Statewide Comprehensive Needs Assessment for the Homeless Education Program

Homeless Education Program
Arizona Department of Education

November 2023

Thank you to all individuals involved in the process of this comprehensive needs assessment. Your knowledge, experiences, ideas, and visions for what is possible were instrumental in developing this report.

This word cloud was created based on common responses by Arizona education leaders to the following questions:

What is your purpose in serving students experiencing homelessness? What does this work mean to you and the children and youth you serve?

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Arizona Department of Education Mission Statement

The Arizona Department of Education is a service organization committed to raising academic outcomes and empowering parents.

Homeless Education Program Mission Statement

The mission of the Homeless Education Program is to ensure positive comparable academic outcomes for children and youth experiencing homelessness through implementation of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act.

Strategic Partners and Participants

To ensure the inclusion of diverse perspectives from across Arizona, participants of the comprehensive needs assessment were included from such educational contexts as traditional public schools, public charter schools, and online academies across urban and rural contexts. Survey respondents and focus group participants joined from such counties as Maricopa, Pima, Yavapai, Coconino, Santa Cruz, Yuma, Navajo, and Pinal.

Executive Summary

The Arizona Department of Education (ADE) Homeless Education Program (HEP) conducted a Comprehensive Needs Assessment (CNA) with the goal of identifying and understanding critical needs of homeless children and youth (HCY) caused by or related to the pandemic. Findings from the CNA were used to develop this strategic plan to address needs using available federal relief dollars.

The CNA was initiated to ensure responsible utilization of funds made available through the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief (ESSER) Fund of 2021. A subset of ESSER funds, the American Rescue Plan - Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) funds are designated specifically for children and youth experiencing homelessness to remove barriers brought on by the pandemic in the areas of identification, enrollment, retention, and academic success in schools. With the provision of the ARP ESSER funds, the ARP ESSER Fund Arizona State Plan (2021) was developed to outline the priorities, identified groups of need, and action steps to address critical need.

Additionally, any goals or actions to be made through the ARP ESSER Fund Arizona State Plan are in alignment with Arizona's Elementary and Secondary Education Act Consolidated (ESSA) State Plan (2017), wherein explicit goals and strategies are described to fulfill the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (2000).

Arizona's Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness

While the COVID-19 pandemic disproportionately impacted people experiencing homelessness throughout the nation, the lack of affordable housing and implications for communal living in Arizona continues to ripple throughout the state (Arizona Department of Economic Security [ADES], 2022).

Between 2020 and 2022, Arizona is cited as having the first largest increase in percentage of those experiencing homelessness in the nation (The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development [HUD], 2022). As of the January 2022 Point-in-Time (PIT) count, more than 13,550 people experiencing homelessness were identified in Arizona, which is an increase of nearly 25% since 2020 (ADES, 2022). Additionally, Arizona ranks fourth in the nation for the number of identified Unaccompanied Youth (UY) (HUD, 2022).

According to data collected by Arizona Continuums of Care (CoC), both Pima and Maricopa County CoCs experienced some of the largest increases of populations experiencing homeless in the nation. Specifically, Pima County CoC contains the third highest percentage of unsheltered people experiencing family homelessness and the fourth highest percentage of unsheltered UY in the nation. Maricopa County CoC contains the fifth largest number of people experiencing family homelessness (HUD, 2022).

The Homeless Education Program (HEP) supports the identification and enrollment of children and youth (ages three to 21) who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence. The primary nighttime residence of these homeless children and youth (HCY) might be a hotel or motel, a shelter or transitional housing, an unsheltered situation such as a car, park, or abandoned building, or doubling-up with another family (McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, 2000). The latest data recording the number of HCY in Arizona from the 2021-2022 school year shows a total of 18,040 students (U.S. Department of Education [USDOE], 2022).

Many identified HCY are dual-labeled, including having one or more disabilities, being English learners, or qualifying as migratory (National Center for Homeless Education [NCHE], 2021). Additionally, students of color greatly overrepresent the number of students experiencing homelessness when compared to overall enrollment numbers. In the 2020-2021 school year, Black students made up 5.6% of overall enrolled students, but 13.3% of HCY, Hispanic students made up 46.6% of overall enrolled students, but 52.3% of HYC, and American Indian / Alaska Native students made up 4.3% of overall enrolled students, but 9% of HCY (NCHE, 2021).

Chronic absenteeism among HCY in Arizona rose steadily from 39.4% in 2017 to 58.8% in 2020 (NCHE, 2022). During the 2021-2022 school year, 49.11% of HCY in the state were chronically absent, the highest rate compared to all other demographics published by the state in that year (Arizona Department of Education [ADE], 2022).

Assessment data of HCY indicate significant gaps when compared to students not experiencing homelessness. In the 2021-2022 school year, the proficiency rate in English-Language Arts (ELA) was at 18% among HCY compared to 40% for all students, and in Mathematics was at 13% among HCY compared to 33% for all students (ADE, 2022).

During the 2021-2022 school year, the dropout rate of HCY was the highest of all other student demographics in Arizona at 12.1%. The graduation rate of HCY in Arizona was 42.6% compared to 75.5% of all students, and HCY are second lowest in this measure, only to students in Foster Care who have a graduation rate of 41.2% (ADE, 2022). The graduation rate of HCY in Arizona is far lower than the national graduation rate of HCY at 68% (NCHE, 2022).

The Greater Impact of Homelessness on Children and Youth

Statistics on chronic absenteeism, academic performance, dropout, and graduation rates of homeless children and youth make clear the negative impact that homelessness has on the academic achievement of Arizona's students. Additionally, research shows that experiencing homelessness at a young age can lead to higher rates of trauma, violence, instability, and declined mental and physical health.

The World Health Organization (WHO) has identified homelessness as one "social determinant of health"; a set of factors outside of an individual's control that can affect their overall health. For HCY, this may be due to poor living conditions, food insecurity, limited access to self-care resources, social isolation, and resulting anxiety and distress (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023).

Children and youth who have experienced homelessness are at greater risk of becoming a victim to violence, use illicit substances, experience sexual assault, and attempt or commit suicide, compared to their stably housed peers (Smith-Grant et al., 2022). This research has been reinforced by a recently conducted Youth Risk Behavior Survey seeking the experiences of unstably housed high school students. This survey illustrated that unstably housed students were "more likely to engage in risky sexual behaviors, substance abuse, and suicide ideation and attempts, and to experience violence" than their stably housed peers (McKinnon, 2021).

Alleviating the impact of homelessness on academic achievement requires addressing these broader impacts of homelessness via prioritizing awareness of and access to educational and wrap-around services for students. To support this, the McKinney-Vento Act's requirement to provide school access and support for academic success to HCY explicitly includes the provision of wrap-around supports. This is supported by allowable uses of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) and American Rescue Plan – Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) grants.

Scope of ARP-HCY

On Thursday, March 11, 2021, President Biden signed the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (ARP) into law. In recognition of the extraordinary impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on students experiencing homelessness, the ARP included an unprecedented $800 million to support the specific needs of homeless children and youth via the American Rescue Plan Elementary and Secondary School Emergency Relief - Homeless Children and Youth (ARP-HCY) Fund ([Office of Elementary & Secondary Education [OESE], 2021](#)). Through these funds, the Arizona Department of Education (ADE) was allocated $16,922,395 to support state and local level programs. State educational agencies (SEAs) and local educational agencies (LEAs) must use ARP-HCY funds to identify HCY, to provide HCY with wrap-around services to address the challenges of COVID-19, and to enable HCY to attend school and fully participate in school activities.

Given the sharp increase in homelessness in Arizona and research that indicates the pandemic had a negative impact on the identification of HCY, the ADE HEP is anticipating growing numbers of identified and unidentified homeless children and youth in Arizona. With the use of recently made available ARP-HCY funds, the HEP has developed a set of recommendations and next steps to address this need. The CNA, recommendations, and next steps are based on available and projected data and are designed to proactively address current as well as anticipated need.

Comprehensive Needs Assessment Process Overview

To conduct this research, the ADE HEP sought the perspective of those working most closely with Arizona students experiencing homelessness, ultimately partnering with 15 McKinney-Vento Liaisons, each from different LEAs. Additionally, one former unaccompanied homeless youth participated. To gather information, the HEP provided each participant with a 12-question survey, consisting of one sorting and 11 short-response questions on a variety of relevant topics. The survey questions can be found in the appendix of this report.

Following the initial survey, the ADE HEP team disaggregated respondent data to identify common patterns of identified barriers and possible solutions regarding

students and families, LEA staff, and partnerships with community-based organizations (CBOs.) From these commonalities, the HEP identified four priority areas, and a list of recommendations and next steps to address the current needs of Arizona's HCY.

Survey Disaggregation Process

Focus Group

Following the collection of surveys from participants, a focus group consisting of veteran McKinney-Vento Liaisons from around the state was organized to begin disaggregating the responses received.

> The goals of the focus group were to:
> - Organize needs by urban, rural, or mutual context;
> - Develop a list of concern statements; and
> - Identify and create solutions, strategies, action items and resources to address identified concern statements.

The focus group met multiple times over a two-month period, ultimately identifying ten concern statements and nine themes. Across these two months, the focus group was split into two groups, which individually analyzed survey results to develop their own lists of concern statements, themes, and solutions. The focus group then came back together to analyze the other group's results, ultimately agreeing upon the final set of concern statements, themes, and possible solutions. A comprehensive list of concern statements developed by the focus group can be found in the appendix of this report.

Homeless Education Program Disaggregation Team

The ADE HEP selected internal team members to review the final comprehensive list of concern statements, themes, and possible solutions developed by the focus group. This team was selected based on their experience with the McKinney-Vento Act and related statute as well as the scope and programmatic goals guiding the HEP. To ensure that relevant context was not left out from focus group deliberations and recommendations, the leading members of this team were also leaders of the focus group and were present at all meetings.

The team was tasked with developing a condensed list of priority items through which the focus group's findings may be organized and addressed. Problems and solutions were organized by a variety of contexts, such as commonality, urban vs. rural impact, and SEA vs. LEA responsibility, with existing overlaps noted. A list of actionable steps organized by priority area and designated for LEA and/or SEA action was created.

Ultimately, the team settled on the following four priority areas:

1. Professional Learning
2. Policies and Procedures around Identification, Enrollment, and Retention
3. Messaging and Awareness
4. Resources

Recommendations

Recommended actions based on the findings of the comprehensive needs assessment are organized by priority area and responsible entity (e.g., SEA, LEA, CBO.)

Professional Learning		

This priority area addresses the identified need for improved comprehensive training for all stakeholders responsible for ensuring the rights of homeless children and youth are provided.

Professional Learning through the Homeless Education Program will work to:

- Provide accessible training for McKinney-Vento Liaisons, education leaders, federal program directors, educators, and other program stakeholders to ensure a unified approach to topics such as identification, development of strategic partnerships and programmatic planning.
- Support LEAs in developing the capacity to provide training for district and site leaders, educators, and community partners on state and local HEP goals and resources.

State Education Agency (SEA) Responsibilities and Actions	Potential Partnerships with Government Agencies and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)	Local Education Agency (LEA) Responsibilities and Actions
The SEA will create and provide the following professional learning: - Roles, responsibilities, and best practices for new and veteran McKinney-Vento (MV) Liaisons and other LEA staff - MV Liaison capacity requirements for superintendents and school administrators	**The SEA will seek partnerships with CBOs and other government agencies to provide the following professional learning:** - Developing professional learning opportunities for shared audiences and stakeholders on topics such as: - Building and maintaining partnerships with CBOs	**All LEAs will create and provide the following professional learning:** - Required annual school wide MV training, with an emphasis on the identification of students - Enrollment practices that ensure the process is free of isolation and stigma

• Provide training for shelters and transitional housing providers on the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act
• Grant training for LEA grant writers and federal program directors on topics, such as:
   ○ Allowable expenses
   ○ Examples of best practice expenses
   ○ Correct language and data needed for program narratives
• "How To" sessions for relevant LEA staff:
   ○ How to help a family or unaccompanied homeless youth find resources available to them
   ○ How to better identify students experiencing homelessness with informed registration and questioning
   ○ How to build relationships with community partners
   ○ How to connect with and provide training for shelters and transitional housing providers
	○ Awareness and access for relevant topics, such as housing and food
	   ○ Coordinated entry
	• How to use 2-1-1 Arizona Information and Referral Services program (Solari) to explore resources for families and unaccompanied homeless youth experiencing homelessness
	• How to obtain government benefits (DES)
		• Resource guidance for appropriate LEA staff to support students and families
		• General McKinney-Vento programming intended for education and outreach to local Community Based Organizations (CBOs)
		• Training tailored toward the various LEA staff members working with students experiencing homelessness
		• For shelters and transitional housing providers on the requirements of the McKinney-Vento Act

Policies and Procedures around Identification, Enrollment, and Retention

This priority area addresses the identified need for solutions to address existing barriers to the identification, enrollment, engagement, and academic success of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

To remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, engagement, and academic success of children and youth experiencing homelessness, the Homeless Education Program will:

- Develop guidance to review and revise state and local policies, programs, procedures, and practices to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, retention, and academic success of students experiencing homelessness.
- Collaborate with stakeholders to gather information and develop support related to policies and procedures around the removal of barriers.

State Education Agency (SEA) Responsibilities and Actions	Potential Partnerships with Government Agencies and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)	Local Education Agency (LEA) Responsibilities and Actions
The SEA will provide example processes to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, and provision of services for children and youth experiencing homelessness through the following avenues: - A.R.S. §15-901 (A)(1) regarding the enrollment drop after ten consecutive, unexcused absences - Confer with the HEP Advisory Committee regarding guidance for the development, review, and revising of policies and	**The SEA will seek partnerships with CBOs and other government agencies to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, and provision of services for children and youth experiencing homelessness through the following avenues:** - Serve on community, statewide, and national committees, such as the Maricopa Association of Governments, the Governor's Interagency and Community Council on Homelessness and Housing, and Youth Provider Collaborative	**All LEAs will regularly review and revise policies, programs, procedures, and practices to remove barriers to the identification, enrollment, and provision of services for children and youth experiencing homelessness through the following avenues:** - LEA enrollment requirements allowing for the provision of multiple options for enrollment: virtual or paper forms completed in-person or remotely, with intention to provide stigma-free access

procedures to remove barriers for the field, as needed
• Development of example policy and procedure documents, including the following:
  o Annual data collection
  o Annual eligibility review procedure
  o Required professional learning for Liaisons
  o A systematic approach to ensure ease of connection to service providers for removal of barriers to collaborative, consistent, and efficient partnerships
		• LEA procurement process and planned connection of students and families to high-demand resources
		• Required professional learning for all district and school personnel

Messaging and Awareness

This priority area addresses the identified need for improved awareness of the rights of children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness as well as available resources.

Messaging and awareness from and about the Homeless Education Program will be designed to:

- Disseminate local and statewide information to increase student identification and enrollment, as well as develop accurate public awareness and understanding of the HEP and available resources provided by CBOs.

State Education Agency (SEA) Responsibilities and Actions	Potential Partnerships with Government Agencies and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)	Local Education Agency (LEA) Responsibilities and Actions
The SEA will provide messaging and awareness through the following methods: • Statewide informational messaging of the McKinney-Vento Act and student and family rights through the publication of the monthly HEP newsletter and inter-agency collaborations • Connect LEAs to free resources made available by external organizations, such as SchoolHouse Connection and the National Center for Homeless Education	**The SEA will seek partnerships with CBOs and other government agencies to provide messaging and awareness through the following methods:** • Partnership with other government agencies or community-based organizations to distribute information, including county and statewide Continuums of Care (CoCs) • Development of a statewide hotline or text service to access quick information related to the McKinney-Vento Act • Statewide informational messaging campaign of the McKinney-Vento Act and student and family rights intended for the general public	**The LEA will provide messaging and awareness through the following methods:** • Utilization of various methods of messaging such as social media, websites, newsletters, and learning management systems to increase accurate awareness of the McKinney-Vento Act, with an emphasis on enrollment and access to resources

	• Establish and organize partnerships with agencies or programs (e.g., housing resources, food, employment, government benefits, etc.) that assist with housing questions and resources, such as 2-1-1 Arizona Information and Referral Services program	

Resources

This priority area addresses the identified need for the improved organization of available resources for students and families experiencing homelessness by the state and local levels to facilitate access and awareness.

The creation and organization of resources relevant to the Homeless Education Program will:

- o Ensure student and family connection to resources such as transportation and secure housing through development of statewide strategic partnerships.
- o Provide a comprehensive and collaborative list of CBOs to ensure ease of access to resources across LEAs and communities in Arizona.
- o Develop public-facing resources to educate individuals of state and local HEP goals and provide ease of access to resources.

State Education Agency (SEA) Responsibilities and Actions	Potential Partnerships with Government Agencies and Community-Based Organizations (CBOs)	Local Education Agency (LEA) Responsibilities and Actions
The SEA will address the following resource related needs: • Determine housing procedures for families when they are facing eviction or searching for housing related services • Develop a process, such as a request for information (RFI), to acquire and publish a comprehensive, up-to-date list of resources and organizations (i.e., agencies, programs, and CBOs), organized by region or community, that provide supportive assistance pertaining to the identification,	**The SEA will seek partnerships with CBOs and other government agencies to provide resources through the following methods:** • Establish and organize partnerships with agencies or programs (e.g., housing resources, food, employment, government benefits, transportation, etc.) that assist with housing questions and resources, such as 2-1-1 Arizona Information and Referral Services program	**The LEA will provide resources through the following methods:** • Provide necessary technology (i.e., Wi-Fi, computer access) for parents and students seeking community resources • Distribute community resource lists to identified families experiencing homelessness • Ensure that ADE is made aware of new community resources to be included on the statewide list

enrollment, and provision of services for children and youth experiencing homelessness, such as a resource list of the following topics:		
○ Housing		

enrollment, and provision of services for children and youth experiencing homelessness, such as a resource list of the following topics:
- o   Housing
- o   Child Care
- o   Preschools
- o   Transportation services
- o   Mental health services
- o   Outreach service providers
- o   Homeless advocacy centers
- o   Laptops
- o   Wi-Fi
- o   Cell phones
- o   Family resource centers

- Collaborate with the HEP Advisory Team to provide a list of transportation options for students experiencing homelessness, especially in rural areas of the state

Next Steps

To ensure that these goals are met, the ADE HEP must set a schedule of action items that can be accomplished internally by the ADE HEP team or with a partnering agency, organization, or vendor. Procedures will be followed to regularly gather data and feedback to assess the effectiveness of actions and efforts, as well adjust and add to the goals and action items of this report.

To accomplish this, the HEP will:
1) Present this comprehensive need assessment report to ADE Executive Leadership.
2) Agree on a finalized set of goals and recommendations.
3) Develop a request for proposal (RFP) to seek outside partners to achieve targeted goals.
4) Make selections based on the RFP and establish terms of the partnership.
5) Implement agreed upon action items.

Conclusion

The 2022 HEP CNA highlighted four essential priority areas through which improved service to children and youth experiencing homelessness must be provided. To action the findings from the CNA, we must focus on seeking feedback and developing solutions related to the following goals:

- Developing the capacity of all LEA staff in understanding and accomplishing their essential role in identifying, enrolling, and ensuring the participation and academic success of students experiencing homelessness.
- Providing clear public outreach and useful structures to inform students and families experiencing homelessness of their rights and connect them to available resources.
- Ensure support and collaboration between the state and local homeless education programs along with community-based organization and other government agencies to achieve common goals and continued adaptation and progress via policies, programs, procedures, and practices that impact homeless children and youth.

The application of these findings through a shared responsibility to address needs implicated by data will ensure comprehensive and holistic supports to children and youth experiencing homelessness.

References

Arizona Department of Economic Security. (2022, December 31). *State of homelessness: Homelessness in Arizona annual report 2022.* https://des.az.gov/sites/default/files/dl/2022-Homelessness-Annual-Report.pdf?time=1691606062005#:~:text=In%202022%2C%20the%20PIT%20count,people%20experiencing%20homelessness%20across%20Arizona.

The Arizona Department of Economic Security (ADES) compiles this report on the state of homelessness each year. The report includes estimated numbers of individuals experiencing homelessness, determined factors contributing to homelessness, effect of homelessness, services provided, and determinations and recommendations to address the current situation of homelessness. The inclusion of data from this report was used to determine the ADE HEP's recommendations and next steps.

Arizona Department of Education. (2021, July 22). *American rescue plan (ARP) elementary and secondary school emergency relief (ESSER) fund - Arizona state plan.* https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/08/Arizona-ARP-ESSER-State-Plan.pdf

This document outlines the state of Arizona's planned usage of the ARP-ESSER Fund, submitted to the U.S. Department of Education on July 22, 2021. HCY were identified among the classification of students with the "highest priority needs", and therefore to be intentionally targeted through the use of ARP ESSER funds. The completion of this comprehensive needs assessment was initiated by these funds being made available to the ADE HEP.

AZ School Report Cards. (2022). *Chronic absenteeism* [Data set]. Arizona Department of Education. https://azreportcards.azed.gov/state-reports

AZ School Report Cards organizes available demographic and performance data on students at the school, local, and state level at the end of each school year. This data was used to provide critical context in determining the ADE HEP's recommendations and next steps.

Cardona, M. (2021, April 23). *Letter to chief state school officers.* U.S. Department of Education. https://oese.ed.gov/files/2021/04/ARP-Homeless-DCL-4.23.pdf

This letter from the U.S. Department of Education Office of the Secretary of Education informs chief state school officers such as governors and state coordinators for the EHCY of the disbursement of ARP-HCY funds including allocation amounts, timelines, and allowable uses of funds.

McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Publ. L. No. 106-400, 114 Stat. 1675 (2000). https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title42/chapter119/subchapter6/partB&edition=prelim

McKinnon, I., Krause, K., Robin, L., King, A., Leon-Nguyen, M., Zavala, E., Suarez, N., Lim, C., Smith-Grant, J., & Underwood, J. Michael. (2023, April 28). Experiences of unstable housing among high school students – Youth risk behavior survey, United States, 2021. *Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (MMWR) Supplement, 72*(1), 29-36. http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.su7201a4

This article describes the findings of the first nationally provided youth risk behavior survey (YRBS) to include a question on housing stability. Authors analyze the health risks and behaviors that are prevalent among HCY. The ADE HEP acknowledges the at-risk nature of HCY within recommendations and next steps.

National Center for Homeless Education. (2022). *Chronic absenteeism among students experiencing homelessness in America: School years 2016-17 to 2020-21.* https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Homeless-Student-Absenteeism-in-America-2022.pdf

The NCHE report on chronic absenteeism among HCY organizes and analyzes state- and district-level data from school years 2016-2017 through 2018-2019. Data were analyzed to determine rates of chronic absenteeism, demographic trends, and changes across multiple years. This data was used to provide critical context in determining the ADE HEP's recommendations and next steps.

National Center for Homeless Education. (2022). *Graduation rates of students who experienced homelessness in America: School years 2017-18 to 2018-19.* https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/09/ACGR-of-Students-Who-Experienced-Homelessness-in-America.pdf

The NCHE report on graduation rates of students experiencing homelessness organizes state- and district-level data by cohorts across multiple years of data to determine the impact of homelessness on graduation rate in a variety of locale types. This data was used to provide critical context in determining the ADE HEP's recommendations and next steps.

National Center for Homeless Education. (2021). *Student homelessness in America: School years 2017-18 to 2019-20.* https://nche.ed.gov/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/Student-Homelessness-in-America-2021.pdf

The NCHE report on student homelessness in America between the school years 2017-18 to 2019-20 provides a comprehensive view of national data based on individual state data reported to the U.S. Department of Education. This brief "examines the number of students experiencing homelessness, the type of housing they used when first identified by school districts, and subgroups of students experiencing homelessness." This data was used to provide critical context in determining the ADE HEP's recommendations and next steps.

Smith-Grant, J., Kilmer, G., Brener, N., Robin, L., & Underwood, J. Michael. (2022). Risk behaviors and experiences among youth experiencing homelessness - Youth risk behavior survey, 23 U.S. states and 11 local school districts, 2019. *J Community Health, 47*, 324–333. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10900-021-01056-2

This article describes the results of the YRBS as they pertain to the experiences of HCY. Indications of these results are that HCY are at a much higher risk of violence victimization, substance abuse, suicide, and sexual risk behavior. The ADE HEP acknowledges the at-risk nature of HCY within recommendations and next steps.

U.S. Department of Education. (2017, March). *Arizona ESSA state plan.* https://www.azed.gov/sites/default/files/policy/files/2020/01/Arizona-State-ESSA-Plan-Final-approved-1.10.20.pdf

This document outlines the state of Arizona's plans for all programs included under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act. Title I, Part A requires an outline of the programmatic goals of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Requirements, goals, and strategies of the ADE HEP are outlined here.

U.S. Department of Education. (2022). *Homeless students enrolled in SEA* [Data set].
https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/download/data-builder/data-download-tool?f%5B0%5D=level%3AState%20Education%20Agency&f%5B1%5D=program%3AMcKinney-Vento%20Act&f%5B2%5D=school_year%3A2021-2022&f%5B3%5D=state_name%3AARIZONA

Ed Data Express is an online data tool that publishes state- and district-level data collected by the U.S. Department of Education. Sources of data are: EDFacts, Consolidated State Performance Reports (CSPR), and the Department's Budget Service office. The ADE HEP regularly utilizes this tool to understand local, state, and national data related to HCY.

U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. (2022, December). *The 2022 annual homelessness assessment report (AHAR) to Congress.*
https://www.huduser.gov/portal/sites/default/files/pdf/2022-AHAR-Part-1.pdf

The US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) develops and presents the Annual Homelessness Assessment Report (AHAR) annually. This AHAR organizes the data derived from Point-in-Time (PIT) measurements by demographic characteristics across the entire United States. The AHAR is utilized nationwide in the development of policies, programmatic decisions, and funding for individuals experiencing homelessness.

World Health Organization. (2023). *Social determinants of health.*
https://www.who.int/health-topics/social-determinants-of-health#tab=tab_1

The World Health Organization (WHO) has defined social determinants of health as "the non-medical factors that influence health outcomes". The consideration of these factors, including housing, allows new understanding of the impact of homelessness. The ADE HEP acknowledges the greater impact of homelessness on health in recommendations and next steps.

Appendix

Comprehensive Needs Assessment Survey Questions

1. Please rank order the following areas of need from top to bottom, as most urgent to least urgent.
2. Please describe the barriers for school staff that may limit their awareness of the McKinney-Vento Act, and how it pertains to their roles and responsibilities.
3. Please describe the barriers for children, youth, and their families experiencing homelessness that may limit their awareness of the McKinney-Vento Act, and how it pertains to them.
4. Please describe the barriers that may limit or interfere with the identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness.
5. Please describe the barriers that may limit or interfere with the enrollment of children and youth experiencing homelessness into school.
6. Please describe the barriers that may limit or interfere with the access to services for children and youth experiencing homelessness.
7. Please describe any other barriers that may limit or interfere with providing services to children and youth experiencing homelessness.
8. Please describe the barriers that may limit or interfere with partnering with community-based organizations (CBOs) to increase the awareness of the McKinney Vento Act for school staff and children, youth, and their families.
9. Please describe the barriers that may limit or interfere with partnering with community-based organizations (CBOs) to identify, enroll, and provide services to children and youth experiencing homelessness.
10. Please describe the ideal partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs) that would help increase the awareness of the McKinney-Vento Act for school staff and children, youth and their families.
11. Please describe the ideal partnership with community-based organizations (CBOs) that would help to overcome the barriers to the identification, enrollment, access to services, or any other need of children and youth experiencing homelessness.

Focus Group Concern Statements

1. We are concerned that there is a lack of resources for families experiencing homelessness for: transportation; mental health; access to affordable childcare and preschool programs and support services.
2. We are concerned that low staff retention, shortage of staff, and limited ongoing staff training contributes to a lack of awareness and consistent implementation of McKinney-Vento Act and identification of students.
3. We are concerned that new & unfamiliar situations, such as new housing pricing being highly inflated in Arizona, & families experiencing homelessness for the first time means there is less awareness for overall support services.
4. We are concerned that families experience fear of and/or frustration with agency involvement, lack of means to communicate and lack of resources creates a barrier to identification.
5. We are concerned that access to online services for school registration or state services creates a barrier for identification of children and youth experiencing homelessness.
6. We are concerned that families that are new to homelessness remain undetected by schools due to shame; stigma; and absences that cause an inability to identify children and youth experiencing homelessness.
7. We are concerned that there is not enough clarity around the enrollment of children and youth experiencing homelessness due to lack of public awareness of McKinney-Vento Act rights, including the enrollment of students without documentation, access and availability to enroll online for both online and in-person school.
8. We are concerned that there are barriers to children and youth experiencing homelessness including: lack of appropriate cell phone or Wi-Fi access and the length of time to get the assistance needed.
9. We are concerned that the LEA procurement processes can mitigate the immediate provision of resources for families and students.
10. We are concerned that school McKinney-Vento staff may not have enough bandwidth or capacity to be fully effective in building relationships with CBOs.
11. We are concerned that there is not enough time, staff, or cross-training opportunities available for both schools and CBOs to identify, enroll, and provide services to children and youth experiencing homelessness.