



## Comments on children and youth experiencing homelessness in Pennsylvania to the Pennsylvania Children & Youth and Education Committees, November 15, 2023

Submitted by Joe Willard, Vice President for Policy, HopePHL

- HopePHL™ (pronounced “hopeful”) was founded through an integration of two human service organizations in Philadelphia, PA: People’s Emergency Center (PEC) and Youth Service, Inc (YSI). HopePHL’s mission is to inspire Philadelphia’s children, youth, families and communities to thrive by providing housing, advocacy, and trauma-responsive social services designed to promote equity, resilience, autonomy, and well-being.
- For the past 15 years, HopePHL has examined data specific to children and youth experiencing homelessness. The following data points come from cited sources.
- Pennsylvania identified 40,003 children and youth as experiencing homelessness in 2022, its highest number ever identified.<sup>i</sup> The Commonwealth ranked 8<sup>th</sup> in the nation for the number of identified homeless students.<sup>ii</sup>
  - Of the 40,003, 34,043 were students.
  - Of the 40,003 children, 23 percent were ages birth through five.
  - This is an increase from 32,666 and 37,930 identified children and youth in 2020-21 and 2019-20, respectively, and historically is the highest reported attributed count.
  - For comparison, Pennsylvania’s homeless housing system served 14,000 children and youth in SY 2022.
  - 34 counties identified more homeless children in 2022 than in 2019, the last year data collection was not affected by the pandemic.<sup>iii</sup>
  - 30 counties identified fewer homeless children in 2022 than in 2019, the last year not affected by the pandemic.<sup>iv</sup>
- HOUSING: 66% of all homeless children and youth are living double up (living with family or friends) due to economic reasons. These are students who are likely in families not being supported by the homeless housing system.
- NOT JUST URBAN: Suburban homelessness is almost identical in scale to urban homelessness.
- UNACCOMPANIED: 11% of the 40,003 children and youth identified were unaccompanied.
- BARRIERS: Determining eligibility and transportation continues to be significant barriers to educational participation.
- DISABILITY: 9,867, or 25 percent of the 40,003 total number of students experiencing homelessness, were reported to having a disability.





- **ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT:** 60% of all 3rd Graders score below basic in Math and 40% in Reading.
  - 32% of 8th Graders score below basic in both Math and Reading.
  - 49% of 11th Graders score below basic in both Math and 30% in Reading.
- **SUPPORTS:** More than 39,000 students received tutoring support.
- **ATTENDANCE:** 58 percent of students are considered chronically absent.
- **YOUNG CHILDREN:**
  - In FY 22-23, 2,187 homeless children were served in Head Start and Early Head Start, down from 2,659 served in FY 2019, the last year not affected by Covid, for a 22% decline.<sup>v</sup> This decline is related to the challenges of early childhood education that includes staffing shortages and the closing of programs.
- **YOUTH:** The following data comes from the Nemours Children Services' report<sup>vi</sup>:
  - 7 in 9 homeless students in Pennsylvania are **NOT** identified or served.
  - 6.11% of public high school students reported homelessness.
  - Students experiencing homelessness are:
    - 466% times more likely to be victimized by violence;
    - 170% times more likely to be victimized by sexual assault;
- **Data Challenges:** The homeless housing system does not report out data on children and youth experiencing homelessness. No entity in Pennsylvania collects data for the entire state except for the Department of Education using excellent data standards set by the United States Department of Education. This results in a disconnect between the education and housing systems. No Pennsylvania administration has focused on children and youth.
  - The Pennsylvania Joint State Government Commission reported in 2016 a variety of challenges and provided recommendations for state action that are still relevant today.
- **Funding:**
  - The 'average' cost to serve one homeless student is estimated at \$141 in FY 22-23.<sup>vii</sup>
  - No General Fund state dollars directly support homeless education.
  - The Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) is typically funded with \$5 million from the federal government to identify and support students experiencing homelessness in the state's 499 school districts, 179 charter and cyber charter schools, and 10 comprehensive career and technical centers.<sup>viii</sup>
    - School districts have discretion to use federal Title I funds for homeless students.
  - Congress directed a one-time \$32 million grant to supplement its \$4.8 million to the Fiscal Year 2021-22 Pennsylvania budget for a total of \$36.8 million. The funds support the "Education for Children and Youth Experiencing



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Homelessness” (ECYEH) program. The ECYEH structure expanded its capacity, as did many school districts and charter schools, to provide staffing, train school personnel, and provide direct services like uniforms, transportation, motel stays, mentoring, summer programming, school supplies, and more.

- However, unspent funds from the \$32 million allotment revert back to the federal government by January 31, 2025. There are no new funds expected and the state does not supplement the federal fund with its ‘General Fund.’ The state budget can be expected to revert back to its \$5 million federal allotment.
- In addition, the Pennsylvania Basic Education Formula Commission<sup>ix</sup> recognize in 2014 that students living in homelessness and foster care may be more costly to educate and suggests that the basic education funding formula be adjusted to include extra revenue.
- This table sums up ECYEH’s revenue:

PA Department of Education	FY 2020-21	FY 2021-22	FY 2022-23	FY 2023-24	FY 2024-25 Assumed**
ECYEH Budget	\$4.8M <sup>iii</sup>	\$36.8M	\$4.8M <sup>iv</sup>	\$5M <sup>v</sup>	\$5M <sup>***</sup>
Per Student	\$180 <sup>^</sup>	\$1,082 <sup>^^</sup>	\$141 <sup>*</sup>	\$147 <sup>**</sup>	\$147 <sup>***</sup>

- All funds are federal. There are no state dollars in the ECYEH budget.
- <sup>^</sup> There were 26,627 K-12 students in SY 2020-21
- <sup>^^</sup> Uses 34,000 students divided into \$36.8 million
- <sup>\*</sup> Estimated at \$4.8M divided by 34,000 students.
- <sup>\*\*</sup> Assumes uses the same number of 34,000 students identified in FY 2022 and divided by \$5M.
- <sup>\*\*\*</sup> Assumes \$5M and uses the same number of 34,000 students identified in FY 2022 and divided by \$5M.



**ADVOCATES' REQUEST:** The Shapiro Administration and the General Assembly should invest \$32 million into the Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness program and create a grant application process, not invest the new funds into the Basic Education formula.

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<sup>i</sup> PA Department of Education: Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program 2021-22 State Evaluation Report

<sup>ii</sup> [Student Homelessness in America \(ed.gov\)](#)

<sup>iii</sup> PA Department of Education: [Reports \(pa.gov\)](#)

<sup>iv</sup> PA Department of Education: IBID

<sup>v</sup> Office of Head Start - Program Information Report (PIR) Summary Report - 2023 - State Level

<sup>vi</sup> Hatchimonji, D.R., Flatley C.A., Treglia, D., Cutuli, J. J. (2021). High School Students Experiencing Homelessness: Findings from the 2019 Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS). Nemours Children's Health System

<sup>vii</sup> HopePHL: *Can Pennsylvania Avoid Reducing Aid To Serving 34,000 Students Experiencing Homelessness?*, November, 2023. To receive a copy, email to [policy@hopephl.org](mailto:policy@hopephl.org).

<sup>viii</sup> PA Department of Education op. cit.

<sup>ix</sup> PA Basic Education Funding Commission, 2014, [2023-08-21 091828 2015BEFC.pdf \(pahouse.com\)](#), p.

81.



