

# Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program 2023-24 State Evaluation Report

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Pennsylvania  
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## Introduction

### **McKINNEY-VENTO HOMELESS EDUCATION ASSISTANCE ACT OVERVIEW**

The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act, enacted in 1987, required states to review and revise residency requirements for the enrollment of children and youth experiencing homelessness. In 1990, the Act was amended to eliminate all enrollment barriers and ensure school access and academic support for students experiencing homelessness, also allowing funds to be used to provide direct educational services to eligible students. In 1994, the education provisions of the McKinney Act were incorporated into the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), expanding services to include preschool education, increasing parental involvement, and emphasizing interagency collaboration. In 2001, the law was reauthorized as the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Act (Title X, Part C of the ESEA), requiring all local educational agencies (LEAs) to designate a local liaison responsible for implementation. The Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) further amended the McKinney-Vento Act in 2015, with changes effective October 2016.

This report covers programming from July 1, 2023 through June 30, 2024 and reflects the legal requirements outlined in the 2016 revision.

The McKinney-Vento Act mandates that state educational agencies ensure every child and youth experiencing homelessness has equal access to the same free, appropriate public education—including public preschool—as other students.

The Act defines “children and youth experiencing homelessness” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence (section 103(a)(1)). This includes:

- a. Children and youth 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 youth 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 (section 103(a)(2)(C));
- c. Children and youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- d. Migratory children (as 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).

Students that meet this definition may also be classified as unaccompanied homeless youth, defined as those not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. Federal law does not specify an age range for unaccompanied youth. The upper limit is typically defined by the state’s school-age guidelines (or age 21 for students in special education), with no specified lower limit. The Act also guarantees the following rights for students experiencing homelessness:

- Immediate enrollment, even without required documentation,
- Continued enrollment in the school of origin, if in the student’s best interest,
- Transportation to and from the school of origin, and
- Provision of support services that promote academic success.

## **EDUCATION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUTH EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS PROGRAM**

The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) implements the McKinney-Vento Act through its Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program. PDE developed a state plan and a Basic Education Circular (BEC) to guide LEAs in implementing the Act. Program updates and resources are available on PDE's website:

[www.education.pa.gov/homeless](http://www.education.pa.gov/homeless).

Rather than distributing McKinney-Vento funds directly to LEAs, Pennsylvania uses a regional model, dividing the state into eight regions, each with a regional coordinator responsible for carrying out program goals and objectives. These positions are awarded through a competitive process on a three-year cycle. In some cases, regional coordinators may subcontract additional staff or engage intermediate units to assist with student identification and program support. This model ensures that all children and youth experiencing homelessness across the state have access to ECYEH services and supports.

At the state level, the PDE ECYEH State Coordinator oversees program coordination, statewide collaboration, and dispute resolution. PDE also contracts with the Center for Schools and Communities (CSC)—a division of the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit—to provide technical assistance to LEAs and regional coordinators. The CSC maintains a website that includes directories of ECYEH staff, LEA homeless liaisons, and statewide shelters for families, victims of domestic violence, and runaway youth, as well as other key resources. PDE and CSC conduct technical assistance visits in each region and compile comprehensive reports to support continuous program improvement. Additionally, through CSC, PDE contracts with external educational professionals to monitor LEA compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act and ESSA. These monitors submit their findings to both CSC and PDE for review.

### **GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ECYEH PROGRAM**

#### **Program Goals:**

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.

#### **Program Objectives:**

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.

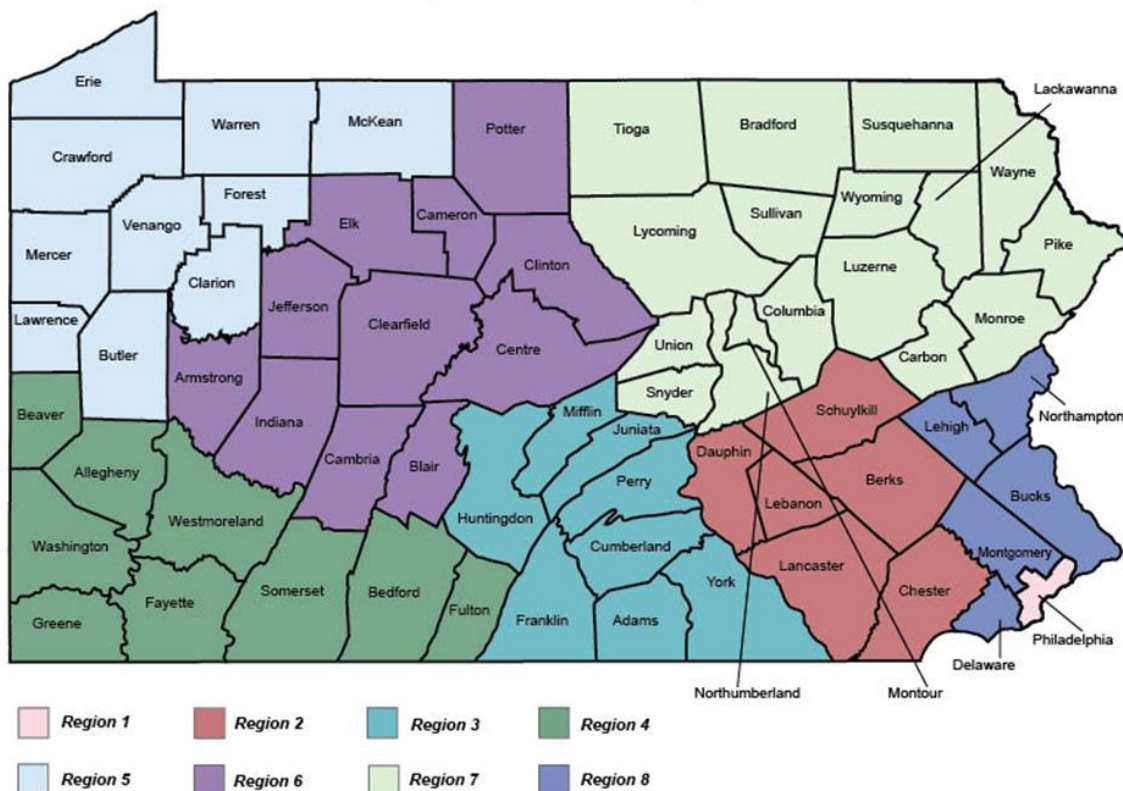
## Role of the Regional Coordinators

Regional coordinators play a key role in ensuring compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act across Pennsylvania public schools. Coordinators:

- Educate LEAs and community partners about the law;
- Provide technical assistance and intervention as needed;
- Support the removal of barriers to education for children and youth experiencing homelessness;
- Collaborate with shelters, agencies, and community organizations; and
- Monitor LEA compliance and assist with corrective action as needed.

The following map illustrates Pennsylvania's eight ECYEH regions.

Figure 1. ECYEH Program Regional Map



## EVALUATION DESIGN AND ACTIVITIES

PDE's Bureau of School Support contracts with the Allegheny Intermediate Unit (AIU) to conduct a comprehensive external evaluation of the ECYEH Program, in alignment with the

federal evaluation requirement outlined in subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.).<sup>1</sup>

The 2023-24 evaluation marked the 14<sup>th</sup> year of ECYEH program evaluation. The purpose of the evaluation 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 the annual evaluation, AIU evaluators assist PDE in compiling annual federally required data on children and youth experiencing homelessness.

For this report, required data elements are aligned with the U.S. Department of Education *EDFacts* file formats and the Comprehensive State Performance Report. Working closely with PDE, evaluators identify and utilize the most appropriate sources for each data element and follow quality standards and guidance provided by the National Center for Homeless Education, to ensure all necessary data is captured. Data is collected at both the program and state levels, prioritizing the use of existing sources to reduce the reporting burden on LEAs and other organizations. These sources include:

- The Pennsylvania Information Management System (PIMS),
- Pennsylvania Migrant Education Program (PA-MEP) database (MIS2000)<sup>2</sup>,
- County U.S. Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS), and
- Publicly available datasets for Title I, poverty, and urbanicity.

A secure, web-based reporting system was used for program-level data collection, enabling real-time access for ECYEH staff and reducing their data management workload.

Contributors of program-level data included:

- LEA homeless liaisons,
- Prekindergarten program staff,
- Shelter staff, and
- Regional or program staff.

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<sup>1</sup> 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.

<sup>2</sup> PA-MEP staff receive ongoing training on ECYEH eligibility to support the data collection process. PA-MEP staff document children and youth that meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness. All children and youth found eligible for PA-MEP services during the ECYEH program year are incorporated into the homeless identification and verification process.

In some instances, ECTEH staff collaborated with shelters to submit data at the county level rather than at the individual shelter level.<sup>3</sup> All shelters and non-LEA prekindergarten programs that receive direct or indirect ECTEH services are required to participate in McKinney-Vento reporting.

To uphold confidentiality protections for domestic violence shelters, a separate data collection process was developed in collaboration with the Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence.<sup>4</sup> Shelters had the option to use the customized tool or submit secure system-generated data extracts. Domestic violence shelters, like others receiving ECTEH support, are also required to report data as part of the McKinney-Vento mandate.

The PAsecureID<sup>5</sup> was a key data element for all school-enrolled individuals as it allowed evaluators to extract and link data across systems to ensure completeness and accuracy.

Since the first year of the evaluation, PDE, ECTEH Program staff, evaluators, and PIMS personnel have worked together to establish the ECTEH evaluation dataset as the official source for identifying students experiencing homelessness in Pennsylvania. This collaboration includes an extensive cross-referencing and follow-up process using ECTEH, PIMS, MIS2000, and HMIS data. After this process, evaluators generate a unique, comprehensive dataset of children and youth experiencing homelessness. This dataset is used to:

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 other PDE reporting purposes; and
3. Produce the annual evaluation report.

In addition to data collected about identified children and youth, evaluators collect information on the work of the ECTEH Program staff in the ECTEH web-based system. This includes technical assistance and professional development provided to LEAs, shelters and community partners; participation in boards, consortia, and interagency meetings related to homelessness; and outreach and education activities that support the implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act across Pennsylvania.

## **AMERICAN RESCUE PLAN (ARP) - HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

In 2021, PDE received one-time federal funding through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act to address the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. These ARP-Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funds were intended to:

- Identify children and youth experiencing homelessness;
- Provide wraparound services and direct assistance;
- Support school attendance and full participation in school activities; and
- Enhance in-person instruction, summer enrichment, and extended learning opportunities.

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<sup>3</sup> Shelters have their own reporting requirements and are required to report information in HUDs HMIS. In regions where data sharing agreements are in place, applicable data was extracted from local HMIS and provided to the regional ECTEH coordinator or directly to evaluators depending on the agreement, thus eliminating duplicate reporting.

<sup>4</sup> Domestic violence shelters are exempt from reporting in HMIS due to program confidentiality.

<sup>5</sup> PAsecureID is a unique, permanent, anonymous statewide student identification number assigned to all students upon their first entry into Pennsylvania's public school system.



The overarching goal of ARP-HCY was to improve the identification, enrollment, retention, and academic success of students experiencing homelessness. Initially, all funds were to be expended by January 30, 2025. However, LEAs with unspent funds as of September 30, 2024, could request an extension. Those that were approved for the extension could use funds through March 31, 2025.

ARP-HCY funds were distributed in two phases: ARP-HCY I and ARP-HCY II.

**ARP-HCY I** funds were disseminated early in the 2021-22 program year and were allocated across three funding streams:

1. **Regional offices** - To expand existing ECYEH-funded activities with an emphasis on ARP-HCY goals.
2. **Center for Schools and Communities (CSC)** - To provide enhanced professional development to regional offices and LEAs including development of a statewide mobile app (Finding Your Way in PA) for families and youth experiencing homelessness and a virtual summer camp.<sup>6</sup>
3. **AIU State Evaluation Team** - To evaluate ARP-HCY activities, including: development of a customized LEA Data Profile that summarized LEA evaluation and federal data; creation of a “Questioning the Data” Guide to assist with LEA Data Profile interpretation; an annual Implementation Survey to collect data about the use of ARP-HCY II funds at the LEA and regional consortium levels; updated ECYEH program monitoring tool and results report used to identify trends and needs for technical assistance; web-based data collection system updates to maintain compliance with security protocols and reporting; development of an interactive data dashboard for PDE and regional coordinators to identify and address trends in real-time; and assisting PDE with compilation and summarization of fund liquidation data for submission to the U.S. Department of Education.

**ARP-HCY II funds** were allocated directly to LEAs or regional consortiums of LEAs, based on historical ECYEH counts, with adjustments to ensure a minimum funding threshold for all McKinney-Vento subgrantees. Final award amounts were also influenced by the number of LEAs that opted to participate either directly (i.e., through a Request for Applications) or through regional consortiums. Because these funds were released late in the 2021-22 program year, most LEAs began to implement ARP-HCY programming in 2022-23.

Of Pennsylvania’s 713 LEAs (including school districts, charter schools, intermediate units, technical schools, and juvenile justice facilities):

- 402 LEAs submitted Requests for Applications (RFAs) for APR-HCY II funding, including:
  - 394 school district, charter schools, or comprehensive technical schools, and
  - 8 intermediate units (IUs) applying on behalf of regional consortiums;
- 196 LEAs chose to receive funding through one of the eight regional consortium grants;
- 108 LEAs declined to receive funding;
- 7 LEAs were not eligible to participate due to ineligibility or because opening after the RFA process; and

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<sup>6</sup> CSC activities are highlighted in the *Statewide Technical Assistance* section of this report.

- 4 LEAs closed or were absorbed into other districts during the funding period.

LEAs that did not apply for direct funding or consortium participation still had access to ARP-HCY-funded professional development, technical assistance, and resources offered by regional offices, the CSC, and the *Finding Your Way* app. As a result, all Pennsylvania LEAs had multiple opportunities to benefit from ARP-HCY resources, regardless of funding status.

## HOW TO USE THIS REPORT

This report presents key findings from the 2023–24 program year evaluation of Pennsylvania’s Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program, based on data collected and analyzed by the state evaluation team.

The evaluation examined data on:

- Children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness;
- The services and supports these students received; and
- Activities conducted by ECYEH Program staff across the state.

The Executive Summary offers a concise overview of the full findings. Past evaluation reports are publicly available on the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) website at [www.education.pa.gov/homeless](http://www.education.pa.gov/homeless).

This report is primarily intended for PDE program management, state technical assistance providers, and regional ECYEH program staff. However, the findings may also be useful for other stakeholders involved in homeless education including policymakers, LEA personnel, and community organizations.

The information provided in this report should be used to:

- Support data-driven program management;
- Guide technical assistance and training at the regional and state levels; and
- Inform program improvement efforts to enhance services and outcomes for students experiencing homelessness.

## Structure and Use of Data

Findings are presented at both the state and regional levels, with additional detail available at the county, LEA, or school level, as appropriate. To promote accuracy and readability:

- Percentages throughout the report may be rounded and may not always total 100 percent;
- In tables, a dash (–) is used to indicate no reported data; and
- In graphs, zero percent may represent values below 1 percent.

## Considerations for Interpreting Results

This report should be used to highlight successful implementation, effective practices, and promising programs that may serve as models for others. However, caution should be taken when comparing data across regions due to substantial variation in:

- The number and type of LEAs and community partners;
- Reporting practices and local implementation strategies;
- Staffing and available resources; and

- Regional priorities and needs among the population experiencing homelessness.

While regional differences can highlight areas for targeted technical assistance and statewide improvement, they should not be interpreted as indicators of program quality in isolation.

### **Disclaimer**

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## Executive Summary

The Pennsylvania Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Program ensures that all children and youth experiencing homelessness have equal access to a free, appropriate public education, including public preschool, as guaranteed by the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001. To support this goal, the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) developed a statewide plan and issued a Basic Education Circular to guide local education entities (LEAs) in implementing the Act. These and other resources are available at: [www.education.pa.gov/homeless](http://www.education.pa.gov/homeless).

The ECYEH Program operates across eight regions in Pennsylvania. Each region is staffed with a coordinator and team responsible for outreach, training, and technical assistance to LEAs and to connect LEAs and families to needed supports and services. Statewide technical assistance is provided by the Center for Schools and Communities (CSC), a division of the Central Susquehanna Intermediate Unit, which also monitors regional compliance with McKinney-Vento requirements and maintains a resource website: <https://homeless.center-school.org/resources/>. PDE's state coordinator oversees overall program implementation, manages disputes between LEAs, and assesses LEA compliance with the McKinney-Vento Act and Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA).

This evaluation report presents findings for the 2023-24 program year. The evaluation aimed to:

1. Assess regional support to LEAs in meeting ECYEH goals and objectives;
2. Evaluate services and supports provided to children and youth experiencing homelessness;
3. Identify the types of services and supports received;
4. Measure educational engagement and success among identified students;
5. Strengthen regional capacity to use data for program improvement; and
6. Provide recommendations to inform statewide program development.

## PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION FINDINGS

In 2023-24, approximately 11,543 individuals<sup>7</sup> from 860 unique entities participated in ECYEH-led trainings, professional development sessions, or workshops. The majority of participants were LEA representatives or liaisons, which is expected given that LEAs are the largest stakeholder group and primary focus of the ECYEH program. LEA liaisons are also the staff most directly engaged with students experiencing homelessness.

Although ECYEH offers training to a wide variety of organizations, technical assistance is typically request-based and initiated by LEAs, shelters, prekindergarten programs, and other agencies. Of the 948 entities<sup>8</sup> that received technical assistance:

- 62 percent (592) were LEAs; 9 percent (83) were shelters; 26 percent (243) were groups, agencies, or organizations; and 3 percent (30) were prekindergarten programs; and
- 96 percent (907) received child-specific technical assistance; 82 percent (778) received non-child specific technical assistance; 83 percent (790) received McKinney-Vento Act-

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<sup>7</sup> This number may be duplicated as some individuals may have participated in more than one event / activity. Some regions were not able to provide event participation counts, so a unique count is not available.

<sup>8</sup> Individual entities may be counted in more than one technical assistance category.

related materials; and 70 percent (659) received bulk supplies, such as bus passes, backpacks, school supplies, clothing, or hygiene items.

ECYEH staff also collaborated with other organizations through participation in committees, boards, meetings, and consortia at the county or regional level. These collaborations involved children and youth agencies, shelters, housing providers, prekindergarten programs, runaway and trafficking prevention groups, mental health and drug and alcohol agencies, social workers, and food pantries. In 2023–24, ECYEH staff participated in 380 unique events, which occurred annually (38 events), monthly (220 events), quarterly (85 events), bi-monthly (27 events), or three times per year (10 events). In most cases, staff attended as participants, although they served in a leadership or facilitation role in 45 events.

## **PROGRAM OUTCOME FINDINGS**

Consistent with its primary objectives, the ECYEH Program focused on outreach and building awareness of the McKinney-Vento Act and the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Progress toward these goals is evident in both the breadth of entities submitting data and the number of children and youth identified and reported.

Federal law requires all public LEAs to report data on students experiencing homelessness, including younger siblings of enrolled students. Entities that receive ECYEH support—through training, technical assistance, or resources—are also required to report children and youth experiencing homelessness who reside in their facilities or attend their prekindergarten programs.

Public LEAs in Pennsylvania include school districts, charter and cyber charter schools, intermediate unit-operated prekindergarten programs,<sup>9</sup> and full-time (comprehensive) career and technical centers (CTCs)<sup>10</sup> In 2023–24, there were 499 school districts,<sup>11</sup> 175 charter and cyber charter schools, and 10 comprehensive CTCs.

Nearly all LEAs were represented in the comprehensive dataset of homeless students identified statewide. Only 9 school districts, 15 charter or cyber charter schools, and one comprehensive CTC reported zero students meeting McKinney-Vento eligibility. Of these 25 LEAs, one school district and two charter schools explicitly reported no eligible students. Regional coordinators regularly reminded LEAs of reporting requirements and followed up with non-reporting entities to reinforce these obligations. Shelter data was also collected from every Pennsylvania county.

Through continued outreach and collaboration, the ECYEH program identified 50,030 children and youth experiencing homelessness in 2023-24—up from 46,714 in 2022-23 and 40,003 in 2021-22. This marks the highest attributed count reported to date. The ongoing increase may

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<sup>9</sup> 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.

<sup>10</sup> 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.

<sup>11</sup> Pennsylvania has 500 school districts; however, one very small district in suburban Philadelphia enrolls no students: Bryn Athyn School District, <http://www.brynathynschooldistrict.org/>.

reflect improved identification efforts, spurred in part by the implementation of ARP-HCY I funds beginning in 2021–22.

The number of enrolled students identified as experiencing homelessness also increased, from 40,122 in 2022-23 to 43,222 in 2023-24. These students made up 2.6 percent of the total Pennsylvania public school population, up from 2.4 percent the previous year. For reference, 2021-22 national rate was 2.42 percent.<sup>12</sup>

Of the 43,222 children and youth enrolled in LEA prekindergarten through grade 12:

- 70 percent were doubled-up;<sup>13</sup>
- 18 percent were in shelters or transitional housing;
- 9 percent were in hotels or motels; and
- 3 percent were unsheltered.

Nighttime residence status was not required for children ages birth to 2 or for three- to five-year-olds not enrolled in an LEA-operated prekindergarten program.

Among the 50,030 children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness:

- 18 percent were unaccompanied youth,<sup>14</sup>
- 69 percent were classified as economically disadvantaged (with another 20 percent of unknown status likely meeting this definition),<sup>15</sup>
- 32 percent were Black or African American; 28 percent were White; 25 percent were Hispanic/Latino (any race); and 9 percent were Native American or Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, or two or more races; race was unknown for 6 percent,
- 15 percent were English language learners,
- 5 percent were identified as migrant per Pennsylvania’s Migrant Education Program,
- 27 percent were identified as having a disability, with 33 percent of those categorized under “specific learning disability.”

Additionally, 101 non-LEA entities reported 7,478 (15 percent) children and youth, including 4,644 from birth to age 2, those ages 3 to 5 not in prekindergarten, or those attending non-LEA prekindergarten programs.

Among the 43,222 enrolled students experiencing homelessness, 69 percent attended schools in city or suburban LEAs, and 81 percent attended schools in high-poverty LEAs (i.e., LEAs in which 40 percent or more of students are classified as low income). LEA information was unknown for 7 percent of the students, who were identified only through shelter reporting.

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<sup>12</sup> National Center for Homeless Education - National Overview:

<https://profiles.nche.seiservices.com/ConsolidatedStateProfile.aspx>; most current data available for comparison.

<sup>13</sup> 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.

<sup>14</sup> An unaccompanied youth is any person age 21 or younger who is not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.

<sup>15</sup> 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.

## PROGRAM IMPACTS

Program impacts reflect the extent to which the ECYEH Program achieved its anticipated outcomes, including reducing or eliminating barriers to enrollment and education, maintaining students in their school of origin, and providing services aligned with McKinney-Vento Act provisions. Student academic outcomes are also included in this section.

Barriers are defined as situations that interfere with a child or youth's school enrollment, attendance, or educational success. In 2023-24, 21 percent of enrolled students faced one or more such barriers. The most commonly reported issue was determining student eligibility for homeless services, followed by transportation challenges. Transportation barriers often stem from limited LEA resources and/or logistical complexities. To address this, 2022-23 ARP-HCY II funds were directed toward mitigating transportation difficulties, with efforts continuing through the end of the funding period in 2024-25. These funds also supported the development of long-term transportation solutions.

A key provision of the McKinney-Vento Act is the right for students to remain in their school of origin when it is determined to be in their best interest. Among the 43,222 enrolled students experiencing homelessness, school mobility<sup>16</sup> data was available for 93 percent, of which 80 percent remained in the same LEA/school combination throughout the program year. Nearly 3 percent experienced more than two LEA/school combinations.

Students experiencing homelessness are also entitled to academic support services. In 2023-24, 85 percent of the 50,030 identified children and youth received services at the individual level. The most frequently provided service was tutoring or other instructional support.

State academic assessments in Pennsylvania include the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), and the Keystone Exams. Assessment data were available for approximately 77 percent of eligible students experiencing homelessness—below the 95 percent participation target set by the state. Among students that took the exams:

- 26 percent scored proficient or advanced in reading/literature,
- 14 percent scored proficient or advanced in math/Algebra I, and
- 33 percent scored proficient or advanced in science/biology.

School attendance data were available for 89 percent of enrolled students. Of those, 49 percent attended school at least 90 percent of the days they were enrolled, indicating a chronic absenteeism rate of 51 percent. This marks an improvement over the 54 percent rate reported in 2022-23.

Of the 20,222 students enrolled in grades 7-12, the overall dropout rate was 3.7 percent, down slightly from 3.9 percent the previous year. Grade 12 students had the highest dropout rate at 6.6 percent, followed by grade 11 (6.2 percent) and grade 10 (4.5 percent).

Of 3,395 grade 12 students with known graduation status, 76.4 percent graduated, up from 74.9 percent in 2022-23. Additionally, 88 grade 11 students (3.1 percent) graduated early or obtained a high school equivalency diploma.

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<sup>16</sup> 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.

## REFLECTIONS AND CONSIDERATIONS

Each year, the accuracy and consistency of ECYEH Program reporting continues to improve. Further, reporting by new entities—such as Homeless Management Information Systems (HMIS) and prekindergarten programs—has deepened the program’s understanding of student homelessness across Pennsylvania. As data quality and reporting has improved, the following themes have emerged:

1. Regional staff provide extensive training, technical assistance, and service coordination to LEAs and partner entities that serve children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness.
2. A majority (85 percent) of children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness receive individual support or services.
3. Students experiencing homelessness are predominately economically disadvantaged and attend LEAs that have high levels of poverty.
4. Transportation remains one of the most frequently cited barriers statewide.
5. Most students remain in their LEA/school of origin, supporting educational stability, however, a subset of students experience extreme mobility or face significant enrollment barriers.
7. Homeless identification counts vary widely by region.
8. Although attention has increased on the under-five population, misalignment persists between prekindergarten identification practices and McKinney-Vento reporting guidance.
9. Regional staff have taken on expanded responsibilities as the number of identified students and collaborating partners continues to grow.
10. Only 25 LEAs reported zero identified children and youth experiencing homelessness. These LEAs were typically small, served limited grade spans, and/or had few low-income students. Since 2016-17 the total number of LEAs with no students identified decreased by over half (69 to 25 LEAs).
11. Chronic absenteeism among students experiencing homelessness is high (51 percent), though it has improved from 54 percent in 2022-23. Chronic absenteeism likely contributes to lower academic performance, graduation rates, and higher dropout rates, especially in grades 10-12. Reducing chronic absenteeism should remain a statewide and local priority.
12. Participation in state academic assessments remains below the 95 percent state target. Students experiencing homelessness consistently perform significantly below their peers—about 10 percentage points lower than the historically underperforming population across all tested subjects and grade levels.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on these findings, the following actions are recommended to strengthen implementation at the regional and local levels:

1. Continue improving documentation of professional development, technical assistance, and collaborative activities conducted by ECYEH regional staff and partners to fully capture program efforts.
2. Explore and implement innovative transportation solutions to help LEAs address common logistical and financial challenges.



3. Ensure all 67 counties are represented in HMIS reporting by strengthening coordination with local Continuum of Care partners.
4. Identify and expand instructional support opportunities for students outside the regular school day (e.g., afterschool, summer programs, or services for students residing in shelters).
5. Offer targeted professional development or technical assistance to LEAs focused on:
  - Supporting younger siblings through prekindergarten referrals,
  - Reducing chronic absenteeism,
  - Improving graduation rates and reducing dropout rates,
  - Increasing access to academic support services, and
  - Prioritizing LEAs with high rates of missing data or poor outcomes.
6. Strengthen state and regional partnerships with prekindergarten providers and ensure LEAs are aware of and can refer families to local programs, especially when under-five siblings are not yet enrolled. Further, strengthen shelter-prekindergarten connections where needed.
7. Continue proactive outreach to non-reporting LEAs—especially charter schools—to ensure compliance with McKinney-Vento requirements and consistent identification and reporting practices.
8. Reinforce the importance of student participation in state standardized assessments and connect students with supports that improve test preparedness.
9. Review ECYEH staff roles and responsibilities to ensure efficient delivery of training, technical assistance, and outreach, given the growing partner network and number of students experiencing homelessness.
10. Re-evaluate prekindergarten identification protocols to improve alignment with McKinney-Vento reporting expectations.
11. Encourage regional and LEA staff to use the ECYEH Program Data Dashboard and LEA Data Profile to track trends and inform local identification and service strategies.
12. Continue to improve consistency and accuracy of service documentation across regions. Utilize state-level technical assistance and monitoring to ensure regional staff accurately report services provided.

## Findings

Findings are organized into three sections: Program Implementation, Program Outcomes, and Program Impacts, including student-level outcomes. As described in the *Evaluation Design and Activities* section, data for this report were compiled from multiple sources to assess child and youth homelessness in Pennsylvania in the context of the McKinney-Vento Act. When children or youth were identified by more than one entity—or by a non-LEA entity—their data were reported with their LEA(s), when available.

### PROGRAM IMPLEMENTATION

Program implementation findings reveal the extent to which the ECYEH Program provided professional development, technical assistance, and other supports to LEAs, partner organizations, and families, children, and youth experiencing homelessness. Data were collected at the regional level through a web-based reporting system and included activities such as trainings and workshops, technical assistance and distribution of bulk supplies, and participation in meetings, consortia, and boards.

#### Professional Development, Technical Assistance, and Collaboration

ECYEH regional staff provided professional development and technical assistance to LEAs, parents and caregivers, shelters, and organizations serving individuals experiencing homelessness.

A longstanding priority of the ECYEH Program is targeted outreach to LEAs and shelters to raise awareness of McKinney-Vento Act requirements and improve service coordination for students experiencing homelessness. In recent years, regional coordinators have broadened their outreach efforts to include non-LEA prekindergarten programs, as well as community agencies and organizations that support individuals experiencing homelessness.

Each year, evaluators work with regional coordinators to improve the accuracy and consistency of data reporting. To support this effort, a web-based reporting system was implemented during the 2016-17 program year. While consistency continues to improve, variation in how regions classify and report professional development activities remains. These differences are often tied to regional characteristics, such as geographic size, population density, and staffing structure, all of which influence how professional development is delivered.

This section highlights the scope and reach of ECYEH-funded outreach and training efforts related to the McKinney-Vento Act across Pennsylvania. In 2023-24, regional offices used ARP-HCY I funds to support and expand professional development and technical assistance and related activities.

#### Professional Development

The ECYEH Program tracks the reach of its professional development activities, including trainings and workshops, provided to a variety of stakeholders. These sessions covered foundational topics such as McKinney-Vento 101 and ECYEH 101, along with special topics like transportation and supports for specific student populations. Some trainings were tailored for specific audiences such as special education directors or local community organizations.

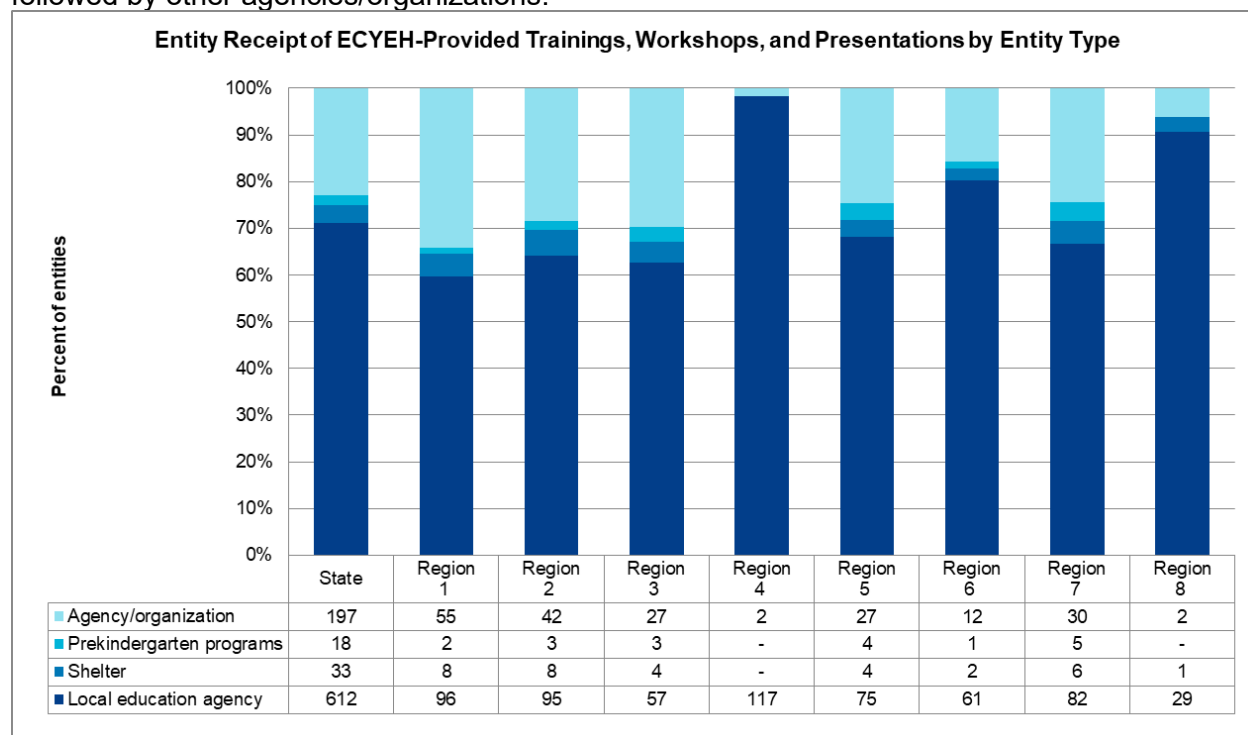
Professional development also included sessions to support LEAs in preparing for or responding to external monitoring.

Training and professional development sessions were delivered across multiple levels--regional, county, LEA, organizational, and individual—and the same event may have occurred across multiple levels. Liaison training was offered throughout the year, particularly in response to staff turnover. To better reflect the program’s reach, participation data are reported by recipient type rather than by number of sessions held.

Figure 2 displays participation 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.

In 2023-24, 860 unique entities participated in at least one ECYEH-sponsored training, workshop, or professional development event (see Figure 2). LEAs represented the largest share of participants, which aligns with the program’s priority to support LEAs and their homeless liaisons.

Figure 2. LEAs were the most common participant in ECYEH trainings/workshops/presentation, followed by other agencies/organizations.



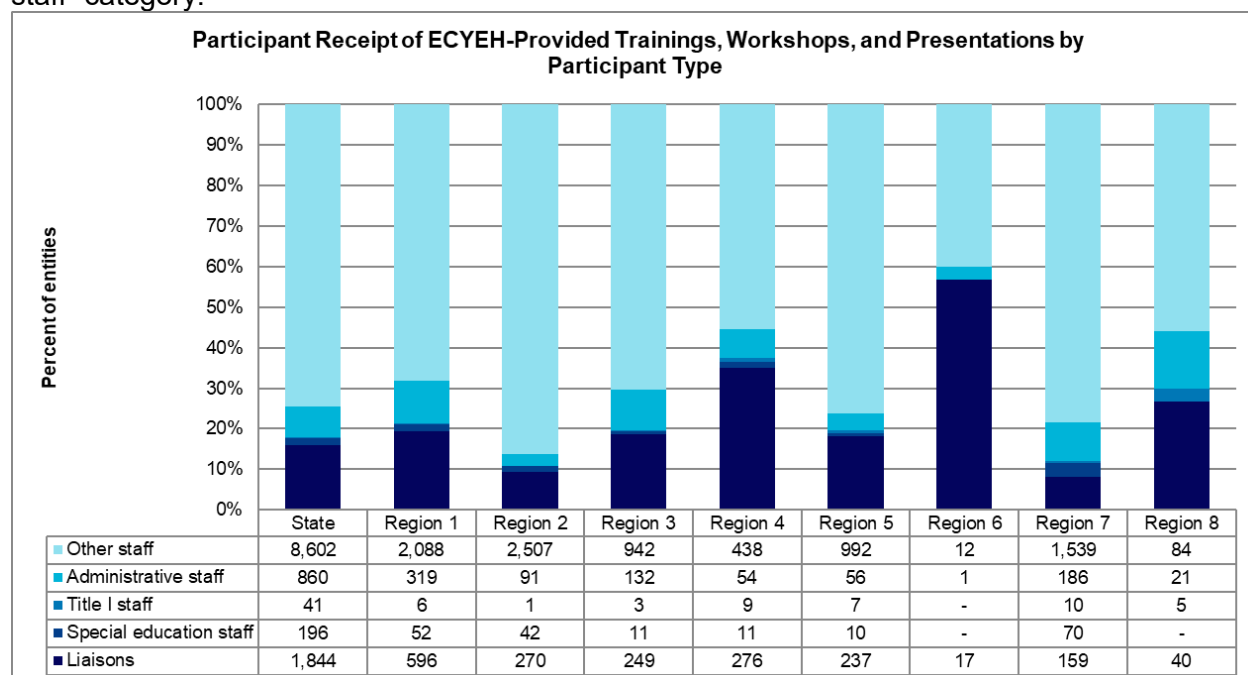
Participant data were also analyzed by role. A total of 11,543<sup>17</sup> individuals attended ECYEH trainings or events during the program year (see Figure 3). Participants selected their primary role from a predefined list. The most commonly selected category was “other staff,” which includes teachers, counselors, and support personnel.

<sup>17</sup> This number may include duplicates as participants may have attended more than one event.

Some LEAs--especially those with large numbers of students experiencing homelessness—have a designated building-level liaisons in addition to a district-wide liaison. As a result, some duplication in liaison counts is expected. In 2023-24:

- 1,844 liaisons (duplicate count) attended one or more ECYEH-led trainings sessions, and
- 149 liaisons participated in sessions specifically focused on LEA monitoring preparation and/or follow-up.

Figure 3. Other than Region 6, the majority of ECYEH training participants fell into the “other staff” category.



## Technical Assistance

In addition to professional development, ECYEH staff provided targeted technical assistance in response to requests from LEAs, shelters, prekindergarten programs, and other organizations. This support was documented in four categories:

- Child/family-specific,
- Child/family non-specific,
- McKinney-Vento Act-related materials, and
- Bulk supplies (e.g., backpacks, clothing, toiletries, bus passes).

Child/family-specific and child/family non-specific technical assistance typically occurred through phone calls or emails. If assistance led to direct services for a child or youth, it was documented in their individual service record. Some entities 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.

During 2023-24, 948 unique entities received support through one or more technical assistance category:

- LEAs: 62 percent (592);
- Shelters: 9 percent (83);

- Agencies/organizations/groups: 26 percent (243); and
- Non-LEA prekindergarten programs 3 percent (30).

Technical assistance frequency was captured as once, occasionally, or often. Of the 592 LEAs that received technical assistance:

- 584 (99 percent) received child-specific technical assistance. Of these, 277 reported receiving this type of technical assistance 'often,' 301 'occasionally,' and 6 'once.'
- 488 LEAs (82 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 240 LEAs reported receiving 'often,' 240 'occasionally,' and 8 'once.'
- 527 LEAs (89 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials.
- 407 LEAs (69 percent) received bulk supplies such as backpacks, school supplies, bus passes, clothing, toiletries, or blankets.

Of the 83 shelter, emergency, or transitional housing facilities that received technical assistance:

- 83 (100 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, of which 40 received 'often' and 43 received 'occasionally.'
- 67 (81 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 45 received 'often' and 22 facilities received 'occasionally.'
- 75 (90 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act related materials.
- 75 (90 percent) received bulk supplies.

Of the 243 agencies, organizations, or groups that received technical assistance:

- 210 (86 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, of which 103 received 'often' and 107 'occasionally.'
- 197 (81 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 110 received 'often,' 85 'occasionally,' and 2 'once.'
- 163 entities (67 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials.
- 152 entities (63 percent) received bulk supplies.

Of the 30 non-LEA prekindergarten programs that received technical assistance support:

- 30 (100 percent) received child-specific technical assistance, of which 10 received 'often' and 20 received 'occasionally.'
- 26 (87 percent) received child non-specific technical assistance, of which 21 received 'often' and 5 received 'occasionally.'
- 25 (83 percent) received McKinney-Vento Act-related materials.
- 25 (83 percent) received bulk supplies.

## **Meetings, Boards, Consortia and Committees**

In addition to delivering professional development and providing technical assistance, ECYEH staff devoted time to collaborative engagement with agencies, organizations, and community groups by participating in meetings, boards, consortia, and committees. The engagements support cross-system coordination and help raise awareness about the needs of children, youth and families experiencing homelessness. While the structure and frequency of these collaborative efforts varied across regions, several common themes and partners were present statewide.

In 2023-24, ECTEH staff reported participating in 380 unique events. These events occurred annually (38 events), monthly (220 events), quarterly (85 events), bi-monthly (27 events), or three times per year (10 events).

In most cases, staff participated as attendees; however, in 45 instances, they served in a leadership or facilitator. Event attendance ranged from two to 3,277 individuals, with an average of 107 participants per event.

These events typically occurred at the county or regional level and involved organizations that serve or support individuals experiencing homelessness. Common collaborating entities included: 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, and food pantries.

Participation in these events served multiple purposes, including strengthening local partnerships, promoting the McKinney-Vento Act, increasing awareness of ECTEH services, and supporting the identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness. Collaborative efforts such as these—along with targeted support for LEAs undergoing monitoring—contributed to the continued increase in identification and accurate reporting across Pennsylvania.

### **Statewide Technical Assistance**

The Center for Schools and Communities provided a range of professional services to the Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) throughout the 2023-24 program year, supporting training, technical assistance (TA), monitoring, resource development, and special project implementation.

### **Technical Assistance Visits to ECTEH Regional Offices**

Staff conducted 16 technical assistance visits—one in the fall and one in the spring—for each of the eight regional ECTEH program offices. These visits, held both virtually and in-person, provided targeted support to regional coordinators and staff.

In addition, the PDE ECTEH State Coordinator conducted annual monitoring of each regional office to ensure compliance with federal and state guidelines for ECTEH and ARP-HCY I & II programming. Insights from these visits informed statewide best practices, informed professional development content (including the *Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference*), and were summarized in reports shared with PDE and the regional offices.

### **ECTEH Program Statewide and Regional Professional Development**

State-level ECTEH staff coordinated and facilitated professional development efforts to strengthen the capacity of regional coordinators, homeless liaisons, and professionals supporting students and families experiencing homelessness. Activities included:

1. Development, facilitation, dissemination, and/or participation in the following resources, webinars, and trainings/events:
  - Head Start connection calls between each regional office and the Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) to determine some next steps on increasing collaborative efforts and identification of head start students.

- Information session with Department of Human Services Managed Health Care for families experiencing challenges – during regional coordinator bimonthly virtual meeting.
  - McKinney-Vento 101 training for Pennsylvania Association of School Business Officials (PASBO) members.
  - Connected PA's Parents as Teachers Program staff with ECTEH Program regional offices for student and family engagement support.
  - General TA requests from regional offices on unique scenarios, identification, allowable activities, and uses of funds.
  - Provided daily or weekly approvals to the ECTEH Homeless Liaison Directory available online.
  - Attendee at Pennsylvania Coalition to Advance Respect statewide conference in July 2023 for human trafficking specific workshop sessions.
  - Presenter (to over 100 participants) on the Five Factors of Resilience for Youth, and attendee at the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth Conference in November 2023.
  - Exhibitor at PA Student Assistance Professional Conference in February 2024.
  - Presenter (to over 50 participants) on the Five Factors of Resilience for Youth, and attendee at the National Youth Advocacy and Resilience Conference in March 2024.
  - Exhibitor at 2024 OCDEL Conference in March 2024.
  - Exhibitor at Pennsylvania PreK Counts and Head Start Supplemental Assistant Program Grantee Meeting in April 2024.
  - PA Early Childhood Education Homelessness quarterly stakeholders' meetings organized by PA Head Start.
  - Monthly state TA meetings with PDE and Allegheny Intermediate Unit 3 program staff.
2. Coordination and implementation of the annual Paving the Way to Educational Success Conference (PTW) October 2023 (virtual and in-person). The conference was attended by 600 professionals working with children and youth experiencing homelessness or in foster care. The 2023 conference included three keynote speakers highlighting themes of nurturing healing amid trauma; and personal stories of resilience and achievement in the face of experiencing homelessness as students.

Additional conference highlights included:

- Collaboration with two sponsors.
- Opening reception uplifting the voices of students experiencing homelessness and foster care film screening, artwork displays, and community quilt project.
- Advocate awards ceremony honoring eight "Advocates of the Year" who have positively impacted the educational success of students experiencing homelessness or in foster care.
- Regional and local education agency networking spaces.
- Over 40 sessions with 50+ speakers (including statewide and national expertise)
- Opening and closing conference reflective spaces and activities including a reflect and refresh space for attendees that modeled SEL practices and resources.

3. Launched November 2023 ECYEH Awareness Week Campaign including:
  - 2-part webinar series:
    - Multi-Tiered Systems of Support: Going Upstream on Youth Homelessness with Anne F. Farrell, Ph. D at Chapin Hall; and
    - The Urgency in Identifying and Enrolling our Youngest Children Experiencing Homelessness into Quality Early Learning Programs with Amy Requa and Tracey Duarte, PA Keys and OCDEL.
  - Online community outreach and social media toolkit for regional offices, LEAs, community organizations, and student advocates to simplify and unify awareness efforts.
  - Coordination for a statewide “Wear Red Day,” for various awareness events, and for supply drives associated with awareness week at schools and community partners.
  - Participation at the “ECYEH Awareness Advocacy Day” special event at the State Capital to grow statewide support and elevate the needs of students experiencing homelessness including proclamation, and live legislation advocacy presentation.
4. Coordination and facilitation of ECYEH Regional Coordinator bimonthly- virtual meetings
5. Coordination and facilitation of the annual spring regional professional development meeting held in April 2024 at Milton Hershey School. Training for ECYEH regional offices included:
  - Obtaining Surrogates for Unaccompanied Youth in Special Education;
  - Regional Strategizing for Program Success;
  - PA Education Policy & How We Can Influence Policymaking;
  - Information sessions about FosterEd and PA Hunger Free Campus; and
  - Tour of Milton Hershey School Campus.
6. Coordination and facilitation of ECYEH and ARP-HCY monitoring for the 2023-2024 cycle year including:
  - Updating monitor orientation documents and guidelines for academic year;
  - Compilation of LEAs to be monitored, reviews and edits to monitoring tool in collaboration with AIU3;
  - Contracting with monitors;
  - Hosting virtual monitor orientation training;
  - Scheduling monitor visits;
  - Providing additional monitor and LEA support throughout the monitoring cycle along with processing of all finalized reports throughout the 2023-2024 school year;
  - Gathered input and sought collaboration from regional offices for monitor recommendations for 2024-2025 ECYEH monitoring cycle; and
  - Began content updates/review/edits for the 2024-2025 ECYEH monitoring tool with Allegheny Intermediate Unit staff.
7. Statewide launch of new ECYEH Website (coinciding with November – ECYEH Awareness Week) including updated content for liaisons, educators, students and parents; and highlighting multiple ARP-HCY special projects.



## **ARP-HCY Fund Statewide TA, Training, and Professional Development**

During the 2023-2024 program year, ARP-HCY statewide technical assistance and training highlights included:

1. Provided extensive support to LEAs receiving ARP-HCY funding including holding and archiving sessions for ARP-HCY I and II Fund grantees.
2. Coordinated the compliance monitoring of ARP-HCY grantees between November 2023 and May 2024, along with the review and return of reports to LEAs.
3. Provided direct assistance to LEAs, compliance monitors, and regional office staff in preparation for monitoring reviews.
4. Assisted PDE with important email reminders to send out to ARP-HCY grantees as the deadline for usage of funds approached closer to September 30, 2024.
5. Maintained ARP-HCY webpages and disseminated publications and resource materials to LEA grantees, shelters, and other community organizations.
6. Provided monthly virtual Restorative Practice Series for youth serving professionals and educators with instructor Dr. Rajni Shankar-Brown, Stetson University. The series, titled "Replenish and Keep Growing!" included topics such as social emotional learning, unpacking trauma, cultivating empathy, and cultural humility. The average monthly attendance included 50-60 participants. Monthly sessions offered continuing education credits to attendees.
7. Continued outreach and publication of, "Finding Your Way in PA," empowering educators, service providers, and those seeking help to find and access Pennsylvania resources based on service area by radius. Service categories include education, shelter/housing, food, and other resources. Held focus groups during app development. Learn more about the app [here](#). Utilized marketing resources to raise awareness and increase traffic in the usage of the app.
8. Provided guidance, technical assistance, and made resources available to grantees on topics such as, allowable activities, utilization of funds, a program timeline and reporting requirements. Sent reminders to grantees about availability of funds and planning their fund balance. 1:1 technical assistance was provided as requested.
9. Coordinated and hosted the first in person summer camp, "Build Your Best School Year," for students experiencing homelessness in summer 2024. The camp's objectives include topics to accelerate learning, to prepare students for the following school year, and to provide students with the opportunity to engage with peers in similar life situations. Over 50 students participated. Camp was held at Susquehanna University in partnership with Youth Move PA.
10. Developed and launched the Bridge Project in PA which facilitates free access to mental health services for children and youth experiencing homelessness. The Bridge Project is available for a limited time. In partnership with our providers, services are available online and at no cost to the student, family, or local education agency (LEA). No health insurance is necessary.

11. Developed and launched a partnership with T-Mobile and Premier Wireless providing 200 internet-equipped cellphones to keep students experiencing homelessness connected to school, resources, and vital support systems. This service was available to eligible McKinney-Vento students at no cost to them or schools.
12. Exhibited at various education-related events and conferences throughout PA to raise awareness about students experiencing homelessness and available statewide resources and program availability of ARP-HCY.
13. Continued release of monthly podcast series, “I Will Be Your Voice: Stories of Homelessness and Hope” to amplify the voices and stories of students experiencing homelessness via guest interviews. The podcast seeks to create a dialogue around students experiencing homelessness to increase awareness and identification.
14. ARP-HCY Consortium support included:
  - a. Coordinated the delivery of bulk and as-needed hygiene kits for students experiencing homelessness.
  - b. Facilitated the outfitting of care closets and laundry facilities for charter schools serving McKinney-Vento students.
  - c. Organized and delivered over 200 backpacks filled with school supplies to homeless liaisons.
  - d. Held ongoing technical assistance for the use of ARP-HCY II Consortium funds by member LEAs.

In 2023–24, the ECYEH and ARP-HCY program teams provided consistent support, training, and technical assistance to ECYEH regional offices and ARP-HCY Fund grantees. Technical assistance was delivered through regular email and phone contact, as well as structured opportunities for collaboration and learning. These included bi-monthly regional coordinator meetings (held five times annually) and biannual meetings for all regional staff in October and May. Organized by ECYEH and ARP-HCY program staff, these sessions allowed regional coordinators and their teams to receive state-level updates, engage in peer networking, and collaboratively address emerging issues and complex scenarios affecting students experiencing homelessness across Pennsylvania. In addition, technical assistance was provided to ARP-HCY grantees on an as-needed basis.

### **Finding Your Way in Pennsylvania App**

The Finding Your Way in Pennsylvania (FYW in PA) app, developed with support from the ARP-HCY Program, is a based mobile and desktop app designed to share services, resources, and information with young people and families, particularly those experiencing homelessness. Users can search for and request assistance with services and resources in their current location, local communities, and throughout Pennsylvania to connect them with helpful support. Over 5,000 services for shelter, food, health and mental health, education, and work are listed within the app. Ultimately, it supports educational stability and strives to foster positive education outcomes so that students and families experiencing housing instability can succeed in school, work, and life.

Over 39,000 users engaged with the FYW in PA app during the 2023-24 ECYEH program year, a significant increase over the approximate 9,600 users in 2022-23. Users were able to utilize their mobile device (81.8 percent), desktop (15.4 percent), or tablet (2.7 percent) to access the 5,203 total service providers available during 2023-24 in the app. This usage represents a large

shift in device type (64% for desktop, 35% for mobile, and 1% for tablet) in accessing the 5,123 total service providers available during 2022-23 in the app. Of these services, categories were defined as Women (3,601 providers), Men (3,559 providers), Seniors (3,925 providers), Kids (4,407 providers), Families (3,574 providers), LGBTQ+ (3,590 providers), Disabled (3,573 providers), and All (3,390 providers covering every category). Additionally, service types were defined as Resources (3,645 providers), Food (2,535 providers), Education (1,452 providers), Shelter (819 providers), and Health (451 providers). These category and type counts are in line with those reported in 2022-23 with slight incremental gains based on additions to the list of providers.

## **PROGRAM OUTCOMES**

Program outcome findings provide insight into the children and youth identified and served through the ECYEH Program, as well as the LEAs they attended. Data was collected through various sources, including ECYEH Program data systems, PIMS, MIS2000, HMIS, individual shelter extracts, and non-LEA prekindergarten reports. Information about LEAs and schools was supplemented by publicly available data from PDE, the National Center for Education Statistics, and individual LEAs.

A central focus of ECYEH program implementation is conducting outreach to raise awareness of the McKinney-Vento Act and the rights of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The program's effectiveness in achieving this goal is demonstrated by the number of reporting entities and the number of children and youth identified, served, and reported. Program outcomes include demographic details of the children and youth served and characteristics of the reporting entities.

In accordance with federal reporting requirements, all public LEAs are required to report students experiencing homelessness who attend their schools, including younger siblings of enrolled students. Additionally, non-LEAs that receive training, professional development, technical assistance, or resources from the ECYEH Program—such as shelters and prekindergarten programs—are required to report children and youth experiencing homelessness who reside in their facilities or attend their programs.

Public LEAs include school districts, charter schools, intermediate unit-operated prekindergarten programs,<sup>18</sup> and full-time (comprehensive) career and technical centers.<sup>19</sup> In the 2023-24 academic year, Pennsylvania had 499 school districts,<sup>20</sup> 175 charter and cyber charter schools, and 10 comprehensive career and technical centers.

Based on the comprehensive list of identified students across Pennsylvania, nearly all LEAs were represented in reporting. However, 25 LEAs (9 school districts, 15 charter or cyber charter

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<sup>18</sup> 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.

<sup>19</sup> 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.

<sup>20</sup> Pennsylvania has 500 school districts; however, one very small district in suburban Philadelphia enrolls no students: Bryn Athyn School District, <http://www.brynathynschooldistrict.org/>.

schools, and one one comprehensive career and technical center) did not report any students who met the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness. Among these, one school district and two charter or cyber charter schools reported that they had no students to report.<sup>21</sup>

Further analysis of LEAs with zero identified students<sup>22</sup> revealed several contributing factors. Many of these LEAs were small (16 enrolled fewer than 500 students), served only a subset of the K-12 population (24 LEAs), and/or enrolled relatively few students from low-income families (12 LEAs).<sup>23</sup> Most (18 LEAs) exhibited a combination of these characteristics, offering a reasonable explanation for the absence of identified students.

Each year, regional coordinators prioritize outreach to LEAs that report no students experiencing homelessness. These efforts have led to a consistent decline in the number of non-reporting or zero-reporting entities. However, outreach to charter schools remains particularly challenging. Higher rates of liaison turnover in charter schools contribute to inconsistent or delayed reporting, and the continual emergency of new charter schools adds further complexity.

To address these issues, evaluators sent automated email reminders throughout the year emphasizing the importance of reporting. Undeliverable emails were flagged and shared with regional staff for targeted follow-up. Evaluators also conducted periodic data checks to identify LEAs with no identified students, which were referred for regional support. Additionally, LEA monitoring activities helped raise awareness of federal requirements. Together, these strategies have led to a substantial reduction in non-reporting LEAs—from 69 in 2016–17 to just 25 in 2023–24.

ECYEH Program staff also conduct outreach to non-LEA entities, including shelters and prekindergarten programs. As a result, many children and youth were identified solely through these entities. Children and youth are only reported by a non-LEA entity when no LEA information is available or verifiable.<sup>24</sup> In 2023-24, shelter data was collected from all Pennsylvania counties.

Increased awareness and improved data quality allowed more children and youth identified by shelters to be matched to their respective LEAs and were reported accordingly. Still, in 2023-24, 101 non-LEA entities<sup>25</sup> reported 7,478 children and youth (15 percent of identified children and youth) who could not be matched to an LEA. The majority of these children and youth (4,644) were either birth to age 2, ages 3 to 5 (not enrolled in prekindergarten) or attended non-LEA prekindergarten programs. Reporting by non-LEA entities has steadily increased, driven by regional coordinator outreach, state level collaboration, and growing awareness of their reporting responsibilities.

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<sup>21</sup> LEAs received regular reminders of their reporting responsibilities, and regional coordinators consistently followed up with non-reporting LEAs to reinforce these obligations.

<sup>22</sup> 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.

<sup>23</sup> The LEA's percent of low-income families was less than 40 percent.

<sup>24</sup> 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.

<sup>25</sup> In every case, non-LEA entities are reported at the aggregate county level. As such, one non-LEA entity may be reporting several different sites within a county.

## Children and Youth Characteristics

In accordance with federal reporting requirements, children and youth experiencing homelessness are identified and reported by their nighttime residence status (i.e., fixed, regular, adequate) and by their age or grade category. Following the implementation of ESSA<sup>26</sup>, the definition of homelessness under the McKinney-Vento Act was revised: children and youth awaiting foster care placement are no longer eligible, and out-of-school youth—those age 21 or younger who have not graduated—are only reported if they are enrolled in an LEA-operated high school in college (grade 13) program.

In 2023-24, 50,030 children and youth were identified as experiencing homelessness, an increase from 46,714 in 2022-23 and 40,003 in 2021-22. Typically, identification rates increase each year due to ongoing ECYEH Program outreach to LEAs, shelters, and prekindergarten programs. After pandemic-related disruptions, this upward trend resumed in 2021-22 and continued through 2023-24, marking the highest number of identified children and youth in program history. Within this total, the number of enrolled students experiencing homelessness rose from 40,122 in 2022-23 to 43,222 in 2023-24.

The following sections provide data and demographic information for all children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness at any point during the ECYEH program year (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024).

According to PDE, the October 1, 2023, public school enrollment count (covering school districts, charter/cyber charter schools, and career and technical centers) was 1,684,773 students.<sup>27</sup> Of the 50,030 children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness, 43,222 were enrolled in public school. This represents 2.6% of the total student population, up from 2.4% in 2022–23 and significantly higher than the 1.6% rate in 2019–20. Nationally, the 2021–22 percentage of enrolled students identified as experiencing homelessness was 2.42 percent.<sup>28</sup>

Demographic information in this section is presented in accordance with federal reporting requirements, including age/grade categories, nighttime status, unaccompanied youth status, disability status, English learner status, migrant status, race/ethnicity, and economic disadvantage status. Demographic data are not available for all identified individuals; available data are based on the source of collection. Each subsection notes the population included in the specific demographic category.

### Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Age/Grade Category

Figure 4 displays the age/grade breakdown of the 50,030 children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness. 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 in 2023-24.

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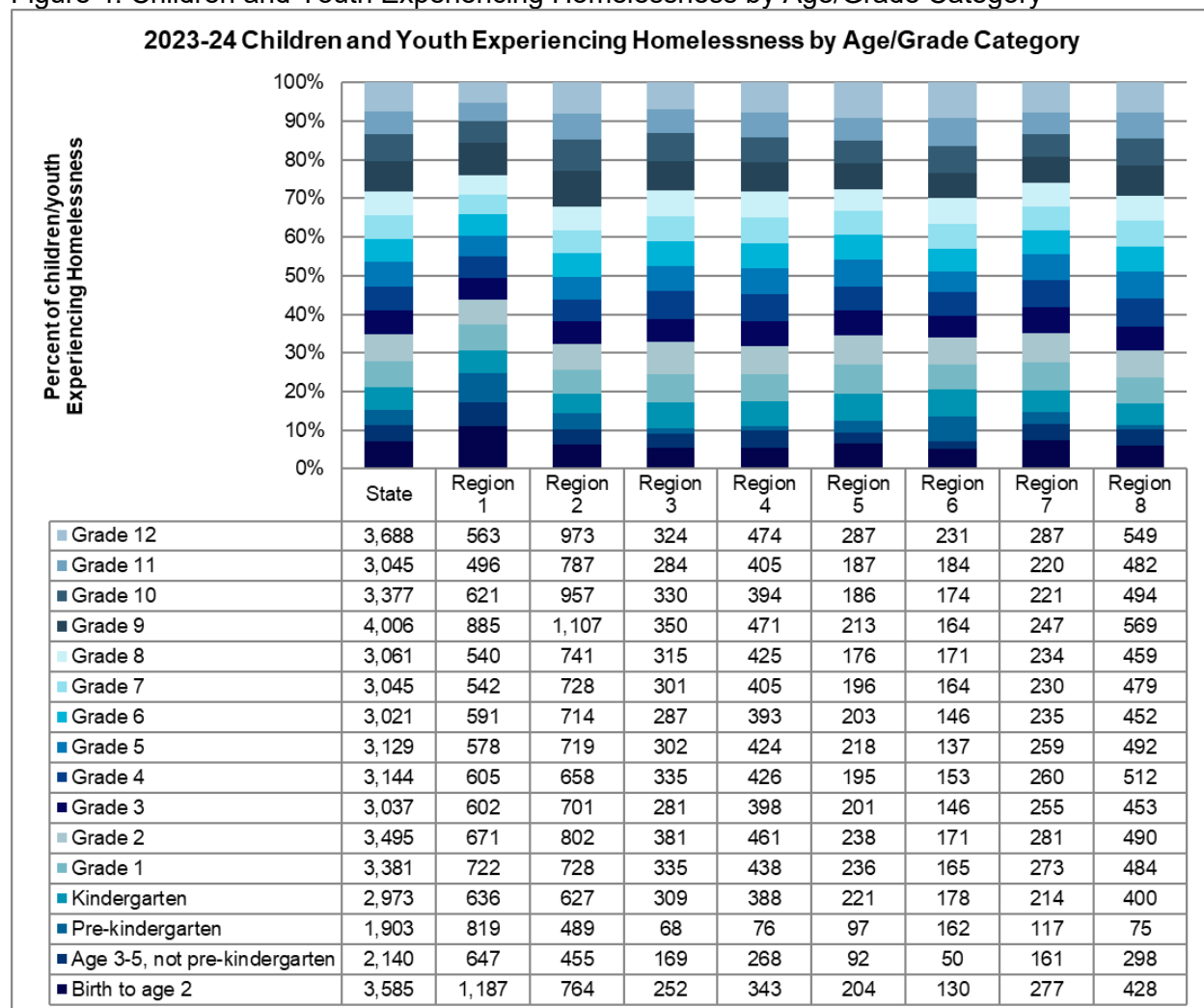
<sup>26</sup> As of December 2016.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/data-and-reporting/enrollment.html>

<sup>28</sup> National Center for Homeless Education - National Overview: <https://profiles.nche.seiservices.com/ConsolidatedStateProfile.aspx>; the most current data available for comparison.

Statewide, children and youth were distributed relatively evenly across categories. The ECYEH Program continued to observe an increase in reporting of children under age five (not yet in kindergarten). While regional distributions generally reflected statewide trends, variation in the prekindergarten categories likely reflects differences in migrant populations, the number and type of prekindergarten programs (LEA and non-LEA), the number of shelters within regions, the degree to which these entities reported children under age five, and the extent to which LEAs report non-enrolled siblings of identified students.

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



### Nighttime Status of Enrolled Students

Nighttime status is a federally required reporting element for students enrolled in public prekindergarten through grade 12 and determines if a child or youth is eligible for McKinney-Vento services. Because nighttime status is not required for the birth to 2 population or for children ages 3 to 5 who are not enrolled in an LEA-operated prekindergarten program, results in this report are limited to the federally required nighttime status age/grade categories.

Nighttime status reporting categories include:

- Doubled-up,
- Hotel or motel,
- Shelters,
- Transitional housing, and
- Unsheltered.

Only the student's first reported nighttime status is submitted for federal reporting, although students may experience multiple living situations throughout the year.

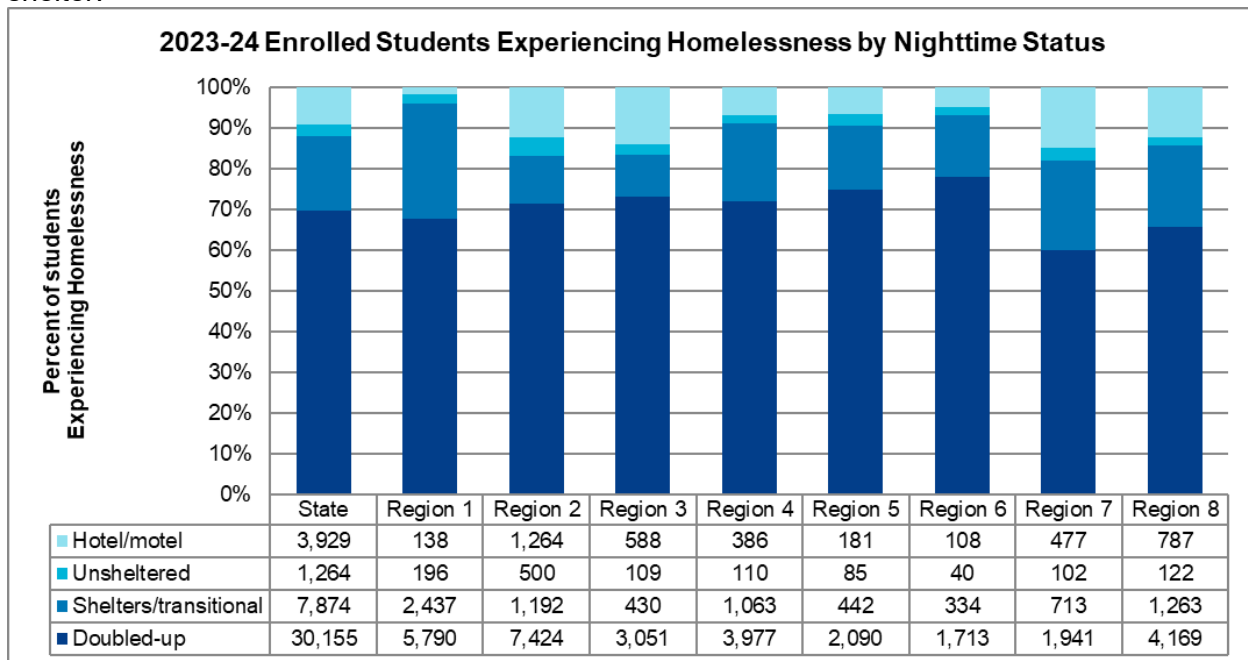
Figure 5 presents nighttime status for the 43,222 students enrolled in school, prekindergarten programs through grade 12:

- 70 percent were reported as doubled-up, and
- 18 percent were reported as residing in shelters.

Despite an increase in data collection from shelters, these proportions are similar to prior years, suggesting that most students identified by shelters are also reported by the LEAs they attend.

Region 1 has implemented specific strategies to better identify students in doubled-up living situations. These efforts have led to a steady increase in reporting, with the number of doubled-up students rising from 402 students in 2010-11 to 5,790 students in 2023-24. This also marks a slight increase over 2022-23 (5,740), indicating sustained progress in capturing data on this population.

Figure 5. The majority of enrolled students experiencing homelessness were doubled up or in a shelter.



In 2023-24, the statewide percentage of enrolled students experiencing homelessness who were in hotel or motel settings was 9%. Four regions exceeded this statewide percentage: Region 2 (12%), Region 3 (14%), Region 7 (15%), and Region 8 (12%). These higher rates may reflect regional differences in shelter availability, patterns in family mobility, and availability of ARP-HCY funds to meet population housing needs through hotel/motel stays. The elevated



hotel/motel usage in these regions in particular suggests a greater reliance on temporary accommodations as an alternative to shelters or doubling up.

Finally, while unsheltered status remains the least reported category statewide (1,264 students), Region 2 leads with the highest number (500), which could signal a need for additional outreach or that there is a greater prevalence of unsheltered homeless individuals in that region.

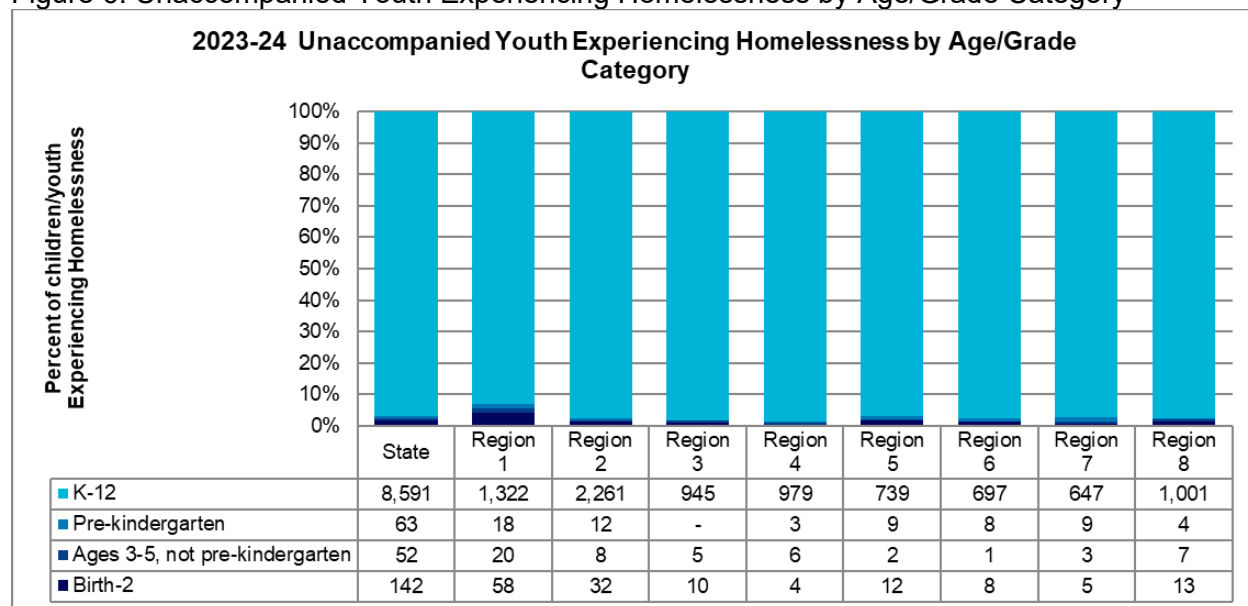
## Unaccompanied Youth

“Unaccompanied youth” is a federally defined term referring to children or youth who meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness and are not in the physical custody of a parent or legal guardian. An unaccompanied youth can be any age from birth to 21 years.<sup>29</sup>

In 2023-24, a total of 8,848 (18 percent of the 50,030 children and youth experiencing homelessness) were reported as unaccompanied. This proportion has stayed the same over the past several years. The vast majority of unaccompanied youth statewide (97 percent) were enrolled in grades K-12. Regional data closely aligned with the state, with the percentage of unaccompanied youth in grades K-12 ranging from 93 to 99 percent. The remaining three percent of unaccompanied youth fell into the early childhood categories: birth-2 or ages 3-5 enrolled or not enrolled in prekindergarten. Again, regional percentages in these categories mirrored the state, ranging from 1.3 to 6.8 percent.

Figure 6 displays the age and grade distribution of the 8,848 unaccompanied children and youth experiencing homelessness.

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



<sup>29</sup> 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>.



## Special Education Status

Special education status was collected through the PIMS system extract for enrolled students and supplemented with evaluator-coded data for children identified in early interview programs. These children were categorized as having either a developmental delay or as infants/toddlers with disabilities, based on their age/grade classification. Additionally, students only reported through HMIS (shelter data) with a disability a designation were included, though these entries typically lacked the specific type of disability.

Of the 50,030 children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness in 2023-24, 13,274 (27 percent) were identified as having a disability. This proportion is consistent with the previous year's figure of 26 percent. Among those identified with disabilities, the most common category was "specific learning disability," accounting for 33 percent of the group—also similar to the prior year (35 percent). Other frequently reported categories included "other health impairment" (19 percent) and "emotional disturbance" (12 percent).

Table 1 presents the number and percentage of students by federally defined disability categories. Categories with 10 or fewer children or youth are suppressed and marked with an asterisk (\*) in accordance with PDE confidentiality protocols. Due to small sample sizes in several categories, regional-level data are not reported.

Table 1. Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Disability Category

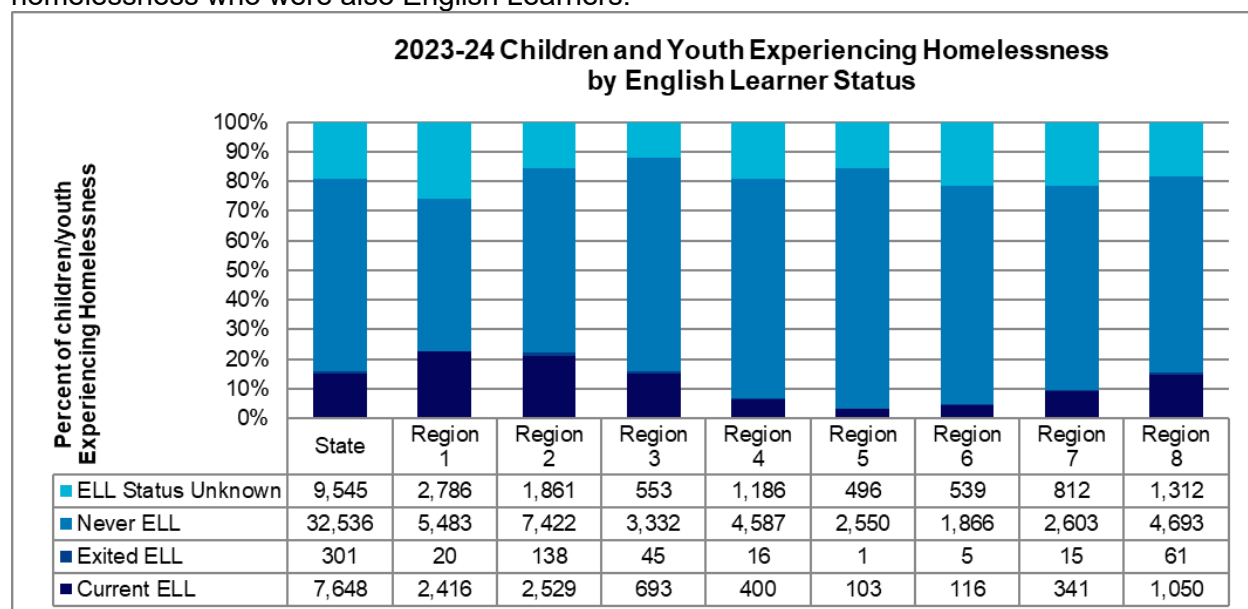
Disability Category	Number of Students	Percentage of Students
Specific learning disability	4,396	33%
Other health impairment	2,534	19%
Emotional disturbance	1,648	12%
Speech or language impairment	1,149	9%
Autistic/autism	960	7%
Intellectual disability	924	7%
Disability type unknown	756	6%
Multiple disabilities	478	4%
Infants and toddlers with disabilities	182	1%
Developmental delay	143	1%
Hearing impairment including deafness	43	<1%
Visual impairment including blindness	25	<1%
Traumatic brain injury	21	<1%
Orthopedic impairment	14	<1%
Deaf-Blindness	*	*

## English Learners

English learner data were collected from PIMS for all enrolled students and from MIS2000 for migrant children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness. This information was not collected for children and youth identified solely through HMIS (shelter) systems or for non-enrolled children under age five, with the exception of migrant children also reported as experiencing homelessness.

Statewide, English learners made up 15 percent of all children and youth experiencing homelessness. Regions 1 and 2 had the highest proportions, with 23 percent and 21 percent respectively, followed by Regions 3 and 8, each at 15 percent. These regions have historically served larger migrant populations and consistently report the highest numbers of English learners.

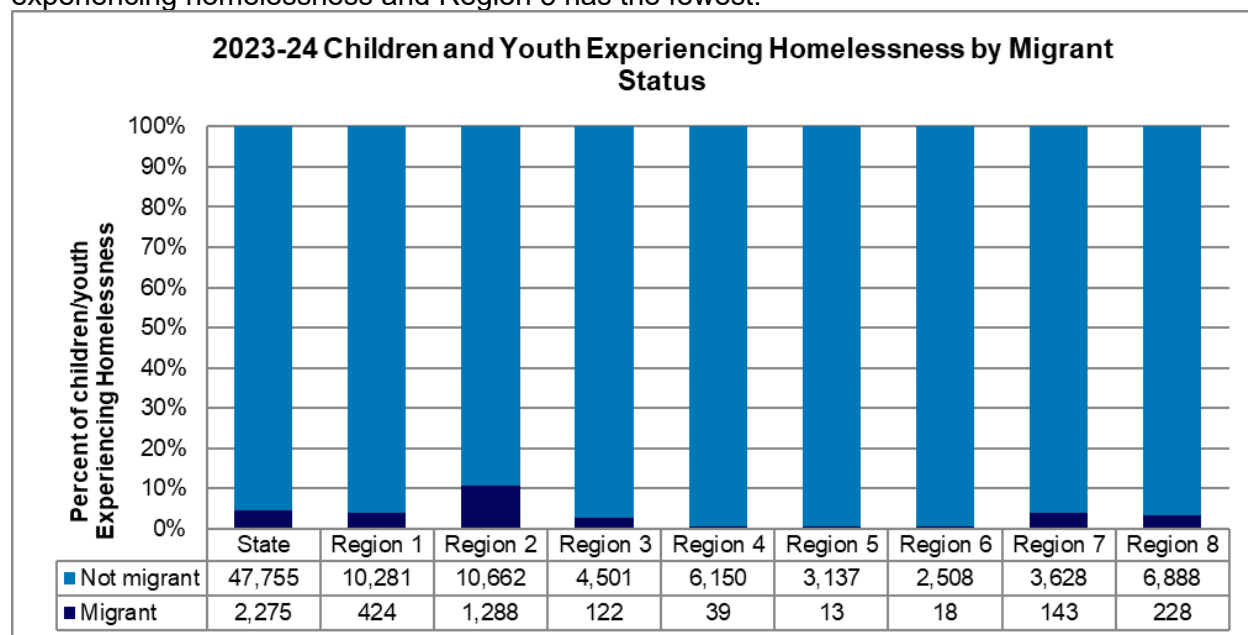
Figure 7. Regions 1, 2, 3 and 8 had the highest number of children and youth experiencing homelessness who were also English Learners.



## Migrant Status

Migrant status is determined for all children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness. Pennsylvania's Migrant Education Program (PA-MEP) includes homeless eligibility as part of its comprehensive needs assessment, ensuring that migrant status is documented for all eligible children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Figure 8. Region 2 has the largest number of migrant children and youth who are also experiencing homelessness and Region 5 has the fewest.



Of the 50,030 children and youth identified in 2023-24, 5 percent (2,275) were eligible for services through PA-MEP. This reflects a significant increase from the prior year, when 1,493 children and youth (3 percent) were identified as both migrant and experiencing homelessness.

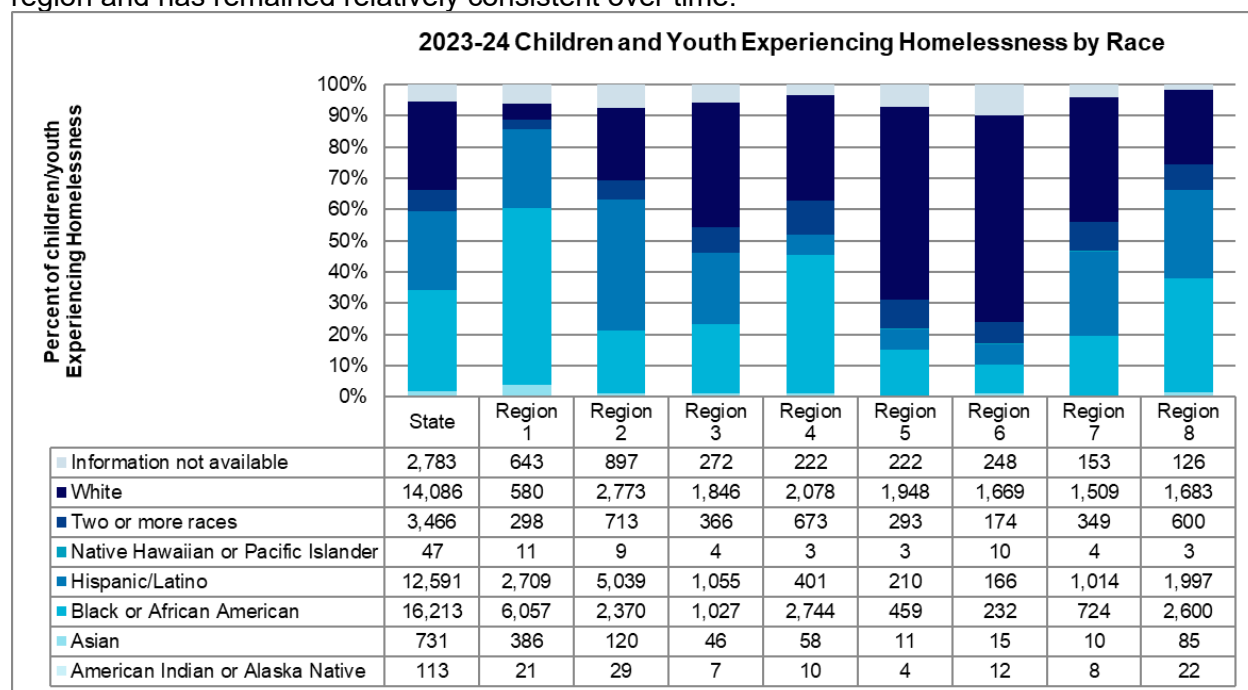
The number of migrant children and youth varies widely across Pennsylvania and is closely tied to the location of qualifying migrant work. While migrant children and youth represent only 5 percent of the total homeless population, their presence can meaningfully influence other demographic categories such as English learner status, mobility, and economic status—particularly in regions with larger migrant populations.

Migrant work opportunities are more prevalent in the eastern half of Pennsylvania, especially in regions 1, 2, 7, and 8. As a result, these regions report higher numbers of migrant children and youth experiencing homelessness. Figure 8 shows that Region 2 had the largest number of migrant children and youth, while Region 5 had the fewest.

## Race and Ethnicity

Race and ethnicity data were collected through the PIMS extract for all enrolled students and through the MIS2000 extract for migrant children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness. In most cases, HMIS (shelter) data also provided race and ethnicity information. Overall, race and ethnicity data was available for 94 percent of the 50,030 identified children and youth. While the remaining six percent were unknown, it is likely that their racial and ethnic makeup aligns with their regional populations—though this cannot be confirmed.

Figure 9. The racial categories of children and youth experiencing homelessness varies by region and has remained relatively consistent over time.



The proportions of children and youth experiencing homelessness by race and ethnicity have remained relatively stable over time. As shown in Figure 9, in 2023-24, 32 percent of identified

children were Black or African American, 28 percent were White, and 25 were Hispanic/Latino. These percentages are similar to recent years, though past fluctuations have occurred—for example, disaster displacement in 2017-18 increased the percentage of Hispanic/Latino students to 24 percent.

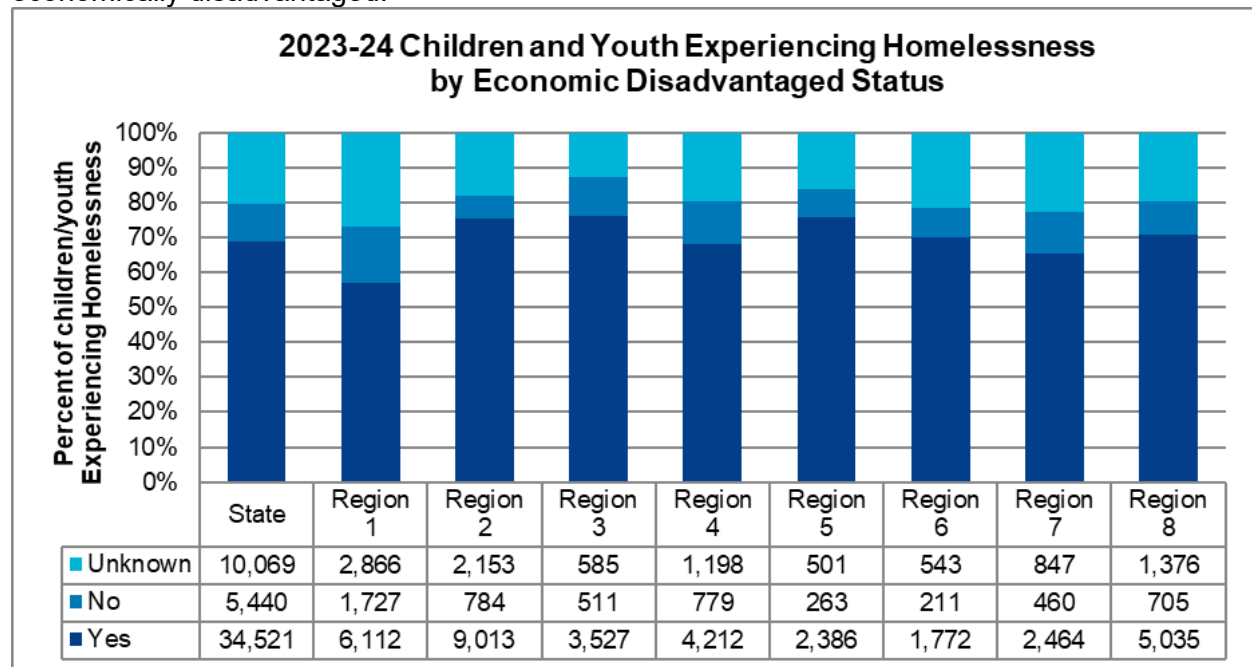
Racial and ethnic composition varies by region, reflecting regional demographics. Regions with large urban centers, such as Region 1 (Philadelphia) and Region 4 (Pittsburgh), report more racial and ethnic diversity. In contrast, Regions 5 and 6 (northwest and north-central Pennsylvania) are more rural and demographically homogeneous. Region 2 (southeastern Pennsylvania) reflects a large and longstanding Hispanic/Latino population.

## Economic Disadvantage

Economic disadvantage status was collected through PIMS for all enrolled students. Additionally, for prekindergarten children, those known to attend Early Head Start or Head Start programs were designated as economically disadvantaged based on eligibility criteria for those programs.

Of the 50,030 children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness in 2023-24, 69 percent were designated as economically disadvantaged, and 11 percent were reported as not economically disadvantaged. For the remaining 20 percent, economic status was unknown. Two-thirds of this unknown group were identified through HMIS (shelter) data sources. While many of these children and youth are likely to meet the criteria for economic disadvantage, this cannot be confirmed due to data limitations.

Figure 10. The majority of children and youth experiencing homelessness across the state are economically disadvantaged.



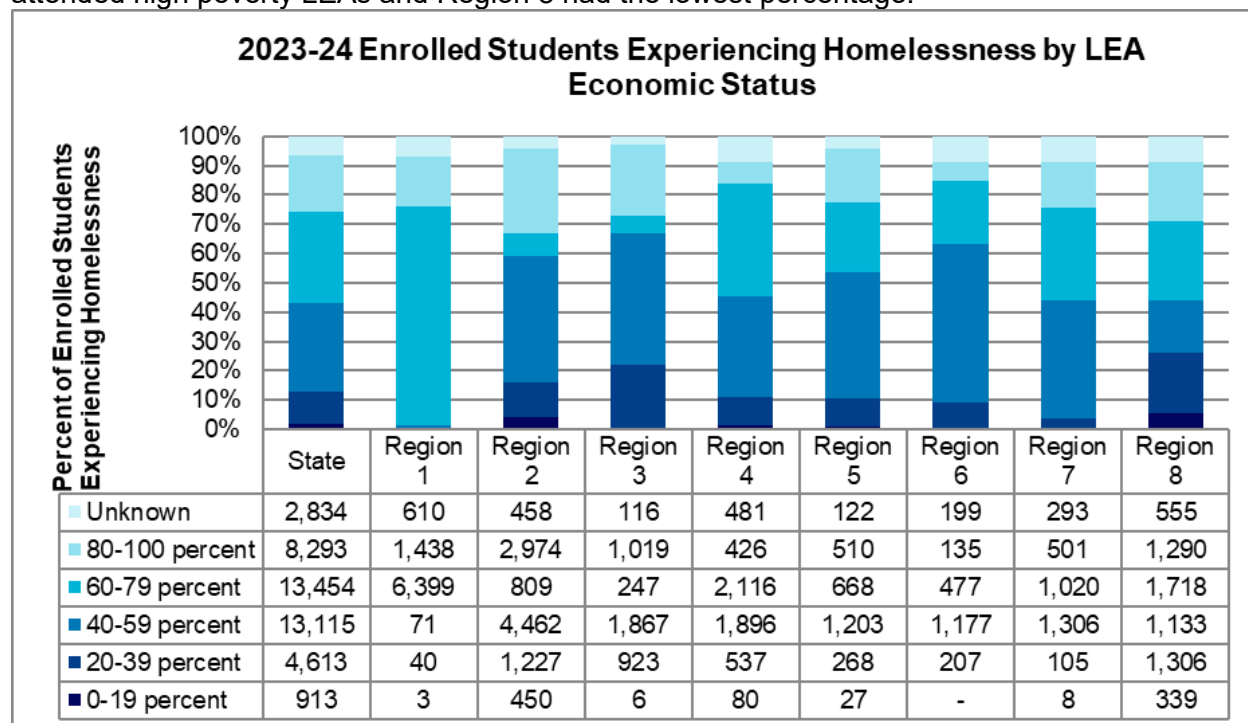
## LEA Demographics

LEA-level data on enrollment from low-income families and urban-centric locale codes provide additional context about the communities where students experiencing homelessness attend school. PDE produced as a public report showing the number and percentage of students from low-income families enrolled in each LEA and school building.<sup>30</sup>

For this analysis, LEAs were grouped into five income bands: 0-19 percent, 20-39 percent, 40-59 percent, 60-79 percent, and 80-100 percent of enrollment from low-income families. Figure 11 displays the number and proportion of enrolled students experiencing homelessness in each income band.

LEAs with at least 40 percent of students from low-income families are considered high-poverty LEAs. Statewide, 81 percent (34,862) of enrolled students experiencing homelessness attended high-poverty LEAs. Economic status data was unavailable for 7 percent (2,834) of students identified only through shelters, as LEA information was not provided. Region 1 had the highest percentage of students attending high-poverty LEAs (92 percent), followed by Regions 7 (87 percent), 5 (85 percent), 6 (82 percent), and 4 (80 percent). Regions 2 and 3 reported 79 percent and 75 percent, respectively. Region 8 had the lowest percentage, with 65 percent of students attending high-poverty LEAs.

Figure 11. Region 1 had the highest percentage of students experiencing homelessness who attended high poverty LEAs and Region 8 had the lowest percentage.



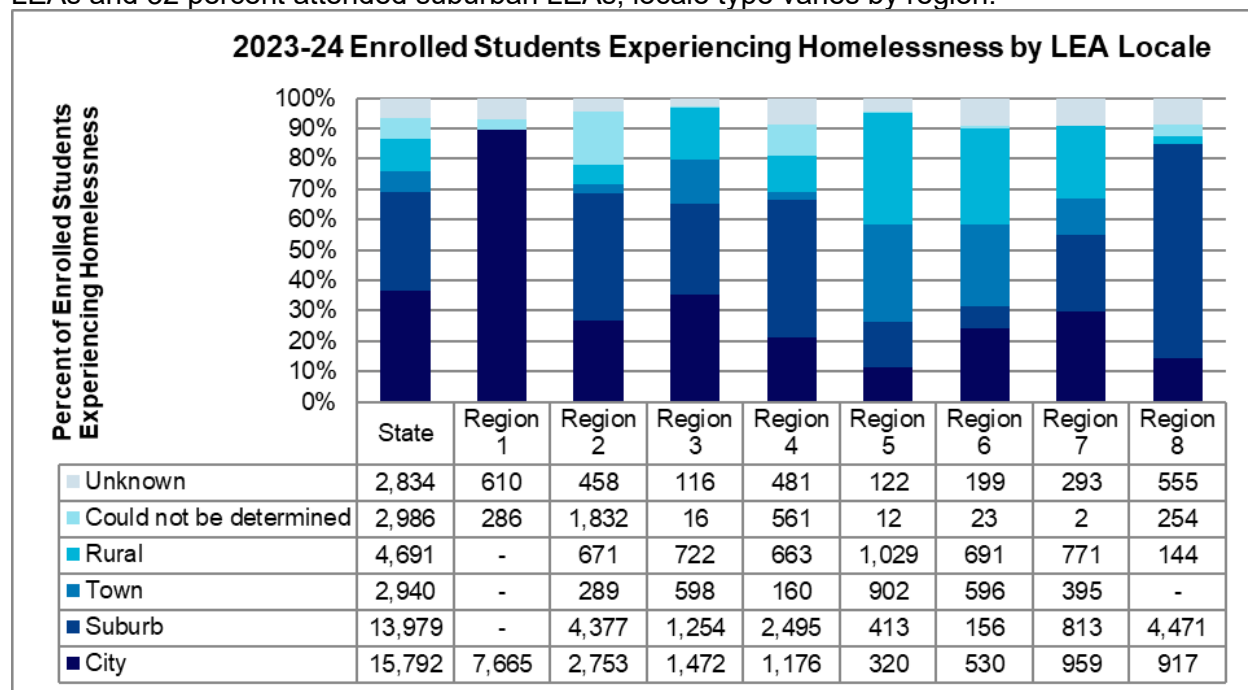
<sup>30</sup> <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/data-and-reporting/enrollment.html>

While poverty is a significant factor within the communities where students experiencing homelessness are enrolled, it is not universal. Thirteen percent (5,526) of these students attended LEAs with lower concentrations of low-income enrollment.

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.<sup>31</sup> This system, which replaced the previous eight-category metro-centric framework, includes 12 categories that reflect both region type and population size. Descriptions of these categories are available on the NCES website.<sup>32</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, evaluators consolidated the 12 NCES categories into five broader groups: city, suburb, town, rural, and unknown.

Figure 12 displays the number of enrolled students experiencing homelessness by their LEA's locale designation. The "could not be determined" category includes 2,986 students (7 percent) who attended LEAs that serve multiple geographic areas, most commonly intermediate unit prekindergarten programs and cyber charter schools. Because cyber charter schools can enroll students across the Commonwealth, their locale designation is based solely on the location of their central office. Additionally, 2,834 students (7 percent) enrolled students were identified through shelter reporting only and were not linked to a specific LEA. These students are included in the 'unknown' category.

Figure 12. Statewide, 37 percent of students experiencing homelessness attended city-based LEAs and 32 percent attended suburban LEAs; locale type varies by region.



Statewide, 37 percent of enrolled students experiencing homelessness (15,792) attended LEAs classified as city, and 32 percent (13,979) attended those classified as suburb. This distribution differs markedly from the general student population in Pennsylvania, where only 20 percent attend city-based LEAs and 51 percent attend suburban LEAs. LEAs in city locales report

<sup>31</sup> <https://www.pa.gov/agencies/education/data-and-reporting/school-climate/school-locale.html>

<sup>32</sup> [https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/docs/LOCALE\\_CLASSIFICATIONS.pdf](https://nces.ed.gov/programs/edge/docs/LOCALE_CLASSIFICATIONS.pdf)

significantly higher numbers of students experiencing homelessness, both in total and proportionally.

There are also notable regional differences. Region 1 is composed almost entirely of city locales. Regions 2, 4, and 8 are characterized by large suburban populations, while Regions 5, 6, and 7 include more town and rural areas. Region 3 encompasses a mix of locale types. These regional differences influence the availability and type of agencies and resources that support children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness and should be taken into consideration when analyzing outcomes across regions.

## PROGRAM IMPACT

Findings on program impact highlight the extent to which the ECYEH Program achieved its intended outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness. These outcomes include reducing or eliminating barriers to enrollment and education, supporting students in remaining in their school of origin, and providing services consistent with the authorized activities of the McKinney-Vento Act. This section also presents data on student attendance and academic outcomes.

The information is drawn from multiple sources: ECYEH student-level service delivery data, bulk supply data from the technical assistance web-based reporting system, PIMS, MIS2000, and shelter reporting.

### Barriers

Barriers are defined as situations that interfere with children and youth's enrollment, attendance, and/or educational success. Barrier information is only reported when LEAs or ECYEH staff actively work to resolve an identified situation. As awareness and understanding of barriers have improved, reporting has increased; however, the extent of reporting still varies significantly by LEA.

Table 2. Barriers to School Enrollment for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Barriers	State	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4	Region 5	Region 6	Region 7	Region 8
Determining eligibility for homeless services	3,043	252	1,747	184	295	42	17	161	345
Transportation	2,255	669	210	158	304	259	65	90	500
Obtaining other medical records	477	130	315	*	*	*	*	*	*
Immunization records	967	135	750	13	26	11	*	14	15
School Records	816	146	557	33	25	14	*	22	12
School Selection	321	96	30	109	36	14	*	14	17
Other	2,420	1,920	126	152	118	19	26	16	43
<b>Total youth for whom barrier data was available</b>	<b>31,790</b>	<b>3,548</b>	<b>8,651</b>	<b>3,660</b>	<b>3,961</b>	<b>2,493</b>	<b>1,855</b>	<b>2,481</b>	<b>5,141</b>
<b>Total youth with available data that experienced at least one barrier</b>	<b>6,705</b>	<b>2,347</b>	<b>2,067</b>	<b>275</b>	<b>584</b>	<b>294</b>	<b>110</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>765</b>
<b>Percentage of youth experiencing at least one barrier</b>	<b>21%</b>	<b>66%</b>	<b>24%</b>	<b>8%</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>12%</b>	<b>6%</b>	<b>11%</b>	<b>15%</b>

Of the 43,222 enrolled children and youth experiencing homelessness, 74 percent (31,790) had barrier data available. Among these, 21 percent (6,705) were reported as having experienced at least one barrier to enrollment, attendance, and/or academic success. Table 2 presents the statewide and regional prevalence of each reported barrier.

The most commonly reported barrier both statewide and regionally was determining eligibility for homeless services. This barrier often arises due to confusion between the McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness and the HUD definition. Ongoing outreach and training by ECYEH staff aim to clarify this distinction. Additionally, families and youth may be reluctant to disclose their housing situation, which further complicates the eligibility determination process.

Transportation was the second most commonly reported barrier. Transportation challenges frequently emerge when a student moves—whether within or between school districts—requiring new arrangements to ensure continued access to their school of origin. Inter-district coordination is essential when students move across district lines. Transportation issues may also be compounded in cases involving unaccompanied youth or complex family circumstances.

Other reported barriers included difficulty obtaining school or medical records (e.g., immunizations), challenges with school selection, and "other" categories such as school breaks, hospitalizations, lack of child care, or incomplete information at enrollment. It is important to note that some reported barriers may reflect a lack of understanding of students' rights under the McKinney-Vento Act—such as the right to immediate enrollment without required records. Ongoing professional development, technical assistance, and monitoring aim to reduce these misunderstandings among LEA staff.

There was significant variation in the percentage of students reported as experiencing barriers across regions. Region 1 had the highest rate, with 66 percent of students with available data identified as having at least one barrier—more than three times the statewide average of 21 percent. This likely reflects both the complex needs of families in urban areas and possibly stronger reporting practices. In contrast, Regions 6 and 7 reported the lowest rates (6 percent and 11 percent, respectively), which may indicate under-identification or inconsistent reporting practices rather than a lower incidence of barriers. These regional differences highlight the need for continued support and training to ensure consistent identification and reporting practices across the Commonwealth.

### **Barriers for Young Children**

There continues to be a strong interest in identifying and addressing barriers for children under age five. However, 75 percent of children in this group (7,628 children) are either birth to age 2 (3,585 children) or ages 3 to 5 but not enrolled in prekindergarten (2,140 children) for whom school enrollment barriers do not typically apply.

For children ages 3 to 5 but not enrolled in prekindergarten programs, access to early childhood programs may be a more relevant issue than specific enrollment barriers. ECYEH coordinators continue to support increased coordination and collaboration with early childhood partners to improve access for this subpopulation.

Among the 1,903 children attending a prekindergarten program (LEA and non-LEA), 40 percent (755 children) had barrier data reported. Of those, 101 children (13 percent) were identified as experiencing one or more barriers. As with the broader student population, the most common issue reported was determining eligibility for services.



## Student Mobility

Eligible students experiencing homelessness have the right to remain in their school of origin if it is determined to be in their best interest. To assess student mobility, evaluators identified every LEA/school which a student attended during the 2023-24 program year (July 1, 2023, through June 30, 2024), regardless of whether every LEA identified the student as experiencing homelessness.

Of the 43,222 enrolled students identified as experiencing homelessness, LEA mobility could be determined for 40,388 students (93 percent). The remaining 2,834 students (7 percent) were enrolled in school but did not have enough information to determine their mobility.

As shown in Table 3, 75 percent of enrolled students (32,476) remained in a single LEA/school combination throughout the year. Another 16 percent (6,889 students) attended two LEA/school combinations, and 2 percent (1,023 students) attended three or more LEA/school combinations.

While the majority remained stable, a notable portion—18 percent (7,912 students)—experienced at least one school or LEA change during the year. This is consistent with the prior year's data, in which 7,708 students (19 percent) attended more than one LEA/school combination. It is also possible that students whose mobility could not be determined (2,834 students) experienced at least one move that was not captured in available records.

When examining regional data, mobility patterns varied. For example, Region 4 had the highest proportion of students experiencing greater mobility, with 24 percent of students enrolling in more than one LEA/school combination. This includes 20 percent who attended two combinations and 4 percent who attended more than two. Regions 6 and 7 also saw higher-than-average mobility, with 30 percent and 28 percent of students, respectively, attending more than one LEA/school combination. In contrast, Region 2 had relatively higher stability, with 78 percent of students remaining in one LEA/school and only 2 percent experiencing high mobility (more than two LEAs/schools). These differences may reflect regional variations in housing availability, transportation access, or local support services.

Table 3. Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness by Mobility

Region	Total	1 LEA/ School	2 LEAs/ Schools	>2 LEAs/ Schools	Unable to Determine	% 1 LEA/ School	% 2 LEAs/ Schools	% >2 LEAs/ Schools	% Unable to Determine
1	8,561	6,570	1,214	167	610	77%	14%	2%	7%
2	10,380	8,111	1,611	200	458	78%	16%	2%	4%
3	4,178	3,224	733	105	116	77%	18%	3%	3%
4	5,536	3,740	1,093	222	481	68%	20%	4%	9%
5	2,798	2,097	498	81	122	75%	18%	3%	4%
6	2,195	1,539	384	73	199	70%	17%	3%	9%
7	3,233	2,248	610	82	293	70%	19%	3%	9%
8	6,341	4,947	746	93	555	78%	12%	1%	9%
<b>State Total</b>	<b>43,222</b>	<b>32,476</b>	<b>6,889</b>	<b>1,023</b>	<b>2,834</b>	<b>75%</b>	<b>16%</b>	<b>2%</b>	<b>7%</b>

## Service Delivery

Students experiencing homelessness have the right to receive support services that promote academic success. The McKinney-Vento Act outlines a range of authorized activities for which funds can be used. This section of the report describes the services provided to eligible children and youth during the 2023-24 program year. Services were delivered through multiple sources, including the ECYEH Program directly or with McKinney-Vento Act funds, LEAs, prekindergarten programs, PA-MEP, and shelters. Documentation of services was collected from the ECYEH data collection process, PIMS, MIS2000, and domestic violence shelter reporting.

Information was compiled at the individual level for each child and youth identified and categorized according to McKinney-Vento Act authorized activities. These categories include: tutoring or other instructional support; expedited evaluations; referrals for medical, dental, and other health services; transportation; early childhood programs; assistance with participation in school programs; before school, afterschool, mentoring, and summer programs; obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment; coordination between schools and agencies; counseling; addressing needs related to domestic violence; clothing to meet school requirements; school supplies; referrals to other programs and services; emergency assistance related to school attendance; and other services. “Other” services included the distribution of hygiene items, clothing donations, or gift cards. A relatively new and increasingly reported service was the provision of backpacks containing food items for after-school or weekend use.

Many children and youth were identified as receiving instructional support services. This included those attending federally, state, or locally funded prekindergarten programs, receiving services from the Pennsylvania Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL), or identified as receiving special education or Title III services. Students attending Title I schoolwide programs were also counted as receiving instructional support, as all students in such buildings benefit from Title I-funded services. Additionally, children and youth identified through domestic violence shelters were marked as receiving services addressing needs related to domestic violence. ECYEH staff also reported direct and indirect services provided to children, families, LEAs, and other service providers. These services are described in more detail in the Program Implementation section of the report.

Services were further documented by their funding source: Title I, McKinney-Vento, or “other” funds. The “other” category included services or programming offered by LEAs, prekindergarten programs, PA-MEP, shelters, collaborating agencies and organizations, or private donations.

All services were reported at the individual level. Although service delivery documentation continues to improve annually, there remain limitations: data may be incomplete, inconsistently reported, or incorrectly categorized by funding source. Additionally, service provision and reporting capacity varies across regions, depending on local resources and the strength of community partnerships. Despite these limitations, the data demonstrate that the majority of children and youth experiencing homelessness received support in at least one service category.

Statewide, 85 percent (42,297) of the 50,030 identified children and youth experiencing homelessness were documented as receiving at least one service at the individual level. Although this represents a decrease from 89 percent in 2022–23, it remains an increase from the 80 percent reported in 2021–22. The fluctuation in service delivery across these years may

be directly related to the availability and use of ARP-HCY/ESSER funds. Region 5 reported the highest proportion of children and youth receiving services, followed by Regions 2, 1, and 6.

As shown in Table 4, tutoring or other instructional support was by far the most commonly reported service, with over 34,900 students served through Title I funds and an additional 22,392 supported by other sources. This high prevalence reflects both the widespread use of Title I funds in schoolwide programs and the inclusion of students in prekindergarten, special education, and other educational support programs.

Other frequently provided services across funding sources included transportation (9,004 students), school supplies (7,258), assistance with participation in school programs (5,808), and clothing to meet school requirements (3,591).

Over 5,500 students received services supported by ARP-HCY/ESSER funds, which were primarily used for school supplies, transportation, tutoring, clothing, and program participation assistance. Although reported under various funding sources, these top service categories suggest that basic needs and access-related supports remain central to helping students experiencing homelessness attend and succeed in school. Variability in the use of funding sources across service types also suggests regional flexibility in aligning resources to local priorities.

Table 4. Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness by Service Type and Funding Source

Service	Title I	McKinney-Vento	Other
Tutoring or other instructional support	34,910	35	22,392
Clothing to meet a school requirement	1,963	350	1,278
Transportation	3,425	629	4,950
School supplies	3,038	1,270	2,950
Other services	1,247	494	2,115
Expedited evaluations	566	145	195
Assistance with participation in school programs	1,585	1,909	2,314
Counseling	1,215	453	2,283
Coordination between schools and agencies	1,517	677	2,162
Referral to other programs and services	857	130	3,365
Before-, after-school, mentoring, summer programs	1,483	306	2,534
Referrals for medical, dental, and other health services	1,003	410	3,415
Early childhood programs	423	110	1,492
Obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment	1,152	397	320
Emergency assistance related to school attendance	490	69	436
Addressing needs related to domestic violence	488	82	1,650
<b>Unique count children/youth receiving Title I services</b>	<b>35,443</b>		
<b>Unique count children/youth receiving McKinney-Vento services</b>		<b>3,834</b>	
<b>Unique count children/youth receiving Other services</b>			<b>29,286</b>

### Service Delivery by Individual Funding Source

When examining individual funding sources, tutoring and instructional support remained the most frequently provided service under both Title I and other funds. Under Title I, the next most commonly reported services were transportation, clothing to meet a school requirement, and school supplies. McKinney-Vento Act funds were most often used to support assistance with participation in school programs, followed by school supplies, transportation, and clothing to

meet school requirements. For services supported by other funds, transportation and school supplies were the second and third most commonly reported categories.

It is important to note that some services listed in Table 4—while funded by the ECYEH Program through McKinney-Vento Act allocations—are not captured at the individual student level. These services, which include bus passes, clothing, hygiene items, school supplies (e.g., backpacks, college preparation materials, curriculum materials), and fees for school or recreational, social, or holiday activities, are typically distributed in bulk. As a result, the individual recipients of these supports are not identified in the service delivery data. Instead, this information is captured in the Technical Assistance and Bulk Supply section of the ECYEH web-based data collection system. Additional detail on these services is provided earlier in the report in the Program Implementation section.

Table 5 provides counts of children and youth served by funding source, where each child or youth is counted once within that funding source category—both statewide and by region. For context, the table also includes the number of unique children and youth receiving individual services overall, the total number of children and youth for whom data was available, and the percentage of those receiving at least one individual service to illustrate the reach of ECYEH-funded supports across various regions and funding streams.

Across all regions, a high proportion of children and youth identified as experiencing homelessness received at least one individual service, ranging from 81% to 89%. Region 2 had the highest number of children and youth receiving services (10,453), followed closely by Region 1 (9,183), while Region 4 served the fewest (3,726). Region 6 had the highest overall service rate (89%), despite having a smaller population of identified students.

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

	<b>State</b>	<b>Region 1</b>	<b>Region 2</b>	<b>Region 3</b>	<b>Region 4</b>	<b>Region 5</b>	<b>Region 6</b>	<b>Region 7</b>	<b>Region 8</b>
Unique count of children/youth receiving Title I services	35,443	8,588	7,852	3,096	4,377	2,429	1,526	2,585	4,990
Unique count of children/youth receiving McKinney-Vento services	3,834	2,249	497	20	262	464	100	207	35
Unique count of children/youth receiving Other services	29,286	6,196	8,709	2,265	3,270	1,800	1,390	2,010	3,646
<b>Total children/youth with available data</b>	<b>50,030</b>	<b>10,705</b>	<b>11,950</b>	<b>4,623</b>	<b>6,189</b>	<b>3,150</b>	<b>2,526</b>	<b>3,771</b>	<b>7,116</b>
<b>Total children/youth receiving services</b>	<b>42,297</b>	<b>9,183</b>	<b>10,453</b>	<b>3,726</b>	<b>5,089</b>	<b>2,789</b>	<b>2,151</b>	<b>3,079</b>	<b>5,827</b>
<b>Proportion of children/youth receiving at least one service</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>86%</b>	<b>87%</b>	<b>81%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>89%</b>	<b>85%</b>	<b>82%</b>	<b>82%</b>

## Title I Services

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 a demonstrated academic need.<sup>33</sup> LEAs must reserve or set aside the necessary funds to serve children and

<sup>33</sup> 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

youth experiencing homelessness who do not attend Title I schools, including providing educational-related support services. As outlined in the service delivery section, the receipt of Title I services is documented in various ways. As shown in Table 4, 35,443 students (82 percent of 43,222 enrolled students) were documented as receiving Title I services, primarily in the form of tutoring or other instructional support.

## **STUDENT OUTCOMES**

This section highlights key academic outcomes, including school attendance, graduation, and dropout rates<sup>34</sup>.

For federal reporting purposes, the designated PDE offices utilize the homeless flag to prepare their *EDFacts* file submissions. Outcomes for the homeless student subgroup, as reported in *EDFacts*, are publicly available on the *EDFacts* website.<sup>35</sup>

### **State Academic Assessments: PSSA/PASA and Keystone Exam**

State academic assessment data for the 2023-24 school year includes results from the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA), the Pennsylvania Alternate System of Assessment (PASA), and the Keystone Exams. The PSSA is administered in reading and mathematics (grades 3–8), science (grades 4 and 8), and writing (grades 5 and 8). The PASA is designed for students with the most significant cognitive disabilities and is administered across four grade spans: 3–4, 5–6, 7–8, and 11. The Keystone Exams assess proficiency in literature, Algebra I, and biology; students may retake these exams until they achieve proficiency. Once a student scores at the proficient level, their score is “banked” for use in grade 11 state and federal accountability reporting. As a result, Keystone Exam data are not included in accountability reporting until students reach grade 11. All public school students in the relevant grades are expected to participate in these assessments unless they qualify for an exemption.

For this report, data was analyzed for the following assessments:

- PSSA: Reading mathematics, and science,
- PASA: Reading, mathematics, and science, and
- Keystone Exams: literature, algebra I, and biology.

### **Reading and Literature Outcomes**

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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.

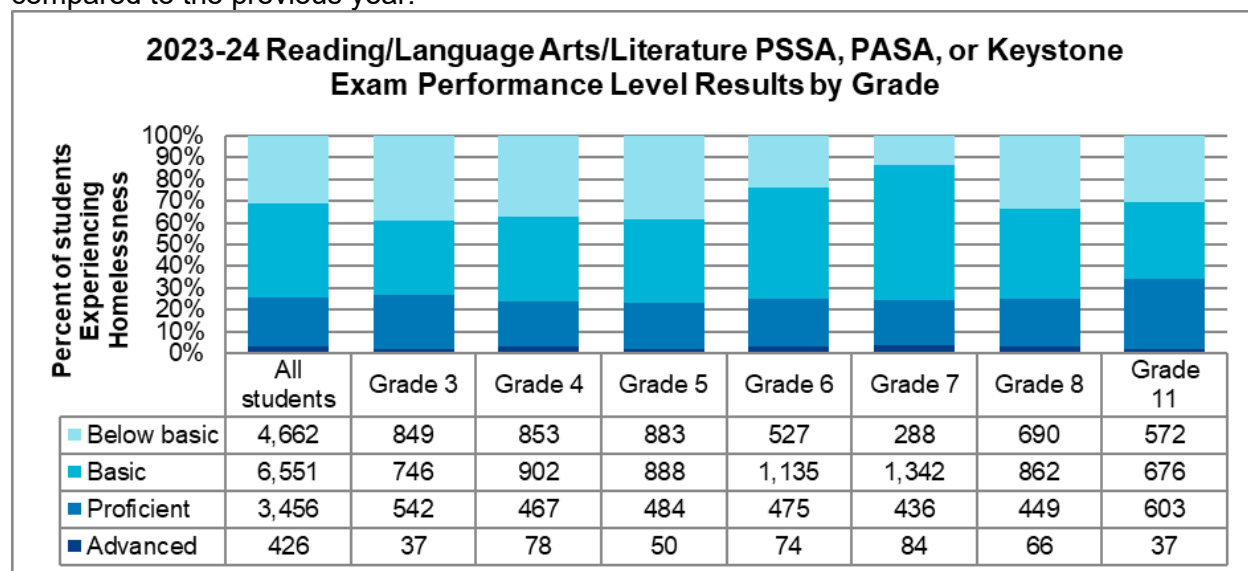
<sup>34</sup> As noted in the Evaluation Design and Activities section of this report, evaluators provide the homeless flag to PDE for all enrolled students and requests available data for those students. Evaluators examine all available data for students experiencing homelessness. Evaluators do not have the capacity to identify students to exclude or include based on various reporting criteria for PSSA, school attendance, graduation, or drop out. This analysis provides an overall snapshot of academic outcomes for students experiencing homelessness.

<sup>35</sup> <https://nces.ed.gov/ccd/edrp.asp>

During the 2023-24 school year, 21,482 students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in grades eligible for the reading PSSA (grades 3–8), the literature Keystone Exam (grade 11), or the reading PASA (grades 3, 8, or 11). Of these, assessment results were available for 15,095 students (70 percent).<sup>36</sup> Figure 13 presents student performance in reading/literature, categorized by performance levels: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced, both overall and by grade level.

Statewide, 26 percent of students experiencing homelessness scored at the proficient or advanced level in reading or literature during the 2023-24 school year, representing a 1 percentage point increase from 25 percent in 2022-23. Performance varied by grade level: grade 11 had the highest proportion of students achieving proficient or advanced scores (34 percent), while grade 5 had the lowest (23 percent).

Figure 13. Statewide, 26 percent of children and youth experiencing homelessness scored at a proficient or advanced level in Reading, Language Arts, or Literature—a 1 percent increase compared to the previous year.



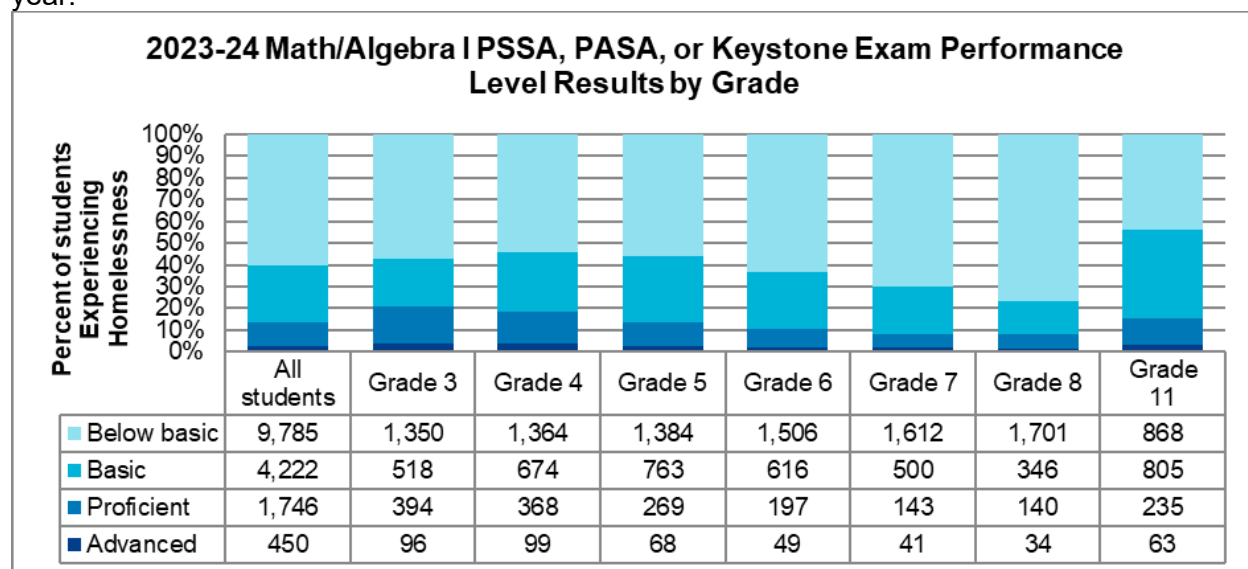
### Mathematics / Algebra I Outcomes

During the 2023-24 school year, 21,482 students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in grades eligible for the math PSSA (grades 3-8), the Algebra I Keystone Exam (grade 11), or the math PASA (grades 3, 8, or 11). Of these, 16,203 students (75 percent) had available assessment results. Figure 14 presents student performance in math and Algebra I, categorized by performance levels: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced, overall and by grade level.

Statewide, 14 percent of students assessed scored at the proficient or advanced level, up from 13 percent in 2022-23. This percentage also varied by grade level: grade 3 grade had the highest percentage of students achieving proficient or advanced scores (21 percent), while grade 8 had the lowest (8 percent).

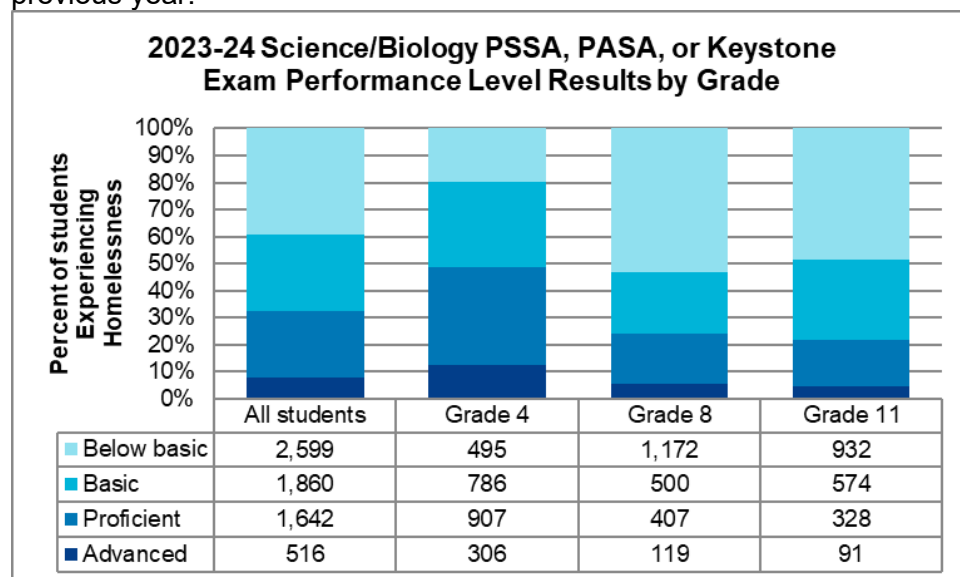
<sup>36</sup> English Learner students who have not been in the United States for at least one year are exempt from taking the Reading/Literature Exam.

Figure 14. Statewide, 14 percent of children and youth experiencing homelessness scored at a proficient or advanced level in Math or Algebra—a 1 percent increase compared to the previous year.



## Science Outcomes

Figure 15. Statewide, 33 percent of children and youth experiencing homelessness scored at a proficient or advanced level in Science or Biology, a 2 percent increase compared to the previous year.



For science assessments, 9,250 students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in grades eligible to take the science PSSA (grades 4 and 8), the science PASA (grades 4, 8, and 11), or the biology Keystone Exam (grade 11) during the 2023-24 school year. Of these, 6,617 students (72 percent) had assessment results available. Figure 15 displays student performance in science and biology, categorized by performance levels: below basic, basic, proficient, and advanced, overall and by grade level.

Overall, 33 percent of students scored at the proficient or advanced level in science, compared to 31 percent in 2022-23. By grade level, grade 4 had the highest percentage of students achieving proficient or advanced scores (49 percent), while grade 11 had the lowest (22 percent).

## Summary

Despite overall improvements in assessment results, the participation rate for students experiencing homelessness in state assessments remains below the state's designated threshold of 95 percent. The inherent instability of homelessness, including frequent mobility, transportation challenges, and irregular attendance, are significant factors contributing to lower participation rates.

Furthermore, year over year, students experiencing homelessness in Pennsylvania consistently perform below their peers, scoring approximately 10 percentage points lower than the historically underperforming student population across all grades and content areas.<sup>37</sup>

## School Attendance

Student absence is defined as a student not being physically present on school grounds and not participating in instruction or instruction-related activities at an approved off-grounds location for at least half the school day.<sup>38</sup>

For *EDFacts* reporting, chronic absenteeism is defined as “the unduplicated count<sup>39</sup> of students who are absent for 10 percent or more of school days during the academic year. Students in kindergarten through grade 12 are included in chronic absenteeism data once they have been enrolled in a school for at least 10 school days.

Attendance data for all K-12 students was analyzed by aggregating each student's total days attended across all schools attended during the academic year. This approach ensures that each student has a single, comprehensive attendance record, providing a more accurate representation of their overall attendance and accounting for any gaps between school enrollments.

Of the 42,402 identified and enrolled K-12 students experiencing homelessness, 89 percent (37,551) had available school attendance data. Eleven percent (4,489) did not have attendance data, and 1 percent (362) were not enrolled in an LEA for 10 or more days.

Among the 37,551 students with data:

- 49 percent (18,287) attended school for 90 percent or more of their enrolled days,
- 26 percent (9,619) attended 80-89 percent of days,

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<sup>37</sup> *Historically Underperforming Students* are defined as a non-duplicated count of students with disabilities, economically disadvantaged *students*, and English Learners enrolled for a full academic year taking the PSSA/PASA/Keystone Exams.

<sup>38</sup> FS195-Chronic Absenteeism File Specifications v16.0

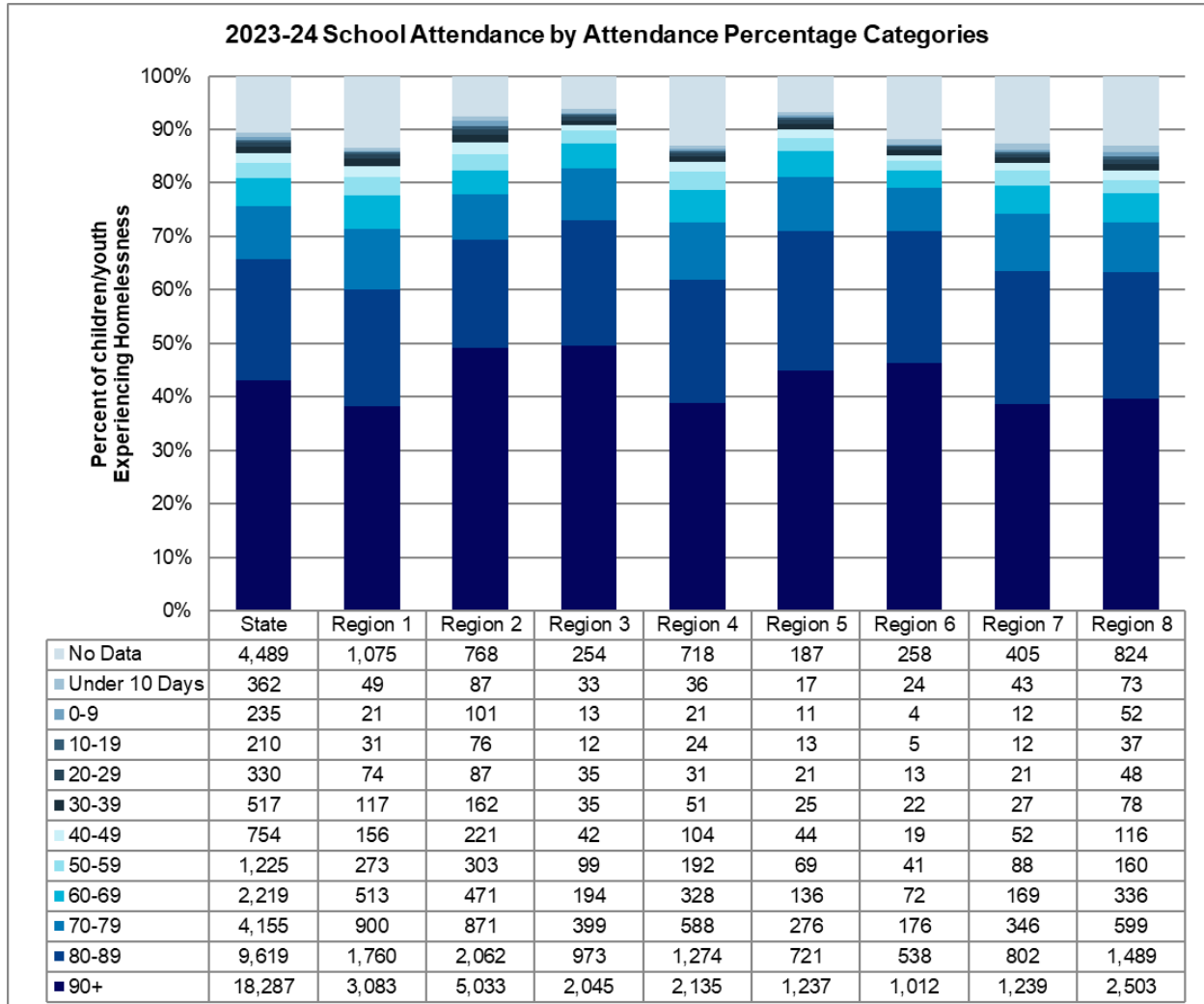
<sup>39</sup> Students should be counted once at each school he/she attends. For example, a student is enrolled in school A for half the school year and school B for the other half of the school year. This student should be counted at both school A and B.



- 11 percent (4,155) attended 70-79 percent of days, and
- 15 percent (5,490) attended 69 percent or fewer of their enrolled days.

Based on these data, 51 percent of students experiencing homelessness would be considered chronically absent, a slight improvement from 54 percent in 2022-23. Figure 16 displays school attendance by the attendance percentage categories.

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



## Graduation and Dropout

Students identified under the McKinney-Vento Act are reported as a subgroup for graduation and dropout rates in federal reporting (*EDFacts*). Accordingly, all available graduation and dropout data were analyzed for this population. Dropout data were examined for students in grades 7–12, while graduation data were analyzed for grade 12 students and for grade 11 students who graduated early.

In the 2023-24 school year, 20,222 students experiencing homelessness were enrolled in grades 7–12. Of these, 3.7 percent dropped out of school, a slight decrease from 3.9 percent in 2022-23. For comparison, the statewide dropout rate for 2023-24 was 1.41 percent.<sup>40</sup>

Dropout rates by grade were as follows:

- Grade 12: 6.6 percent (245 of 3,688 students)
- Grade 11: 6.2 percent (190 of 3,045 students)
- Grade 10: 4.5 percent (153 of 3,377 students)

Regarding graduation, there were 3,688 grade 12 students identified as experiencing homelessness. Of these, 3,395 (92 percent) had graduation status information available. Among those:

- 2,593 (76.4 percent) graduated or obtained a high school equivalency diploma.
- 245 (7.2 percent) dropped out, and
- 557 (16.4 percent) did not graduate.

For context, the graduation rate for students experiencing homelessness was 74.9 percent in 2022-23. Additionally, 88 students designated as being in grade 11 either graduated or obtained a high school equivalency diploma.

## **ARP-HCY IMPLEMENTATION SURVEY RESULTS**

Each year, LEAs completed an Implementation Survey to assess how ARP-HCY II funding was used to support students experiencing homelessness. Both direct-funded LEAs and eight regional consortium recipients participated, with surveys conducted in May 2022-23 and 2023-24. Detailed findings were shared with PDE and CSC each summer

In May 2024, a final survey captured programming over the two-year period of full ARP-HCY II implementation. Of the 390 funded LEAs, 383 (98 percent) responded, representing 97 percent of the ARP-HCY II allocation. This high response rate ensures the findings accurately reflect statewide implementation trends.

Top needs addressed with ARP-HCY II funds included transportation (75 percent), supplies (55 percent), and attendance (25 percent). To support identification, enrollment, retention, and educational success, LEAs used funds for transportation (80 percent), purchasing supplies (64 percent), and providing store or prepaid cards for student needs (36 percent).

Among respondents, 73 percent offered summer school programming, most commonly for grades K–5 (87 percent), 6–8 (72 percent), and 9–12 (63 percent). Nearly 40 percent provided summer programs for at least three grade groupings, with most programs held in July (85 percent) and June (63 percent). Summer programming focused on reading/literacy (94 percent), math (89 percent), and often included STEM/STEAM (41 percent). Most programs were in-person (79 percent), with others combining in-person and virtual formats. Funding sources included ESSER/ARP (55 percent), ARP-HCY II (10 percent), and LEA general funds (40 percent)

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<sup>40</sup> <https://www.education.pa.gov/DataAndReporting/Dropouts/Pages/default.aspx>

LEAs also identified priority areas for further professional development or technical assistance. The top four areas were transportation (25 percent), temporary housing (24 percent), mental health support (22 percent), and attendance (22 percent).

Finally, LEAs were asked to share how they used ARP-HCY II funds to create sustainable practices or services that would continue after the funds were depleted. Thirty-three LEAs described efforts such as:

- Maintaining new community connections and partnerships,
- Maintaining new staff positions and/or roles,
- Continuing to address basic needs by maintaining infrastructure such as showers and laundry facilities,
- Continuing to provide basic needs items such as clothing, food and hygiene items through donation support,
- Continuing to provide new services/supports, and
- Planning for alternative funding sources, community donations, and strategic partnerships that can replace ARP-HCY II funds.

## **ARP-HCY MONITORING RESULTS**

All open LEAs (390) receiving ARP-HCY II funds were monitored during 2022-23 and 2023-24 to ensure compliance and effective implementation. Monitoring tools were revised to align with ARP-HCY and McKinney-Vento requirements, and two instruments were used depending on the LEA's monitoring cycle. Results showed that most LEAs met or exceeded expectations; only 22 LEAs (6 percent) met less than 75 percent of requirements, and one outlier was removed from analysis<sup>41</sup>.

## **ARP-HCY I & II EXTENSION RESULTS**

LEAs with unspent funds at the conclusion of the ARP-HCY funding cycle were provided the opportunity to obligate any remaining ARP-HCY I and II funds by September 30, 2024, for approved purposes, with the possibility of extending the obligation period by up to 18 months. Of the 412 LEAs that received funding, 50 percent had fully expended their allocations before the deadline, 27 percent were in the process of reimbursement, and 2 percent chose to liquidate their remaining balances. The remaining 21 percent primarily obligated funds for transportation, supplies, and contracted support services.

## **Program Reflections, Key Findings, and Strategic Recommendations**

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<sup>41</sup> A Monitoring Trends Report, including performance data and a list of LEAs needing technical assistance, was provided to regional coordinators and PDE in December 2024.

Pennsylvania's regional model for implementing the McKinney-Vento Act plays a vital role in ensuring that children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to essential educational resources and services. This includes ensuring school enrollment—from prekindergarten through high school—and supporting academic success.

Regional coordinators and their teams are central to this effort. They provide training, troubleshoot challenges, offer direct intervention, and collaborate with families, schools, and shelters. The diversity of regions—across geography, urban and rural settings, and the mix of LEAs, shelters, and service organizations—presents distinct challenges that shape local implementation strategies. Furthermore, variation in ECTEH staff size and composition across regions contributes to differing capacities for service delivery.

Over time, LEAs have improved in identifying children and youth experiencing homelessness, with notable gains in the reporting of enrolled students, non-enrolled younger siblings, and prekindergarten children. Further, reporting from non-LEA entities, particularly from HMIS, has also improved, reflecting a strong commitment to the goals of the ECTEH Program.

In 2023–24, 50,030 children and youth were identified statewide—an increase of 7.1% from 2022–23 (46,714). Of these, 43,222 were enrolled students, representing a 7.7% increase from the prior year. This growth may be partially attributed to intensified identification efforts supported by ARP-HCY I funding launched in 2021–22.

Despite the ECTEH Program's increased focus on supporting children younger than age five in enrolling, attending, and succeeding in prekindergarten programs, challenges persist in aligning prekindergarten program reporting with McKinney-Vento criteria. Most LEAs do not operate prekindergarten programs, and non-LEA programs are only required to report if they receive services from ECTEH. While ECTEH staff conduct outreach to all prekindergarten providers, their primary responsibilities center on supporting LEAs and liaisons—resulting in an incomplete picture of homelessness among children not yet enrolled in LEA schools.

Over the last several years, several consistent program trends have emerged:

### **Service Delivery and Support**

- Regional staff deliver extensive training, technical assistance, and coordination for LEAs and other service providers.
- Approximately 85 percent of identified students receive individualized support or services.
- Regional staff have taken on expanded roles in response to increased student needs and partnership demands.

### **Student Characteristics and Outcomes**

- Most identified students are economically disadvantaged and attend high-poverty LEAs.
- While a majority of students remain in their LEA/school of origin, some students face extreme mobility or barriers to enrollment.
- Participation in state assessments remains below the 95 percent threshold, and students' performance lags significantly behind the general population and other historically underperforming groups.

### **Identification Improvements**

- Homeless counts vary widely across state regions.
- Only 25 LEAs reported zero students experiencing homelessness in 2023-24, a significant reduction from 69 in 2016-17. These LEAs typically serve small, low-poverty populations.

### **Barriers and Gaps**

- Transportation remains a common and persistent barrier across regions.
- Discrepancies continue between prekindergarten identification protocols and McKinney-Vento Act reporting guidance.
- Chronic absenteeism affects 51 percent of students experiencing homelessness (down slightly from 54 percent in 2022-23), and contributes to poor academic outcomes, especially in grades 10-12.

### **Strategic Recommendations for Program Improvement**

Based on results presented in this report, the following strategic recommendations are provided to optimize program implementation at the state and regional levels:

#### **1. Enhancing Collaboration and Outreach**

To strengthen cross-sector connections and ensure more comprehensive reporting:

- a. Expand outreach to non-reporting LEAs, with particular focus on charter schools, to clarify McKinney-Vento obligations, reporting expectations, and their role within ECYEH.
- b. Continue building collaborations with prekindergarten partners at both the state and regional levels. Ensure LEAs can identify local prekindergarten programs and refer younger siblings of enrolled students.
- c. Deepen collaboration with Continuums of Care in all 67 counties to sustain robust HMIS reporting and integrated services.

#### **2. Addressing Transportation and Instructional Support**

To remove key barriers to access and continuity:

- a. Explore creative transportation solutions to help LEAs overcome challenges associated with student mobility.
- b. Investigate options for instructional support beyond standard school hours, including afterschool or summer programs, particularly for students living in shelters.

#### **3. Focusing on Prekindergarten and Early Childhood Education**

To better support children under five:

- a. Review and realign prekindergarten identification protocols to ensure consistency with McKinney-Vento reporting guidance.
- b. Provide technical assistance to LEAs to explore prekindergarten program options for younger siblings of students. Include strategies for attendance, dropout prevention, graduation, and academic achievement.
- c. Strengthen linkages between shelters and prekindergarten programs to support the enrollment of children under five who are not yet in school.

#### **4. Supporting Student Success and Engagement**

To improve outcomes and engagement:

- a. Emphasize the importance of state assessment participation for students experiencing homelessness, and ensure they receive the support needed to succeed.
- b. Address chronic absenteeism as a priority at both the state and LEA levels, focusing particularly on students in grades 10–12.

#### **5. Improving Program Efficiency and Staff Capacity**

To manage growth and demands effectively:

- a. Review ECYEH staff roles and responsibilities to identify time-efficient methods for training, technical assistance, and outreach.
- b. Expand regional staff responsibilities as needed to meet growing demands, ensuring staff are supported and resourced to handle expanded roles.

#### **6. Strengthening Data Collection and Documentation**

To inform continuous improvement:

- a. Improve documentation of ECYEH-led professional development, technical assistance, and partner engagement to reflect the program's full scope.
- b. Continue using the LEA Data Profile to monitor trends, track progress, and inform identification and support strategies.
- c. Leverage state-level technical assistance to ensure consistent and accurate reporting of services across all regions.

### **Conclusion**

The 2023–24 evaluation of Pennsylvania's ECYEH Program affirms its continued growth, responsiveness, and effectiveness in supporting children and youth experiencing homelessness across the Commonwealth. The record-high identification count of 50,030 students underscores the strength of the regional coordination model, data-driven outreach, and interagency collaboration.

ECYEH staff at both regional and state levels delivered extensive professional development, technical assistance, and direct support while managing increasing demands and a growing number of identified students. The strategic use of ARP-HCY funding further enhanced training, service innovation, and collaboration infrastructure.

However, persistent challenges remain. Chronic absenteeism, academic underperformance, and dropout rates—particularly in high school—continue to impact this population. Assessment participation remains below state targets, and reporting gaps persist, especially among charter schools and from the early childhood providers. Additionally, the expanding scope of ECYEH staff responsibilities highlights the need for strategic capacity planning.

Looking ahead, sustained investments in staff development, cross-sector partnerships, and data-informed decision-making will be critical to advancing educational equity. Continuous

attention to coordination, early identification, and student outcomes will help ensure that all children and youth—regardless of housing status—can enroll, attend, and succeed in school.