

# Federal data shows a record number of homeless students

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Federal data [released Wednesday](#) by the National Center for Homeless Education shows public schools identified a record 1.5 million students experiencing homelessness in the 2017-2018 school year, an 11 percent jump from the previous year.

That's the highest number ever recorded nationally, according to the nonprofit SchoolHouse Connection.

The number of students in unsheltered situations, such as cars, parks or streets, more than doubled between 2016-2017 and 2017-2018, a 104 percent increase, according to the group's analysis.

The number staying in motels increased by 17 percent while the number of those staying with other people temporarily because they lacked other alternatives is up by 9 percent. Data on homelessness is submitted by states to the Department of Education.

Barbara Duffield, executive director of SchoolHouse Connection, said schools are overlooked in their response to homeless students, and they need more support to help meet these students' needs.

"Schools are basically the only safety net for these children and youth in many of these communities," said Duffield, whose organization works to overcome homelessness through education. "This is where they'll have food, temporary shelter, caring adults and the education they need to not be homeless anymore."

The National Center for Homeless Education at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, which released the report, operates the U.S. Department of Education's technical assistance and information center for the federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program. The program provides grants to ensure homeless students have access to education.

The data shows graduation and proficiency rates for students confronting homelessness are significantly below those of economically disadvantaged students.

"We have learned how to effectively identify students experiencing homelessness and get them the supports they need to stay on track in school," said John Bridgeland, founder and CEO of the organization Civic, which develops campaigns and public policies in various fields, including education. "Now is the time to apply this knowledge to redouble our efforts in ensuring all students have the same opportunity to graduate from high school and succeed in college, work and life."

SchoolHouse Connection and Civic are asking Congress to increase funding for the Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program, among other things.

And they're calling on states and school districts to ensure appropriate staffing and training to tackle the issue, reserve adequate funding to serve homeless students, partner with community organizations and pass state legislation that removes barriers to graduation.