A State-Level Brief

Participation of Young Children Experiencing Homelessness in Early Childhood Programs in Pennsylvania

Young children experiencing homelessness are at increased risk of poor health and academic outcomes, and the experience of homelessness can disrupt a child's development, resulting in persistent developmental delays. They are more likely to lack access to and to participate regularly in early childhood and child care programs, especially high-quality programs, known to help alleviate the adverse effects of homelessness and any of a range of co-occurring trauma or toxic stress that often accompany unsafe, unstable, and inadequate housing.[1] Further, the challenges presented by homelessness during the early years are particularly urgent to address. "While becoming homeless is potentially traumatizing for people of any age, it is important to recognize that, when young children experience trauma, there is a relatively short window in their developmental process to address the trauma before it becomes a serious problem that affects them as adults."[2]

This brief contains data from the early childhood and housing service sectors. Throughout the brief there are multiple examples of the challenges presented by the way data is defined and collected not only across service sectors but in the various early childhood programs. Because the two federal homeless definitions are quite different (See "Defining Homelessness") errors occur in eligibility determination and data gathering. Additionally, data reflect varying time periods, some for a point-in-time and others over varying program or fiscal years. Each of these data challenges ultimately impact interpretation of the problem and services to children and their families.

Defining Homelessness: McKinney-Vento Definition vs. HUD Definition

Early childhood and education programs funded or regulated by the US Department of Education and the US Department of Health and Human Services must use the McKinney-Vento Act education subtitle's definition of homeless. T*his definition focuses on the needs of the child and includes children who are staying with others*, including family and friends, due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason. McKinney-Vento Definition – National Center for Homeless Education

The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homeless is different. It focuses on individuals who are in shelters, unsheltered or who move frequently within a short period of time. HUD's Definition of Homelessness: Resources and Guidance - HUD Exchange

Using the McKinney-Vento definition to identify and determine eligibility for children is critical to ensure their access to services and benefits designed to address their unique needs.

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[1] Brown, S.R., Shinn, M., and Khadduri, J. (January 2017). *Well-being of Young Children after Experiencing Homelessness*. Homeless Families Research Brief. OPRE, Report No. 2017-06. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation www.acf.hhs.gov/sites/default/files/documents/opre/opre_homefam_brief3_hhs_children_02_24_2017_b508.pdf

[2] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (July 31, 2019). Child Homelessness: A Growing Crisis. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/child-homelessness-growing-crisis

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The brief includes overall population and poverty data for children under age 6 and presents data on what we know about the participation of young children experiencing homelessness enrolled in quality early childhood programs from both the early childhood and housing perspectives. These data and trends over time are available to establish baselines, set policy directions, and gauge progress. Areas are identified for further study. Throughout, suggestions are apparent for enhancing policy alignment and for moving forward toward the goal of ensuring access and full participation in quality early childhood programs for young children experiencing homelessness throughout the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

What We Know About Children Birth to Age 5 in Pennsylvania

As shown in Table 1, the number of children under six in Pennsylvania has steadily declined.

Table 1. Pennsylvania children 0-5 - Population by age 2015-2019. [3]

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019
<1	141,436	139,877	137,546	136,485	134,712
1	142,391	142,021	140,820	138,695	137,402
2	142,385	142,961	142,950	141,592	139,553
TOTAL 0-2	426,212	424,859	421,316	416,772	411,667
3	143,350	143,031	143,782	143,651	142,257
4	144,356	143,553	143,621	144,385	144,000
5	144,822	144,398	143,932	144,063	144,818
TOTAL 3-5	432,528	430,982	431,335	432,099	431,075
TOTAL 0-5	858,740	855,841	852,651	848,871	842,742

Table 2 shows a small but steady decline in the number of children under age 6 living in poverty in the Commonwealth for the years 2015 to 2018, similar to national trends. In 2018, the most recent year for which data are available by age, greater than 1 in 3 young children were living in families with incomes below 200% of poverty, roughly 1 in 5 young children were in families with incomes below federal poverty (100% of poverty), and about 1 in 10 young children were living in extreme poverty (family income below 50% of poverty) in Pennsylvania.

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[3] Population Division, U.S. Census Bureau as cited by Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Center, *Child population by single age*, KIDS COUNT Data Center website. Retrieved July 12, 2021.
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Table 2. Pennsylvania children 0-5 living in poverty 2015-2018. [4]

	2015	2016	2017	2018
Total population of children ages 0-5	843,450	838,960	826,680	822,220
Children 0-5 in families earning < 200% poverty	352,410 41.8%	334,940 39.9%	329,920 39.9%	315,950 38.4%
Children 0-5 in families earning < 100% poverty	178,090 21.1%	167,730 20.0%	162,960 19.7%	145,990 17.8%
Children 0-5 in deep or extreme (< 50%) poverty	87,380 10.6%	89,045 10.0%	83,865 9.9%	81,480 8.9%

What We Know About Children Birth to Age 5 Experiencing Homelessness in Pennsylvania

Annual data profiles compiled by school districts under U.S. Department of Education's McKinney Act's Education of Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program provide the most consistent and detailed description of homelessness for children. These reports offer a national context and the potential for comparison across states and over time. Using the broader McKinney-Vento definition of homelessness, an estimated 29,995 children under age 6 in Pennsylvania experienced homelessness during the 2018-2019 school year, or 1 in 29 (3.5%) of children birth through age five. [5] Table 3 provides additional data on annual estimates over time.

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[4] Data source: U.S. Bureau of the Census, American Community Survey, cited by Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Center, *Poverty Level – Population (age 0-5) in Pennsylvania* and Population Reference Bureau, analysis of data from the U.S. Census Bureau, American Community Survey, cited by Annie E. Casey Foundation Data Center, *Children in extreme poverty (50% of poverty) in Pennsylvania*, KIDS COUNT Data Center website. Retrieved July 12, 2021. Note: Several counties are not reported due to low counts which results in the undercounts of total children 0-5 in Table 2 when compared to Table 1.

[5] U.S. Department of Education, Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development, Office of the Chief Data Officer. (2021). *Early Childhood Homelessness State Profiles Data Collected in 2018-2019.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education. www2.ed.gov/rschstat/eval/disadv/homeless/early-childhood-homelessness-state-profiles-2021.pdf

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Table 3. Pennsylvania children 0-5 who are experiencing homelessness and participating in quality early childhood programs [6]

	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Estimated children 0-5 experiencing homelessness	21,301	22,434 (1 in 38)	24,318 (1 in 35)	29,659 (1 in 29)	29,995 (1 in 28)
Children served by Head Start	2,031 (10%)	2,285 (10%)	2,241 (9%)	2,588 (9%)	2,690 (9%)
Children served by ECYEH	4,211 (20%)	3,064 (14%)	5,633 (23%)	6,199 (21%)	8,251 (28%)
Children unserved/unknown	15,059 (71%)	17,085 (76%)	16,444 (68%)	20,872 (70%)	19,054 (64%)

Data on young children served in the housing sector is more difficult to obtain. In addition to using the narrower HUD definition, there is inconsistency in the breakdown of data by age and there is no reporting of data at the state-level. However, these data can be used to further understand the challenges. For example, using the narrow HUD definition, one large study found that a person is most likely to be in a public shelter while an infant, with children under 6 disproportionately represented overall. [7] HUD's annual report to Congress began breaking out children birth to five from all children under age 18 in its 'families with children' category for 2018, and for families with children using emergency shelters and transitional housing nationwide from September 30, 2017, to September 30, 2018, 30% of persons in those households were under the age of 6. [8] Although data are submitted to HUD by each local Continuums of Care (CoC), there is no repository for the 16 CoCs in the Commonwealth making state-level data unavailable. Additionally, this source does not break out young children in reports of veteran or youth homelessness although many may be parents or families who were rapidly rehoused, and data do not reflect those families in domestic violence and recovery residential settings.

The HUD report referenced above reported 61.8% of persons under the age of 18 in households using emergency shelters and transitional housing nationwide from September 30, 2017, to September 30, 2018, or 309,680 children. [9] For the 2017-2018 school year, the U. S. Department of Education EHCY

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[6] Data source: Departments of Policy and Program Studies Service and Office of Planning, Evaluation and Policy Development (2017, 2018, 2019, 2020, 2021). *Early Childhood Homelessness State Profiles for 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017,2018, 2018-2019, respectively.* Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education.
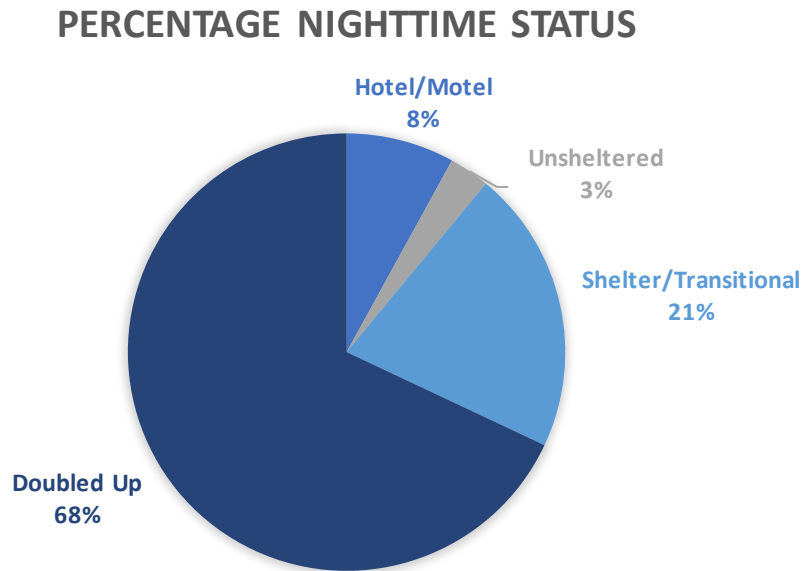
[7] Shinn, M., Brown, S. R., Wood, M., & Gubits, D. (2016). Housing and service interventions for families experiencing homelessness in the United States: An experimental evaluation. European Journal of Homelessness, 10(1), 13–30. Housing and Service Interventions for Families Experiencing Homelessness in the United States: An Experimental Evaluation - PubMed (nih.gov)

[8] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development. (September 2020). Part 2: Estimates of Homelessness in the United States The 2018 Annual homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (huduser.gov)

[9] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development. (September 2020). Part 2: Estimates of Homelessness in the United States The 2018 Annual homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (huduser.gov)

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program reported 1,504,544 children identified as homeless enrolled in public schools.[10] This contrast – 309,680 children vs. 1,504,544 children – highlights the challenges presented by multiple definitions. Additional clarity is provided by breaking out the wider range of housing settings recognized under the McKinney-Vento definition. This data is available for Pennsylvania and for each of the 8 regions under the Commonwealth's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) program. See Figure 1. Only about 20% of children were staying in shelters or transitional settings.

Figure 1. Housing Setting/Nighttime Status of All Homeless Students in Pennsylvania[11]

PERCENTAGE NIGHTTIME STATUS

Hotel/Motel
8%

Unsheltered
3%

Shelter/Transitional
21%

Doubled Up
68%

PA ECYEH 2019-2020 State Evaluation Report

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[10] National Overview 2017-2018. National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) (seiservices.com) Retrieved January 14, 2022.

[11] Pennsylvania Department of Education. (August 2021). Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program 2019-20 State Evaluation Report.

What We Know About Young Children Experiencing Homelessness Participating in Quality Early Childhood Programs in Pennsylvania

Again, data on access to and participation in early childhood programs for children under age 6 who are experiencing homelessness come primarily from annual data submitted by local school districts through PA's ECYEH program and Head Start and Early Head Start grantees and summarized into annual reports and state profiles by the US Department of Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program and the US Department of Health and Human Services Office of Head Start. An assumption of these annual State Profiles is that Head Start and ECYEH are quality programs. Pennsylvania data over a five-year period are provided in Table 3 above.

ECYEH data include early childhood programs federally funded through the public schools, such as Title 1 preschool and preschool special education under IDEA Part B but is not clear if all data from Charter Schools is also included. These profiles have not yet added federally funded subsidized child care through the Child Care and Development Fund. Also lacking is consistent data from other early childhood programs, e.g., state or locally funded PreK programs such as PreK Counts and Philadelphia PreK, and other federally funded efforts like the Maternal Infant and Early Childhood Home Visiting (MIECHV) or Early Intervention (EI) under IDEA Part C, although these programs do have data elements tracking homeless status. State Profiles compiled by federal agencies have thus far not included MIECHV and EI data.

Of note is the large number of children who remain untracked and unknown. These children and families may be participating in programs but not yet identified and as meeting homeless criteria and included in the data, or they may remain unidentified and unserved. There are no known sources of state-level compilation of data related to young children experiencing homelessness across sectors in Pennsylvania.

What We Know About Young Children Experiencing Homelessness Participating in Quality Early Childhood Programs from Head Start Programs in Pennsylvania

Head Start in Pennsylvania offers another source of data and includes a number of additional data points that reflect the needs of families. Data are displayed in Table 6.

Table 6. Children and families experiencing homelessness who are participating in Head Start and Early Head Start programs in Pennsylvania[12]

Head Start Children	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Total children served	44,170	44,155	43,883	44,262	44,170
• HS (ages 3-5)	37,643	35,528	35,107	34,584	34,603
• EHS (birth - age 3)	6,527	7,944	8,776	9,678	9,567
Pregnant women served	715	683	720	736	704
Cumulative enrollment	44,885	44,155	44,603	44,998	44,874
• enrolled by homeless status (% of all enrollments)	1,803 (4.0%)	1,896 (4.3%)	1,962 (4.4%)	2,252 (5.0%)	2,659 (5.9%)
Children experiencing homelessness (% of all children served)	2,031 (4.6%)	2,285 (5.2%)	2,241 (5.1%)	2,588 (5.8%)	2,690 (6.1%)

Head Start Families	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Total families served	41,187	40,184	40,094	40,467	39,882
Families experiencing homelessness (% of all families)	1,850 (4.5%)	1,915 (4.8%)	2,058 (5.1%)	2,419 (6.0%)	2,508 (6.3%)
Families experiencing homelessness who found housing (% of homeless families)	468 (25.3%)	641 (33.5%)	611 (29.7%)	704 (29.1%)	690 (27.5%)

Family Services	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019
Total families served	41,187	40,184	40,094	40,467	39,882
Families w/at least 1 of 16 service needs (% of all families)	27,366 (66.4%)	24,265 (60.4%)	23,784 (59.3%)	23,300 (57.6%)	23,352 (58.6%)
• housing assistance Rank among 16 services (% of all families) (% of families w/needs)	4,918 4th (11.9%) (18.0%)	5,575 4th (13.9%) (23.9%)	5,408 4th (13.5%) (22.7%)	4,253 4th (10.5%) (18.3%)	4,618 4th (11.6%) (19.8%)
• emergency/crisis intervention Rank among 16 services (% of all families) (% of families w/needs)	8,066 3rd (19.6%) (29.5%)	7,865 3rd (19.6%) (32.4%)	7,716 3rd (19.2%) (32.4%)	7,701 3rd (19.0%) (33.1%)	7,538 3rd (18.9%) (32.3%)

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[12] Data source: Office of Head Start. (2015, 2016, 2017, 2018, 2019). Head Start Program Information Report (PIR) Summary Reports for 2014-2015, 2015-2016, 2016-2017, 2017-2018, and 2018-2019, respectively. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

Trends show that increasing numbers of children and families experiencing homelessness have been identified and served during this period. Of the 16 family services offered by Head Start programs, housing assistance, defined as help with subsidies, utilities, repairs, etc., ranked 4th each year. Of all families served by Head Start, roughly 1 in 8 needed housing assistance. Also, while not all families in Head Start have service needs, of those who do, 1 in 3 families with any identified family service need had service needs related to housing.

What We Know About Young Children Experiencing Homelessness Participating in Quality Early Childhood Programs from Child Care Subsidy in Pennsylvania

Family homeless status is included on the federal CCDF state report (Form ACF-801) and data suggest increasing numbers of families experiencing homelessness being identified for subsidized child care. Data also indicate an increasing number of children enrolled in quality child care which meets the Keystone STARS 3 & 4 ratings. Efforts continue to identify and reach out to families experiencing homelessness who are in need of subsidized child care through targeted training and partnerships. Particularly important is that staff who determine eligibility are using the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless to determine eligibility. Table 4 contains data on subsidized child care for the five-year period FY 2015 through FY 2019.

Table 4. Subsidized Child Care in Pennsylvania[13]

	FY 2015 (2014-2015)	FY 2016 (2015-2016)	FY 2017 (2016-2017)	FY 2018 (2017-2018)	FY 2019 (2018-2019)
Children under age 5 eligible for subsidized child care	307,481	307,899	307,509	301,569	294,989
Total number of children receiving subsidized child care	106,468	106,581	103,666	112,473	108,412
Percent enrolled in Keystone STARS 3 & 4 (quality)	24.1%	26.6%	28.0%	30.7%	33.9%
Total number of children receiving subsidized child care who reported experiencing homelessness	196	216	253	324	392
Percent of children receiving subsidized child care who	0.18%	0.20%	0.24%	0.29%	0.36%

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[13] Data obtained from PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning. Children under age 5 eligible for subsidized child care = (Number of Children Ages 0-5) * (Percent of Children Ages 0-5 Living in Households under 200% FPL). Number of Children Percent of Children Ages 0-5 Living in Households under 200% FPL: American Community Survey 5 Year. Subsidized Child Care data (Source: PELICAN) represents a point in time in March of each year.

	FY 2015 (2014-2015)	FY 2016 (2015-2016)	FY 2017 (2016-2017)	FY 2018 (2017-2018)	FY 2019 (2018-2019)
eported experiencing homelessness					
Total number of children receiving subsidized child care who reported experiencing homelessness enrolled in Keystone STARS 3 & 4 (quality)	51	68	75	84	110
Percent of children receiving subsidized child care who reported experiencing homelessness enrolled in Keystone STARS 3 & 4 (quality)	0.40%	0.48%	0.51%	0.49%	0.61%

What We Know About Young Children Experiencing Homelessness Participating in Quality Early Childhood Programs from the Building Early Links for Learning (BELL) Initiative in Philadelphia

The People's Emergency Center in Philadelphia has served as many as 325 to over 400 individuals on most any given night through its 18 city-contracted emergency shelters and transitional housing settings. Their Building Early Learning Links (BELL) Initiative is focused on tailoring services to the unique needs of young children and their parents. A recent report on the impact of the BELL initiative described how staff conversations with parents about early childhood programs available to them, including how to recognize quality, have been valuable to learn about families' needs and to assist families in finding and enrolling in quality settings. Seventy percent (70%) of parents of 709 young children had a conversation with staff about the early childhood programs they were using, and parental responses were documented by BELL and appear in Table 5. BELL defines high quality early childhood programs as those that have a rigorous curriculum combined with reliable and regular oversight. High-quality programs fall into one of three categories: (a) those with a Keystone STARS rating of 3 or 4 (b) federally funded Head Start and Early Head Start, and (c) specialized programs with both rigor and oversight (e.g., licensed therapeutic preschool programs; Early Intervention programs) (p. 5). [14]

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[14] Cutuli, J. J. (2020). 2018-19 Building Early Links for Learning: The BELL report to stakeholders. People's Emergency Center. https://works.bepress.com/jj_cutuli/43/

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Table 5. Children 0-5 Experiencing Homelessness in Philadelphia's BELL Project[15]

Total children 0-5	709	
Children 0-5 in any early childhood program	379 (53%)	49% of children attending ages 0-2 63% of children attending ages 3-5
Children 0-5 not in any early childhood program	330 (47%)	

Total children 0-5	709	
Children 0-5 in a high-quality early childhood program	197 (28%)	43% of children in high-quality ages 0-2 66% of children in high-quality ages 3-5
Children 0-5 not in a high-quality early childhood program	512 (72%)	

Overall, 7 out of every 10 families (70%) had at least one conversation about early childhood programs with staff. This itself is notable. Additionally, more than half (53%) of families with a BELL record attended some sort of early childhood program and more than half (52%) of those were high-quality programs. However, 72% of children 0-5 were either not participating in any early childhood program or they were participating in some type of care for which quality was unknown.

Early childhood program participation rates were lowest for children under age 3. Fewer infants and toddlers attended any early childhood program (49% vs. 63% for 3- to 5-year-olds) and when they did attend, they were less likely to be in high quality settings (43% vs. 66%). There are fewer early care and learning programs funded for infants and toddlers which decreases their opportunity to participate. Finally, no information is known for 30% of families. Also unknown is how many families of infants and toddlers may be participating in home visiting programs and this could explain the difference in infant toddler vs preschool participation, although staff have reported limited access to home visiting and BELL has increased efforts to collaborate with home visiting programs in the community.

Lessons Learned from Head Start in Pennsylvania

Trends in Head Start suggest that efforts to strengthening capacity to reach out to families and identify children experiencing homelessness has resulted in steadily increasing enrollment and participation in Head Start. In addition to national campaigns encouraging enrollment, such as the *Home At Head Start* initiative, periodic regional networking events hosted by the PA Head Start State Collaboration Office have helped to keep sectors informed of one another's resources, changes, and needs. Such intentional activities can sustain relationships and facilitate referrals.

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[15] Ibid.

Family service data illustrate that a significant number of Head Start families have needs related to housing. The demand for assistance in accessing emergency shelter and obtaining help to meet ongoing housing expenses such as utilities and repairs are notable. Supporting staff with resource and training related to trauma and homelessness and supporting staff to maintain the partnerships required to support families can ensure continuity of care for children and stability for programs.

Lessons Learned from Building Early Links for Learning in Philadelphia

Philadelphia's BELL Initiative resulted in a number of key learnings. Engaging families in discussions about their children was appreciated by parents and conveyed regard for their choices and feelings. While many children were involved in early childhood programs, including programs of quality, many were still not enrolled in early childhood programs or services of any sort and programs of quality were found to be less available to families. Housing staff need the space and time to respond to families and processes over time to support parents in meeting the needs of their young children. More and better information is needed by housing staff about the early childhood system, its resources and how to access them. Early childhood programs need continued support to engage and support children and families with housing needs. The BELL Project documents the importance of initiating intentional *community building* efforts. PEC was successful in *engaging philanthropy* and *mobilizing a range of non-financial supports* from municipal services and suggest potential of engaging a variety of partners. at there are additional resources that can help.

Key to achieving their objectives was addressing systemic challenges presented by multiple definitions of who is homeless, disconnected and siloed policies, and lack of data, and they overcame these challenges by educating their networks on different eligibility criteria based on different ways of defining homelessness, working to align policies, and sharing data across sectors and expanding to ensure data specific to young children experiencing homelessness and their families was among data being collected. Their ongoing Children's Work Group collaborative meetings for maintaining strong partnerships across sectors provides a venue for sustaining success.

Looking Ahead

The information and data in this brief can provide a status check and foundation for moving forward with a clear plan for targeting children experiencing homelessness for outreach and increased enrollment in early childhood programs, to both help stabilize their families and their own learning and to prevent further disenfranchisement in the years ahead. Sufficient barriers exist to seriously limit access to this population. Both mobility and the complexity of family challenges make it likely that continuing simple sign-up and recruitment approaches will be unsuccessful in engaging these families.

Lessons learned demonstrate that intentional efforts at connecting the early childhood and housing sectors is needed. Overall population and poverty data can provide a scale to strategic planning and current data systems can be used and expanded to monitor impact of any policy and practice change. Efforts like those of the PA HSSCO and BELL illustrate how to achieve broader impact if expanded across sectors and statewide.

Concluding Comments

This brief did not include data or analyses related to *diversity* although inequities based on race and ethnicity impact access to both adequate housing and quality early care. Homelessness data is not readily available that separates out children by age and by race and ethnicity. Table 6 shows the breakdown of families with children using HUD emergency shelters and transitional housing in the U.S. from September 30, 2017, to September 30, 2018. Of course, children and parents can differ, but this data provide one perspective on the disproportional experience of homelessness by ethnicity and race.

Table 6. Homeless Families with Children in the U.S. [16]

	Ethnicity of Heads of Household		Race of Heads of Household				
	Hispanic/ Latino	Non-Hispanic/ Non-Latino	White, Non-Hispanic/ Non-Latino	White, Hispanic/ Latino	Black or African American	Other One Race	Multiple Race
Families with children in U.S.	20.9%	79.1%	56.8%	13.8%	13.6%	13.2%	2.6%
Families with children living in poverty	31.6%	68.5%	37.0%	20.3%	24.6%	14.9%	3.1%
Sheltered families with children	19.2%	80.8%	27.1%	14.5%	50.3%	3.6%	4.4%

It will be important to explore the intersection of age with race and ethnicity in any data collection, monitoring and planning to achieve equitable access and participation in quality early childhood programs across the Commonwealth.

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[16] U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Office of Community Planning and Development. (September 2020). Part 2: Estimates of Homelessness in the United States The 2018 Annual homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress. The 2018 Annual Homeless Assessment Report (AHAR) to Congress (huduser.gov)

Data presented in this report is for the period prior to the *Covid-19* pandemic which has had myriad and profound impacts on children and families, staff and programs, communities and entire sectors of early care and housing. For housing data in particular, many shelters closed so housing data available by age may markedly. Notable changes have occurred in the availability of early childhood programs, too. Data is only now beginning to emerge for the period 2019-2020 and future trends are difficult to estimate. This document can serve as a baseline for comparison with later years and for planning strategies to ensure equitable access to quality early learning for all young children. It will be important to continue to add to the analyses presented herein.

Finally, it continues to be critical that any understanding of young children experiencing homelessness and the intersection of early childhood and housing sectors be built upon very clear definitions of what constitutes homelessness and include accurate descriptions of the challenges faced by families and how they impact young children specifically. While the National Alliance to End Homelessness states that the number of homeless families decreased by 40% from 2007 to 2020[17], the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration presents rates, over a longer period, as historically high, saying that while in 1988 families accounted for about 1% of people experiencing homelessness, now it is about 36%. [18]

Untangling definitions, populations, and historical context regarding policies effecting children and families will undoubtably be important for taking a strategic and successful approach to ensuring the enrollment and full participation of young children experiencing homelessness in high quality early childhood programs in years to come. Hopefully, the data herein will be helpful to better understanding the current level of participation in the range of early childhood programs and in charting a path forward, setting goals and measuring progress.

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[17] National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2020). State of Homelessness. Washington, DC: National Alliance to End Homelessness. SOH: State and CoC Dashboards - National Alliance to End Homelessness
[18] Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (July 31, 2019). Child Homelessness: A Growing Crisis. Rockville, MD: US Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. www.samhsa.gov/homelessness-programs-resources/hpr-resources/child-homelessness-growing-crisis

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Contact Information

Pennsylvania Homeless Stakeholders Group: A network of state and non-profit organizations strategizing to the enrollment of young children experiencing homelessness into high quality early learning, including Head Start. Hosts quarterly meetings of providers. Contact Tracy Duarte at tradua@pakeys.org.

PA Head Start State Collaboration Office: The PA HSSCO is located at the Pennsylvania Key in Harrisburg. The HSSCO is federally funded by the US DHHS Office of Head Start through a grant to the PA Department of Human Services, Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL). Contact Tracy Duarte, Director, at tradua@pakeys.org.

Pennsylvania Continuum of Care: Information on the Eastern and Western PA CoCs can be found at https://pennsylvaniacoc.org/about-coc.

PA Head Start Association: A membership organization for Head Start providers and families. The PAHSA website includes contact information for Head Start programs by county. Contact www.paheadstart.org

Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) Regional Coordinator and Local Education Agency Liaisons: ECYEH Regional Coordinators and LEA Liaisons are the federal and state designated contacts to ensure access to education and necessary related supports and services to all students from birth through higher education. Coordinator Contact https://directory.center-school.org/homeless/contacts/display and Liaison Contact https://directory.center-school.org/homeless/liaison/search

Early Learning Resource Centers: ELRCs provide a single point-of-contact for families, early learning service providers and communities to gain information and access to services that support high quality child care and early learning programs. Contact www.dhs.pa.gov/Services/Assistance/Pages/ELRCs.aspx

People's Emergency Center (PEC) is located in West Philadelphia. PEC's mission is to nurture families, strengthen neighborhoods and drive change. For families, children, and youth experiencing homelessness, PEC offers more than 235 affordable housing units, job training, parenting and early childhood education, financial education and planning, life skills and technology classes. PEC seeks to change the life trajectory for the families who seek its services and inspire them to achieve housing security and financial stability. Contact Joe Willard, Vice President of Policy, at jwillard@pec-cares.org.