 46 facilities received this type of technical assistance 'often' and one facility received this type of technical assistance 'once.'
- 91 facilities (94 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act related materials.
- 90 facilities (93 percent) received bulk supplies.

Of the 103 agencies, organizations, or groups that received technical assistance:

- 38 entities (37 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, all 38 of which received this type of technical assistance 'often.'
- 50 entities (49 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 38 entities received this type of technical assistance 'often' and 12 entities received this type of technical assistance 'once.'
- 102 entities (99 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials.
- 37 entities (36 percent) received bulk supplies.

Of the 28 non-LEA prekindergarten programs that received technical assistance support:

- 12 entities (43 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, all 12 of which received this type of technical assistance 'often.'
- 20 entities (71 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 12 entities received this type of technical assistance 'often' and eight entities received this type of technical assistance 'once.'
- 27 entities (96 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials.
- 19 entities (68 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 2019-20, ECYEH staff reported participating in 217 unique events. These events occurred annually (29 events), monthly (101 events), quarterly (47 events), or other (40 events). Other events were bi-annually, bi-monthly, or seasonal. Typically, ECYEH staff members' role was regular attendee. In 73 instances, staff held a leader/facilitator role in the event. Event attendees ranged from two to 500 people, with 35 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 addition to the in-person regional technical assistance visits conducted twice each year, the CSC technical assistance staff conducts or coordinates several state-level professional development activities, often in collaboration with regional coordinators or other state personnel. State-level professional development activities not only support the regional coordinators, but also provide outreach and information to other state entities that work with children and youth. Included below is a list of highlighted activities for 2019 – 2020:

1. Attended the September 16, 2019 Young Children Experiencing Homelessness Summit: Educate, Collaborate, Inspire in Philadelphia to expand ECYEH coordination with early childhood services.
2. Provided ECYEH exhibit table at the statewide conference of the PA National Association of Social Workers; approximately 500 individuals had access to program information and resources.
3. Provided an ECYEH exhibit table at the statewide Safe Schools Conference; approximately 300 individuals had access to program information and resources.
4. In conjunction with the foster care initiative, coordinated the 2019 Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference October 15-17, 2019 at the Kalahari Resort and Convention Center; approximately 282 individuals obtained professional development in the following topics: 1) three keynote/special sessions occurred, including Robert Scheer of Comfort Cases regarding support of foster care youth, Melissa Kull of Chapin Hall regarding rural homelessness, and a youth panel and discussion regarding serving the needs of foster care and homeless youth; workshop topics included educational stability for foster care and homeless youth, effective communication strategies, trauma-informed care, McKinney-Vento and ESSA requirements, post-secondary access, poverty, commercial sexual exploitation, unaccompanied homeless youth, exemplary homeless liaisons' strategies, chronic absenteeism/truancy, mental health and homelessness, Title I, and incarcerated parents.
5. Provided an ECYEH exhibit at the October 21-23, 2019 Early Childhood Education Summit; approximately 1,400 individuals had access to information, resources and materials.
6. Attended the ECYEH Region 3 Head Start Roundtable, Community Collaborations: Improving Services for Children and Families Experiencing Homelessness, to provide support for Early Childhood-ECYEH coordination.
7. Facilitated correspondence to the ECYEH regional and site coordinators regarding Shippensburg University's emerging program/services/supports for homeless and foster care youth.
8. Attended and served on the conference planning committee and moderated the World Café session for the National Network for Youth's March 2-3, 2020 National Summit on Youth Homelessness.

There is also a model of support, training, and technical assistance for the ECYEH regional staff. Bi-monthly staff meetings organized by the CSC give regional staff the opportunity to hear state team updates, engage with each other, and discuss and troubleshoot complicated situations. ECYEH staff also have the opportunity to attend and present at state and national conferences to both promote the ECYEH Program as well as enhance their own professional development.

The CSC technical assistance staff conducts at least two on-site technical assistance visits to every region each year, and 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 the statewide staff meetings and state conference. In the fall of 2020, all technical assistance visits were held virtually.

All venues of program implementation – ECYEH-offered outreach, support, training, and technical assistance; ECYEH-received, training, technical assistance, and monitoring; and LEA monitoring – are all 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 2019-20 academic year, there were 499 school districts,¹⁶ 179 charter and cyber charter schools, and 10 comprehensive career and technical centers.

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/>.

Based on the unique, comprehensive list of identified students from across Pennsylvania, nearly all LEAs were represented. There were 12 school districts and 20 charter or cyber charter schools for which no students meeting the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness were reported.

Further exploration of the LEAs with no identified students or reporting zero students¹⁷ revealed that many of the LEAs were small (15 LEAs had fewer than 500 students), served a subset of the total K-12 population (18 LEAs), and/or enrolled few students from low-income families (14 LEAs).¹⁸ In fact, many (14 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 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 more than half (69 to 32).

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 2019-20 year, evaluators collected shelter data from all counties but one. Bucks County did not report in 2019-20 because of staff turnover. However, a new protocol has been established to overcome this in the future and data from this county was already reported for the 2020-21 year at the time of this report.

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 2019-20, 88 non-LEA entities¹⁹ reported 8,202 children and youth (22 percent of identified children and youth) who could not be tied to an LEA. Many of the children and youth (5,104) 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

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.

ongoing coordinator outreach, state level collaboration, and increased awareness of reporting responsibilities of these entities.

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.

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. In 2019-20, 37,930 children and youth were identified as experiencing homelessness. This is a decrease when compared to the 39,221 identified children and youth in 2018-19 and an increase from the 36,823 identified children and youth in 2017-18.

Evaluators attribute the decline in identification in 2019-20 to the closure of providers' physical spaces as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic on or about March 13, 2020. Such closures may have reduced the ability of field staff to identify, serve, and report children and youth experiencing homelessness. **Importantly, however, the ECYEH program identified a slight increase in enrolled students experiencing homelessness: 31,822 in 2018-19 and 31,876 in 2019-20. The decline in the overall count is isolated to the under-five, non-LEA population.**

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, 2019 through June 30, 2020).

PDE reports for 2019-20 year showed a public school (school districts, charter/cyber charter schools, comprehensive technical centers) October 1 enrollment count of 1,721,015 students.²⁰ In 2019-20, 31,876 of the 37,930 children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness were enrolled in school. Students experiencing homelessness made up 1.9 percent of the total public school enrolled population. 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.

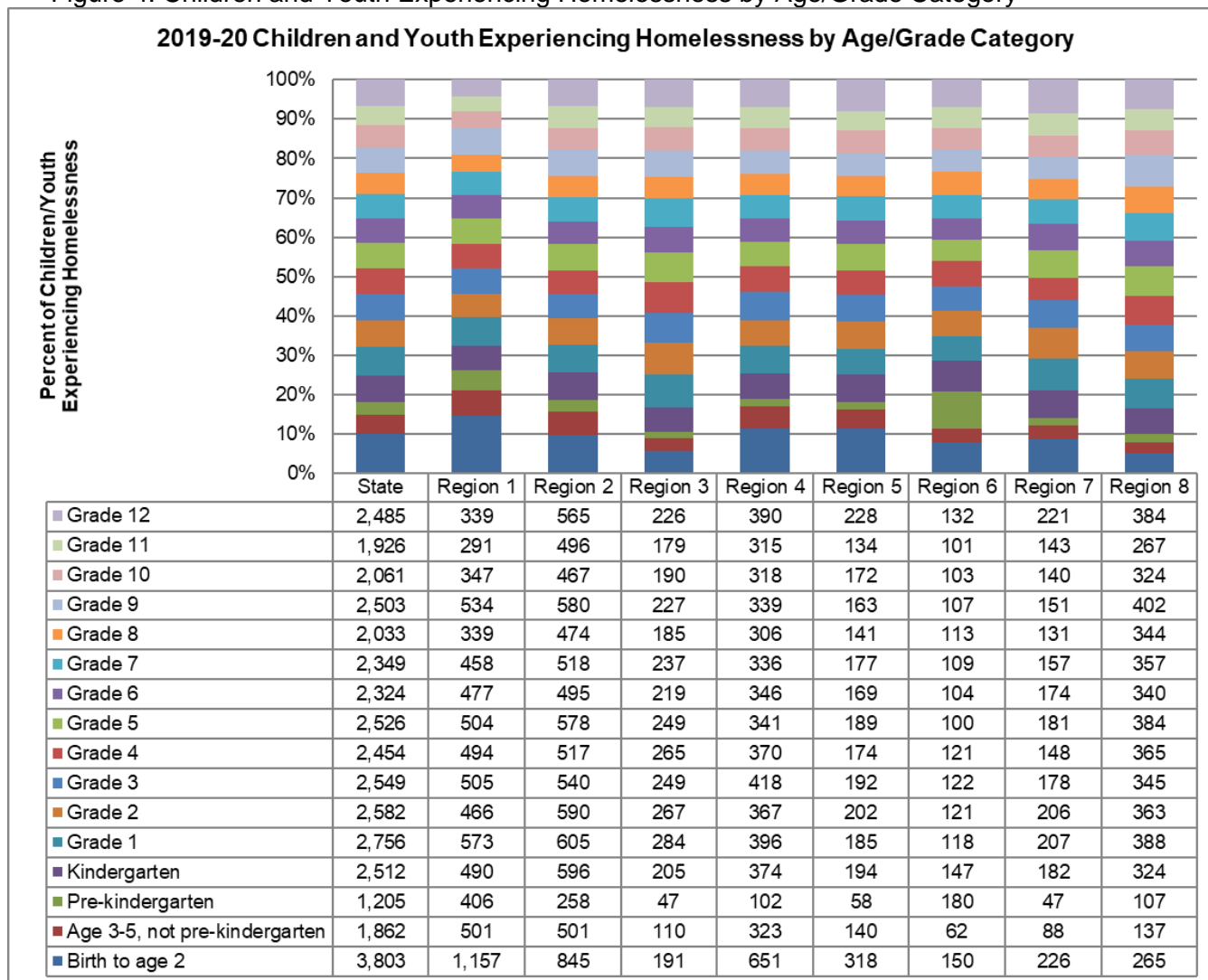
²⁰ <https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/Enrollment>

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 37,930 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



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.

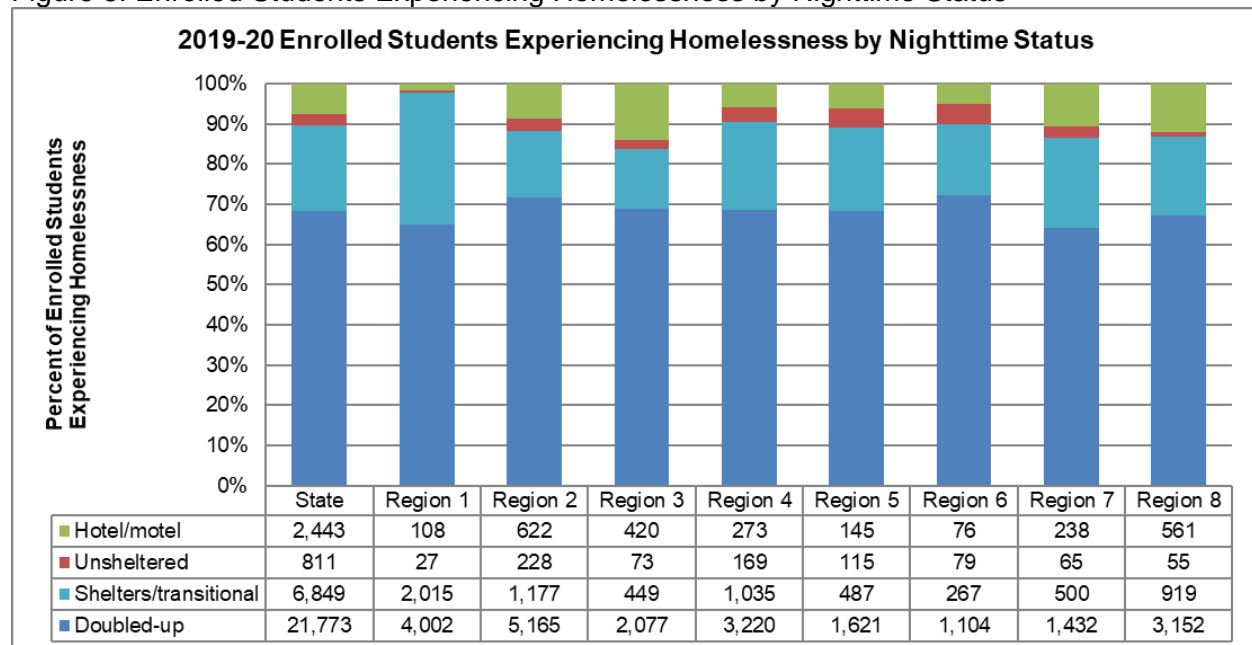
Nighttime status reporting categories include doubled-up, hotel or motel, shelter and transitional housing, and unsheltered. Per federal requirements, the first nighttime status category is reported.

Figure 5 shows the nighttime status for the 31,876 students who were enrolled in school, prekindergarten programs through grade 12.

Overall, 68 percent of students had a nighttime status of doubled-up and 21 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 4,002 students in 2019-20. Prior to 2010-11, the focus in this region had been with shelters.

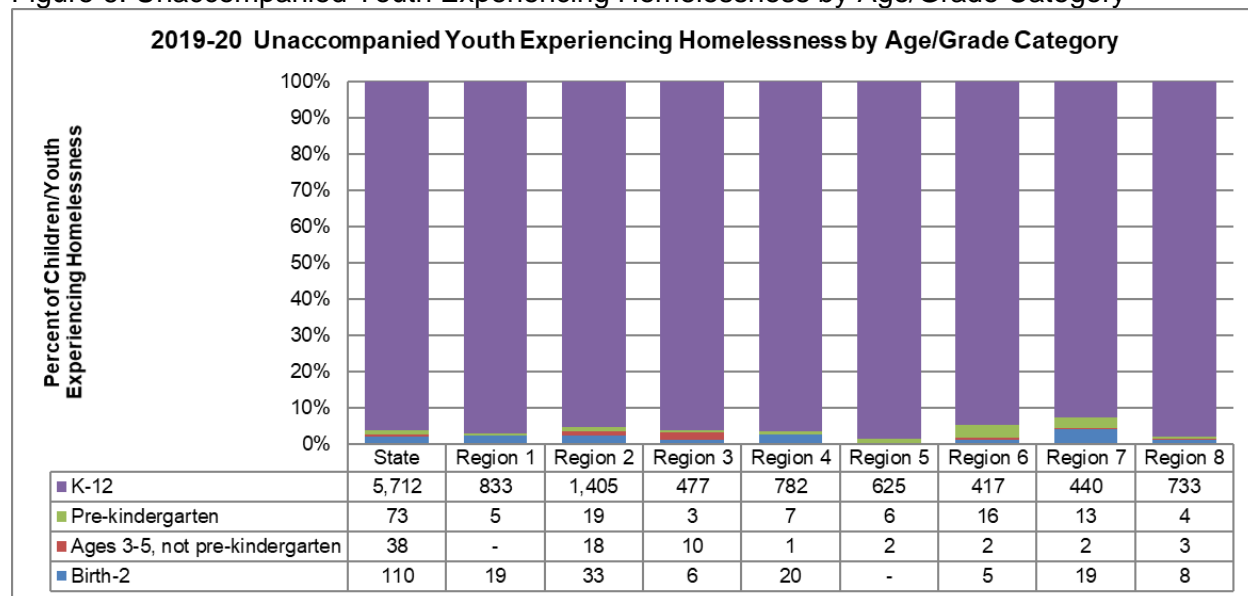
Figure 5. Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness by Nighttime Status



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, 5,933 (16 percent) of the 37,930 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 shows the age/grade breakdown of the 5,933 children and youth identified as unaccompanied and experiencing homelessness.

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



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 37,930 identified children and youth, 9,122 (24 percent) were identified as having a disability. Of the 9,122 children and youth designated as having a disability, the largest percentage of individuals (37 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 - 25 percent and 35 percent, respectively. Table 1 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. This is in compliance with PDE confidentiality protocols. Because of small numbers in several of the categories, regional findings are not included.

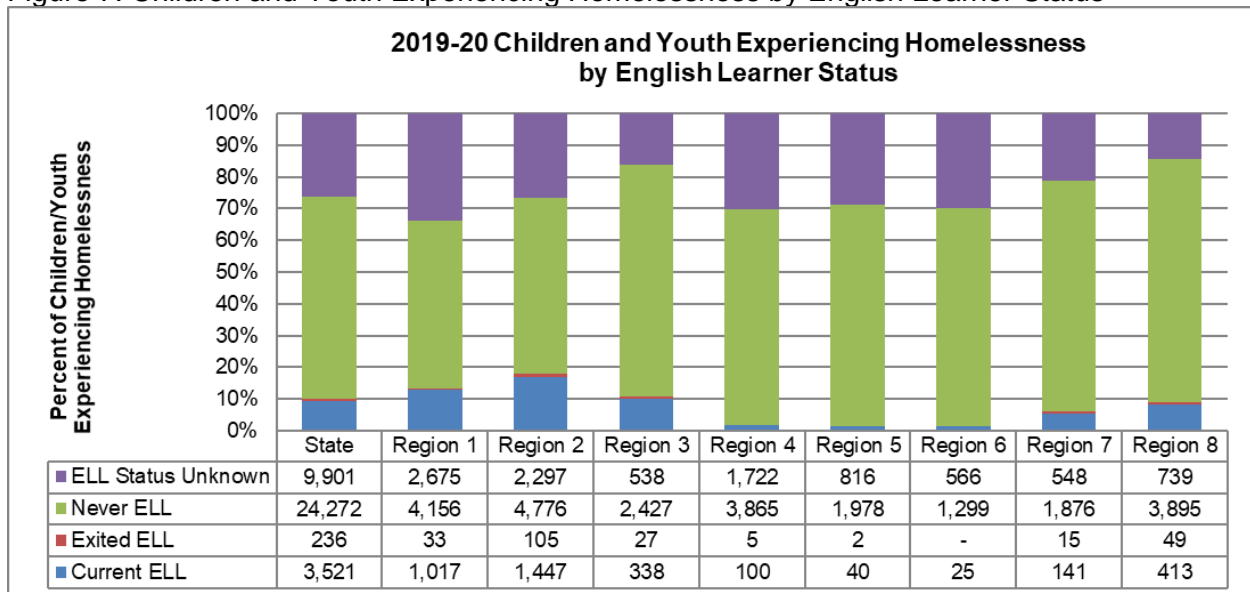
²² This definition of unaccompanied youth differs from the HUD definition, which extends to under 25 years of age <http://www.endhomelessness.org/library/entry/changes-in-the-hud-definition-of-homeless>.

Table 1. Disability Category for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

Disability Category	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Specific learning disability	3,362	37%
Other health impairment	1,417	16%
Emotional disturbance	1,165	13%
Speech or language impairment	1,007	11%
Intellectual disability	653	7%
Disability type unknown	579	6%
Autistic/autism	478	5%
Infants and toddlers with disabilities	217	2%
Developmental delay	115	1%
Hearing impairment including deafness	50	1%
Multiple disabilities	34	<1%
Visual impairment including blindness	21	<1%
Traumatic brain injury	16	<1%
Orthopedic impairment	*	*
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 9 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



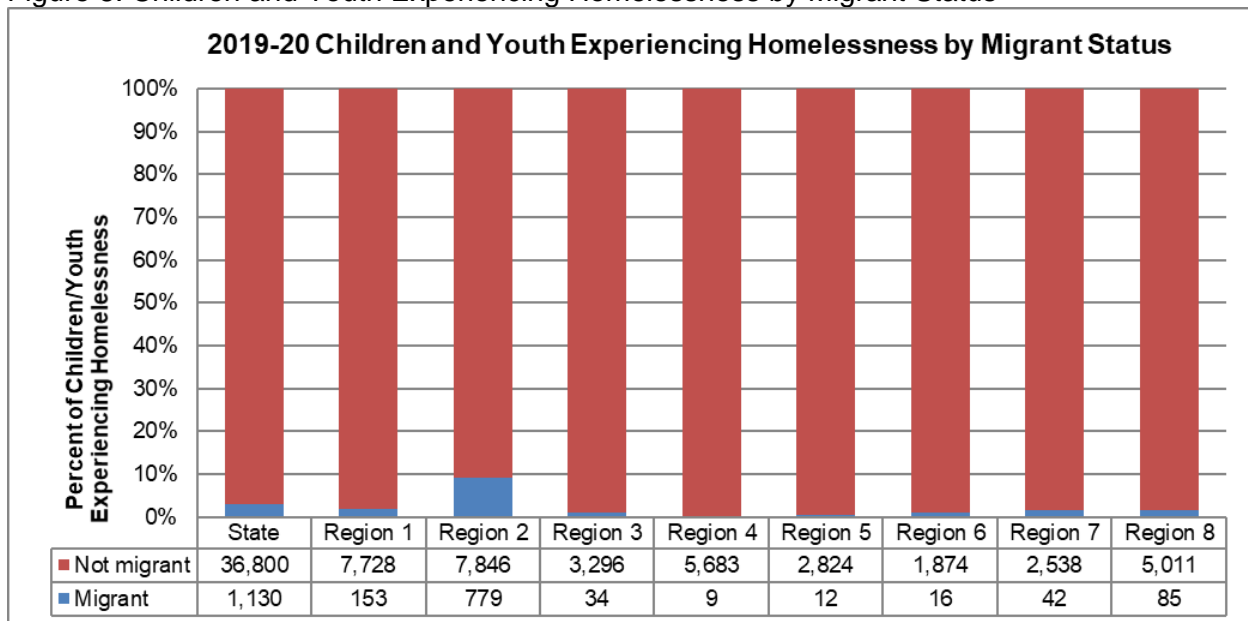
Migrant status can be determined for all children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness. Pennsylvania’s Migrant Education Program (PA-MEP) captures homeless eligibility information in their comprehensive needs assessment. Evaluators receive these details in the MIS2000 extract provided to the ECYEH Program. As such, the migrant status of all eligible children and youth experiencing homelessness is documented.

Of the 37,930 identified children and youth, 3 percent (1,130 children and youth) were identified as eligible for services through PA-MEP. This number and percentage is slightly lower than the prior year of 4 percent (1,557 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 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.

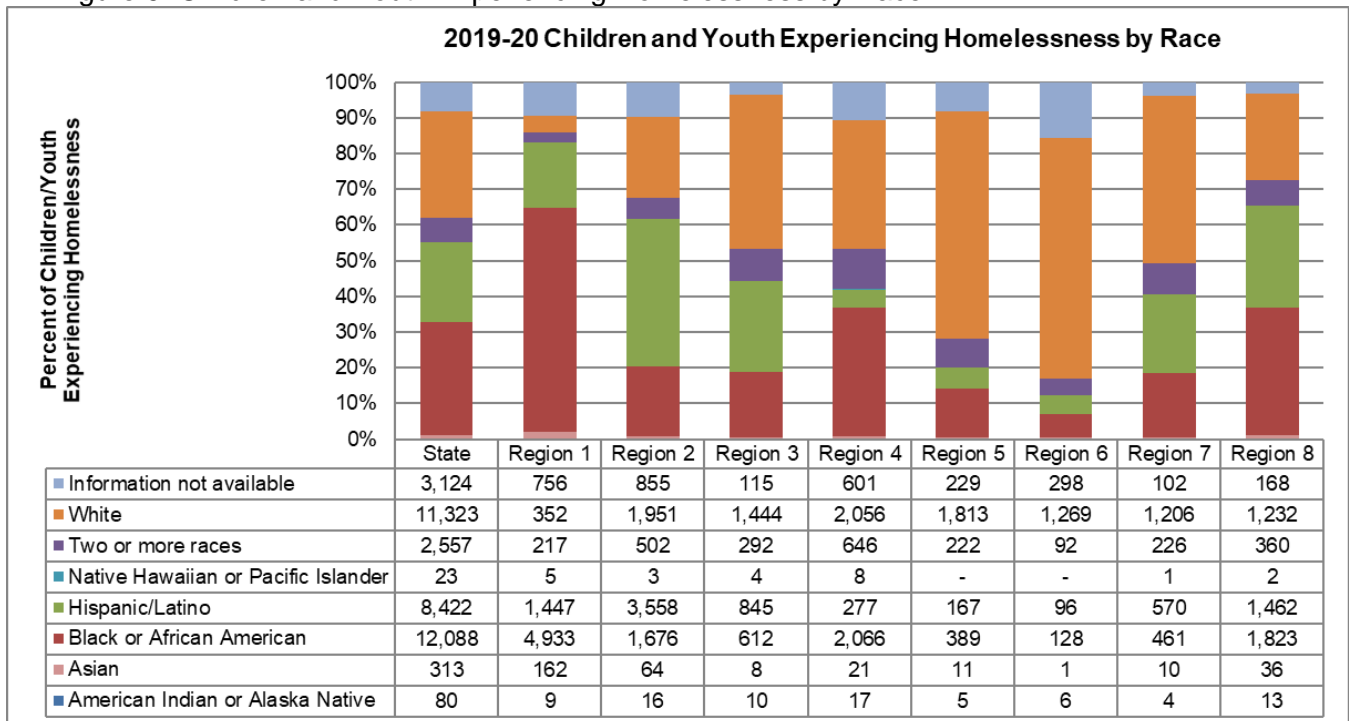
Figure 8. Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Migrant Status



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 92 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 below. 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 2019-20 Hispanic/Latino individuals comprised 22 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 30 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.

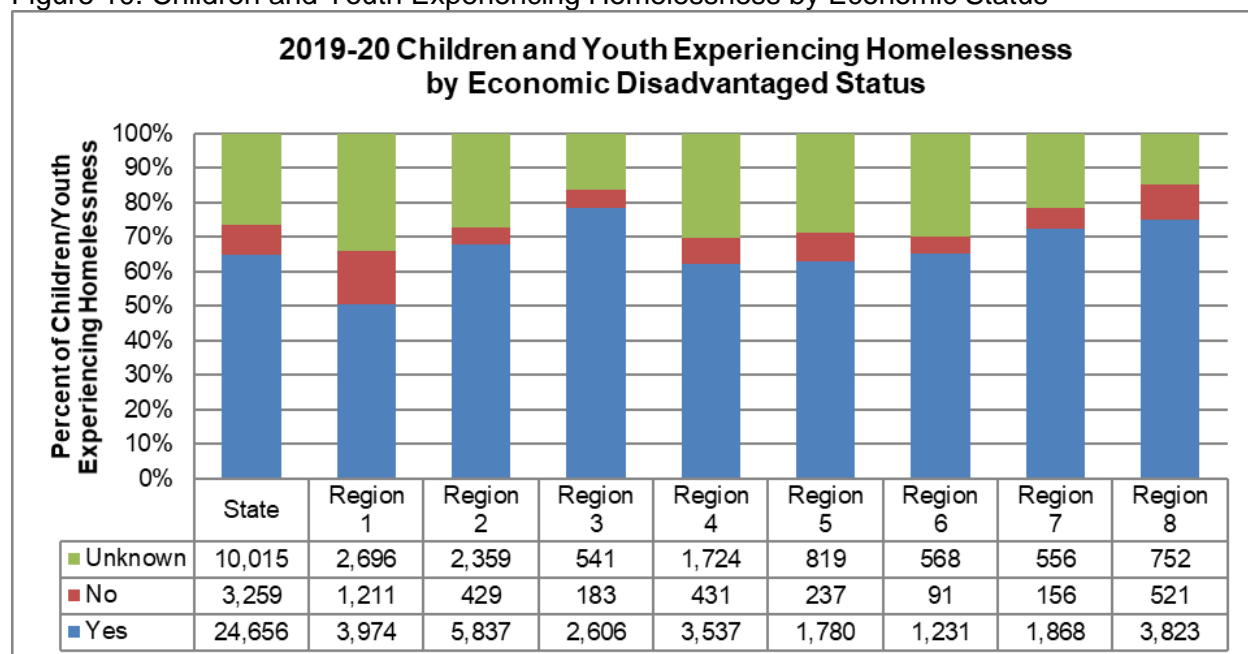
Figure 9. Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Race



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 37,930 identified children and youth, 65 percent were designated as economically disadvantaged, and 9 percent were reported as not economically disadvantaged. Nearly two-thirds of the 26 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



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, 2019 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. The

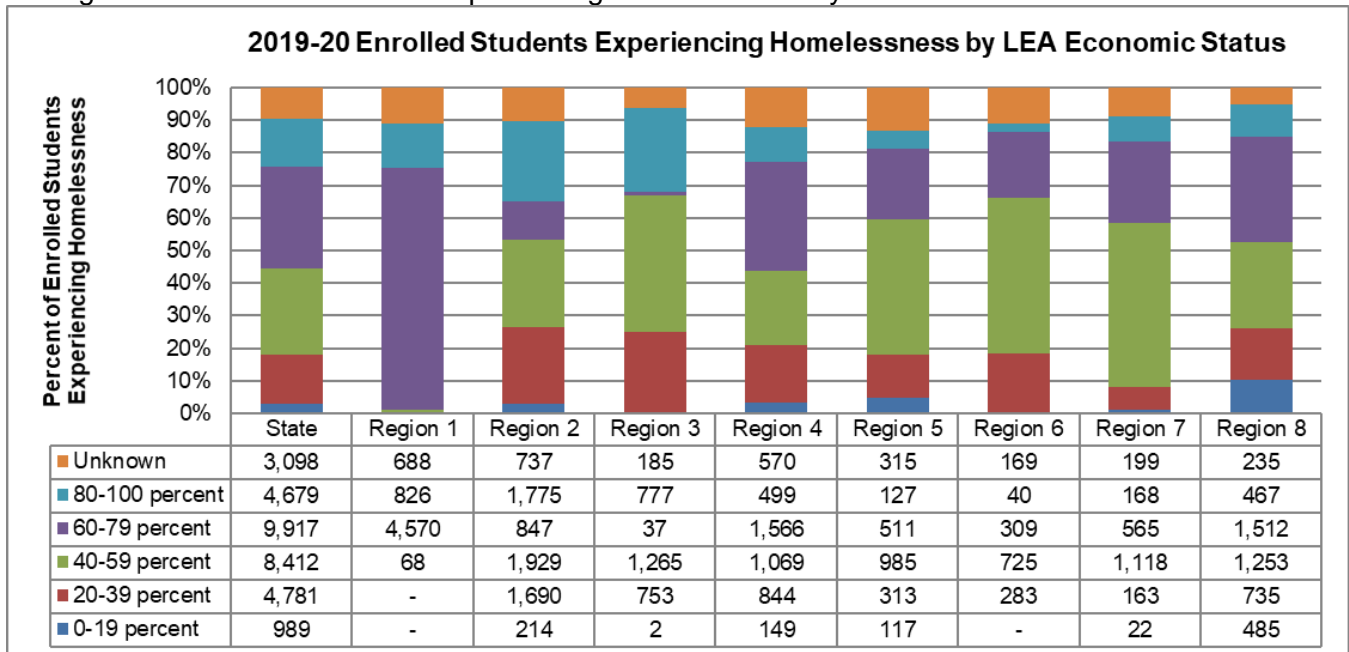
²³ <https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/LoanCanLowIncome/Pages/PublicSchools.aspx>

figure that follows 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, 72 percent of enrolled students experiencing homelessness (23,008) 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 10 percent of the enrolled population (3,098) only identified by shelters that did not provide LEA information. Region 1 had 89 percent of students attending high-poverty LEAs with region 7 having 83 percent and region 6 having 70 percent of students attending high-poverty LEAs. Regions 3, 5, and 8 had 69 percent of identified students attending high-poverty LEAs. Regions 4 and 2 had the lowest percentage of students, 67 and 63 percent, respectively, attending high-poverty LEAs.

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, 17 percent of students experiencing homelessness (5,770) attended LEAs with lower rates of low-income enrollment.

Figure 11. Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness by LEA Economic Status



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.

²⁴ <https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/SchoolLocale>

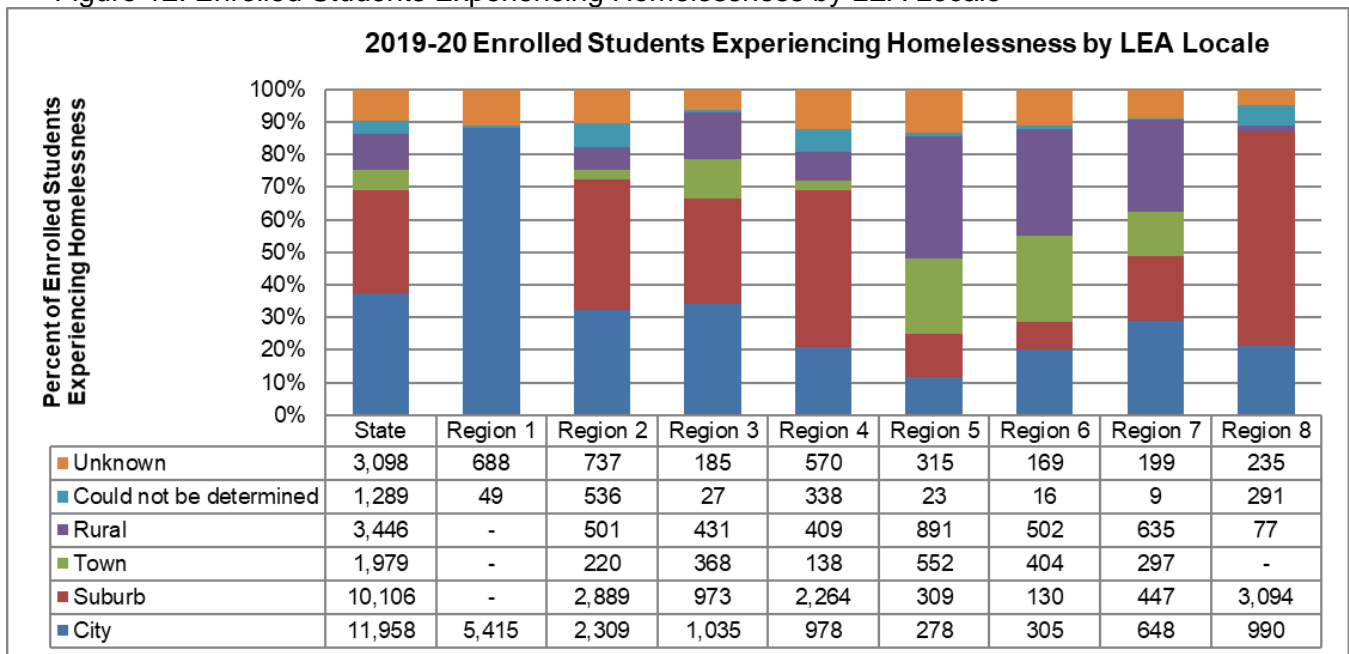
²⁵ https://nces.ed.gov/programs/handbook/data/pdf/appendix_d.pdf

Figure 12 below shows enrolled students experiencing homelessness by their LEA's locale code. The 'Could not be determined' category includes 1,289 students (four 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, 10 percent of enrolled students (3,098) were only identified by shelters that did not provide LEA information. These students are captured in the 'unknown' category.

Overall, 38 percent of enrolled students experiencing homelessness (11,958) attended LEAs categorized as city and 32 percent (10,106) 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 (53 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.

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



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, 82 percent (26,113 of 31,876) had barrier data, of which 13 percent (3,414) 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. Transportation issues, despite ongoing efforts to resolve, continue to be a huge barrier for Region 4 primarily due to the high volume of school districts in Allegheny County.

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 topic 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	1,932	497	363	261	391	94	72	197	57
Transportation	1,781	626	242	166	355	171	17	97	107
Obtaining other medical records	121	28	10	8	13	6	4	12	40
Immunization records	386	164	104	8	34	9	6	22	39
School records	236	62	26	9	51	20	6	22	40
School selection	322	158	21	11	66	15	6	8	37
Other	393	170	25	12	97	6	11	4	68
Any barriers	3,414	1,187	475	313	669	254	86	263	167
Total youth for whom data was available	26,113	5,221	5,840	2,558	3,698	1,944	1,159	1,731	3,962
Percentage of youth with any barrier	13%	23%	8%	12%	18%	13%	7%	15%	4%

There has been ongoing interest related to barriers for the under-five population yet a considerable portion (80 percent) of the under-five age group (6,870 children) are children birth to age 2 (3,803 children) or children ages 3 to 5 not enrolled in prekindergarten (1,862 children) for whom barriers to enrollment is not applicable. 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 ECEH staff actively worked to remove a barrier for a child attending a non-LEA prekindergarten program. Of the 1,205 children identified as experiencing homelessness who attended a prekindergarten program (LEA and non-LEA), 81 percent (975 children) had barrier data. Of those 975 children, 61 children (6 percent) were identified as having one or more barriers. Similar to the complete enrolled population, determining eligibility for services and transportation were the primary barriers 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, 2019 through June 30, 2020, regardless of whether every LEA they attended identified the student as experiencing homelessness.

Of the 31,876 enrolled students identified as experiencing homelessness, LEA/school mobility could be determined for 28,778 students (90 percent). The 'unable to determine' group (3,098 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 on the following page shows the number and the percentage of enrolled students grouped by number of LEA/school combinations. Seventy-two percent of enrolled students remained in their LEA/school combination during the program year, 16 percent of students enrolled in two LEA/school combinations, and two percent enrolled in three or more LEA/school combinations.

While a majority of students (23,045) remained in one LEA/school combination, there are many students (5,733; 18 percent) who changed their LEA/school during the program year.

Evaluators note this sharp increase when compared to prior years; during the 2018-19 program year, 2,868 (9 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 (3,098) 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	6,152	4,495	861	108	688	73%	14%	2%	11%
Region 2	7,192	5,299	1,028	128	737	74%	14%	2%	10%
Region 3	3,019	2,269	483	82	185	75%	16%	3%	6%
Region 4	4,697	3,184	808	135	570	68%	17%	3%	12%
Region 5	2,368	1,637	337	79	315	69%	14%	3%	13%
Region 6	1,526	995	305	57	169	65%	20%	4%	11%
Region 7	2,235	1,557	414	65	199	70%	19%	3%	9%
Region 8	4,687	3,609	746	97	235	77%	16%	2%	5%
State Total	31,876	23,045	4,982	751	3,098	72%	16%	2%	10%

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, after-school, 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, 74 percent (28,092) of the 37,930 identified children and youth were documented as receiving service at the individual level. Region 8 showed the largest proportion of children and youth receiving services followed by regions 2, 4, and 1.

Table 4 on the following page 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, clothing to support a school requirement and school supplies 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 transportation were the next most common services offered. For other funds, transportation and school supplies 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	18,693	121	13,760
Clothing to meet a school requirement	2,746	500	2,188
Transportation	1,591	567	5,349
School supplies	2,378	1,282	3,131
Other Services	474	213	2,825
Expedited evaluations	433	122	830
Assistance with participation in school programs	532	574	1,758
Counseling	500	164	2,208
Coordination between schools and agencies	626	364	2,110
Referral to other programs and services	538	114	2,392
Before-, after-school, mentoring, summer programs	292	573	1,542
Referrals for medical, dental, and other health services	323	107	2,614
Early childhood programs	290	137	841
Obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment	345	101	449
Emergency assistance related to school attendance	257	75	715
Addressing needs related to domestic violence	267	88	2,342
Unique count of children/youth receiving Title I services	19,278		
Unique count of children/youth receiving MV services		2,877	
Unique count of children/youth receiving Other services			21,025

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	19,278	5,056	4,212	1,471	2,914	1,146	601	1,105	2,773
Unique count of children/youth receiving MV services	2,877	1,083	621	44	255	311	77	168	318
Unique count of children/youth receiving Other services	21,025	3,974	5,652	1,605	3,106	1,536	1,030	1,153	2,969
Total children/youth receiving services	28,092	5,951	6,612	2,352	4,302	1,948	1,294	1,686	3,947
Total children/youth	37,930	7,881	8,625	3,330	5,692	2,836	1,890	2,580	5,096
Proportion of children/youth receiving any services	74%	76%	77%	71%	76%	69%	68%	65%	77%

Some services listed in Table 4 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, 19,278 students (60 percent of 31,876 enrolled students) were documented as receiving Title I services. Those services were mostly tutoring or other instructional support.

STUDENT OUTCOMES

Academic outcomes highlighted in this section include school attendance, graduation, and drop-out results. The annual evaluation also typically includes outcomes on state academic assessments. On March 19, 2020, PDE announced the cancellation of all Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), and Keystone exams for the 2019-2020 school year as a result of COVID-19.²⁷ There were no state academic assessments to include for this program year.

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 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.²⁸

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.

²⁷ <https://www.media.pa.gov/Pages/Education-Details.aspx?newsid=813>

²⁸ <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts>

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.”²⁹

Chronic absenteeism for *EDFacts* reporting is defined as: “the unduplicated count³⁰ 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.

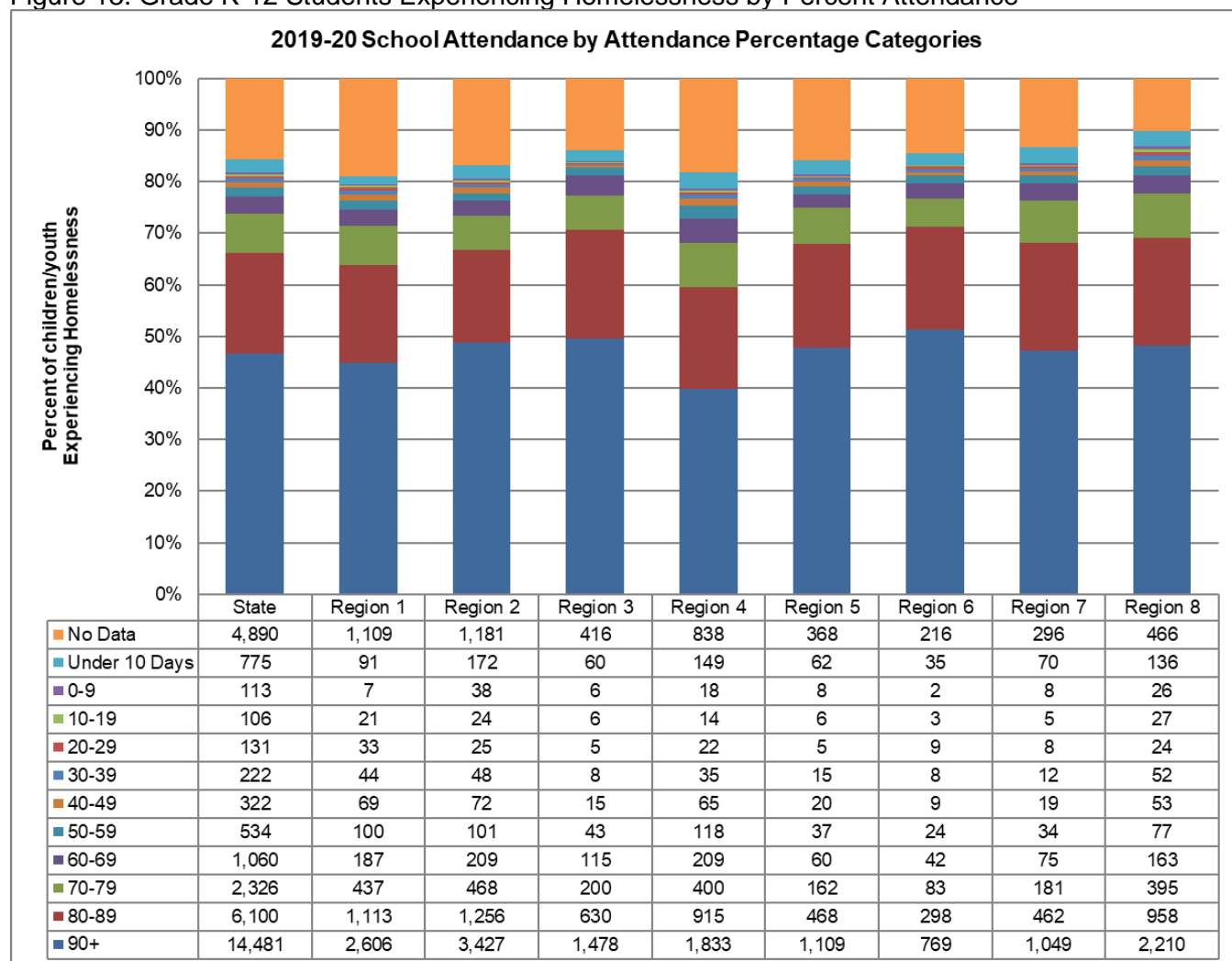
Of the 31,060 identified enrolled K-12 students, 82 percent (25,395) of students had school attendance data, 16 percent (4,890) did not have attendance data, and 2 percent (775) were not enrolled in an LEA for 10 or more days.

Of the 25,395 students with data, 57 percent (14,481) attended school 90 percent or more of the days in which they were enrolled, 24 percent (6,100) attended 80-89 percent of days enrolled, and 9 percent (2,326) attended 70-79 percent of days enrolled. The remaining 10 percent of students (2,488) attended 69 percent or less of the days in which they were enrolled. Based on these data, 43 percent of students would be considered chronically absent. Figure 13 on the following page shows school attendance by the attendance percentage categories.

²⁹ FS195-Chronic Absenteeism File Specifications v16.0

³⁰ 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 13. Grade K-12 Students Experiencing Homelessness by Percent Attendance



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, for comparison, showed a dropout rate of 1.44 percent.³¹

Grade 12 had the highest percentage of students dropping out at 7.5 percent (186 of 2,485 students); grade 11 had the next highest rate at 6.6 percent (127 of 1,926 students); and grade 10 had a rate of 3.8 percent (78 of 2,061 students).

³¹ <https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/Dropouts/Pages/default.aspx>

In terms of graduation, there were 2,485 grade 12 students, of which 2,237 (90 percent) had graduation status information. Of these 2,237 whose status was known, 1,687 graduated or obtained a high school equivalency diploma (74.4 percent), 186 dropped out (8.3 percent), and 364 (16.3 percent) did not graduate.

It is unknown how the pandemic and remote instruction affected these data. It should also be noted that 62 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, 37,930 children and youth were identified as experiencing homelessness in 2019-20. This is a decrease from 39,221 identified children and youth in 2018-19. 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. Importantly, however, the number of enrolled students identified as experiencing homelessness slightly increased from 31,822 in 2018-19 to 31,876 in 2019-20.

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. Almost half of students experiencing homelessness exhibit chronic absenteeism. This was true for 2019-20 as well, even with a portion of the year in remote instruction. 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.

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.