

Statewide Initiative

California

The Learning Policy Institute and UCLA
Center for the Transformation of Schools

The Learning Policy Institute is a California-based organization that conducts and communicates high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. In addition to producing broad, national research and analysis, LPI also publishes California-specific reports, including Students Experiencing Homelessness: The Conditions and Outcomes of Homelessness Among California Students. With 1 in 5 students experiencing homelessness residing in California, this report draws upon data from the California Department of Education and provides a snapshot of contextual factors, including living arrangements, school mobility, school discipline, and learning outcomes. LPI found that the number of students identified as experiencing homelessness has increased by more than 7% over the past four years. Those students are more likely to be chronically absent, less likely to graduate from high school, and are more likely to be enrolled in high-poverty schools. The report also notes that the majority of students experiencing homelessness are living in a doubled-up situation. Recommendations at the federal, state, and local levels center on increasing funding for students experiencing homelessness, improving identification efforts, and increasing access to school services and supports.

The UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools is dedicated to bringing about systems change through humanizing research, validating practices, and transforming policies with key stakeholders to support equitable educational outcomes for historically underserved students. For their report State of Crisis: Dismantling Student Homelessness in California, the Center synthesized data from Data Quest, a program at the California Department of Education that provides data on students experiencing homelessness enrolled in K12 education.



Additionally, the Center conducted interviews and focus groups to gain knowledge about the experience of homelessness in early childhood and higher education, along with nonprofit organizations working with families experiencing homelessness. The report shows that California K12 students experiencing homelessness account for nearly 18% of students experiencing homelessness nationwide. K12 students experiencing homelessness in California experience chronic absenteeism and suspension at twice the rate of their housed peers. Additionally, they experience lower graduation and college readiness rates. The report also tracks these outcomes at the county level, including through an interactive map. This county breakdown is able to provide important takeaways with policy and practice implications. For example, Los Angeles serves the second-highest number of students experiencing homelessness in the state, but has one of the lowest suspension rates. Among their recommendations, the Center suggests increasing funding for the McKinney-Vento Act at the federal level since the report revealed that 2 out of 3 students experiencing homelessness in California are enrolled in a school district that does not receive funding from McKinney-Vento.