

# Child and Youth Homelessness & Education

Alaska Senate Education Committee

January 29, 2024



SchoolHouse  
Connection

<https://schoolhouseconnection.org>

# About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education.

We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

## WEBSITE:

[schoolhouseconnection.org](https://schoolhouseconnection.org)

## NEWSLETTER:

[schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up](https://schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up)

- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships

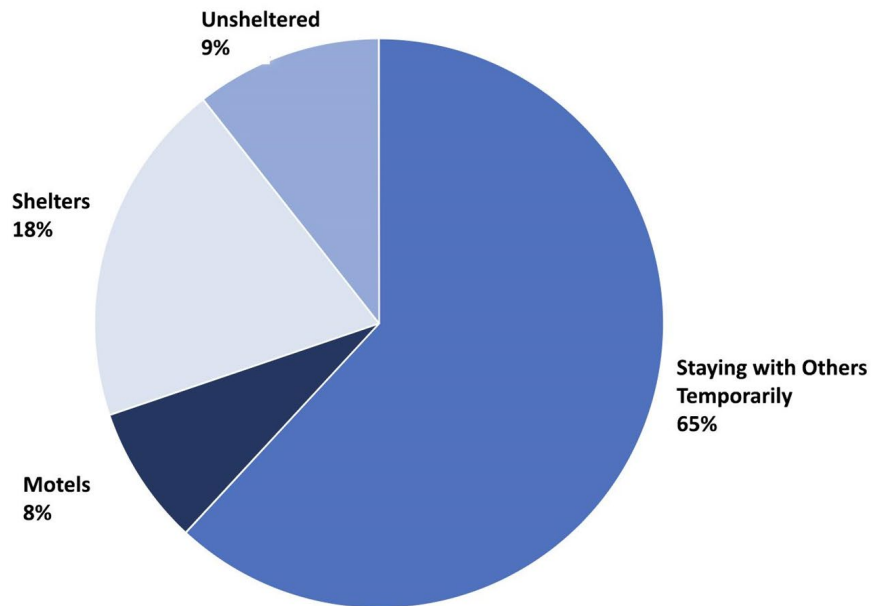
# Student Homelessness: A Growing But Hidden Experience

ALASKA	Early Pandemic	Pandemic	Transition	Recovery
School Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
Number of PreK-12 Homeless Students Identified/Enrolled	3,126	2,578	3,092	3,575 (14% increase from pre-pandemic school year)
% of Total PreK-12 Enrollment	2.4%	2.0%	2.4%	2.7%

- **Challenge: Underidentification**
  - Research indicates the actual prevalence is 50-100% higher than school-identified numbers
- Prevalence is the same in rural, suburban, and urban areas, but more hidden in non-urban settings
- Identification is correlated with targeted funding for homeless students

Sources: [National Center for Homeless Education](#), Chapin Hall, Voices of Youth Count, [www.voicesofyouthcount.org](http://www.voicesofyouthcount.org)

# Where Do They Stay? Living Situations When Homeless Students Are First Identified by Alaska Schools



School Year 2022-2023

- Students move between these situations during the school year
- Lack of shelter in most communities; fear of shelter
- Lack of motels/hotels in most communities; inability to pay
- Children and youth “staying with others temporarily” are extremely vulnerable to predation/harm but more difficult to identify

# Student Homelessness is an Intersectional Issue

## Students with Disabilities

**25%**

**Students Experiencing Homelessness**

**15%**

**All Students**

## English Learners

**17%**

**Students Experiencing Homelessness**

**11%**

**All Students**

# Barriers and Impacts of Homelessness

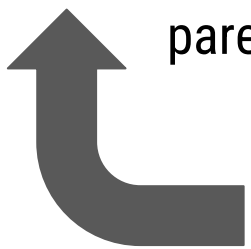
## Barriers:

- High mobility
- Trauma/Fear
- Invisibility
- Enrollment requirements
- Poor health/hunger/sleep
- Caring for siblings and parents

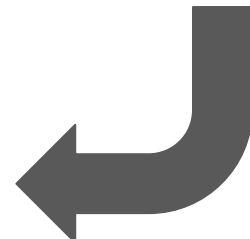


## Leading to:

- Declining enrollment
- Higher rates of chronic absenteeism
- Mental health challenges
- Lower high school graduation rates
- Lower postsecondary enrollment



And the **lack of a high school degree or GED** is the  
Single greatest risk factor for young adult homelessness.



Chronic Absence Rates in Alaska			
	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022
Students Experiencing Homelessness	40.5%	55%	72.1%
All Students	18%	20.2%	45.8%

High School Graduation Rates in Alaska		
	2019-2020	2020-2021
Students Experiencing Homelessness	58%	51%
Economically Disadvantaged	72.3%	69.9%
All Students	79.1%	78.2%

# Federal Protections and Services

## The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

- Liaisons in each LEA
- Identification
- Immediate enrollment
- Right to stay in same school, if best interest
- Transportation
- PreK
- FAFSA assistance

## Title I Part A of ESSA

- Categorical Eligibility
- Required reservation of funds for homeless students
- Disaggregated achievement and graduation rates

- Head Start
- Child Care and Development Fund
- Higher Education Act
- Individuals with Disabilities Education Act
- Child Nutrition Act



# Targeted Federal Funding

	Alaska's Allocation	Number of subgrants to LEAs	Uses of funds
Annual McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Funding (FY2023)	\$372,689	5	16 authorized uses, including outreach, transportation, staffing, supplies
American Rescue Plan Homeless Children and Youth Act Funding <u>Expires 9/30/2024, but many schools imposing 6/30/2024 deadline</u>	\$2,350,009	19	All of the above, plus store cards, gas cards, car repair, limited motel stays, cell phones, and more

# What Works?

## Intentional, Specific Policies + Targeted Resources

With support, students experiencing homelessness can and do succeed:

- Top strategy: trained school staff with capacity to identify and support (e.g., more FTE for liaison position to coordinate internally and externally, site-based contacts, graduation coaches, mentors)
- Reviewing/revising policies that may create barriers
- Trauma-informed and culturally responsive outreach/identification
- School stability, including transportation
- Credit accrual and recovery policies
- Re-engaging and building trust through flexible services

# State Policy Levers

## #1

Promoting preK-12 attendance and high school graduation:

- Targeted funding for outreach and school-based services
- Partial credits
- Alternative diplomas
- Positive school discipline

## #2

Promoting higher education access and completion:

- Housing priority
- Tuition/fee waivers
- On-campus supports
- FAFSA completion

## #3

Promoting early childhood development:

- Streamlined access to child care
- Automatic eligibility and prioritization
- Dedicated housing vouchers for ECE programs

## Homeless Student Stability Act

WA HB 1682 (2016; amended 2023)

Awards grants to school districts and nonprofits to improve educational outcomes for students experiencing homelessness through a statewide competitive grant program. Strong bipartisan support.

Provides:

- Increased staffing capacity (coaches, outreach)
- Housing-related assistance
- Supplements federal homeless education dollars to reach more LEAs



## School-Based Emergency Assistance

ME LD 1609 (2023)

Allows school district homeless liaisons to facilitate emergency financial assistance up to \$750 to a student's family for housing-related needs, including those not currently authorized under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, including:

- Rental assistance
- Utilities
- Critical home repairs and more



# Promoting High School Graduation

KY HB 378 (2019)

- Requires the SEA to promulgate regulations regarding students experiencing homelessness, including: awarding and accepting partial credit; facilitating enrollment in required classes; and providing for diplomas from a prior district or for meeting state minimum requirements for students who change schools in their last two years of high school.
- Regulations require LEAs to adopt written procedures to ensure partial credit is awarded.



## Promoting Higher Education Access and Completion

FL HB 1577 (2022)

- State colleges and universities must designate higher education campus liaisons to support youth experiencing homelessness or foster care; provide the liaison's contact information to all students receiving the homeless/foster tuition waiver, as well as publish it on the institution's website.
- Students experiencing homelessness are exempt from the payment of tuition and fees for a school district workforce education program, Florida College System institution, or state university.



## **Barbara Duffield**

Executive Director  
SchoolHouse Connection

[barbara@schoolhouseconnection.org](mailto:barbara@schoolhouseconnection.org)

## **Rodd Monts**

Director of State Policy  
SchoolHouse Connection

[rodd@schoolhouseconnection.org](mailto:rodd@schoolhouseconnection.org)