



Homeless Children 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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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 (Part C). The current report covers the 2016-17 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, and

- iv. Migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described above.

Each state must adopt policies that ensure appropriate early intervention services are available to all infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families in the state, including those who are homeless. CFR 34 § 303.101(a)(1)(ii)

Similarly, each state is required to ensure that policies and practices have been adopted to ensure that traditionally underserved groups, including homeless families, are meaningfully involved in the planning and implementation of all of the Part C system. CFR 34 § 303.227(a)

Each state must also have a comprehensive child-find system that identifies, locates and evaluates all infants and toddlers with disabilities in the state, including infants and toddlers with disabilities who are homeless. CFR 34 § 303.302(b)(1)(ii)

Homeless family shelters are considered a primary referral source in the Part C system. CFR 34 § 303.303(c)(10) When shelter staff suspects that a child has a developmental delay or disability, they are federally required to refer a child for early intervention services. CFR 34 § 303.303(a)

Analysis

As reported through MARSS, a total of 150 infants and toddlers with disabilities were homeless during the 2016-17 school year. One hundred forty-six of the children qualified under developmental delay and four under Autism Spectrum Disorder. For home primary language reported in MARSS, 137 children spoke English, eight spoke Spanish, two spoke Hmong and one each spoke American Sign Language, Amharic and Karen. Sixty-nine children were white, non-Hispanic; 39 were black, non-Hispanic; 18 were American Indian; 14 were Hispanic; and 10 were Asian or Pacific Islander. Thirty-five school districts reported having homeless children for the 2016-17 school year as compared to 26 districts in 2015-2016. Of the 150 children reported across districts in 2016-17, 94 were from the Twin Cities metropolitan area and 56 were from greater Minnesota. The total number of special education service hours reported for the 150 children ranged from a low of .2 hours to a high of 146 hours. The median number of hours was 12.45 and the average was 17.85 hours of special education services. Overall, there was approximately a 23 percent increase in the number of children receiving Part C services who were reported to be homeless during the 2016-17 school year.

Figure 1

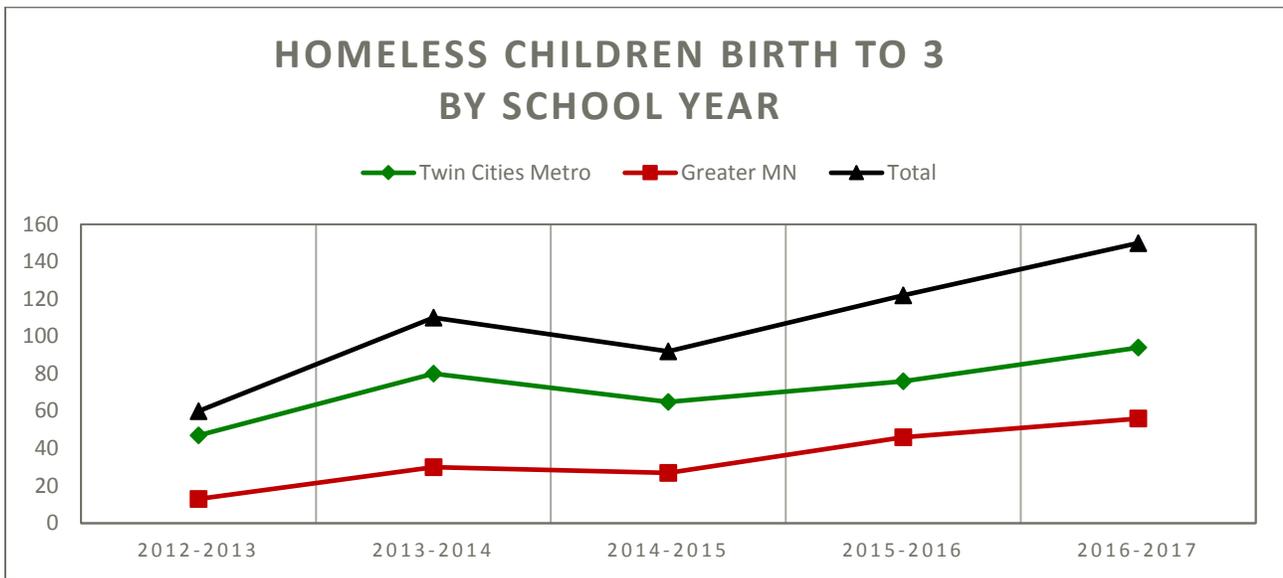


Figure 1 shows the trend of the number of children receiving Part C services who were reported to be homeless, broken out by Twin Cities metro area and greater Minnesota, over five school years since MDE began focusing the child-find, public awareness and outreach efforts of the Interagency Early Intervention Committees on the homeless population.

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), but are also still likely to be under-reported as homeless within the MARSS system.

How MDE Continues to Address this Issue

Efforts of the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) team to communicate the urgency of 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 now serves on the ICC as the state homelessness representative.

The homeless population is a federally mandated focus of the regional Interagency Early Intervention Committees (IEICs) through their child-find, public awareness and outreach efforts. CFR 34 § 303.302 (b)(1)(ii) Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.30, requires that each IEIC include a committee member to represent issues related to homelessness within the early intervention system. For State Fiscal Year 2018, the IEIC will include a goal in their work plans related to evaluation of their child-find, public awareness and outreach efforts. Specifically, they will be looking at “how much did they do”? “how well did they do it”? and “is anybody better off”? By answering these critical questions, IEICs will get a sense of their effectiveness connecting infants and

toddlers who are homeless (and for whom there are developmental concerns or disabilities) to infant toddler intervention and preschool special education services.

Minnesota, through the Children’s Cabinet and efforts of the Minnesota Departments of Health, Education, and Human Services, is in the process of expanding our current Help Me Grow system to be consistent with the National Help Me Grow model out of Connecticut Children’s Hospital. The expansion will lead to increased public awareness and outreach efforts, information and assistance to parents and professionals concerned about a child’s development, and linkages to a wider range of existing community-based services.

MDE hired a Help Me Grow Implementation Coordinator in January 2017 to lead the implementation efforts of the expanded system. The expansion of Help Me Grow will be beneficial to families experiencing homelessness and other risk factors as the efforts of the current Help Me Grow initiative only direct and connect eligible children to Part C infant and toddler intervention services or preschool special education and not any other services and supports that a family experiencing homelessness may benefit from.

In the fall of 2015 through early 2016, the commissioner of education convened a working group to look at the education access and developmental needs of homeless children, ages birth to 4. A careful and thoughtful review of the circumstances and barriers to homeless children’s developmental, social/emotional, and academic needs would be beneficial to understanding how a state response could positively impact student outcomes.

The goals of the working group were to look at the following questions:

- Are we correctly identifying homeless children ages 0-4?
- What needs do homeless children, ages 0-4, have?
- What barriers or gaps in service exist that limit access for homeless children?
- What education-specific services do homeless children, ages 0-4, need?
- What educational services currently exist to fulfill those needs? What are the gaps?
- What resources are currently available that provide educational services to homeless children, ages 0-4?
- What resources are still needed to fill any identified gaps and where does that funding come from—the school district, city, county, state, or federal government?

The working group was asked to provide input and expertise on components of a report and provide recommendations that would meet the developmental needs of homeless children, ages 0-4, to ensure academic success.

Conclusion

Minnesota is aware of the issues related to identifying, serving and reporting on infants and toddlers with disabilities who are homeless and is taking the necessary action to address the need 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 with disabilities and their families who are homeless identified for early intervention services in a timely manner so they receive the appropriate level and intensity of services to maximize their developmental outcomes.

