

# 2025 Fact Sheet: Educating Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program, established under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act in 1987, provides basic access to education for nearly 1.4 million children and youth experiencing homelessness.

The EHCY Program is **the only federal program** dedicated to identifying homeless students and removing barriers to their school attendance and success. Without the protections provided by the McKinney-Vento Act, homeless students will struggle to attend any school, or benefit from any federal, state, or local education funding.

*For information on student homelessness by state, county, local educational agency, U.S. Congressional district, or state legislative district, please visit <https://schoolhouseconnection.org/article/data-profiles>*

## PUBLIC SCHOOLS IDENTIFIED NEARLY 1.4 MILLION STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS IN THE 2022-2023 SCHOOL YEAR.

- Public schools identified 1,374,537 students experiencing homelessness in the 2022-2023 school year, a 14% increase from the previous school year, nearly making up for the drop in homeless student enrollment during school closures in the pandemic. Many states are reporting even higher numbers for the 2023-2024 school year.
- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) reported a 39% increase in families staying in homeless shelters or visibly on the streets in 2024, which was the highest of any population and the second consecutive year of increase.

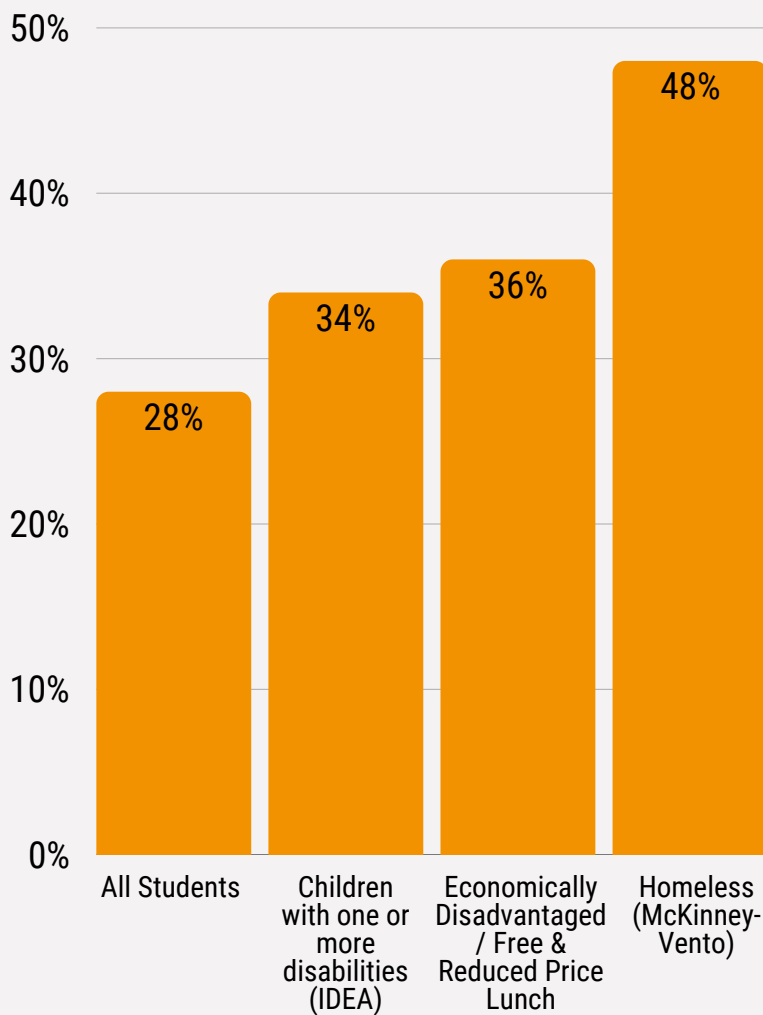
## HOMELESSNESS CREATES UNIQUE BARRIERS TO EDUCATION IN RURAL, SUBURBAN, AND URBAN COMMUNITIES.

- Students experiencing homelessness face unique barriers beyond poverty, such as frequent school transfers, lack of transportation, lack of a fixed address for enrollment, and the stigma and fear of homelessness.
- Homelessness disrupts the lives of children and youth in rural, suburban, and urban communities, but is more hidden in rural and suburban communities. Schools are often the only source of support for homeless students in rural and suburban areas.
- Approximately 9% of homeless students are not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian. These students are often homeless as a result of abuse and neglect, but are not in the custody of child welfare agencies. They face additional educational barriers and are at high risk of trafficking and predation.

**AS A RESULT OF THESE UNIQUE BARRIERS, HOMELESS STUDENTS HAVE HIGHER RATES OF CHRONIC ABSENCE AND LOWER GRADUATION RATES THAN OTHER LOW-INCOME STUDENTS.**

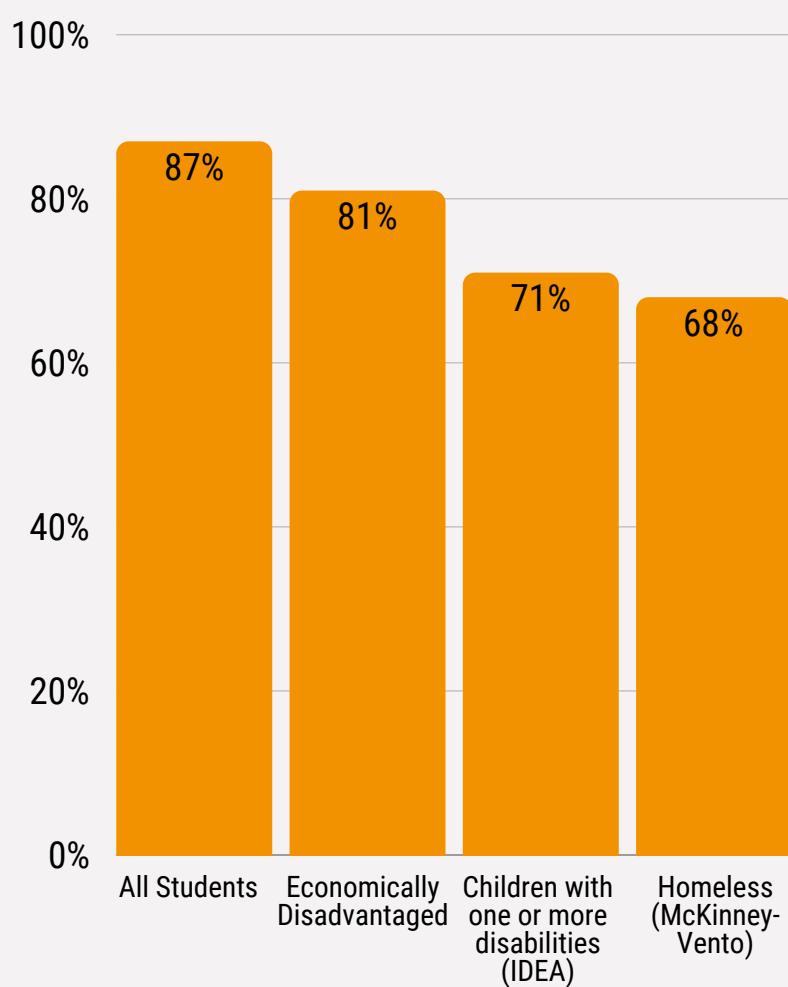
- Nearly half (48%) of students experiencing homelessness in the 2022-2023 school year were chronically absent, a rate that is 12 percentage points higher than other low-income students, and 22 percentage points higher than all students.
- The 2021-2022 national average graduation rate for homeless students was 68%. This is 13 percentage points below other low-income students, and nearly 19 percentage points below all students.
- Youth without a high school diploma or GED are 4.5 times more likely to experience homelessness later in life, making lack of a high school diploma/GED the single greatest risk factor for experiencing homelessness as a young adult – and making education a critical prevention strategy.

**National Chronic Absenteeism Rate, SY 2022-23**



Source: Analysis by Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan. \*Note: Data retrieved from Ed. Data Express Chronic Absenteeism Rate, data group 195 and 655 and NCES Table 204. The percentage for economically disadvantaged students chronically absent is an estimate based on the number of economically disadvantaged students chronically absent divided by the total number of free and reduced price lunch eligible students in the United States. These two groups do not necessarily define economic disadvantage in the same way.

**National 4-Year Cohort Graduation Rate, SY 2021-22**



Source: Ed. Data Express Four-Year Adjusted-Cohort Graduation Rate and Cohort Count, data group 695 and 696. Figure created by Poverty Solutions at the University of Michigan.

## WHEN BARRIERS ARE REMOVED, HOMELESS STUDENTS CAN AND DO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL, WHICH IS THEIR BEST PROTECTION AGAINST FUTURE HOMELESSNESS.

Some school districts and states are closing the gap between students experiencing homelessness and other students, demonstrating that with focused attention and resources, barriers can be overcome. In Henrico County Public Schools, Virginia, the proportion of homeless students experiencing chronic absenteeism dropped by 14 percent over the past two school years (2021-22 and 2022-23). Additionally, graduation rates for high school seniors receiving McKinney-Vento support rose to 93 percent in June 2024.

## WITH A LONG HISTORY OF BIPARTISAN SUPPORT, THE EHCY PROGRAM ENSURES THAT HOMELESS STUDENTS HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO SUCCEED IN SCHOOL. IT PROVIDES:

- **School Stability:** Homeless students can continue attending the same school if it is in their best interest, even if their homelessness forces them to move. Transportation is provided to help maintain school stability.
- **School Access:** If staying in the same school is not in their best interest, homeless students are immediately enrolled in a local school while school records are obtained, limiting educational disruption.
- **School Support:** Every school district designates a local liaison to identify homeless students and provide support, including referrals to community agencies and training for school personnel. Funding is used for direct services to students and families.

## THE EHCY PROGRAM PLAYS A CRITICAL ROLE DURING DISASTERS AND ECONOMIC DOWNTURNS.

- Events like hurricanes, wildfires, and floods can create lasting homelessness for families and youth. For example, public schools in South Carolina, North Carolina, Florida, and Georgia have identified over 5,100 newly homeless students as a result of Hurricanes Helene and Milton. The EHCY program has a proven track record of providing educational access and support to these students.
- During economic downturns and housing crises, homelessness often spikes. The EHCY program provides a safety net to ensure children and youth remain in school during these times of upheaval.

## RECENT FUNDING HISTORY

- **FY2024:** Congress appropriated \$129 million for the EHCY program, allowing about one in five (20.79%) school districts to receive dedicated funding.
- **Unanimous, Bipartisan Amendment to American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act, 2021:** An additional \$800 million was dedicated to aid the identification and support of homeless students, which enabled over half of U.S. school districts to access EHCY support. An evaluation of early impact found improvements in identification, attendance, and achievement. An independent study of early impact found improvements in identification, attendance, and achievement.