Increasing Access to Early Learning for Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness

Tuesday, January 31, 2023
General Housekeeping

- Webinar will last 1 hour and 15 minutes
- Audio is muted - please ask questions through Q&A
- Session is being recorded
- Follow-up email after the session will include the recording, powerpoint, and resources
We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education.

WEBSITE: schoolhouseconnection.org

NEWSLETTER: schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up

- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships
Erin Patterson, Director of Education Initiatives, SchoolHouse Connection

Mykela Collins, Family Ambassador for Ada S McKinley Community Services, and Family Leader for Raising IL

Aminah Wyatt-Jones, Vice President of Child Development Programs, Ada S. McKinley Community Services, Inc.

Carie Bires, Managing Director, Start Early
Overview
DEFINITION

Who is Eligible?

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence.

- Sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons.

- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative adequate accommodations.

- Living in emergency or transitional shelters.

- Living in cars, parks, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
Families often stay with others temporarily because of lack of shelter availability, and the fear of having children removed from their custody.

Staying with others puts families, infants, and toddlers in vulnerable, harmful situations, and conditions that may contribute to developmental delays. Parents may stay with abusive/exploitive people, or trade sex in order to have a place to stay.
Youth run away from home due to abuse or neglect.

- 40-60% of unaccompanied youth were abused physically at home.
- 17-25% of unaccompanied youth were abused sexually at home.
- Research links parental substance abuse and youth running away from home.

Parents force youth out of the home due to conflicts.

- Sexual orientation and gender identity
- Pregnancy

**Unaccompanied Youth**

A child or youth without a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian.
Infants, Toddlers, & Families Experiencing Homelessness

1.3 MILLION babies, toddlers, and young children under age 6 experienced homelessness in 2018-2019 (USED 2018-2019 Profiles)

44% of young women (age 18-25) and 18% of young men experiencing homelessness are current or expectant parents to over 1.1 MILLION young children

(Chapin Hall, University of Chicago)
Infants, Toddlers, & Families Experiencing Homelessness

15.4%
Of infants and toddlers live in crowded housing, which is known to jeopardize child development. 2.9% of babies and toddlers have moved three or more times since birth.

State of Babies Yearbook 2022 (Zero to Three)

Hispanic, American Indian/Alaska Native, and Black Babies

Have a higher incidence of living in crowded housing, and low-income babies are nearly three times more likely to live in crowded housing.
Homelessness in infancy has been found to be associated with delays in language, literacy, and social-emotional development, putting children at risk for later academic problems.

The younger and longer a child experiences homelessness, the greater the cumulative toll of negative health outcomes.

The impacts of homelessness on young children are long-lasting, even once families are housed, including on children’s school readiness.
Homelessness Also Has Long-Term Consequences

The high school graduation rate for students experiencing homelessness is 68% compared to 85% for all students. This is the lowest graduation rate of any student sub-group, including economically disadvantaged.

High school students who experience homelessness are 10x more likely to become pregnant or get someone pregnant.

In addition to the academic impacts, homelessness in the early years can cause developmental delays, social-emotional challenges, and long-term trauma.
BARRIERS TO HOMELESSNESS

Homelessness Creates Barriers to Accessing Early Childhood Programs

- **High Mobility** of families moving in and out of motels, staying with others, living in cars, etc.
- **Lack of documentation** and other enrollment barriers, including child immunization and parent work requirements
- **Lack of transportation** to and from programs
- **Lack of awareness** among early care providers of both the definition of homelessness and the best ways to reach families
Data Collection & Methodology
### Population

How did we calculate the total population of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness in each state?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Kids Count estimate of children ages 0 to 4 in each state</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number of first grade students in each state</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First grade students identified as homeless in each state</td>
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</tbody>
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*This is a conservative estimate.* Underidentification is a known issue in K-12 schools. Younger children face a greater risk of homelessness.
Which early childhood data did we use to get enrollment rates?

- Early Head Start (birth - 3)
- Child Care (birth - 3)
- Home Visiting (Parents as Teachers, birth - 3)

What data is missing or incomplete?

- Two states’ child care data is listed as “insufficient” via the Office of Child Care
- It would be important to have some additional home visiting data, as well as Early Intervention
Data Trends & Key Takeaways
Across all 20 states, there are approximately 311,961 infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness. 22,220, or 7%, are currently identified and served by an early childhood program. That means there are 289,741 who are not identified and/or enrolled in an early childhood program.
An estimated 311,961 infants and toddlers experienced homelessness across the 20 states analyzed during the 2020-2021 school year, representing approximately 3% of the 0-3 population.

Only 7% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness were enrolled in an early childhood program (Early Head Start, Child Care, or Parents as Teachers Home Visiting) in 2020-2021.

Of the three early childhood programs for which data was available, Early Head Start has the highest enrollment rate of children experiencing homelessness (4.2%).

Across the 20 states, there is significant variation in the enrollment rates of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness.
DATA TRENDS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

State-Level Breakdown

Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness

Enrollment

Key Takeaways
Enrollment

Across 20 states:

- **Child Care Programs**
  enroll 2.3% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness

- **Early Head Start Programs**
  enrolls 4.2% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness

- **Home Visiting Programs (Parents as Teachers)**
  enroll 1% of infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness
State-Level Breakdown: Child Care Enrollment
State-Level Breakdown: Early Head Start Enrollment

Data Trends & Key Takeaways

Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness

Enrollment

Key Takeaways
State-Level Breakdown: Home Visiting
DATA TRENDS & KEY TAKEAWAYS

Infants & Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness

Enrollment

Key Takeaways

1. **Infants, toddlers, and families** experiencing homelessness are significantly under-enrolled in early childhood programs.

2. **Some infants, toddlers, and families** experiencing homelessness may be enrolled in, but not identified by, early childhood programs.

3. **More data and better reporting mechanisms** are needed to get a clearer picture of the need and to inform policy and practice.
Recommendations

Early Childhood Programs & Providers
Improve outreach, identification, and support

Federal Agencies
Provide stronger oversight to existing policies to remove barriers for families experiencing homelessness

State Agencies
Strengthen policies and practices, and direct funding, to connect families experiencing homelessness to high-quality early childhood programs.

Congress
Increase investment across all prenatal-3 programs, with specific policies to remove barriers and increase and incentivize support for families and children experiencing homelessness.
Mykela Collins

Family Ambassador for
Ada S McKinley Community Services, Inc. and Family Leader for Raising IL
Aminah Wyatt-Jones

Vice President of Child Development Programs for Ada S McKinley Community Services, Inc.
About Start Early

Our Mission
Start Early advances quality early learning for families with children, before birth through their earliest years, to close the opportunity gap.

Our Vision
Every child has equitable opportunity to reach their full potential to thrive in school and in life.

Our Approach
Our comprehensive approach to early learning and care applies our deep expertise in program, policy and research so that children, families and educators can thrive.
What We Do

Provide **QUALITY EARLY LEARNING AND CARE** to children and families on-the-ground in Chicago and in rural Illinois, and we partner with others to bring our lessons learned to children and families nationwide.

Offer **PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT OFFERINGS** that ensure early childhood professionals build practices that transform teaching and learning and deliver stronger outcomes for children.

Conduct **RESEARCH AND EVALUATION** to optimize and inform every aspect of our work, from the classroom to policy recommendations and training programs.

Promote **WIDE-RANGING POLICIES AND PROGRAMS** that put families first by helping policymakers understand the benefits of and the science behind early childhood development.

Foster **COLLABORATION TO ACCELERATE LEARNING AND IMPACT**, emphasizing the value and power of partnerships and recognizing we are stronger when we share and learn from one another.
Raising Illinois
A Collective Effort to Close the Opportunity Gap for Our Earliest Learners
raisingillinois.org #ILPN3
Early childhood programs and infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness

- The first three years of life represent the most critical period of development in the entire human lifespan.
- Early childhood programs and services can play a huge role in promoting healthy development and mitigating the impacts of adverse experiences.
- Despite the critical importance of the early years, early childhood programs are woefully underfunded, with least investment in infant/toddler programs and services.
- We have to be intentional about expanding supports for and growing investments in infant and toddler services.
Policy landscape for infants/toddlers experiencing homelessness

- States must ensure that children experiencing homelessness have access to public preschool programs
- Preschool is considered a “school of origin”
- McKinney-Vento State Coordinators must collaborate with the early childhood community
- **LEA homeless liaisons must ensure that children experiencing homelessness have access to Head Start and Early Head Start programs, early intervention services under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (Part C), and other preschool programs administered by the LEA**
- All ECE programs use the same definition of homelessness as schools and have many policies and requirements that mirror McKinney-Vento
Policy and systems change efforts in Illinois

- Children experiencing homelessness are considered an official priority population, per the Illinois Early Learning Council
  - Priority populations have been a focus in many of IL's federal grant applications over the last decade
- Children experiencing homelessness are eligible for a period of child care subsidy without a qualifying activity
- Long time early childhood champion in McKinney-Vento state coordinator role—established good relationships
- Initiatives
  - Home Visiting for Homeless Families
  - Cross-training
- Committed and passionate advocates
Considerations for policy and systems change

- Hearts and minds—creating understanding and empathy is critical to growing a larger group of allies and champions
  - Identifying and influencing even just a few key decision makers into allies/champions can significantly speed progress

- Family and community engagement investments are needed to help build and maintain relationships with families

- Cross-system collaboration is foundational, but requires funding and structures to sustain it and make it successful

- Policy and advocacy work is needed at the state level to better align McKinney-Vento and early childhood programs
  - Transform permissive statutory language into program requirements
  - Funding to meet requirements must be part of these efforts
Questions?
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