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Children Experiencing Homelessness Served by Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention – State Fiscal Year 2019

Report to the Legislature

As required by Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.125

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As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197: This report cost approximately \$500 to prepare, including staff time, printing and mailing expenses.

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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 children experiencing homelessness served by the Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention system. The current report covers the 2018-19 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 children experiencing homelessness as evidenced by the explicit inclusion of preschools in the definition of “school of origin.” Data show preschool children comprise a major share of the overall homeless population.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires state and local educational agencies to build awareness of the needs of children and youth who are experiencing homelessness. 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 federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) supports systems and services for students with disabilities. Part C of IDEA requires states to locate, identify, and serve infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families. Part C child-find and service provision requirements include all infants and toddlers with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness. Staff of homeless family shelters are considered primary referral sources in the Part C system and must refer a child to Minnesota’s early intervention system if they have concerns about a child’s development. Another important aspect of Part C of IDEA is that each state must adopt

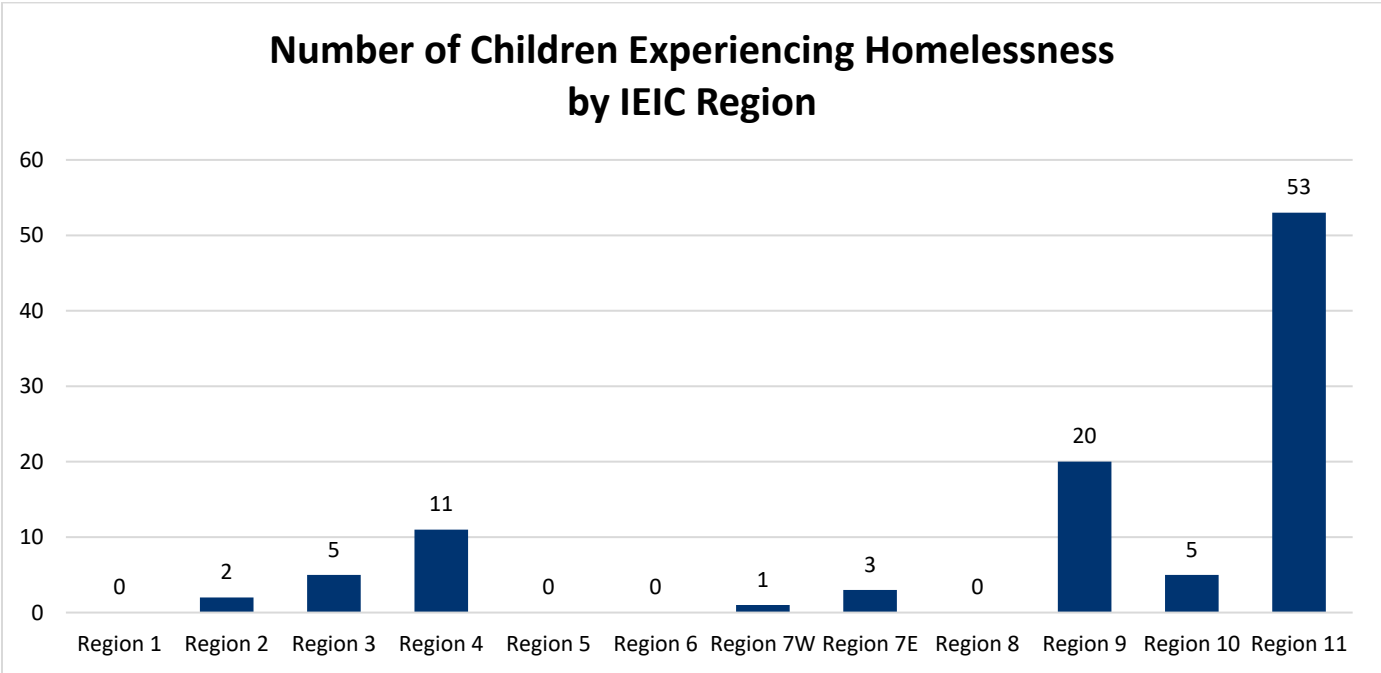
policies and practices to ensure that traditionally underserved groups, including families experiencing homelessness, are meaningfully involved in the planning and implementation of the Part C system.

Analysis

As reported through MARSS, a total of 101 infants and toddlers with disabilities experienced homelessness during the 2018-19 school year as compared to 92 in 2017-18. Due to transience of families experiencing homelessness, it is likely some children are not counted accurately or at all. Of the 101 children who were reported experiencing homelessness in 2018-19, 98 qualified under developmental delay, two children qualified under Autism Spectrum Disorder, and one child qualified under Visually Impaired. Home language for most children was English (87 children) followed by Spanish (eight children), and Somali (three children). The language of two children was reported as “other.” Of the 101 children experiencing homelessness in 2018-19: three children were American Indian/Alaska Native, one child was Asian, 23 children were Black/African American, 17 children were Hispanic, five children were identified as multi-racial, and 51 children were White. Two children were served in a setting designed for children with Developmental Delays, nine children were served in a setting designed for typically-developing children, and 89 children were served in the Home setting as is most typical for children served through natural settings in Part C.

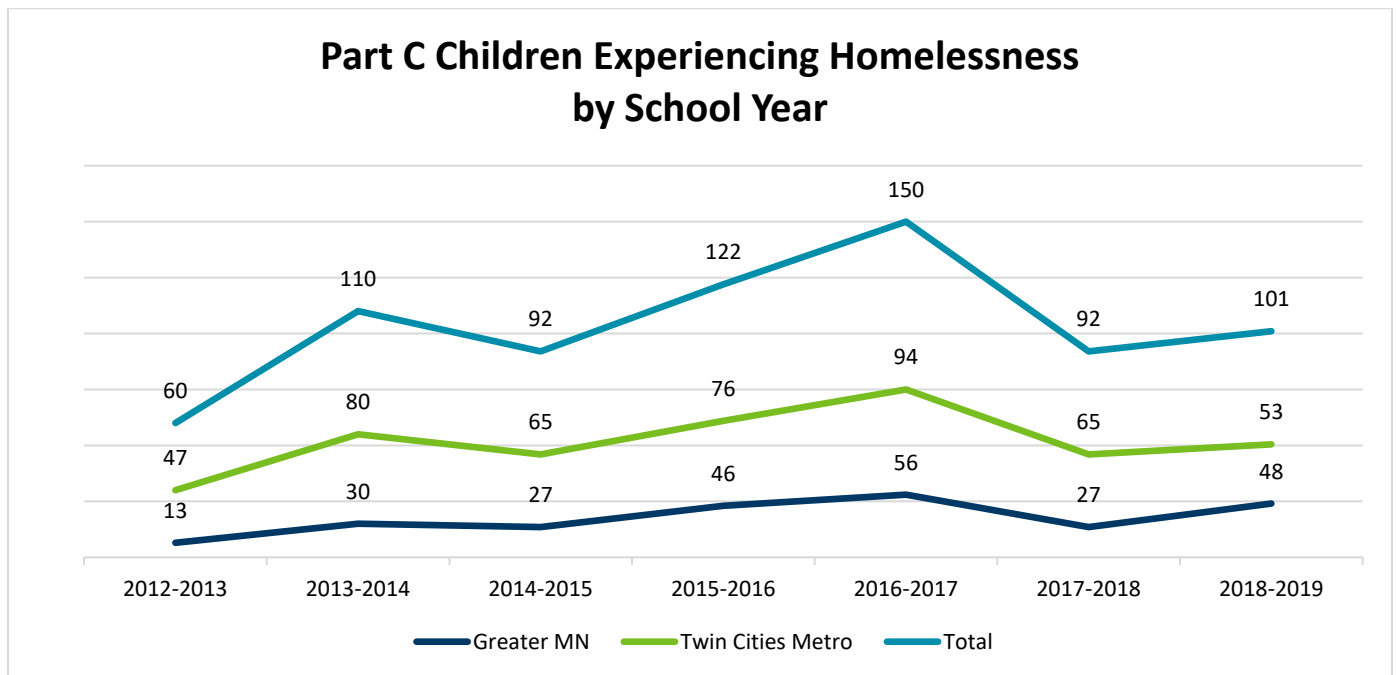
Member districts from eight of 12 Interagency Early Intervention Committees (IEICs) reported serving infants or toddlers experiencing homelessness during the 2018-19 school year. Figure 1 below demonstrates the regional spread. The highest number of children experiencing homelessness being served was in Region 11 (53), with Region 9 the next highest (20). There were no children reported being served in Regions 1, 5, 6, and 8.

Figure 1: Number of Children Experiencing Homelessness by IEIC Region



Of the 101 children experiencing homelessness reported across districts in 2018-19: 53 were from the Twin Cities metropolitan area and 48 were from Greater Minnesota. Figure 2 shows the number of children receiving Part C services who were reported to be experiencing homelessness in the Twin Cities metro area compared to Greater Minnesota over seven school years since MDE began a greater focus on the child-find, public awareness, and outreach efforts of the Interagency Early Intervention Committees (IEICs) on the population experiencing homelessness. During this same time, MDE worked to enhance technical assistance to school districts to improve the accuracy and completeness of data reporting.

Figure 2: Part C Children Experiencing Homelessness by School Year



It is possible that infants and toddlers with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness continue to be under-identified through child-find efforts (e.g., effective outreach is difficult; transience can affect enrollment into school-based Part C programming and thus entrance into the MARSS system). Part C MARSS data for 2018-19 shows that 17 children identified were under the age of 1 year, 38 children were between the ages of 1 and 2 years, and 45 children were between the ages of 2 and 3 years.

How MDE Continues to Address this Issue

Efforts of MDE’s Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) team to communicate the importance of identifying developmental concerns among young children experiencing homelessness builds upon work started during a retreat of the Governor’s Interagency Coordinating Council on Early Childhood Intervention (ICC) in 2013. The retreat focused on underserved populations within the early intervention system. The ICC continues to fill the required position of a “homeless coordinator of education of homeless children and youth” (Minn. Stat. § 125A.28), through MDE’s Homeless and Neglected/Delinquent Programs state coordinator, Roberto Reyes.

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, at least half of the IEICs have a member on their committee with a focus on homelessness. For State Fiscal Year 2019, many IEICs included a goal in their work plans related to evaluation of their child-find, public awareness and outreach efforts for this population. IEICs were encouraged to extend work on their goals into State Fiscal Year 2020. By answering critical questions, IEICs will get a sense of their effectiveness connecting infants and toddlers who are experiencing homeless and developmental concerns or disabilities to infant toddler intervention and preschool special education services.

In addition to the above efforts, Minnesota is in the process of finalizing and launching Help Me Connect, an expansion of our current Help Me Grow system to be consistent with the Help Me Grow model developed by the Connecticut Children's Hospital. Through the Minnesota's Children's Cabinet and collaborative efforts of the Minnesota Departments of Health, Education, and Human Services, the implementation of Help Me Connect 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 state agencies as well as the IEIC and greater diversity within the ICC.

Conclusion

Minnesota is cognizant of and taking action to address the issues related to identifying, reporting on, and serving infants and toddlers with disabilities who are experiencing homelessness. 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 experiencing 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.