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# **Children Living with Homelessness Served by Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention – State Fiscal Year 2018**

Report to the Legislature

As required by Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.125

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## **For more information:**

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As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197: This report cost approximately \$465.00 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

*Upon request, this material will be made available in an alternative format such as large print, braille or audio recording. Printed on recycled paper.*

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## Legislative Charge

Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.125, requires the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to annually report on the number of homeless children served by the Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention system. The current report covers the 2017-18 school year. Data for this report came from the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) data system.

## Introduction

The Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) program is authorized under Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq.) (McKinney-Vento Act). The McKinney-Vento Act was originally authorized in 1987 and most recently re-authorized in December 2015 by the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). There is an increased focus on services for preschool-aged homeless children, which data show compose a major share of the overall homeless population; this includes the explicit inclusion of preschools in the definition of “school of origin.”

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires state and local education agencies to build awareness of the needs of children and youth who are homeless. Public schools, including charter schools, must provide services that remove barriers to enrollment, attendance and educational success of these children. Section 725(2) of the McKinney-Vento Act defines “homeless children and youths” as individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes:

- i. Children and youth who are:
  - a. sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason (sometimes referred to as “doubled-up”);
  - b. living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations;
  - c. living in emergency or transitional shelters; or,
  - d. abandoned in hospitals.
- ii. 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.
- iii. Children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- iv. Migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described above.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) is the federal law that supports systems and services for students with disabilities. Part C of IDEA focuses on requirements for states to locate, identify, and serve infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Under Part C, each state must have a comprehensive child-find system that identifies, locates, and evaluates all infants and toddlers with disabilities and ensures appropriate early intervention services are available to these children and their families. Part C child-find and service provision requirements also include all infants and toddlers with disabilities who are living with homelessness. In addition, staff of homeless family shelters are considered primary referral sources in the Part C system and must refer a child for early intervention services. Another important aspect of Part C of IDEA is that each state must adopt policies and practices to ensure that traditionally underserved groups, including families living with homelessness, are meaningfully involved in the planning and implementation of the Part C system.

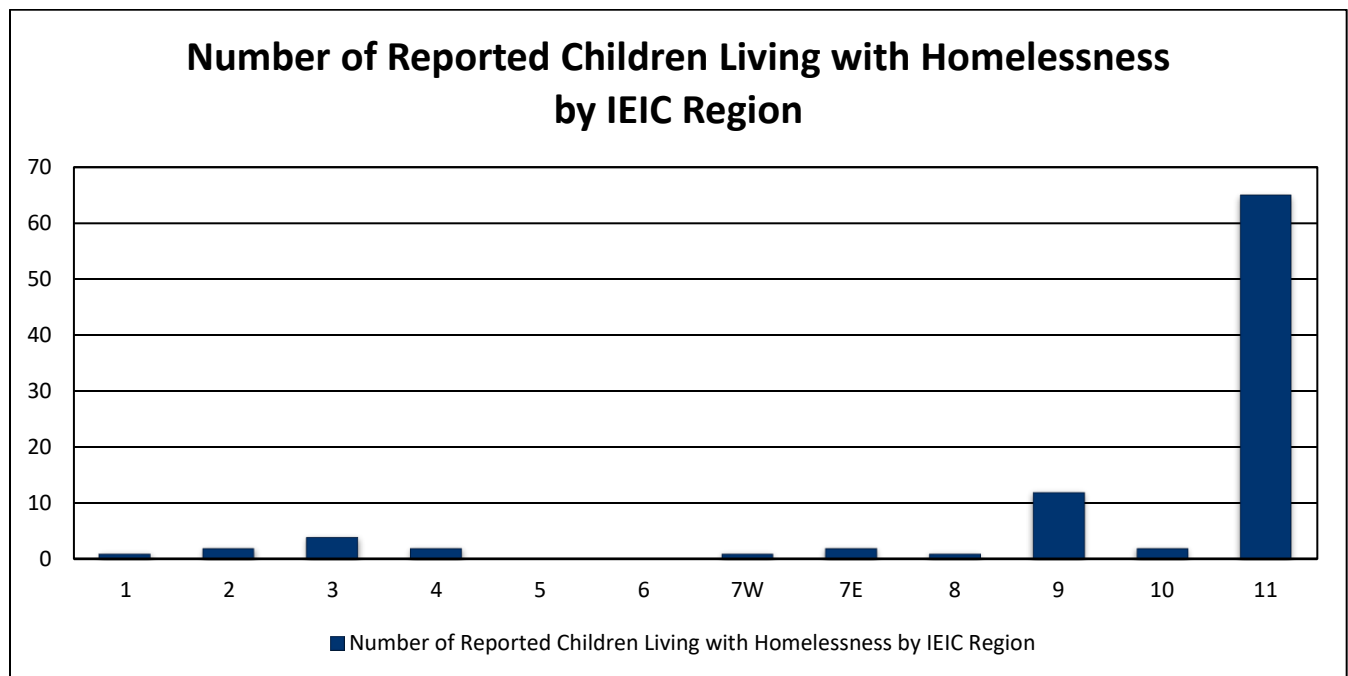
## Analysis

As reported through MARSS, a total of 92 infants and toddlers with disabilities were homeless during the 2017-18 school year as compared to 150 in 2016-17. It is not clear by the current data why this number dropped 38.7 percent, however due to transience of families living with homelessness, it is possible some children were counted twice in previous counts. This factor was ameliorated for the 2017-18 count. Of the 92 children who were reported homeless in 2017-18, 91 qualified under developmental delay, and one child qualified under Autism Spectrum Disorder. For home primary language: 79 children spoke English, six children spoke Spanish, three children spoke Hmong, three children spoke Somali, and one child spoke Amharic. Of the 92 children living

with homelessness in 2017-18: 46 children were white, non-Hispanic; 23 children were black, non-Hispanic; three children were American Indian or Alaskan Native; 10 children were Hispanic; six children were multi-racial; and four children were Asian. The total number of special education service hours reported for the 92 children ranged from a low of 0.1 hours to a high of 77 hours. The average hours of special education service hours was 14.5.

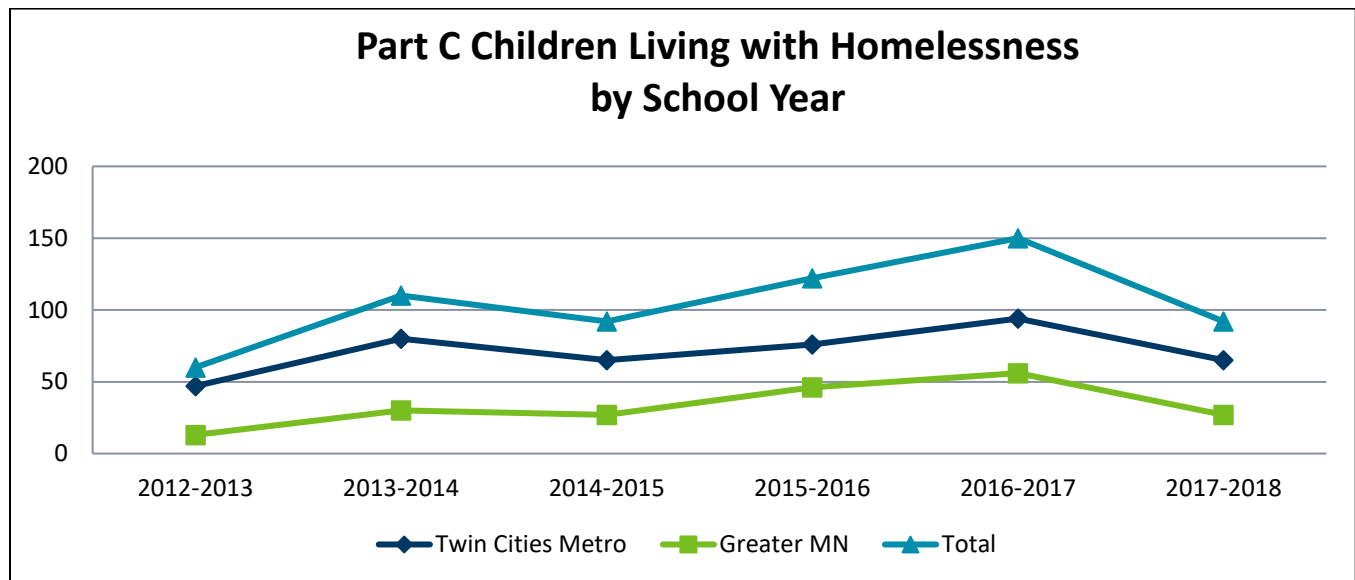
Member districts from 10 of 12 Interagency Early Intervention Committees (IEICs) reported serving infants or toddlers experiencing homelessness during the 2017-18 school year. Figure 1 below demonstrates the regional spread. Of the children reported within each of the 12 IEIC regions, the majority of children lived within Region 11, the Twin Cities metropolitan area.

Figure 1



Of the 92 children living with homelessness reported across districts in 2017-18: 65 were from the Twin Cities metropolitan area and 27 were from greater Minnesota. Figure 2 shows the number of children receiving Part C services who were reported to be living with homelessness in the Twin Cities metro area compared to greater Minnesota, over six school years since MDE began focusing the child-find, public awareness, and outreach efforts of the Interagency Early Intervention Committees (IEICs) on the homeless population. During this same time, MDE worked to enhance technical assistance to school districts to improve the accuracy and completeness of data reporting.

Figure 2



It is possible that infants and toddlers with disabilities who are homeless continue to be under-identified through child-find efforts (i.e., effective outreach is difficult; transience can affect enrollment into school-based Part C programming and thus entrance into the MARSS system). Part C referral data for 2017-18 also showed a significant decrease in total infants under the age of 1 being referred to Part C. While the cause(s) for this is unknown at this time, the Part C referral rates for infants under the age of 1 may also cause under-identification of infants under the age of 1 who are living with homelessness.

### How MDE Continues to Address this Issue

Efforts of MDE's Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) team to communicate the importance of identification of eligibility among young children experiencing homelessness began in the summer of 2013 with the annual retreat of the Governor's Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC). The focus of this retreat was underserved populations within the early intervention system. Roberto Reyes, MDE's Homeless and Neglected/Delinquent Programs state coordinator, presented the issue of and rules on serving homeless children, including infants and toddlers, within the education system. The presentation and discussion that followed revealed an obvious gap and lack of understanding among the various stakeholder groups represented by the ICC members related to homeless infants and toddlers and the relationship with the Part C system. Roberto Reyes continues to serve on the ICC as the state homelessness representative and will continue to help educate that ICC and IEICs about homelessness and how this is being reported and addressed in the schools, including within Part C programming.

Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.30, requires that each IEIC include a committee member to represent issues related to homelessness within the early intervention system. Currently, approximately half of the IEICs have a member on their committee with a focus on homelessness. For State Fiscal Year 2018, the IEIC included a goal in

their work plans related to evaluation of their child-find, public awareness and outreach efforts. Specifically, they looked at “How much did they do?”, “How well did they do it?”, and “Is anybody better off?”. This goal has been extended for State Fiscal Year 2019 for comparative data and to drive continued focus on the homelessness issue statewide. By answering these critical questions, IEICs will get a sense of their effectiveness connecting infants and toddlers who are homeless and have developmental concerns or disabilities to infant toddler intervention and preschool special education services.

In addition to the above efforts, Minnesota is in-process of expanding our current [Help Me Grow](#) system to be consistent with the Help Me Grow model developed by the Connecticut Children’s Hospital. Through the Children’s Cabinet and collaborative efforts of the Minnesota Departments of Health, Education, and Human Services, the expansion will lead in part to increased public awareness and outreach efforts, information and assistance to parents and professionals concerned about a child’s development, data collection and implementation, and linkages to a wider range of existing community-based services – including services that may directly benefit children and families who are experiencing homelessness.

MDE’s ECSE team continues to increase statewide capacity to serve these most vulnerable children and their families through intentional collaboration with other MDE divisions and other agencies as well as the IEICs.

## Conclusion

Minnesota is cognizant of and concerned for the issues related to identifying, reporting on, and serving infants and toddlers with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness; and Minnesota is taking the necessary action to address specific gaps and needs within the system. By addressing the issues related to homelessness throughout all levels of the Part C service system, MDE hopes to see all infants and toddlers and their families who are living with homelessness identified for and receiving appropriate early intervention services in a timely manner, so that they can maximize their children’s developmental outcomes and increase family stability moving forward.