

Homeless Youth in Indiana

Homeless children – those who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence – face numerous barriers to academic and developmental success. They are likely to be ill more often, have more behavioral problems, and fare worse academically than their housed peers. After researchers found that only 50 percent of homeless youth regularly attend school,¹ the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act was authorized in 1987 to ensure that all children have equal access to a free, appropriate public education by addressing problems with enrollment, attendance, and academic success for homeless children and youth.²

With increasing unemployment and foreclosure rates across the country, homelessness among families with children is a growing problem. But programs to help these children are available, and awareness of those resources is fundamental in aiding homeless youth.

The federal definition of homelessness (also used by public schools) specifically includes children living in the following situations: shelters, transitional housing, cars, campgrounds, motels and sharing the housing of others temporarily due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reasons. This includes both children who are homeless with their families and those who have run away or gotten kicked out of their homes.

How Many Indiana Kids Are Homeless?

An estimated 29,000 Indiana children are homeless (about 1 in 55 children);³ this number is equally divided among males and females,⁴ and about 42 percent of homeless children are under age six.⁵ Children with a history of foster care are more likely to become homeless at an earlier age and remain homeless for a longer period of time.⁶ Between 27 and 44 percent of homeless adolescent females have ever been pregnant,⁷ and about seven percent of homeless youth are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender.⁸ Nearly half (47%) of homeless school-aged children and a third (29%) of homeless children under five have witnessed domestic violence in their families.⁹

Number of Homeless Students Identified in Public Schools in Indiana

Year	Enrollment	Homeless
2007-08	1,046,609	8,480
2006-07	1,045,700	8,249
2005-06	1,034,727	7,547

Not all homeless children are identified through the public school districts' homeless liaisons, a position mandated by a 2001 McKinney-Vento Act reauthorization. Nationally there were 794,617 homeless youth served in public schools in school year (SY) 2007-08 (about 1 in 63 students), a 17 percent increase from the previous year. In Indiana, the number of homeless

¹ Indiana Department of education. McKinney-Vento Homeless. <http://www.doe.in.gov/alted/homelesslinkpg.html>

² Indiana Department of Education. (2004, August). Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program: Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Available at http://www.doe.in.gov/alted/pdf/mckinney_nonreg_guidance.pdf

³ Indiana Department of education. McKinney-Vento Homeless. <http://www.doe.in.gov/alted/homelesslinkpg.html>

⁴ Molino, A.C. Characteristics of Help-Seeking Street Youth and Non-Street Youth. (2007). National Symposium on Homelessness Research.

⁵ Burt, M.; Aron, L.; Douglas, T.; Valente, J.; Lee, E.; and Iwen, B. (1999). Homelessness: Programs and the People They Serve. Findings of the National Survey of Homeless Assistance Providers and Clients. Washington DC: The Urban Institute. Available at: <http://www.urban.org/publications/310291.html#2-demo>

⁶ Roman, Nan P. and Phyllis B. Wolfe. Web of Failure: The Relationship Between Foster Care and Homelessness, 1995. Available from the National Alliance to End Homelessness, 1518 K St., NW, Suite 206, Washington, DC 20005-1203; 202/638-1526.

⁷ Health Resources and Services Administration, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Program Assistance Letter: Understanding the Health Care Needs of Homeless Youth, 2001. Available free at <http://bphc.hrsa.gov/policy/pal0110.htm>

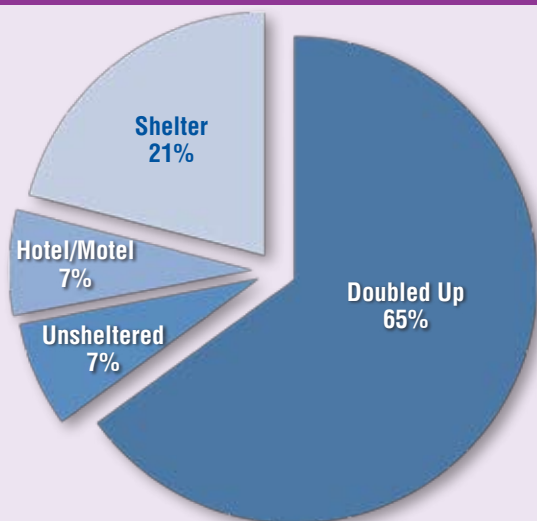
⁸ Molino, A.C. Characteristics of Help-Seeking Street Youth and Non-Street Youth. (2007). National Symposium on Homelessness Research.

⁹ Ralph Nunez. (2000). Homeless in America: A Children's Story. Journal of Children & Poverty (2000).

youth served in public schools also increased from 7,547 students in SY2005-06 (about 1 in 137) to 8,480 in SY 2007-08, a 12 percent increase. Statistics from homeless public school students show that more than two-thirds are living in a doubled-up housing situation (meaning they temporarily live with others due to loss of housing), while about 1 in 14 are living unsheltered.

These numbers do not include approximately 5,465 homeless children under age 6 in Indiana who would not yet be served by public schools, and about 180 unaccompanied youth (those without a custodial guardian) (SY 2005-06).¹⁰ Unaccompanied youth are especially difficult to count because they often do not seek help from shelters. In Indiana, living on one's own under the age of 18 without being legally emancipated is a juvenile crime, and shelter staff is required to report any unaccompanied youth to the Indiana Department of Child Services within 72 hours of arrival.¹¹

Primary Nighttime Residence for Homeless Children 2007-2008



Furthermore, because a lack of affordable housing is a leading cause of homelessness, increasing home foreclosure rates point to an imminent rise in homelessness.¹² Indiana's foreclosure rates have increased by 64 percent between 2007 and 2008, and by 114 percent between 2006 and 2008. In September 2009, one in every 643 housing units in the state received a foreclosure filing.¹³ Poverty, unemployment and low-paying jobs may exacerbate the homeless problem. In order to afford¹⁴ a two bedroom apartment at fair market rent in Indiana (\$697), an individual would need to earn \$13.41 an hour, or work two full time jobs at minimum wage (\$6.55).¹⁵ This annual wage is about 30% higher than federal poverty level for a family of four (\$21,200 per year).¹⁶

How Does Being Homeless Affect Kids?

According to national McKinney Vento Act records, only 35 percent of homeless high school students meet or exceed state proficiency in reading and only 29 percent meet or exceed proficiency in mathematics.¹⁷ Because homelessness often forces families to be transient, more than 55 percent of homeless children are forced to transfer schools.¹⁸ It may take a student four to six months to recover academically after changing schools;¹⁹ research shows that homeless youth change schools 3.2 times while they are homeless and have lower educational achievement among all grades than their housed peers.²⁰

In addition, homeless children also tend to be plagued by more illness than their peers, have a greater number of behavioral problems, perform much worse academically, have poorer school attendance, and often are developmentally delayed. Researchers have noted that these issues, combined with lack of sleep, poor diet, and exposure to the elements, lead to disproportionately higher rates of problems with health, emotions, behaviors, and substance use than those experienced by housed adolescents.²¹

¹⁰ America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness. (2009). http://www.homelesschildrenamerica.org/pdf/report_cards/long/in_long.pdf

¹¹ Center for Health Policy (2008) Homeless Youth in Marion County face Grim Prospects. Researcher: Barbara Lucas

¹² U.S. Conference of Mayors. (2008) Hunger and Homelessness Survey. http://usmayors.org/pressreleases/documents/hungerhomelessnessreport_121208.pdf

¹³ Indiana Real Estate Trends. (2009) National Real Estate Trends. RealtyTrac.com/trendcenter

¹⁴ According to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, affordability is measured by a family spending no more than 30% of their income on housing.

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development. (2007) Office of Policy Development & Research. Data. Available at www.huduser.org/datasets/fmr.html

¹⁶ Federal Register, Vol. 73, No. 15, January 23, 2008, pp. 3971-3972

¹⁷ U.S. Department of Education. Education for Homeless Children and Youths Program. Analysis of data from the 2007-2008 Federally required State Data Collection for the McKinney-Vento Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001. Compiled April, 2009.

¹⁸ Ralph Nunez. (2000). Homeless in America: A Children's Story. Journal of Children & Poverty (2000), 6(1), 51-72

¹⁹ Dr. Joy Rogers(1991), Education Report of Rule 706 Expert Pane., Loyola University Department of Education.

²⁰ Chapin Hall: Educational Attainment is Lower for Homeless Youth at All Grades. Available at <http://www.chapinhall.org/research/inside/educational-achievement-lower-homeless-youth-all-grades> (accessed 6/29/09).

²¹ MacLean, M.G., Embry, L.E., & Cauce, A.M. (1999). Homeless Adolescent's Paths to Separation from Family: Comparison of Family Characteristics, Psychological Adjustment, and Victimization. Journal of Community Psychology, 27, 179-187.

What Programs Are Available for Homeless Kids?

Support Services

- All public school corporations have a McKinney-Vento liaison to help families in homeless situations. They are also there to help youth without parents or guardians. To find out who your school's McKinney-Vento liaison is, call your corporation's central administration office or look at this list from the Indiana Department of Education: http://www.doe.in.gov/alted/pdf/mckinney_liaison_directory.pdf.
- All homeless students are automatically eligible to receive the following:
 - **Title 1 services** that include before- and after-school programs, tutoring programs, and other assistance such as graphing calculators required for math classes.
 - **The right to school placement** at the school in their best interest. Homeless children may attend the school they attended when permanently housed or the school closest to where he/she is temporarily staying. This right lasts the entire duration of a child's homelessness or until the end of the school year after permanent housing is achieved.
 - **School breakfast and lunch** fees as well as the fees for textbooks are waived for homeless children.
 - **The ability to enroll without school, medical, or similar records.** Schools normally require parents to have birth certificates, proof of residency, school records, and medical records with them when they enroll their children. Homeless children may be enrolled without these documents, although they may need to be provided later.
 - **Transportation to and from school** provided by the school district. Parents needing this service for their children should request it from the McKinney-Vento liaison.
- The Apply for or Manage Benefits page on the in.gov website can help families determine whether they are eligible for government benefits: <http://www.in.gov/fssa/2954.htm>.

- Directories of homeless programs:
 - Indiana Emergency Shelters: http://www.in.gov/ih-cda/files/Emergency_Shelter_List%281%29.pdf
 - Homeless Shelter Directory: <http://www.homelessshelterdirectory.org/>
 - Shelter Listing: <http://www.shelterlistings.org/>
 - National Community Action Partnership: <http://www.communityactionpartnership.com/>
 - The National Coalition on Homelessness' Online Directory of Statewide and Local Advocacy Coalitions <http://www.nationalhomeless.org/directories/index.html>

Emergency Services

- Call 2-1-1 for information on housing, employment, legal aid, counseling and much more. Referral specialists answer 2-1-1 calls; discuss the caller's needs, and offer referrals to local human service programs: http://www.in211.org/documents/factsheet_3-09.pdf.
- Teenagers thinking about running away from home, or already living on the streets, may call the National Runaway Switchboard for help. The Switchboard is a toll free, confidential hotline. Switchboard staff listen, help determine next steps, and provide community referrals. The phone number is 1-800-621-4000 and the Switchboard's website is <http://www.nrscrisisline.org/>.
- Safe Place provides immediate access to help and supportive resources for young people in crisis. Youth can text the word SAFE and their current location to the number 69866 and they will receive an address of the nearest Safe Place site and contact number for the local youth shelter. In cities that don't have a Safe Place program, the youth will receive the name and number of the youth shelter or, if there is no local shelter, a national-hotline number.
- Hoosiers facing foreclosure may call a toll-free helpline, 877-GET-HOPE, or go to the website www.877GetHope.org. This initiative is lead by the Indiana Foreclosure Prevention Network (IFPN).

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