



Children Experiencing Homelessness Served by Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention – State Fiscal Year 2020

Report to the Legislature

As required by Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.125

For more information:

Cat Tamminga, Part C Coordinator
Early Learning Services/Early Childhood Special Education
Minnesota Department of Education
1500 Highway 36 West
Roseville, MN 55113
651-582-8746
Cat.Tamminga@state.mn.us
education.mn.gov

As requested by Minnesota Statutes, section 3.197: This report cost approximately \$800 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.

Table of Contents

Legislative Charge.....	4
Introduction.....	4
Analysis.....	5
How MDE Continues to Address this Issue	7
Conclusion	8

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 2019-20 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 (as such term is defined in [section 6399 of title 20](#)) 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

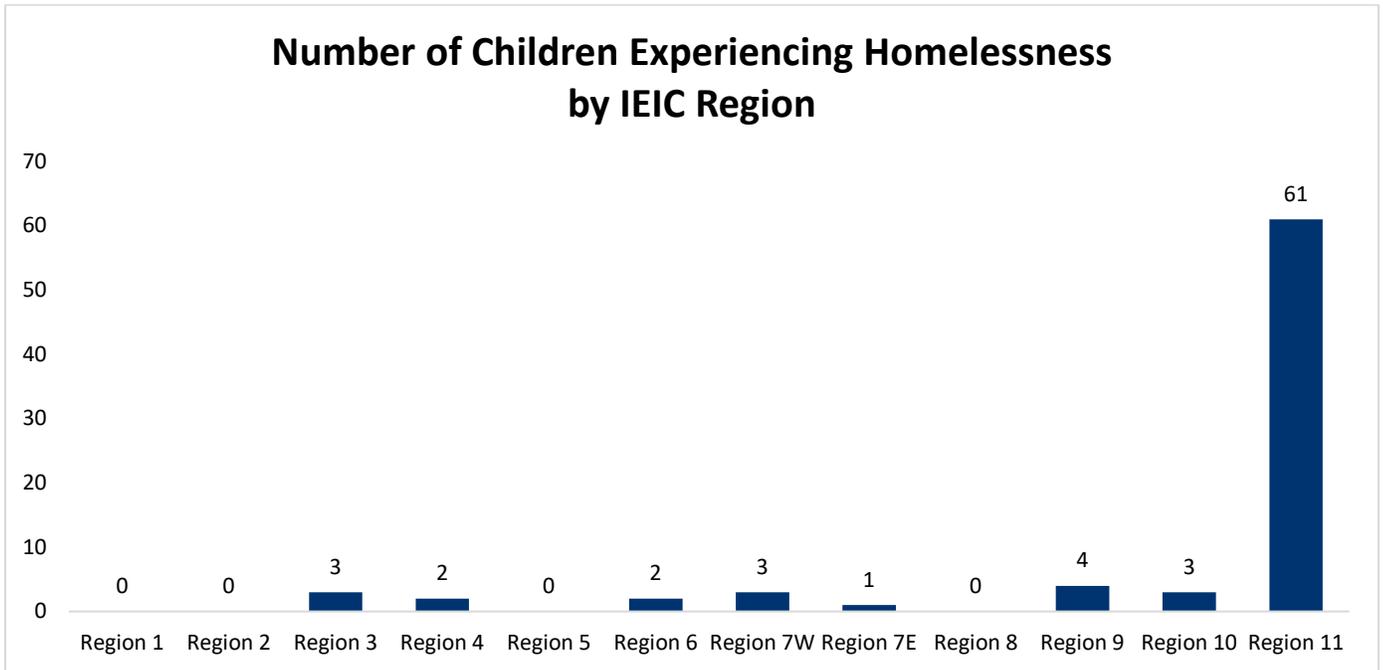
policies and practices to ensure that traditionally underserved groups, including families experiencing homelessness, are meaningfully involved in the planning and implementation of the Part C system.

Analysis

There was a total of 13,829 infants and toddlers referred to Early Childhood Special Education through Minnesota's Help Me Grow system during the 2019-20 school year. As reported through MARSS, a total of 79 infants and toddlers found to be eligible for services with disabilities experienced homelessness during the 2019-20 school year as compared to 101 in 2018-19. Due to transience of families experiencing homelessness, it is likely some children were not counted accurately or at all, particularly during the timeframe of the COVID-19 pandemic. Of the 79 children who were reported experiencing homelessness in 2019-20, 75 qualified for their primary disability category under Developmental Delay, two children qualified under Speech-Language Impaired, one child qualified under Autism Spectrum Disorder, and one child qualified under Deaf/Hard-of-Hearing. Note that for children under the age of 3, Developmental Delay is most common due to the different avenues a child can be found eligible under Part C in Minnesota. Home language for most children was English (73 children) followed by Hmong and Spanish (two children each), and Somali and Other (one child each). Of the 79 children experiencing homelessness in 2019-20: three children were identified as American Indian/Alaska Native; four children were identified as Asian; 17 children were identified as Black/African American; 10 children were identified as Hispanic/Latino; no children were identified as Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander; 12 children were identified as Two or More Identified; and 33 children were identified as White. Two children were served in a setting designed for children with Developmental Delays; six children were served in a setting designed for typically developing children; 69 children were served in the home setting as is most typical for children served through natural settings in Part C; two children were served in a service provider location; and no children were served in settings described as Other. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, distance learning (tele-practice) was used as a service delivery method within families' natural environment locations.

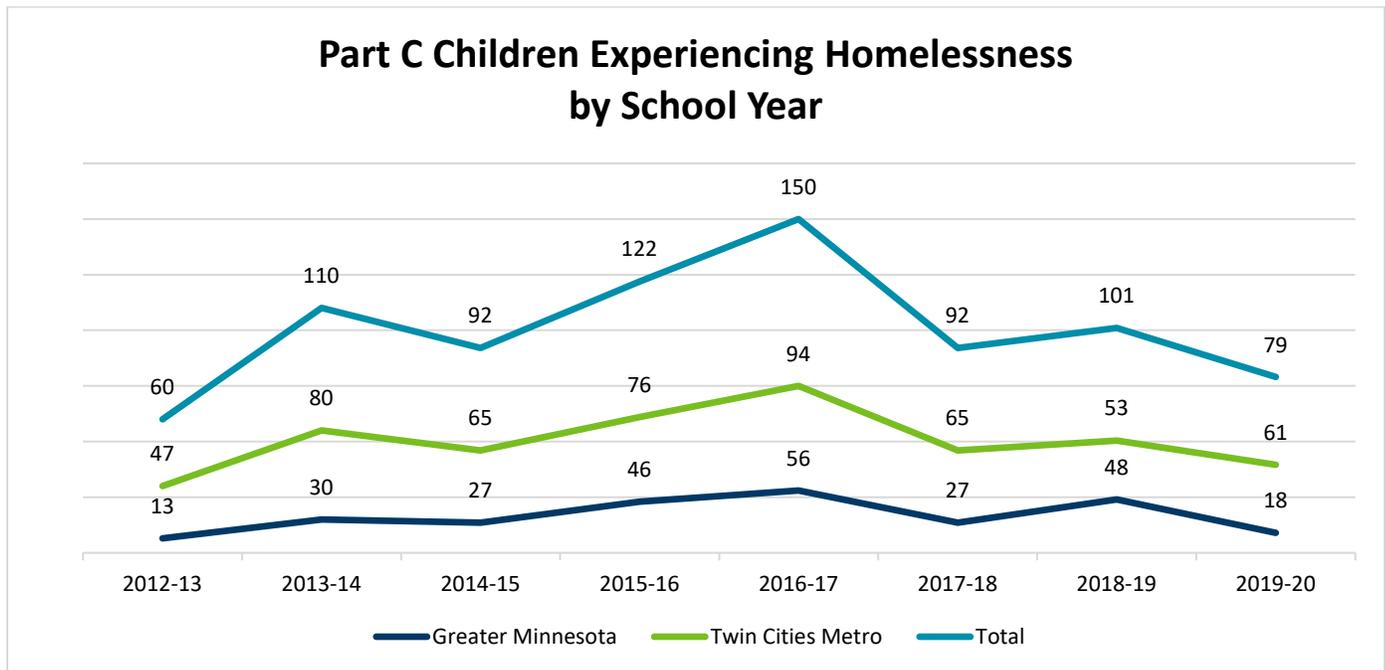
Member districts located within nine of the 12 [Interagency Early Intervention Committees \(IEICs\)](#), the regional teams statutorily responsible for child find and public awareness and outreach in Minnesota, reported serving infants or toddlers experiencing homelessness during the 2019-20 school year. Figure 1 demonstrates the number of children experiencing homelessness by regional spread. The highest number of children experiencing homelessness being served was in Region 11 (61), with Region 9 the next highest (4). There were no children reported being served in Regions 1, 2, 5 and 8.

Figure 1: Number of Children Experiencing Homelessness by IEIC Region



Of the 79 children experiencing homelessness reported across districts in 2019-20: 61 were from the Twin Cities metro region and 18 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 region compared to Greater Minnesota over the past eight school years. This is the timeframe that MDE began a greater focus on the child find, public awareness, and outreach efforts of the IEICs on the population experiencing homelessness. During this same time, MDE has also 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 suspected 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; COVID-19 has affected child find and families’ resources statewide). Part C MARSS data for 2019-20 shows that 18 children identified were under the age of 1 year, 23 children were between the ages of 1 and 2 years, and 38 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 ICC assists and advises MDE as the lead agency for ECSE services in our work. The 2013 retreat focused on underserved populations within the early intervention system, including a priority for children experiencing homelessness and their families. 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. The Part C Coordinator is also involved in a number of interagency and grant projects supporting infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness and their families to ensure the unique needs of infants and toddlers with disabilities or suspected of disabilities are represented in systems-level decisions and development.

Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.30, requires that each Interagency Early Intervention Committee (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 and 2020, a number of IEICs included a specific goal in their work plans for action and evaluation of their child find and public awareness and outreach efforts for this population. It is expected that child find for children experiencing homelessness was impacted directly by COVID-19, given that total referrals for Part C were down significantly from March 2020 through present.

In addition to the above efforts, Minnesota launched Help Me Connect on May 19, 2021. Help Me Connect is an expansion of Minnesota's current Help Me Grow system, combined with core components of the National Help Me Grow model developed by the Connecticut Children's Hospital. Help Me Connect is an interagency collaboration and partnership of the Minnesota Departments of Education, Health, and Human Services, as well as the Minnesota's Children's Cabinet. Implementation of Help Me Connect will lead to increased child find, public awareness and outreach efforts, information and assistance to families 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 support children and families who are experiencing homelessness. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, Help Me Connect also added a specific section for Peacetime Emergencies. We increased culturally supportive resources following the murder of George Floyd, which put a spotlight on Minnesota's racial inequities and disproportionalities in our systems.

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, the Minnesota Department of Health through interagency agreements, and other Minnesota state agencies. The IEICs and the ICC are intentionally focusing on children and families historically and currently made to be most marginalized by the systems, including infants and toddlers with disabilities or suspected of having disabilities and their families experiencing homelessness.

Conclusion

Minnesota is taking action to address the issues related to identifying, reporting on and serving infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families 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 receive self-determined early intervention services in a timely manner. Families know their children best. When families receive supports they know they need, families are better able to maximize their children's developmental outcomes and increase whole-family stability moving forward.