Pride Action Tank’s convening on college students and homelessness was held at the University of Illinois at Chicago April 6, 2017.

The event was one in a series of activities PAT has organized around youth homelessness, beginning with the 2014 Youth Summit on LGBTQ youth experiencing housing instability. The Chicago Youth Storage Project emerged directly from young people’s identification of their needs and more than 200 lockers have been made available since then.

PAT has also hosted two "Out in the Open" events--a 2016 "sleep-out" and a 2017 "sleep-in"--to draw attention to the lack of housing options and raising money for organizations serving people experiencing homelessness. In 2016, the "Tiny Homes Summit: New Solutions for Youth Homelessness" included a design contest for a home to be built at the summit's site and featured panels and small group discussions among area service providers, advocates, and activists from cities that have used tiny homes to address homelessness. At the summit's conclusion, the model home was rebuilt at another site that allowed hundreds of people--including the Mayor of Chicago and other city representatives--to tour it and plans are being developed for a pilot project.

The 2017 summit on college students and homelessness was sponsored by Polk Bros. Foundation, the UIC Gender and Sexuality Center and Office of the Dean of Students, and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless (CCH). It brought together about 60 faculty and staff members from 10 area colleges and universities, eight nonprofits and service providers, Chicago Public Schools, and the University of Illinois System to discuss the challenges facing college students experiencing housing instability and campus resources to address them. (The complete list of attendees and affiliations is attached, along with the program.)

Speakers from Chicago-area colleges and universities, service providers, and advocacy groups presented data and existing research on student homelessness, information about Federal and state legislation, potential campus and other resources, and ways of helping students overcome stigma that often prevents them from seeking help. One panel consisted of current and former students who described the obstacles they faced in trying to attend and complete college and the resources they used or couldn’t access. Another featured UIC and DePaul staff members describing their campuses’ efforts to develop programs around student homelessness.

Both panelists and attendees talked about their shared challenges in trying to support students experiencing homelessness, such as finding a way to count them. CCH has partnered with the City Colleges of Chicago to do this but four-year colleges and universities are still trying to find ways to produce an accurate count. Among the possibilities are conducting surveys of applicants and enrolling students and connecting with school districts’ liaisons to find numbers of unhoused students across the state.

These steps may also help address another significant obstacle, mentioned by both students and staff: the stigma for students of acknowledging their situation, which can prevent them from seeking or accessing resources. Students’ embarrassment, as well as their fear of endangering existing support, means that campuses must not only identify resources but also devise a campaign that lessens stigma so that students are comfortable using them. By making materials on resources available at recruitment and enrollment events, in mailings, and mandating that they be listed in required syllabus templates, campuses can let students
experiencing or anticipating homelessness see them as welcoming places with staff and services designed to help campuses can let students experiencing or anticipating homelessness see them as welcoming places with staff and services designed to help them.

Cost is obviously the greatest barrier for students seeking higher education, and even those who find funding and are able to access campus resources often leave school after a single semester because of expenses—especially those connected to housing—and many enroll multiple times (often at different schools) before they are able to complete a degree. Even students who can afford to complete an academic year may be unable to find housing during interim periods and vacations. Standard academic calendars and housing regulations usually do not fit those students who are experiencing long-term homelessness (vs. short-term instability) and/or are estranged from their families of origin. Even if they find somewhere to stay when campus housing is closed, they may not be able to store their belongings, including books and computers, safely during a holiday break.

The convening had two main goals. The first was to bring together colleges and universities to begin the development of a Chicago network to address homelessness and higher education and to connect them with area service providers. The second was to introduce a new toolkit to guide campuses in identifying and organizing existing resources and ways of making them accessible, developed by a Pride Action Tank working group that included student affairs staff from UIC, Northeastern Illinois University, Loyola University at Chicago, and DePaul University, and staff from the Chicago Coalition for Homeless and Howard Brown Health’s Broadway Youth Center.

Brainstorming groups gave attendees an opportunity to talk about the specific issues facing their campuses and to share ideas about how to use the toolkit to establish support systems of their own. Every campus reported increasing numbers of students in need and were glad to connect with service providers and find out more about area resources. They found that they share many obstacles, such as students’ concern about stigma and greatly reduced budgets. Some, however, also have individual challenges, such as Governor State's location in a food desert that makes it doubly difficult for students without resources.

Since the April convening, an electronic version of the toolkit (attached) has been provided to all participants and a second convening is planned for the fall. That event will allow campuses to share the resources and support plans they have been working on and to begin discussion on establishing a network that allows them to continue working together on potential solutions.

Laura Stempel, PhD
SUPPORTING COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS & HOUSING INSTABILITY

APRIL 6, 2017
8:30 am – 12 pm

UIC Student Center East - 750 S. Halsted - Cardinal Room

Sponsored by Pride Action Tank,
Polk Bros. Foundation
UIC’s Gender & Sexuality Center & Office of the Dean of Students,
and the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
8:30 Breakfast and Introductions
  Megan Carney, Director, Gender & Sexuality Center, University of Illinois at Chicago
  J. Rex Tolliver, Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, UIC
  Kim Hunt, Executive Director, Pride Action Tank
  Laura Stempel, Pride Action Tank

8:50 Overview
  Tracy Baim, Co-Chair, Pride Action Tank

9:00 Research on Youth and Student Homelessness
  Casey Holtschneider, Assistant Professor, Northeastern Illinois University; Executive Director, LYTE Collective

9:15 Young People’s Experience
  Jayme Robinson, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
  Caprice Williams, Kennedy-King College
  Malia Santiago-Bossilini, Youth Empowerment Performance Project

9:35 Current Advocacy Work
  Patricia Nix-Hodes, The Law Project, Chicago Coalition for the Homeless
  Jennifer Fabbrini, Students in Temporary Living Situations, Chicago Public Schools
  Casey Holtschneider, LYTE Collective
  Megan Wickman, Chicago Youth Storage Project Collective

10:00 Service Providers
  Adrianna Collis, Education/Vocation Coordinator, Broadway Youth Center
  Emily Werger, Solid Ground and Youth In College Program Coordinator, La Casa Norte

10:15 Toolkit and Campus Resources
  Laura Stempel, Pride Action Tank
  William Rodriguez, Ombudsperson, UIC
  Carol Petersen, Associate Director, UIC Wellness Center
  Ashley B. Knight, Dean of Students, DePaul University
  Tracy Baim, Pride Action Tank

10:45 Brainstorming Groups

11:30 Report Back & Next Steps
SUPPORTING COLLEGE STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS AND HOUSING INSTABILITY

A TOOLKIT FOR COLLEGE AND UNIVERSITIES

POLK BROS FOUNDATION

April 2017
TOOLKIT CONTENTS TEMPLATE

Data
- Use existing campus resources (e.g., student data, incoming student surveys) to estimate the number of students experiencing homeless and housing instability
- Connect with city and state networks and resources
- Counselors, academic advisors: collect (anonymous) anecdotal information

Training
- Understand why/how students may become homeless, impact short- and long-term
- Stigma and other reasons students don’t self-identify or ask directly for help
- How to be welcoming, how to listen for cues student might have housing challenges, consider possible related problems (e.g., doing poorly in class because they don’t have anywhere to study)
- Learn about on- and off-campus resources

Where to go for more information
- Identify a campus point person and informed individuals in key student services units and large colleges
- Require that information be included on course syllabi

Financial Aid
- What are the Federal regulations? What opportunities exist?
- Post one-page summary in visible locations

Housing and Support
- Is emergency shelter available on campus?
- Are there facilities providing showers, kitchen, storage, etc.?
- What are the dorm rules on staying in someone else’s room? Short-term rentals? Use over breaks?
- Storage for books and other academic materials, documents, valuables
- Computer access, study areas, wi-fi, places to recharge phones/computers
- Resources about off-campus shelters, housing programs

Food
- Do you have a food pantry or any other sources of free food?
- Are there any discounts at campus or neighborhood restaurants?

INCLUDE COPIES OF OR LINKS TO DOCUMENTS AND OTHER MATERIALS APPROPRIATE TO YOUR CAMPUS
SAMPLE TOOLKIT CONTENTS: DEPAUL UNIVERSITY
Ashley Knight, Dean of Students

Where to go for more information:
Identify a point person in multiple student-focused units, large colleges, or a primary office
- At DePaul, the Dean of Students (DOS) Office is the point location for students who are experiencing food or housing insecurity.

Housing
Is emergency shelter available on campus?
- DePaul does not have an emergency shelter available on campus.
  - In some cases, providing that funds are available, assistance may be available to students who are on the verge of being homeless and/or experiencing housing insecurity. In such cases, the Dean of Students Office (DOS) will make short-term arrangements for the student to stay at a hostel (Hostelling International in the Loop or Getaway Hostel in Lincoln Park). This arrangement is also dependent on the availability of beds at the hostels.
  - DePaul also provides students with options for community resources, including where homeless shelters are located. Students meet with a staff member in the Dean of Students Office to learn more about options that may be best suited for their situation.

Are there facilities providing showers, kitchen, storage, etc.?
- Local hostels allow a guest to stay in an economy dorm room with a shared common bathroom in the hall and a self-service kitchen.
- Each shelter may be run by a unique organization. The manner that each facility is set up varies and amenities vary.

What are the dorm rules on staying in someone else’s room? Short-term rentals? Use over breaks?
- The guest policy for the campus housing at DePaul is as followed: No more than two guests may be ‘signed in’ by one resident at any given time. Guests cannot stay more than two nights in any given 7-day period.
- Campus housing is only for enrolled students and begins from the start of the academic year (or portion thereof) and will continue through the end of the academic year.
- Traditional halls are closed during winter break, from Thanksgiving until the new year and students must vacate the halls. DePaul’s apartment style halls and the University Center remain open from the start of fall quarter through the end of spring quarter. Summer quarter is processed separately.

Resources about off-campus shelters, housing programs
- Information about off campus shelters, housing and other programs can be accessed by meeting with a staff member in the Dean of Students Office.
- Generally DePaul students who experience housing insecurity are referred to the following:
  - Home Host Program – This program is for full-time students who are part of the traditional college age group and who are confronting homelessness. The host-home model is an alternative to the shelter system. Volunteers open their homes to homeless DePaul University students for an academic term (12 weeks). Both the student and the volunteer hosts go through a screening and training process facilitated by the Dax Program Coordinator. Students live with their host family and have access to a case manager at St. Vincent de Paul Center. The case manager helps students explore issues that contributed to their homelessness. The Dax Program Coordinator also supports the students by providing counseling and by helping students access employment and resources such as food, school supplies, and transportation.
La Casa – This is a program unaffiliated with DePaul that surrounds students with all the benefits and resources of on-campus living—plus the added advantage of an on-site Resource Center. The Resource Center provides a wide range of student support services that help in navigating the complexities of college life and developing leadership skills. A student must qualify to live at La Casa and no family housing is available. La Casa student housing is a 6-story building located in Chicago’s Pilsen neighborhood at the intersection of 18th Street and Paulina, just minutes from all major universities in the Chicago area. Student residences are located on floors 2 through 6.

H.O.M.E (Housing Opportunities & Maintenance for the Elderly) – This is a senior living facility (two Chicagoland locations) where students can apply to be a resident assistant and work 20 hours per week. This includes meal preparation, assist residents with cleaning and small transportation responsibilities to pick up food or other supplies. Students can live at the facility and are provided room and board, access to food and laundry. The DOS office has contacts with staff at H.O.M.E and applications for the RA position.

Food

- **Direct to Food – [www.direct2food.org](http://www.direct2food.org)**
  - A searchable directory to locate community-based food assistance programs, such as food pantries, soup kitchens, home delivered meals, and senior congregate dining sites. The site also lists the specific services offered, hours of operation, and who to contact with any additional questions. Information regarding eligibility requirements for public benefits to prevent food insecurity such as Food Stamps, Women, Infant, and Child (WIC), and other programs that help people in need of food is also available through Direct2Food.

- **Lakeview Food Pantries** - East location: 3831 N. Broadway & West location: 1414 W. Oakdale
- **Parish Food Pantries** - 1010 W. Webster Ave., Chicago IL 60614
- **Mother Seton food pantry and sandwich kitchen** – A food pantry open to students and community members is available through the St. Vincent DePaul parish. The pantry is open every Tuesday from 10:30am-1pm. Students are able to get one bag of non-perishable food items twice a month. If students are unable to go to the pantry during open hours a DOS staff member will retrieve a bag of food and keep it in the office until the student can pick it up.

Books and Other Academic Materials

- **Emergency assistance may be available for students facing financial hardships who are unable to purchase books and other academic materials. Students may meet with a staff member in the Dean of Students Office to review options for accessing resources in and out of the university.**
We have an initiative dedicated to connecting students in need with the appropriate campus resources—
U and I Care (https://dos.uic.edu/uicare.shtml). Students can identify their needs and are provided with
contact info for the best available resources.

Where to go for more information:
Identify a point person in multiple student-focused units, large colleges, or a primary office

- Dean of Students Office – 1200 W Harrison St, Chicago, IL, Suite 3030 – 312-996-4857

Financial Aid
What opportunities exist?

- Emergency loans administered by Dean of Students Office through the financial aid office
- Dragon Dollars may be available (Dragon dollars are university funds added to a student’s ID
card to be used at any of the cafeterias or retail operations)
- Some colleges have:
  - “last mile” funds for students in their last semester needing financial assistance or
  - “emergency” funds students in need

Housing
Is emergency shelter available on campus?

- Campus Housing – Temporary housing sometimes available for homeless students (818 S
  Wolcott, Chicago, IL 60612, Suite 220 – 312-355-6300)

Are there facilities providing showers, kitchen, storage, etc.?

- Commuter Student Resource Center (750 S Halsted, Chicago, IL 60607, Suite 245)
  - has weekly/semester lockers
  - kitchen,
  - showers (women only),
- Student Recreational Facilities
  - East Campus (737 S Halsted)
    - Hours: Monday-Friday 6am-9pm; Saturday 10am-6pm; Sunday 12pm-8pm
    - Showers, locks available for purchase ($5) to use on lockers
  - West Campus (828 S Wolcott)
    - Hours: Monday-Friday 6am-11pm; Friday 6am-9pm; Saturday 9am-9pm; Sunday
      11am-11pm
    - Showers, locker rentals available

What are the dorm rules on staying in someone else’s room? Short-term rentals? Use over breaks?

- Campus Housing rules indicated that “guests” of a campus housing students can stay in the
dorms as a guest for no more than 72 hours.
- Interim housing (between breaks) contracts are available

Resources about off-campus shelters, housing programs

- U and I Care website (https://dos.uic.edu/uicarestudentstostudents.shtml#shares) lists Chicago
  area food pantries and homeless shelters

Food

- UIC Food Pantry offered on specific dates throughout the semester—food can also be available
  on other dates if student inquire with the Office of Dean of Students or directly with the
  Wellness Center (750 S Halsted St, 238 – (312)413-2120)
- Emergency “Dragon Dollars” for students with food insecurity. “Dragon Dollars” can be
  redeemed in various cafeterias on campus.
• U and I Care website (https://dos.uic.edu/uicarestudentstostudents.shtml#shares) lists Chicago area food pantries and homeless shelters

Support
Counselors, academic advisors: collect (anonymous) anecdotal information
• Dean of Students Office – 1200 W Harrison St, 3030 – 312-996-4857
• Gender and Sexuality Center – 1007 W. Harrison St, GSC Lounge RM 181 – 312-413-8619
• Counseling Center – 1200 W Harrison St, 2010 – 312-996-3490
• Campus Advocacy Network – 1101 W Taylor St, Third Floor – 312-413-1025
• Wellness Center – 750 S Halsted St, 238 – 312-413-2120

Data
Computer access, study areas, recharge/wi-fi
• Commuter Student Resource Center – Lounge and study area with campus wifi, outlets for device charging. 750 S Halsted, Chicago, IL 60607, Suite 245
• Richard Daley Library – campus wifi and computers, study rooms with outlets for device charging. 801 S Morgan St, 312-996-2724
• C-Stop- http://accc.uic.edu/service/c-stop
• LARES-Latin American Recruitment and Educational Services-computers and study rooms.
• AAAN-African American Academic Network-computers and study rooms.
• Idea Commons – 801 S Morgan Street (inside Richard Daley Library) – Lounging areas, dry erase boards and markers, computers, printing access, group study areas, laptop bars, photocopier/scanner, assorted office supplies. Hours: Monday-Friday 7am-1am; Saturday 7am-5pm; Sunday 10am-6pm
• Computer Labs – Access to labs outside of business hours (Monday-Friday 9am-5pm) require building access. No charge for UIC students to access computer labs.
  o Benjamin Goldberg Research Center -- 24/7 Labs, Rooms 105A and 105B
  o Behavioral Sciences Building, Rooms 4133, and B001
  o Grant Hall, Room 304
  o James J. Stukel Towers-Residents only, JST 214
  o Marie Robinson Hall-Residents only, MRH 156
  o Student Center East. SCE 401 and 408
  o Science and Engineering Laboratory East -- 24/7 Labs
    ▪ SELE 2265, 2263, 2249F, 2249, 2058
  o Science and Engineering Offices, SEO 1200
  o Science and Engineering South, SES 201, 205B, 205C
  o School of Public Health and Psychiatric Institute, SPHPI B34
  o Student Residence and Commons-South, SRC 2027
  o Student Residence Hall-Residents only, Room 209
  o Thomas Beckham Hall- Residents only, Room 181

Storage
• Commuter Student Resource Center – has weekly/semester lockers, kitchen, showers. 750 S Halsted, Chicago, IL 60607, Suite 245

External resources
• U and I Care website (https://dos.uic.edu/uicarestudentstostudents.shtml#shares) lists Chicago area food pantries and homeless shelters
SELECTED ONLINE RESOURCES

NAEHCY, the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth ([http://www.naehcy.org/] ). Extensive information on key Federal legislation and guidance and resources:
Federal legislation:
https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/110/hr2669/text
http://www.naehcy.org/sites/default/files/dl/legis/hea_summ.pdf
Every Students Succeeds Act (2015):
http://naehcy.org/educational-resources/essa
They’ve also created a toolkit for educators and service providers: http://www.naehcy.org/educational-resources/he-toolkit

NCHE, the National Center for Homeless Education, is the US Department of Education’s technical assistance and information provider and their site includes online training and access to state resources:
http://nche.ed.gov/web/online_tr.php
https://nche.ed.gov/states/state_resources.php
They also publish Homeless Education Issue Briefs, including a series on Best Practices:
Increasing Access to Higher Education for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth:

School House Connection ([http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/] ) offers information on resources for students from pre-K through higher education, including a new report on a national study of basic needs insecurity for students in higher ed:

The complete text of the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, which adds unaccompanied youth experiencing or at risk of homelessness to the students for whom a financial aid administrator may make a determination of independence, is available here:

https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/110/hr2669/text
https://www2.ed.gov/policy/elsec/leg/esea02/pg116.html
**HB3212 - Access to Housing**

Establishes a pathway for unaccompanied homeless minors to consent to housing and services with a DCFS-licensed youth transitional housing program.

745 homeless minors in Chicago are unaccompanied.

The legislation provides the opportunity for homeless minors to access:
- Housing
- Social services
- Counseling
- Life skills training
- And much needed stability

**HB3211 - College Student Hunger**

Increased hunger on college campuses has become a pressing issue in Illinois, especially among students at community colleges.

48% of college students report experiencing food insecurity.

This bill utilizes flexibility offered by the federal program to extend SNAP (food stamps) eligibility to low income adults pursuing a vocational or degree program at a community college.

**HB3709 - Increasing Access to Counseling**

In Illinois minors 12 and over are permitted to consent to 5 counseling visits without parental consent. Youth often struggle with discussing problems with their parents or guardians.

But sometimes 5 sessions are not enough for youth to feel comfortable sharing with their parents.

This bill expands counseling sessions from 5 to 8.

"Mental health professionals are in a good position to help heal families by working with youth who are running away, homeless or otherwise estranged. This legislation expands the possibility for youth to seek help from providers and get short-term support. Most often this is likely to lead to reunification with families."

- Niranjan S. Karnik, MD, PhD

Who will benefit from this legislation?
- Unaccompanied homeless minors
- LGBTQ Youth
- Minors in need of early intervention for mental health crisis
- Minors in conflict with their family

**Homeless Youth**

Studies have long shown that unsheltered youth are much more likely to be raped, sexually exploited, physically assaulted, and to go without needed health care.

These pieces of legislation provide youth with:
- housing
- nutrition
- and counseling services.

It gives youth the opportunity to find their place in the world.
**ILLINOIS**

All data presented here are drawn from the most recently available years of the U.S. Department of Education’s EDFacts Initiative unless otherwise noted. Click [here](#) to learn more about the EDFacts Initiative.

---

**STATE CONTACT**

Mr. Jeffrey Aranowski  
State Coordinator for Homeless Education  
Illinois State Board of Education  
Office of the General Counsel  
100 W. Randolph Street, Suite 14-300  
Chicago, IL 60601  
Phone: (312) 814-2223  
Fax: (312) 814-8871  
Email: jaranows@isbe.net  
Website: [Illinois Department of Education EHCY Program](#)  
[Illinois Liaison Directory](#)

---

**FAST FACTS**

| Total number of Local Education Agencies (LEAs) in this state: | 876 |
| Number of LEAs receiving McKinney-Vento subgrants: | 790 |
| Total students enrolled in LEAs: | 2,066,990 |
| Percentage of enrolled students who are homeless: | 2.6% |
| Percentage of all people in the state who are below the poverty level | 15.27% |
| Percentage of people under 18 years old in the state who are below the poverty level | 17.73% |

---

**Number of Homeless Children/Youth Enrolled in Public School by Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>49,623</td>
<td>54,452</td>
<td>52,333</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Includes all enrolled homeless children and youth in grades PK through 12; ungraded students are excluded.

---

**Subgroups of Homeless Children/Youth**

Number of homeless children/youth enrolled in public schools who are:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup Type</th>
<th>SY 2012-2013</th>
<th>SY 2013-2014</th>
<th>SY 2014-2015</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Migratory children/youth</td>
<td>97</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unaccompanied homeless youth</td>
<td>4,786</td>
<td>4,942</td>
<td>5,131</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with disabilities (IDEA)</td>
<td>9,602</td>
<td>10,864</td>
<td>10,630</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficient (LEP) students</td>
<td>2,768</td>
<td>2,863</td>
<td>3,340</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: These subgroups are not mutually exclusive. It is possible for homeless students to be counted in more than one subgroup.

---

**Percentage of homeless children/youth enrolled in public schools by type of primary nighttime residence**

Additional State Data Notes:
Did not collect data from districts without subgrants (SY 12-13, 13-14, 14-15).
Primary nighttime residence was not reported for all students. (SY 14-15)

Summary Sheets and Additional Data:
- Download data from Section 1.9 of the Consolidated State Performance Reports for the state using the drop-down box.

Note: Before SY 2010-2011, reading and mathematics assessment data were only collected for students served in LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants. As of SY 2010-2011, these data are now collected for all students enrolled in all LEAs. Enrollment figures prior to SY 2010-2011 are not comparable to those after and including SY 2010-2011.
Note: Figures in these Summary Sheets are based on LEA-reported data and contain duplicates. These figures may not match the figures presented here.

- Download a .PDF report of the data presented on this page.
- Download a spreadsheet of McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth Actual State Funding Allocations by year for all states.
- Click here to go to the U.S. Department of Education’s webpage for State Tables of agency program fund allocations.
FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS ABOUT HOMELESSNESS

Where can I call for help for a homeless person or family in the city of Chicago?

Please phone Chicago City Services at “311” or (312) 744-5000.

If you are homeless and need shelter, tell the operator that you are homeless and in need of shelter. If you are housed but concerned that you may lose your housing, tell the operator you need “short term help.” Callers will be transferred to a Homelessness Prevention Call Center. The center is housed and operated by Catholic Charities, with services available in multiple languages.

Callers with hearing problems can access TTY equipment at (312) 948-6817.

Where can I call for help in suburban Cook County?

Phone (877) 426-6515. Cook County’s Foreclosure Prevention Helpline is staffed Monday through Friday, 10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Where can I call for legal aid or advice for a homeless person or family living in Chicago or the suburbs?

Phone our Law Project toll-free helpline, (800) 940-1119. Referrals will be made available for people living outside the metropolitan area.

How many homeless people live in Chicago?

Chicago Coalition for the Homeless is finalizing a new analysis of how many Chicagoans are homeless in our city. The new count will be released in April 2017.

Our analysis will include people who live doubled-up in the homes of others due to hardship, often in overcrowded conditions.

How many homeless students are in Chicago?

- Chicago Public Schools identified 18,831 homeless students during the 2015-16 school year.
- This is 6.8% (1,374 students) less than the prior school year, but total CPS enrollment also dropped. The share of homeless students in CPS remained about the same, at 4.8% of total enrollment.
- Almost 87% (16,334) of these homeless students lived doubled-up in the homes of others due to hardship, usually in overcrowded conditions.
- Another 11.6% of students (2,180) lived in shelters. Less than 1% lived in motels (127), in a park or other public place (64), or in a temporary foster care placement (126).
- Also, 12.7% (2,396) were unaccompanied youths, defined as teens who are homeless and living on their own, without a parent or guardian.
• Homeless students identified by CPS were 98.2% children of color. They were 83.7% (15,759) African American, 12.9% (2,423) Latino, 1.6% (306) other ethnicities, and 1.7% (317) white, with 14 whose ethnicity was not identified. Another 22.4% (4,228) of students were diagnosed with disabilities or developmental delays.

How many homeless people, including students, live in Illinois?

A report by the Illinois Department of Human Services states that 38,036 Illinois residents were served in state-funded shelters in FY 2014. Of this, 10,673 were children under age 18 and 27,363 were adults, living in 26,387 households. IDHS reports that this included 19% who lived in emergency shelters, 13.5% lived on the street or in cars and other non-housing; 37% lived doubled-up in the homes of others.

Homeless school enrollment is a reliable barometer of family homelessness. In August 2016, the Illinois State Board of Education reported that public schools identified 53,733 homeless students during the 2015-16 school year.

The prior year, 2014-15, ISBE reported that public schools identified 54,528 homeless students. That was double what it was six years earlier, when 26,688 homeless students were counted. That 2008-09 school year was the only year in which the state of Illinois contributed in addition to federal funds for homeless school programs: $3 million in state grants were awarded to 36 school districts statewide. CCH campaigned to create that funding.

Outside of Chicago, the 15 school districts reporting the largest homeless enrollment in 2014-15 were Rockford SD 205, 2,401 students (up 5%); Kane County/Elgin SD U-46, 897 (up 11%); Harvey SD 152, 784 (up 4%); Granite City (Madison County) CUSD 9, 608 (up 12%); Springfield District 186, 614 (down 16%); Peoria SD 150, 578 (down 33%); East St. Louis District 189, 460; Waukegan District 60, 362; Valley View District 365U, 349; Algonquin District 300, 337; Evanston District 65, 333 (down 31%); Joliet District 86, 324; Wheeling District 21, 303; South Holland District 150, 297; and Plainfield District 202, 274.

Outside of Chicago, the largest homeless enrollments were in Rockford SD 205, 1,589; Triad CUSD 2 (Madison County), 1,111; Peoria SD 150, 769; Harvey SD 152, 697; Kane County SD U-46, 694; Springfield SD 186, 674; and Granite City CUSD 9 (Madison County), 552. – See more at: http://www.chicagohomeless.org/city-state-homeless-enrollments-rose-8-in-2012-13/#sthash.jp47cDE8.dpuf

Outside of Chicago, the largest homeless enrollments were in Rockford SD 205, 1,589; Triad CUSD 2 (Madison County), 1,111; Peoria SD 150, 769; Harvey SD 152, 697; Kane County SD U-46, 694; Springfield SD 186, 674; and Granite City CUSD 9 (Madison County), 552. – See more at: http://www.chicagohomeless.org/city-state-homeless-enrollments-rose-8-in-2012-13/#sthash.jp47cDE8.dpuf

How many unaccompanied youth lived in Chicago?

Unaccompanied youth are homeless and living on their own, without the support of family or guardian. These youth include students – the Chicago Public Schools counted 2,396 unaccompanied youths attending its schools in the 2015-16 school year.

An estimated 25,000 unaccompanied youth live in Illinois, per a comprehensive 2005 state-run study on which CCH collaborated. There are not enough shelter beds for homeless youth. Since mid-2013, there are about 580 youth shelter beds across Illinois: 374 youth beds in Chicago, about
115 in the suburbs, and about 90 beds downstate, per Chicago and state officials. CCH advocated for Chicago’s increased funding for overnight youth shelter beds, with 120 low-threshold (overnight) shelter beds added since 2011.

**What are some demographics of homeless people being served by Chicago shelters and housing programs?**

For the U.S. Conference of Mayors 2016 Hunger and Homelessness Survey, released December 14, 2016, the city of Chicago claimed the largest decrease in chronic homelessness among the 38 cities. The survey covers the period of September 2015 through August 2016, using data from January point-in-time counts of how many people can be found on a winter night in shelters or living in public places.

Chicago claimed chronic homelessness dropped 68.2%, by 716 people, between 2015 and 2016. In the survey, Chicago touted its 2016 pilot project to rehouse 75 chronically homeless people camped under Uptown viaducts. It noted the program had housed 43 people by mid-October, with 13 people “self-resolved” and no longer in need of housing help.

Chicago also claimed the largest decline in family homelessness between 2009 and 2016, a drop of 25.2%, or 730 people.

City officials reported that 5.2% of Chicago’s homeless population are children and youth, below the 6.5% U.S. average. But the study noted it’s likely that cities’ point-in-time counts do not count the full number of homeless young people, “who tend not to congregate in the same areas as older homeless adults.”

Chicago claimed the largest drop among homeless people who were “unsheltered” in the past year, a drop of 39.5% or 812 fewer people. Chicago’s 2016 homeless count reported that 78.9% were staying in shelters and 21.1% were unsheltered. The share of Chicagoans homeless with their families was 36.8%, and 63.2% were single individuals.

However, Chicago reported the largest increase in veteran homelessness between 2009 and 2016, a 20.2% increase, up by 101 people. The city reported that 10.2% of those who were homeless in 2016 were veterans, up from 7% in 2015 and 9% in 2014.

Chicago ranked 21st among 32 cities in its rate of homelessness per 10,000 people in 2016, at 21.6 people. These rates ranged from 11.2 people in Wichita, Kansas to 124.2 people in Washington, D.C.

The 2016 U.S. mayors’ study did not include demographics covered previously. In the 2015 survey, Chicago reported that 14% of homeless adults were employed, 4% HIV positive, 19% physically disabled, and 33% severely mentally ill (the same as in 2014). Homeless people who entered permanent supportive housing in 2015 totaled 752 individuals and 105 families, the city reported.

Also in 2015, Chicago reported 1,701 emergency shelter beds available, compared to 2,064 beds (down 17.6%) in 2014. Also, there were 4,574 beds in transitional housing, compared to 3,903 (up 17.2%); and 7,613 beds in permanent supportive housing, down 10% from 8,460.

**How many homeless people are survivors of domestic violence?**

In the 2015 U.S. Conference of Mayors survey, Chicago reported that 20% of homeless residents were domestic violence victims. This compared to 23% in 2014, 20% in 2013, and 33% in 2012.
In a comprehensive 2004 study, 56% of women in Chicago shelters reported that they had experienced domestic violence, per the Center for Impact Research. Also, 36% said they had experienced physical or sexual abuse in their homes as children, according to the report, *Pathways To and From Homelessness: Women and Children in Chicago Shelters.*

http://www.issuelab.org/resource/pathways_to_and_from_homelessness_women_and_children_in_chicago_shelters

**What is the racial breakdown of homeless people in Chicago?**

According to a 2015 point-in-time count by the city of Chicago, the racial demographic of people living in city homeless shelters was 76% African American, 11% white, 10% Latino, and 3% other ethnicities. Racial demographics are no longer included by cities in the U.S. Conference of Mayors’ survey. Chicago Public Schools reports that 98% of its homeless students are children of color.

**What income is needed to pay for rental housing in Illinois?**

According to the annual *Out of Reach* study (May 2016) by the National Low Income Housing Coalition, the Illinois housing wage is $19.98 an hour, 16th highest among the states. This is based on fair market rent of $1,039 for a 2-bedroom apartment in Illinois, and assumes a 40-hour work week for 52 weeks a year. With the Illinois minimum wage at $8.25 an hour for six years (since July 2010), a household needs two minimum wage earners working a total of 97 hours a week to pay for a 2-bedroom’s fair market rent.

In Chicago and the five-county suburban area, the housing wage is $22.62 an hour for a typical 2-bedroom.
A Brief History of The McKinney-Vento Act

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>The Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Act is signed into law, requiring states to review and revise residency requirements for the enrollment of homeless children and youth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>The McKinney Act is amended, requiring states to eliminate all enrollment barriers, and provide school access and support for academic success for students experiencing homelessness; McKinney funds may now be used to provide direct educational services for eligible students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>The education portion of the McKinney Act is included in the Improving America's Schools Act (IASA), adding preschool services, greater parental input, and emphasis on interagency collaboration.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>The Act is reauthorized by Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act, strengthening legislative requirements and requiring all school districts to appoint a local homeless education liaison to ensure the law is implemented effectively at the local level.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Rights of Eligible Children and Youth

- Right to immediate enrollment even when records not present
- Right to remain in the school of origin, if in the student’s best interest
- Right to receive transportation to the school of origin
- Support for academic success

Funding for States and School Districts

The U.S. Department of Education allocates McKinney-Vento funding annually to states based on the state’s proportion of the Title I, Part A federal allocation. States must subgrant funds competitively to school districts within the state to be used for program implementation at the local level.

- States must distribute no less that 75% of its annual McKinney-Vento allocation to local school districts in subgrants; a few minimally funded states can reserve up to 50% of their allocation.
- Subgrants are awarded competitively based on need and the quality of the application.

Funding History

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Annual Federal Allocation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>$61,871,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>$61,871,040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>$64,066,851</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARRA*</td>
<td>$70,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>$65,427,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>$65,427,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>$65,296,146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>$65,172,591</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>$61,771,052</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>$65,042,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015</td>
<td>$65,042,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*American Reinvestment and Recovery Act

Program Administrative Structure

**Federal:** Federal program coordinator in the U.S. Department of Education; national technical assistance center (see reverse)

**State:** State coordinator for homeless education in each state: [www.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php](http://www.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php) (click on the state to access state contact information)

**Local:** Local homeless education liaison in each school district; contact your state coordinator for local liaison contact information in your area
Homeless Student Enrollment Data

**Total U.S. Homeless Student Enrollment by Year**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Total Enrolled</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SY11-12</td>
<td>1,132,853</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SY12-13</td>
<td>1,219,818</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SY13-14</td>
<td>1,301,239</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Homeless Student Enrollment by Nighttime Residence, SY13-14**

- Doubled-up, 76%
- Shelters, 15%
- Unsheltered, 3%
- Hotels/Motels, 6%

**Number and Percentage Change in Enrolled Homeless Students by Subgroup**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subgroup</th>
<th>2012-2013</th>
<th>2013-2014</th>
<th>% Change</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Unaccompanied homeless youth</td>
<td>78,654</td>
<td>88,966</td>
<td>13.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migratory children/youth</td>
<td>16,231</td>
<td>18,512</td>
<td>14.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students</td>
<td>174,870</td>
<td>190,785</td>
<td>9.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children with Disabilities</td>
<td>191,259</td>
<td>220,405</td>
<td>15.2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Interagency Collaboration**

The U.S. Department of Education’s EHCY Program works together with many federal programs to serve children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness, including:

- The Office of Elementary and Secondary Education
  - The Title I, Part A Program
  - The Office of Migrant Education
  - The Office of Special Education Programs
- The Office of Federal Student Aid
- The U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness
- The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
- The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
  - The Administration on Children, Youth, and Families
  - The Office of Child Care
  - The Office of Head Start
- The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

**Program Contact Information**

**Federal Program Officer**

John McLaughlin, Ed. D.
Federal Coordinator
U.S. Department of Education
(202) 401-0962
john.mclaughlin@ed.gov
www2.ed.gov/programs/homeless/index.html

**National Technical Assistance Center**

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) has been the U.S. Department of Education’s technical assistance provider for homeless education since 1998. Housed at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro, NCHE provides a toll-free helpline, a comprehensive website, online and face-to-face trainings, and informational resources.
(800) 308-2145, homeless@serve.org
www.serve.org/nche/
The answers are general responses based on federal statutes, regulations, and guidance; relevant case law; and best practices from across the country. It cannot be emphasized enough that these are general responses, and that answers could change based on the facts of a particular case. McKinney-Vento issues require a case-specific inquiry. This document is meant to provide basic information and tools to assist parents, youth, liaisons, administrators and advocates in understanding the McKinney-Vento Act and related laws.

127. Can students experiencing homelessness request waivers of fees for SAT and ACT testing and college applications?

A: Yes. Students should be eligible for waivers for all of those fees, due to their income level and/or their homelessness. However, SAT and ACT waivers are available only when a student is enrolled in high school. School counselors should be familiar with the procedures for fee waivers. More information is also available at [http://www.act.org/aap/pdf/feewaiver.pdf](http://www.act.org/aap/pdf/feewaiver.pdf) and [http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/calenfees/feewaivers.html](http://www.collegeboard.com/student/testing/sat/calenfees/feewaivers.html).

128. What must an LEA do to help prepare youth experiencing homelessness for college?

A. LEAs must ensure that counselors provide advice to McKinney-Vento youth to help prepare and improve their readiness for college. 42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(1)(K). The local liaison, along with guidance counselors and other LEA staff tasked with college preparation, should ensure that all high school students experiencing homelessness receive information and individualized counseling regarding college readiness, college selection, the application process, financial aid, and the availability of on-campus supports. 2016 Guidance, Q-1.

129. What must LEA liaisons do to assist unaccompanied homeless youth to apply for financial aid for post-secondary education?

A. Local liaisons must ensure that unaccompanied homeless youth are informed of their status as independent students for college financial aid. See Question 130. In addition, liaisons must assist youths to receive verification of their independent student status for federal student aid purposes. 42 U.S.C. 11432(g)(6)(A)(x)(III); 2016 Guidance, Q-2.
130. Can unaccompanied homeless youth apply for federal financial aid (through the Free Application for Federal Student Aid, or FAFSA) without providing information about their parents’ income and their parents’ signature?

A: Yes. Generally, youth under age 24 must provide parental information when completing the FAFSA. However, under the Higher Education Act, youth who are both (1) unaccompanied and (2) homeless (or self-supporting and at risk of homelessness) can apply for federal aid independently, without parental information or signature. Their eligibility must be verified, in the year in which the youth completes the FAFSA, by (1) a McKinney-Vento liaison; (2) a U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development homeless assistance program director or his/her designee; (3) a Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program director or his/her designee; or (4) a financial aid administrator.

For youth who do not have, and cannot obtain, verification from their liaison or a shelter provider (for example, youth who have graduated from high school, were not identified as homeless in high schools, or did not stay in a shelter), the college financial aid administrator must make a determination of homelessness based on the legal definitions of “unaccompanied” and “homeless.” In these instances, a financial aid administrator may make a determination of homeless status on the basis of a documented interview. U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid Application and Verification Guide, 2016-2017. Financial aid administrators, McKinney-Vento liaisons and shelter staff should verify homelessness by consulting with and gathering information from the youth; they should not require the youth to provide extensive documentation “proving” homelessness. July 2015 Dear Colleague Letter from the U.S. Department of Education at https://ifap.ed.gov/dpcletters/GEN1516.html. More information about helping unaccompanied youth apply for financial aid is available at http://www.naehcy.org/higher_ed.html.

131. Who can make a determination of homeless and unaccompanied status once a youth is no longer in high school?

A. A local liaison may continue to make a determination of a youth’s status as either unaccompanied and homeless, or as self-supporting and at risk of being homeless, for federal student aid purposes for as long as the liaison has access to the information necessary to make such a determination for a particular youth. 2016 Guidance, Q-2. If a liaison does not have the information that is necessary to make the determination, either because the youth become homeless after high school, or because the liaison is no longer familiar with the youth’s circumstances, the financial aid administrator must make the determination. A tool to assist financial aid administrators to make determinations of unaccompanied and homeless status is available at http://www.naehcy.org/higher_ed.html.

132. A student answered “yes” to the questions on the FAFSA about being a homeless unaccompanied youth. Now the financial aid office is asking the student for a determination of a student’s homeless status from the McKinney-Vento liaison or shelter director. What kind of documentation must the liaison or shelter director (or designee) provide to satisfy this requirement?

A: There is no specific documentation that a liaison or a shelter provider must provide to a financial aid office. A sample template for this purpose is available on the NAEHCY website at
Financial aid administrators, McKinney-Vento liaisons, and shelter directors should meet to establish an expeditious process, including standard forms.

133. Are there other circumstances in which a youth can apply for financial aid without parental signature or financial information?

A: Yes. Youth who meet the federal definition of “independent student” can fill out the FAFSA without their parents. Independent students include students who are 24 years of age or older, orphans, a youth who was in foster care at any time after the age of 13, a youth who was a ward or dependent of the court, emancipated youth, veterans, graduate students, and youth who are married, have children or other legal dependents that they support. A financial aid administrator at a college can also designate a student as independent for “other unusual circumstances”, through a process known as a dependency override. Youth should contact the financial aid administrator at the college of their choice for more information about this process. 20 U.S.C. 1087vv(d)

134. What address should a youth experiencing homelessness use on the FAFSA and college applications?

A: By definition, students experiencing homelessness are likely to lack a stable address. For the FAFSA, college applications, and similar documents, homeless students should use a safe, reliable mailing address, where they will be able to retrieve mail on an on-going basis with a minimal risk of mail being lost or stolen. This can be the address of a relative or friend who has given them permission to use it, or it can be their school’s address, as long as they have contacted the school for permission and instructions for insuring that mail they receive at the school reaches them. U.S. Department of Education, Federal Student Aid Application and Verification Guide, 2016-2017.

135. A student’s FAFSA has been rejected. What should the student do?

A: There are many reasons a FAFSA may be rejected. The student should contact the Federal Student Aid Information Center at (800) 433-3243 to find out the specific problem with the student’s FAFSA. The college financial aid administrator also may be able to help. FAFSA corrections can be made on-line via the federal financial aid website, which also contains detailed instructions and answers to Frequently Asked Questions. The site is: http://www.fafsa.ed.gov/.

136. Are there other college access programs from which youth experiencing homelessness might benefit?

A: Yes. The Federal TRIO programs consist of programs that support at-risk junior high and high school students to graduate from high school, enter college, and complete their degrees. These programs include Talent Search, Upward Bound, Student Support Services, Educational Opportunity Centers and Staff Development Activities. The Gaining Early Awareness and Readiness for Undergraduate Programs (GEAR-UP) program also can support McKinney-Vento students. Students experiencing homelessness are at great risk of academic failure due to their extreme poverty and residential instability, and are now explicitly recognized as eligible populations in these federal programs.
Introduction

Each year, more than a million young people in the United States experience homelessness; some of these young people, known as unaccompanied homeless youth, will face the challenges of homelessness while living on their own without the support of a caring adult. Unaccompanied homeless youth face the same struggles as other young people: trying to do well in school, “fit in”, and figure out what their future will look like. Without adult guidance and support, however, they will face these struggles while also working to provide for their own livelihood.

Many of these youth hope to attend college, but wonder how they will pay tuition without help from their parents, who will sign important paperwork on their behalf, how they will juggle long work hours and schoolwork, and where they will stay when the dormitories close during holiday and summer breaks.

Fortunately, federal laws provide additional support for this vulnerable population. To increase the awareness of post-secondary educators and education administrators of the issue of unaccompanied homeless youth, this brief will provide:

- A better understanding of unaccompanied homeless youth and the educational and other challenges they face;
- A summary of federal education legislation, including the McKinney-Vento Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act, that gives unaccompanied homeless youth access to important educational supports;
- Samples of promising practices implemented by high schools, colleges, and universities to assist unaccompanied homeless youth in succeeding in college; and
- Additional resources for more information.

Understanding Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

The primary piece of federal legislation dealing with the education of students experiencing homelessness is the McKinney-Vento Act, reauthorized in 2002 by Title X, Part C, of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act. The

Who is homeless?

(McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act – Title X, Part C of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act)

The term “homeless children and youth”—

A. means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence...; and

B. includes —

1. children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement;

2. children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings...

3. children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and

4. migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).
Act defines an unaccompanied homeless youth as a youth whose living situation is not “fixed, regular, and adequate,” (homeless) and who is “not in the physical custody of a parent or guardian” (unaccompanied). The Act provides examples of living arrangements that would be considered homeless, including living in emergency and transitional shelters, living doubled-up with others due to loss of housing, and living on the street or in a car (see sidebar on page 1 for the full definition of homeless). By far, the most common type of living situation for unaccompanied homeless youth is that of living doubled-up, often bouncing between the homes of different relatives or friends (“couch-surfing”). The U.S. Department of Education’s federal data for the 2009-2010 school year show that approximately 72 percent of homeless children and youth identified by school districts live in doubled-up situations1.

The Numbers
Unaccompanied homeless youth include those who have run away from home or have been asked to leave home by a parent or guardian. The National Runaway Switchboard estimates that between 1.6 and 2.8 million youth experience a runaway/throwaway episode annually2. While some of these young people may return home shortly after leaving, others will live on their own long-term or even permanently.

Difficulty in collecting data on mobile populations and youths’ reluctance to admit their precarious living situations create challenges in determining the true scope of the problem; however, it is likely that numbers are much higher than have been documented.

Paths to Being on Their Own
One of the most common reasons that youth end up unaccompanied and homeless is family conflict. In some instances, youth are forced out of the home by their parents; other times, youth leave home because they feel unsafe or are unwilling to continue living in a difficult home environment. Whatever the reason for the youth leaving home, acute family conflict, which may involve physical, sexual, or mental abuse, is often present3. Across studies of homeless youth, 17 to 53 percent of the youth cite experiences of sexual abuse, while 40 to 60 percent cite experiences of physical abuse4. Some unaccompanied youth also mention the absence of a parent or guardian due to incarceration, deployment, or death.

Further, there is a strong connection between homelessness and foster care. Some children and youth enter the foster care system because their parents, in addition to experiencing homelessness, are unable to care for them. Many youth end up homeless because they run away from foster care with the hopes of reuniting with their biological family or escaping a problematic foster placement. Numerous others will age out of the foster care system and be launched abruptly into adulthood. Many of these youth will lack the skills necessary for independent adult living and yet also lack a reliable support system to help them make the transition.

The Barriers
Unaccompanied homeless youth often live in high-risk environments, putting them in danger of experiencing a wide variety of problems. In many cases, the youth have been living apart from their parents for several years, either staying off and on with friends and relatives or living on the street. Some of the challenges unaccompanied homeless youth face are:

• Lack of financial means to live independently and safely
Unaccompanied youth often are unable to meet their basic needs for shelter, food, clothing, and health care. Many also face barriers created by a lack of transportation.

• Limited housing options, especially in small towns or rural areas
Most unaccompanied youth depend on

---

the good graces of friends or relatives who will allow the youth to stay with them for a short period of time only. When living doubled-up is no longer an option, these youth frequently find themselves in unsafe and inadequate housing arrangements.

- **Lack of connection with adults or agencies that could help**
  After leaving home, unaccompanied youth often fear being forced to return home or placed in foster care. As young adults, they remain reluctant to seek help or are unaware of available assistance.

Unaccompanied homeless youth also face the following barriers specific to continuing their education:

- **Struggling to balance school and other responsibilities**
  Many unaccompanied youth fall behind in school because they are attempting to balance school with the demands of working to provide for their basic needs. Due to high residential mobility or heavy work demands, many unaccompanied youth end up missing school and losing credits. The time these youth must dedicate to maintaining employment often comes at the expense of time needed to focus on their education.

- **Lack of adult guidance and support**
  Unaccompanied youth often lack connections with adults who can guide them in the process of preparing for and gaining admission into college. Most lack the presence of a supportive adult to encourage them to have high educational expectations. Many don’t know where to apply for college, how to prepare and take the SAT or ACT, or how to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Shelters and other service providers for youth generally lack information on college access. If youth are reluctant to seek help at school, school counselors or local homeless education liaisons (see sidebar on page 5) may not be aware of their situations and, therefore, unable to provide needed support.

### Profile of an Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

Carl's situation is typical of many unaccompanied homeless youth. His father died when he was a baby. Due to abuse by his mother’s boyfriend, Carl left home during his senior year in high school and stayed with a variety of family members and friends, most of whom lived outside of his school district. Fearing he would be kicked out of school while doubling up outside his school’s residential zone, Carl hid his living situation from school officials.

After graduating high school, Carl decided to work for a year to save money for college. Although his living situation was still unstable, he at least felt like he had enough money to look into enrolling in college. While filling out his FAFSA, Carl noticed multiple places in the application requesting parent signatures or information about parental income and financial contribution. He was relieved to notice that the application mentions the term “Independent Student”, and it appears that he meets the necessary criteria, but he doesn’t know who can determine his independent student status for purposes of the FAFSA.

When he mentioned the issue to the financial aid staff at the local community college, they seemed hesitant to qualify him as an independent student and told him he must submit his mother’s financial records to receive financial aid. He has had only sporadic contact with his mother since leaving home nearly two years ago; and, any attempts at communication have been met with indifference or hostility. Carl is about to give up on his dream of attending college.

- **Lack of access to parental financial information and support**
  Unaccompanied youth often have become estranged from their parents, which leads to difficulty with filling out the FAFSA. In most cases, completing the FAFSA requires youth to provide
information about their parents’ finances and to have their parents sign the completed form. Fortunately, the College Cost Reduction and Access Act includes provisions to assist unaccompanied homeless youth in filling out the FAFSA. More information is provided below.

- **Inability to be financially self-sufficient once enrolled in college**
  Once attending college, many unaccompanied youth struggle to provide for their basic needs. They often maintain rigorous work schedules that impact the amount of time they can devote to their studies. A particular challenge exists during breaks at residential colleges and universities, when dormitories close. During these times, unaccompanied homeless students living in the dorms often have nowhere to go and insufficient funds to pay for housing.

- **Failure to access available support systems**
  Unaccompanied homeless youth often go unidentified, either due to their own hesitancy to disclose details about their personal lives or lack of knowledge on the part of university staff. This prevents student support services and other staff from helping to address their unique needs.

### The College Cost Reduction and Access Act

The College Cost Reduction and Access Act (CCRAA), signed into law in 2007, includes specific provisions designed to remove barriers to accessing federal financial aid for college for unaccompanied homeless youth. The Act enables these youth to be qualified as “independent students” for the purposes of filling out the FAFSA, thereby removing the need for these youth to provide parental financial information and a parent signature. Youth must be determined as unaccompanied and homeless, or as unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting during the school year in which they apply for aid. Because many unaccompanied homeless youth have no contact with their parents or access to their financial information or support, the “independent student” designation is critical to enable them to complete the FAFSA.

Determination of independent student status must be made by one of the following:

1. A school district local homeless education liaison;
2. A U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development emergency shelter program director or its designee;
3. A Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program director or its designee; or
4. A college financial aid administrator

As the implementation of the CCRAA moves forward, administrators of higher education institutions and university systems have realized the need for training and additional guidance for financial aid administrators. A thorough knowledge of the Act and its provisions for unaccompanied homeless youth by financial aid administrators is particularly critical for youth like Carl (see sidebar on page 3). If a youth becomes homeless and unaccompanied after graduating high school and has not stayed in a HUD- or RHYA-funded shelter, he or she will need to depend on a financial aid administrator to make the independent student determination. A lack of guidance on and standard procedure for determining eligibility has resulted in many financial aid offices denying a youth’s eligibility or requiring inappropriate information to be provided to prove independent status. To this end, the U.S. Department of Education has included specific guidance on the issue in its Application and Verification Guide (AVG), available for downloading at [http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php#avg](http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php#avg).

### Promising Practices for Institutions of Higher Education

#### Determination of independent student status

- Become familiar with the U.S. Department of Education’s Application and Verification Guide (AVG). The guide provides instructions and guidance to financial aid administrators on
determining the independent status of unaccompanied homeless youth.

- Consider each student’s eligibility on a case-by-case basis. Start by understanding the McKinney-Vento Act’s definition of homeless. The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) provides a helpful brief on determining homelessness by the definition, which is available for downloading at http://www.serve.org/nche/downloads/briefs/det_elig.pdf.

- Contact the local homeless education liaison in your school district to discuss the McKinney-Vento definition and how it applies to specific students (see sidebar to the right).

- If the student cannot be qualified by emergency shelter staff or a local liaison, accept letters from those with whom the student resides or from a professional in the community who can corroborate the student’s homeless status.


- Do not require students to disclose personal details about past abuse in their family or other causes for homelessness and separation from their parents.

Identification of unaccompanied homeless youth who attend your college or university

- Place posters and brochures around campus with the definition of homeless and contact information for someone who can link homeless students with support services. A free poster, created jointly by NCHE and the National Association of Student Financial Aid Administrators (NASFAA) is available for downloading at http://www.serve.org/nche/pr/hea_poster.php.

- Create awareness among faculty and staff about unaccompanied homeless youth and the challenges they face so they can help with identification and support.

School District Collaboration

The McKinney-Vento Act is the primary piece of federal legislation supporting the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness. The Act guarantees homeless students immediate access to the free, appropriate public education to which they are entitled.

Under the McKinney-Vento Act, each state must appoint a State Coordinator for Homeless Education, charged with ensuring the full implementation of the Act in all school districts through the state. In addition, every school district in the United States must appoint a local homeless education liaison to ensure the full implementation of the Act in all district schools. State Coordinators and local liaisons are well-versed in the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless (see sidebar on page 1). As such, they can be a valuable resource for institutions of higher education for determining independent student status according to the definition and understanding the needs of students experiencing homelessness. To contact your State Coordinator, including to request contact information for the local liaison in your area, visit http://www.serve.org/nche/states/state_resources.php.

The federal Education for Homeless Children and Youth program, authorized under the McKinney-Vento Act, also maintains a federal technical assistance and information center: The National Center for Homeless Education. For additional information about supporting the education of children and youth experiencing homelessness, visit the NCHE website at http://www.serve.org/nche/ or contact the NCHE helpline at (800) 308-2145 or homeless@serve.org.

Supporting unaccompanied homeless youth who attend your college or university

- Refer unaccompanied homeless students to support services upon their admission.
• Establish coordination between financial aid offices, student support services, and campus housing.
• Provide financial aid offices and student support services with information on community-based resources for homeless students, such as food and clothing banks and low-cost healthcare providers.
• Create awareness among professors and advisors working with students so they can refer homeless students to additional help, when needed; specific signs to look for include excessive absences and failing grades.
• Establish a food and clothing bank on campus.
• Plan housing for homeless students when dormitories close; ideas include leaving one residence hall open or establishing a list of “host homes” in the community.
• Establish a mentoring program for unaccompanied homeless youth.

U. S. Department of Education Resources

Student Support Services
Student Support Services programs assist low-income students with staying in college until they earn their degrees. The Student Support Services program was amended by the Higher Education Opportunity Act to foster an institutional climate supportive of success in postsecondary education for homeless children and youth and students who are in foster care or aging out of foster care. Through a grant competition, the U.S. Department of Education awards funds to institutions of higher education to provide opportunities for academic development, assist students with basic college requirements, and motivate students toward the successful completion of their postsecondary education. In addition, the Student Support Services program authorizes funds to be used for temporary housing during breaks in the academic year for homeless students and students who are in foster care or are aging out of the foster care system. For more information, visit http://www2.ed.gov/programs/triostudsupp/index.html.

Educational Opportunity Centers
The Educational Opportunity Centers (EOC) program is one of the federal TRIO programs, a group of eight outreach programs funded by the U.S. Department of Education designed to support and assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds in progressing through the academic pipeline from middle school to attainment of a post-baccalaureate degree. Educational Opportunity Centers located throughout the country primarily serve displaced or underemployed workers from families with incomes under $33,075. These centers help people to choose a college and access needed financial aid. For more information, visit http://www2.ed.gov/programs/trioeoc/index.html.

Conclusion

Unaccompanied homeless youth often do not have the guidance and support of a caring adult as they prepare for college and navigate the system for accessing financial aid. Even if able to enroll, they have difficulty providing for their basic needs, which impacts their ability to be successful in the classroom. Supporting these youth in obtaining a college education will enable them to break the cycle of poverty and move towards a brighter and more stable future. Institutions of higher education, in collaboration with public schools and community agencies, can play a critical role in supporting unaccompanied homeless youth in their post-secondary endeavors.

Additional Resources

National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE)
Ph: (800) 308-2145
homeless@serve.org
http://www.serve.org/nche/ibt/higher_ed.php

National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY)
Barbara Duffield, Policy Director
Ph: (202) 364.7392
bduffield@naehcy.org
http://www.naehcy.org/higher_ed.html

College Goal Sunday
Marcia Weston, Director
Ph: (336) 617-0535
marcia.weston@ymca.net
http://www.collegegoalsundayusa.org/
HUNGRY AND HOMELESS IN COLLEGE:
RESULTS FROM A NATIONAL STUDY OF BASIC NEEDS INSECURITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

Sara Goldrick-Rab, Jed Richardson, and Anthony Hernandez
Wisconsin HOPE Lab

MARCH 2017
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Food and housing insecurity among the nation’s community college students threatens their health and wellbeing, along with their academic achievements. Addressing these basic needs is critical to ensuring that more students not only start college, but also have the opportunity to complete degrees.

This report presents findings from the largest survey ever conducted of basic needs insecurity among college students. In 2015, the Wisconsin HOPE Lab published the research report Hungry to Learn, a study based on a survey of approximately 4,000 students at ten community colleges in seven states. This study includes more than 33,000 students at 70 community colleges in 24 states. While this is not a nationally representative sample of students or colleges, it is far greater in size and diversity than prior samples, and provides information to shed new light on critical issues warranting further research.

In particular, we draw on this new survey to provide information to help practitioners and policymakers learn more about whether food and housing insecurity are more or less prevalent at certain types of community colleges or among different parts of the country. We also share a detailed profile of homeless community college students, including their financial circumstances and work behaviors, as well as forms of support that they received.

We found substantially higher rates of food insecurity among community college students than previously reported, while rates of housing insecurity and homelessness were consistent with prior estimates. Our 2015 report indicated that about half of community college students were food insecure, but this study found that two in three students are food insecure. Both surveys revealed that about half of community college students were housing insecure, and 13 to 14 percent were homeless.

Contrary to popular expectations, there appears to be very little geographic variation in hunger and homelessness among community college students. Basic needs insecurity does not seem to be restricted to community colleges in urban areas or to those with high proportions of Pell Grant recipients, and is prevalent in all regions of the country.

However, some community college students are at greater risk of food and housing insecurity than others. For example, this is the first study to consider the basic needs security of former foster youth. We found that 29 percent of former foster youth surveyed were homeless, a far higher rate than that of non-former foster youth attending community college (13 percent). Students with children were also disproportionately likely to experience food and housing insecurity.

While pursuing degrees despite enduring basic needs insecurity, community college students are nonetheless striving to ameliorate conditions of material hardship. Between 31 and 32 percent of students experiencing food or housing insecurity were both working and receiving financial aid. But in many cases, these efforts were not matched by other forms of support. For example, we estimate that 63 percent of parenting students were food insecure and almost 14 percent were homeless, but only about five percent received any child care assistance.
As expected, homeless community college students were experiencing especially difficult challenges. They were more likely than housing-secure students to work long hours at low-wage, low-quality jobs, and to get less sleep. It is especially concerning that despite being in such vulnerable circumstances and facing high odds of non-completion, almost one-third of these students were using loans to finance college.

The data presented in this report largely confirm evidence from prior studies, underscoring the need for improvements in policy and practice to support the basic needs security of all undergraduates. Investments in food and housing assistance programs to help community college students complete degrees will yield dividends, helping individuals improve their employment prospects and reducing their need for future support. Such strategies must become priorities of leaders in higher education.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Last Name</th>
<th>Institution</th>
<th>Unit/Role</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Rolanda</td>
<td>Green</td>
<td>Adler University Financial Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Lynette</td>
<td>Barnes</td>
<td>All Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Julie</td>
<td>McKelphin</td>
<td>All Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Dave</td>
<td>Thomas</td>
<td>All Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Leturyurin</td>
<td>Woods</td>
<td>All Chicago</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Onaje</td>
<td>Douglas</td>
<td>Case Manager Case Manager</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Patricia</td>
<td>Nix-Hodes</td>
<td>Chicago Coalition for the Homeless</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Jayme</td>
<td>Robinson</td>
<td>CCH Scholarship recipient</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Ali</td>
<td>Behrens</td>
<td>Chicago HOPES for Kids</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Bohmann</td>
<td>CPS Resource and Training Coordinator, Students in Temporary Living Situations (STLS)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Jennifer</td>
<td>Fabbrini</td>
<td>CPS Manager of Students in Temporary Living Situations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Ashley</td>
<td>Knight</td>
<td>DePaul University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Nikki</td>
<td>Witt Penwell</td>
<td>Governors State University Coordinator of Community Standards</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Sheree</td>
<td>Sanderson</td>
<td>Governors State University Assistant Dean of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Randi</td>
<td>Schneider</td>
<td>Governors State University Associate Vice President for Enrollment Management and Student Affairs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Betsy</td>
<td>Joseph</td>
<td>Governors State University Director of Auxiliary Services and University Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Byron</td>
<td>Terry</td>
<td>Governors State University AmeriCorp / Illinois Campus Compact VISTA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Aurélio Manuel</td>
<td>Valente</td>
<td>Governors State University Vice President for Student Affairs and Dean of Students</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Coleman</td>
<td>Governors State University Health concentration student</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Adrianna</td>
<td>Collis</td>
<td>Howard Brown Education/Vocation Coordinator, Broadway Youth Ctr</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Melissa</td>
<td>Hayne Loretto</td>
<td>Illinois Tech Office of Financial Aid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Emily</td>
<td>Werger</td>
<td>La Casa Norte</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Kimberly</td>
<td>Moore</td>
<td>Loyola University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>First Name</td>
<td>Last Name</td>
<td>Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Ernest</td>
<td>Fernandez</td>
<td>Loyala University of Chicago, Arrupe College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Yolanda</td>
<td>Golden</td>
<td>Loyala University of Chicago, Arrupe College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Trisha</td>
<td>Mullin</td>
<td>Loyala University of Chicago, Arrupe College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Casey</td>
<td>Holtschneider</td>
<td>Lyte Collective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>Alexa</td>
<td>Frenn</td>
<td>Mercy Home for Boys and Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>Juan</td>
<td>Medina</td>
<td>Mercy Home for Boys and Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Samuel</td>
<td>Villaseñor, MSW</td>
<td>Mercy Home for Boys and Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Larry</td>
<td>Miller</td>
<td>National Louis University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Marlee</td>
<td>Benton</td>
<td>National Louis University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Kelvin</td>
<td>Johnson</td>
<td>NEIU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Matt</td>
<td>Specht</td>
<td>NEIU</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Bonnie</td>
<td>Conner</td>
<td>OPA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Mary Beth</td>
<td>Hedmark</td>
<td>Robert Morris University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Charity</td>
<td>Seaborn</td>
<td>Roosevelt University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>38</td>
<td>Jamar</td>
<td>Orr</td>
<td>Roosevelt University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Tedd</td>
<td>Pesco</td>
<td>The Night Ministry</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>Jenny</td>
<td>Merritt</td>
<td>The Night Ministry -North Lawndale</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>41</td>
<td>Spencer</td>
<td>Long</td>
<td>UIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>42</td>
<td>Karen</td>
<td>Caldwell-Littleton</td>
<td>Truman College</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>43</td>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>McCray</td>
<td>UIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>44</td>
<td>Willie</td>
<td>Rodriguez</td>
<td>UIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>45</td>
<td>Joy</td>
<td>Vergara</td>
<td>UIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>46</td>
<td>Sam</td>
<td>Bahena</td>
<td>UIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>47</td>
<td>Megan</td>
<td>Carney</td>
<td>UIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>48</td>
<td>Shirley</td>
<td>Rodriguez-Vega</td>
<td>UIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>49</td>
<td>Linda</td>
<td>Deanna</td>
<td>UIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Last Name</td>
<td>First Name</td>
<td>Institution</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>-------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>J. Rex</td>
<td>Tolliver</td>
<td>UIC</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>51</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Zehr</td>
<td>University of Illinois System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>52</td>
<td>Tim</td>
<td>Gilles</td>
<td>University of Illinois System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>53</td>
<td>Bonsai</td>
<td>Bermudez</td>
<td>YEPP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>55</td>
<td>Caprice</td>
<td>Williams</td>
<td>Student</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>