



# Homelessness Among Students: A Close Look

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## Definition and Incidences

- Homelessness is defined as a student who lacks an ordinary night time residence. This includes:
  - Living with multiple families
  - Living in motels
  - Living in public locations
- There are 2.5 million homeless students in the United States.
- Kentucky makes up 67,000 of these students
- 24% of students in Rowan County are considered homeless.

## Programs for Homeless Students

- Department of Community Based Services Division of Family Support offers monetary assistance for families considered below standard income. It provides assistance such as KTAP, Medicaid benefits, and SNAP benefits.
- Christian Social Services Inc. located in Morehead, Kentucky is funded by donations and grants. These funds assist families with rent, medical needs not covered by their insurance, utilities, and other basic necessities.
- Family Resource Centers are located within all school systems and are the easiest program that teachers can use to help students within their classroom. This program provides clothes, school supplies, and food through their backpack program. The backpack program provides food for students which will sustain them throughout the weekend.
- Morehead State University's Build-a-Bed program provides preschool through twelfth grade students living in Eastern Kentucky a proper place to sleep in their home. Each participant receives a twin sized bed, mattress, a set of sheets, a blanket, a hygiene kit, nightlight or alarm clock, and stuffed animal. This programs promotes stable and healthy bedtime routines and with that gives students happier days and more opportunity for success.

## Legislation

- The McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Assistance Improvements Act was passed in 1987 by President Ronald Reagan.
  - This act ensures that all students receive free transportation to and from school and must provide transportation to the student's school of origin.
  - Each state is required to designate a coordinator to create procedures and review policies to ensure that homeless children are able to attend school.
  - The state can choose not to implement the act. However this will impact the federal funding the state receives for education.
  - The law contains emergency relief actions, long-term solutions, and preventative methods for addressing homelessness.

## Effects on Student Learning

- Students who are homeless experience worry, stress, fear, and traumatic events leading to severe emotional defense. These emotions have adverse effects on students in the classroom.
- Students are burdened with fear and anxiety concerning basic needs such as food, shelter, and other necessary provisions for which children in stable homes do not have to consider.
- Students experiencing homelessness may be exposed to traumatic events such as interpersonal and community violence. These events can emotionally impact a child for the entirety of his/her life.
- Students tend to have increased health issues due to their living situations. They are more likely to be absent than their peers. This can be attributed to the lack of consistent healthcare and the family's intermittent mobility.
- Students lack reliable transportation to and from school; this has a significant impact on their absenteeism. Students lacking a regular nightly residence may be sleeping in a different place every night of the week. This can make transportation to school challenging.
- Students who are homeless may not have access to necessary items for personal hygiene and clothing. This is a prominent issue for those students who have an irregular nightly residence.
- Students may not have access to the resources needed to complete assignments such as paper, pencils, books, or internet.

Top 10 Composite Score	Bottom 10 Composite Score
1. Minnesota	41. Tennessee
2. Nebraska	42. Kentucky
3. Massachusetts	43. Oklahoma
4. Iowa	44. Nevada
5. New Jersey	45. Arizona
6. Vermont	46. New Mexico
7. New Hampshire	47. Arkansas
8. Pennsylvania	48. California
9. Hawaii	49. Mississippi
10. Maine	50. Alabama



*"...what would you do with 100 dollars?" Most kids talked about buying new toys, game systems, or giving the money to someone. One little boy wrote, "I would buy myself a bed." On Saturday, this very deserving 9-year-old boy will be sleeping in his brand new bed for the first time. We have a lot of work to do in the next two days, but it will all be worth it when 240 children in Eastern Kentucky will be getting a good night's sleep!! I love Build-A-Bed!!"*

-Mary Claire Williams

(MCorps- AmeriCorps and Build-a-Bed participant)

## How Can Educators Help?

- A positively influenced teacher can have the greatest impact on the student's educational experience. For students who are experiencing homelessness, education must emulate the compassion and cognitive stimulation which he/she may not be experiencing at home.
- Teachers should take exceptional measures to keep the students engrossed in school work and extracurricular activities. By keeping the student engaged, the teacher is giving the student a long-lasting, effectual learning experience which can influence a lifetime of success.
- Knowledge and advocacy for the rights of students who are homeless according to educational litigation can improve the educational potential of students.

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