

Policy Landscape and Trends

2023 NCSL Youth Homelessness Fellows

June 26, 2023, 11:30 a.m. — 12:30 p.m.

Session Overview



Presentation



Understanding and Sharing



Participant Q&A





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2023 NCSL Youth Homelessness Fellows

Policy Landscape and Trends

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About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education.

We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

WEBSITE:

schoolhouseconnection.org

NEWSLETTER:

schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up

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

Who Is Experiencing Homelessness?

Two Primary Federal Definitions of Homelessness

Living Situation	Public Schools, Institutions of Higher Education, Child Care, Head Start, School Meals, DV Programs (U.S. Department of Education: definition)	Homeless Assistance, Public Housing Programs, Veterans Programs (U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development: definition)
Unsheltered	Yes	Yes
Emergency Shelters/Transitional Housing	Yes	Yes
Hotels/Motels	Yes, if due to lack of adequate alternative accommodations.	Only if paid for by government or charity; otherwise, only very limited circumstances.
Staying with Others Temporarily	Yes, if due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason.	Only under extremely narrow circumstances.

Additional Relevant Federal Definitions of Homelessness

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Program (HHS)	Health Care for the Homeless (HHS)	Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Programs (SNAP)
Individuals who are “not more than 21 years of age...for whom it is not possible to live in a safe environment with a relative and who have no other safe alternative living arrangement.	A person who lacks housing “a recognition of the instability of an individual’s living arrangements is critical to the definition of homelessness.”	Includes same categories of HUD definition, but also includes “a temporary accommodation for not more than 90 days in the residence of another individual.”

Why Do Federal Definitions of Homelessness Matter to State Policymakers?

UNDERSTANDING PREVALENCE

How many youth are experiencing homelessness in your community and state? Depending on the definition and source, the scale of the problem looks very different, shaping public and policymakers understanding. State policymakers will need to be intentional about which data and definitions to use when developing interim studies or legislative reports.

UNDERSTANDING DYNAMICS AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Which youth are most likely to experience homelessness? What does youth homelessness look like in rural, suburban, and urban communities?

UNDERSTANDING TRENDS

Is youth homelessness increasing? Decreasing? Is an increase in reported numbers actually a good thing? What are the federal and state resource needs? Different data tell different stories. It is important to use a consistent broad definition to inform policy and funding decisions.

UNDERSTANDING BARRIERS TO SERVICES AND HOUSING

Federal definitions determine eligibility for and access to critical services, including shelter, housing, education, health care, nutrition, child care, and early development. State policy can help mitigate gaps caused by federal conflicts.

Federal Programs & Funding Streams

Education and Early Care

McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program

Sets out a broad set of protections and services for children and youth experiencing homelessness in every local educational agency (LEA) in every state; requires LEA local liaisons, identification, immediate enrollment, school stability, transportation, connection to services.

Higher Education Act

Youth experiencing homelessness are a target population of college access programs and student support services; special provisions allow youth experiencing homelessness to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) on their own.

Early Development: Child Care and Head Start/Early Head Start

Federal child care and Head Start programs are required to identify and remove barriers to the participation of young children experiencing homelessness. These are critical supports for the large number of youth experiencing homelessness who are pregnant or parenting.

Federal Programs & Funding Streams

Runaway and Homeless Youth Act Programs

Street Outreach

Funds grants to public and private organizations for street-based services to runaway, homeless, and street youth, who have been subjected to, or are at risk of being subjected to, sexual abuse, human trafficking, or sexual exploitation.

Basic Center Programs

Short-term crisis housing (up to 21 days) with essential needs such as food, personal hygiene products, and clothing as well as connection to counseling services and strength-based family interventions to reunify youth under the age of 18 with their families when safe and appropriate. Aftercare services are also provided to ensure youth remain in safe and stable housing.

Transitional Living Programs and Maternity Group Homes

Provides long-term housing for older youth 16-22 years old coupled with supportive services such as employment, education, and mental health to help the youth achieve success and sustainable self-sufficiency. Maternity group homes support pregnant and parenting youth experiencing homelessness.

Federal Programs & Funding Streams: Child Welfare

Chaffee Foster Care Independence Program

Authorizes funding to support youth aging out/aged out of foster care. Funds can be used for housing, educational services and independent living services. Later legislation ([Fostering Connections Act of 2008](#)) allows states to provide foster care to youth until age 21 if the youth is in school, working or medically exempt.

Chafee Education and Training Voucher Program

Support for young people currently or formerly in foster care to attend college or participate in vocational training programs. Historically, students could receive up to \$5,000 a year to pursue postsecondary education or vocational training. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, federal legislation raised the annual maximum to \$12,000 from October 2021 through September 2022.

Federal Programs & Funding Streams: HUD's Homeless Assistance Programs

Continuum of Care (CoC)

CoC are administrative entities that coordinate, plan, and administer HUD funding across all homeless populations. Permanent Supportive Housing, Rapid Rehousing, limited transitional housing.

Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP)

YHDP is administered as a competitive two-year grant program through HUD that provides funding for local CoCs to reduce the number of youth experiencing homelessness. YHDP projects partner with community stakeholders and require communities to convene Youth Action Boards.

In summary....

- The legal framework for addressing youth homelessness is complex.
- Federal laws operate across multiple systems – federal, state, local, & even private organizations.
- We've provided a simple summary here, but the reach and application of these laws are complex and vary by state and locale.

What's on the Horizon in Federal Youth Homelessness Policy?

- [American Rescue Plan Act - Homeless Children and Youth Funding](#)
 - Funding must be obligated by September 30, 2024, and spent by January 31, 2025
- FY2024 Appropriations
- Farm Bill
 - Access to Food and Nutrition
- [Runaway and Homeless Youth Trafficking & Prevention Act](#)
- [Housing for Homeless Students Act](#)
 - Amends the Low Income Housing Tax Credit
- [The Homeless Children and Youth Act](#)
 - Aligns HUD's definition of homelessness with other federal definitions
 - Requires HUD to score application based on local goals and plans
 - Requires communities to include children, youth and families (under the new definition) in local counts.
- [Higher Education Access & Success for Homeless and Foster Youth Act](#)
 - Remove barriers in college for homeless and foster youth to ensure clear and reliable pathways into and through higher education.
- Child Care: Democrat and Republican Senators have introduced legislation to reform federal child care; both bills create categorical eligibility for children experiencing homelessness.



Engagement Break



STATE POLICY

Key Areas for State Policy

Many of the policies most important for preventing and addressing youth homelessness fall under state law.

Access to vital documents

State early care and education policy

Child welfare

Funding for services

Employment programs

Minor consent for shelter/housing; health and mental health insurance and access

Recent State Policy Trends Include

#1

Promoting high school graduation

- Partial credits
- Alternative diplomas
- Positive school discipline

#2

Promoting higher education completion

- Housing priority
- Tuition/fee waivers
- On-campus supports

#3

Providing minors the ability to consent to needed supports

- Health care
- Mental health care
- Housing and services

#4

Promoting employment

- Child care
- Vital records access
- Car insurance
- Tax credits

#5

Funding services

- Transitional housing
- Permanent housing
- Employment
- Education
- Family support

Improving Access to Vital Documents

AL HB 385 (2022)

- Exempts students experiencing homelessness from fees for:
 - Driver's license examination
 - Driver's license
 - 1st duplicate license
- Vital documents bills typically include driver's licenses, government identification cards, driver's permits, birth certificates, and related expenses.



Promoting Employment

FL SB 1708 (2022)

- Extends the Keys to Independence program (previously only for foster youth) to unaccompanied homeless youth (paying for driver education, license, and insurance costs).
- Waives birth certificate fees for youth experiencing homelessness.



Promoting College Completion

FL SB 1708 (2022)

- Provides higher education campus liaisons.
- Expands and streamlines the state homeless tuition/fee waiver.

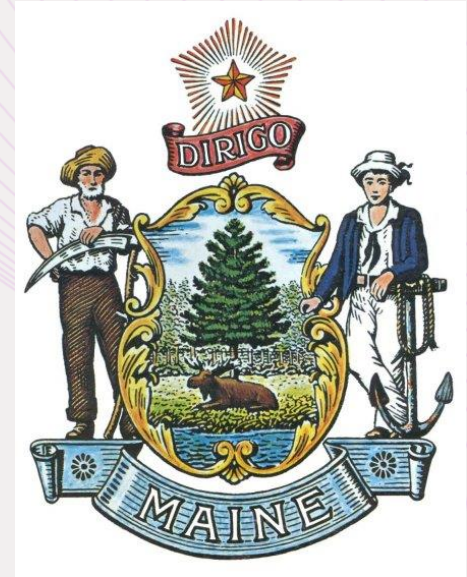


Funding Supportive Services - Housing

ME LD 1609 (2023)

Allows school district homeless liaisons to facilitate emergency financial assistance up to \$750 to a student's family for housing-related needs not authorized under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, including:

- Rental assistance
- Utilities
- Critical home repairs and more



Promoting High School Graduation

CA SB 532 (2022)

- Offers students experiencing homelessness and foster youth, the right to a fifth year in high school to complete state graduation requirements.
- Ensures LEAs are managing credits/partial credits toward graduation for highly mobile students transferring schools.
- Requires consultation with highly mobile students/educational rights holders regarding the impact of enrolling in a fifth year or seeking alternatives on postsecondary education or vocational plans to ensure informed decision making.



Contact Information



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Engagement Break



Questions



Resources



NCSL

- [Youth Homelessness Overview](#)
- [Housing and Homelessness Legislation Database](#)

SchoolHouse Connection

- [Child and Youth Homelessness in the United States: Data Profiles](#)
- [State Policy Network](#)

Other

- [U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Continuum of Care Program: Regional Teams](#)
- [National Homeless Education Data](#) (Includes state coordinator contact information)
- [Youth.gov Federal Definitions for Runaway and Homeless Youth](#)

Funding Opportunity (application deadline, Jul 31, 2023): [HHS-2023-ACF-ACYF-CY-0070](#), FY 2023 Runaway and Homeless Youth-Prevention Demonstration Program (RHY-PDP); U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children & Families - ACYF/FYSB

