

**THE HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
ACT OF 2011: PROPOSALS TO PROMOTE  
ECONOMIC INDEPENDENCE FOR HOMELESS  
CHILDREN AND YOUTH**

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**HEARING**

BEFORE THE

SUBCOMMITTEE ON  
INSURANCE, HOUSING AND  
COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY

OF THE

COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ONE HUNDRED TWELFTH CONGRESS

FIRST SESSION

DECEMBER 15, 2011

Printed for the use of the Committee on Financial Services

**Serial No. 112-93**



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**THE HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH  
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**Thursday, December 15, 2011**

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,  
SUBCOMMITTEE ON INSURANCE, HOUSING  
AND COMMUNITY OPPORTUNITY,  
COMMITTEE ON FINANCIAL SERVICES,  
*Washington, D.C.*

The subcommittee met, pursuant to notice, at 10:07 a.m., in room 2237, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Judy Biggert [chairwoman of the subcommittee] presiding.

Members present: Representatives Biggert, Capito, Stivers; Waters, Cleaver, and Capuano.

Also present: Representatives George Miller of California, Green, and Davis.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. The Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity will come to order. We are having a hearing today entitled, “The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011: Proposals to Promote Economic Independence for Homeless Children and Youth.”

I would like to welcome you all here today. And first of all, I would like to thank the Judiciary Committee for allowing us to hold our hearing in this room. We usually are in our Financial Services Committee room, but they are doing some work to fix the walls because of the earthquake that occurred about a month ago. I never thought that Washington would have to repair walls from earthquakes, but that is the way it is.

I will now turn to opening statements, and without objection, all Members’ opening statements will be made a part of the record. And I will yield myself such time as I require.

Good morning, everyone, and I would like to welcome our special guests on panel one, and especially the current or former homeless children and youth, also in the audience. Welcome, to you, and thank you so much for being here. And we hope that your first experience—I assume this is your first experience—with the U.S. Congress as a witness or in the audience here is a good one, one that will help many children in this country.

And I would also like to recognize a now formerly homeless family that was featured on “60 Minutes” recently, the Metzgers—Arielle, Austin, and their dad, Tom. So welcome—maybe raise your

hands so we can see where you are. Thank you. Thanks for being here.

Children should not be without a home and they should not have to fight to prove that they are homeless, and on this, I hope we all agree. Today's hearing will examine H.R. 32, the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011, which will expand the McKinney-Vento definition of "homeless person" so that homeless children and youth verified as homeless by other Federal programs can access HUD housing and services.

We have a unique opportunity to hear from witnesses about the bureaucratic barriers that are preventing homeless children and youth from securing HUD homeless assistance. Our ultimate goal is to ensure that homeless children and youth are eligible for HUD homeless housing and supportive services.

Secure and more stable housing as well as supportive services will help kids stay in school and avoid becoming tomorrow's homeless adults. These goals must be a top priority for Federal agencies that have homeless programs.

If Federal programs are not working for the people they are intended to serve, it is our job to find the flaws and reform those programs. During the past decade, two significant reforms to the McKinney-Vento Act have been intended to help children and youth to more easily secure homeless assistance, but our work is not complete. This week, the National Center on Family Homelessness released a report revealing that 1 out of every 45 children in the United States is homeless.

The Department of Education reported that student homelessness is on the rise. There are nearly 1 million homeless children in the United States, and these statistics are absolutely unacceptable.

Our subcommittee will work to identify the Federal red tape that is standing in the way of local providers who are helping homeless children and youth to increase what they can do. We will pursue reform measures that break down those barriers. One such reform measure, H.R. 32, our subcommittee will likely consider when we come back in 2012.

With that, I recognize the gentleman from Missouri, Mr. Cleaver, for an opening statement.

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I would like to first of all extend a very warm welcome to the two young men and four young women who are testifying before this committee. You are having an experience that hardly any other individuals your age will ever have, and that means that you are now famous. You can start your own reality TV show. Thank you for being here to share your own personal experiences.

You can't turn on the television or go out anyplace during this time of year without seeing at least the attempt to create a festive environment. This is a holiday season that generally captures the attention of just about everybody in this country.

It is difficult, however, for me, having read your testimonies, to feel the kind of festive atmosphere that I would normally enter into during this time of the year. While I have four children, and while I look like I am in my thirties, I actually have three grandchildren,

and it is a bit painful to read your testimonies. There is nothing that can touch my soul as much as finding pain with young people.

In my real life, I am a United Methodist pastor, and from time to time I do become involved in issues adversely affecting young people. And this testimony that I was able to read actually touched my soul and caused me to do a great deal of thinking last night as I was trying to sleep. And in my struggles last night trying to sleep after having read this, I thought to myself, "Now, what about all these other kids around the country who have no place to sleep?" I am in my bed across the street—I live in the Methodist building—and I am not able to sleep because I am thinking, "Boy, this is terrible." And then, I thought about people without a place to sleep, and that really created more pain.

Sometimes, our discussions on the issues of homelessness can become extremely technical and we become more involved in program descriptions and specifics, but we cannot lose sight—we must not lose sight of the fact that this discussion today is about real people—real stories. And your testimony will help us to remember that.

One thing we all know is that despite the efforts we have made over the past several years, and the improvements that we have made with the HEARTH Act, there is still much that our Federal agencies could do to improve coordination across programs and increase access to the services that are being provided. I think that today we will hear some valuable perspectives on how we in Congress can help.

I understand that our subcommittee Chair, Mrs. Biggert's, bill is intended to reduce the barriers to services for children and youth who are in highly unstable housing situations but don't currently meet the HUD definition of homeless. So I want to thank Mrs. Biggert for her work.

And, there are very few conversations that we can have here in Washington that will not include a discussion of dollars. For good or bad, that is the way it goes. And this discussion is no different, so we have to acknowledge that fact as we move forward.

I want to thank you, Madam Chairwoman, for what you have done, and I look forward to hearing the testimony today.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Cleaver.

The gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Stivers, is recognized for 3 minutes.

Mr. STIVERS. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman. And I would like to thank you for holding this hearing today to ensure that homeless children and youth have access to homeless assistance and services. I appreciate that.

I am pleased to welcome Private First Class Brittany Amber Koon, who spent much of her childhood in Upper Arlington, Ohio, in my district, and she recently joined the United States military—the Army—and completed her initial service and is stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. I am looking forward to hearing her testimony today, and I want to thank her and all the witnesses for sharing their stories.

One of the things that Private First Class Koon's testimony reminded me, she has a quote in there that she liked the idea of taking her leadership skills to the next level to serve her country and

she decided to go on active duty because she would have training and a stable place to live. We have a lot of young folks in this country who have a lot to offer, and many of them are fighting homelessness. And I can tell you, I am pleased to join that fight with Private First Class Koon and to try to fight homelessness.

I am looking forward to hearing the testimony of all of the witnesses today. I appreciate your time, and I look forward to hearing your testimony.

And I appreciate the chairman for holding this hearing, and I look forward to continuing the fight to make things better for young folks who are suffering from homelessness.

Thank you so much.

And welcome, Private First Class Koon.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

Mr. Cleaver?

Mr. CLEAVER. Mr. George Miller is here with us. He is not a member of this subcommittee, but I would ask unanimous consent to allow him to speak on this issue that he feels very strongly about.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The gentleman from Massachusetts is recognized for 1 minute.

Mr. CAPUANO. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Madam Chairwoman, thank you for having this hearing, and I congratulate the young people who are here today. I don't think this is a usual situation. Congress is not a usual place. So don't think this has anything to do with most of your real life.

But I want to be really clear: This proposal today is a good proposal. It is something that is long overdue and I congratulate the chairwoman for submitting it.

But I also want to be very clear: This is not going to be the final answer to ending homelessness with children or with others. The only way this country is going to do that is to put money on the table to build more affordable housing. Simple.

Otherwise, there will be no place to go. Simply getting a family into a shelter is better than not, but we can't just leave them in a shelter. That is not real advancement; that is not real opportunity.

It is better than not, but we need to build affordable housing in this country right up the ladder for the people at the bottom, the people on the next rung up, and the next rung up. And we need to make sure that those people can afford to buy a home. In today's world, we will be able to afford tomorrow by keeping mortgage rates at a reasonable level.

Otherwise, most of the world will be forced into subsidized housing if they can't get into their own home or homeownership. And if that happens, we will never be able to build our way out of it.

So I want to be really clear: This is a good proposal that is long overdue that I strongly support and I look forward to passing.

But as far as I am concerned, we really have to get serious about addressing homelessness in this country, which, to me, is a national embarrassment. It is a national embarrassment that we have children on the streets. It is a national embarrassment that we have veterans on the street. It is a national embarrassment

that we don't take care of some of our people with mental challenges who are also on the street.

I think it doesn't speak well for us as a society. So for me, this is a great thing, but I want to be very clear that this will not end homelessness. The only way for us to do that as a society is to be honest about it and to try to put money on the table to build more affordable housing so that people will be able to move up the ladder on their own.

Madam Chairwoman, I yield back the remainder of my time.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

Mr. Green, from Texas, you are recognized for 2 minutes.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Please permit me, Madam Chairwoman, to thank you for hosting this hearing. It is, without question, one of the most important hearings that we will have, and one of the most important hearings that I think that I have been a party to. So I am grateful that you have had the vision and the foresight to cause us to visit these issues.

I would like to concur with my colleagues who have stressed the importance of the issue. I also want to stress the importance of the fact that we can solve the problem. It is not something that is beyond our ability to resolve.

So the question really isn't whether there is a way to resolve this issue of homelessness with our young people. The question is really whether we have the will.

Do we have the will to do it? If we only have the will, this country, which prides itself on its future, will take charge and make sure that the future continues to be bright for all of our children.

I thank you, and I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Green.

We are joined by Ranking Member Miller, the ranking member of the Education and the Workforce Committee.

Thank you for joining us, and you are recognized for 4 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you, Chairwoman Biggert, for holding this hearing on such a critical issue facing our Nation today. I want to thank you for your leadership on this issue and the Committee on Education and the Workforce. You have been a consistent champion of homeless children and families, and it has been a pleasure to partner with you on such important issues.

I also want to thank all the young people who are here to tell their stories today to the committee and to the Congress. I can't tell you how important it is that Congress hears directly on the realities that you and your families face because of the lack of adequate housing. I have served on the Education Committee for my entire time in public office, and I know what a dramatic impact housing and mobility have on a student's education.

Public schools have a unique perspective on social and economic issues like homelessness. Unlike other community service organizations, schools see the full range of children without housing, not just children and youth who make it into a shelter. They see kids moving from place to place, from couch, to basement, to car, to motel, and to another couch. None of these places should be considered a home.

We know that homelessness puts kids at a much higher risk of educational failure. Students without stable homes have more attendance problems and they don't do as well in school. Student homelessness is also often overlooked as a contributor to the Nation's dropout crises.

Without an education, these students will have a more difficult time obtaining jobs that pay decent wages, and they are more likely to experience homelessness as an adult. Federal education law, through the McKinney-Vento Act, requires schools to support homeless students in a number of ways, including keeping homeless students in the same school when it is in their best interest and providing transportation or immediately enrolling them in new schools.

However, education is only part of the answer. In order for homeless students to succeed in school, they must receive housing and other supportive services that will stabilize their situations and enable them to concentrate on their education.

Unfortunately, school districts face barriers when they try to refer kids to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's homeless programs because of the difference in the definitions of "homeless." This prevents kids from getting services they need and limits community collaboration. And perhaps equally disturbing, this mismatch in definition also keeps the true scale of children and youth homelessness hidden from view.

H.R. 32 is similar to legislation enacted by the Education and the Workforce Committee, the Child Nutrition and Higher Education Act. Both of these laws help homeless kids get services through the programs by taking advantage of point people in the public schools. Similarly, H.R. 32 gets rid of the interagency barriers by allowing school districts and liaisons and others in Federal and child youth programs to verify children and youth in HUD homelessness services.

It is absolutely critical that this coordination, collaboration, and availability be made acceptable within the laws of this country so that these children will not have these artificial barriers put up to stability in their residencies, and in stability in their education attainment, and stability in their family life so that they can continue to seek and to successfully complete their educational opportunities in this country.

And I want to thank you again, Madam Chairwoman, for holding this hearing.

And again, thank you to the students we are going to hear from. Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you very much.

And now, we will introduce all of the panel members, and then we will come back and you will each have 5 minutes for your statement.

We have: Brandon Dunlap, from Chicago, Illinois; Rumi Khan, who is in sixth grade at Lambertton Middle School, Carlisle, Pennsylvania—thank you for being here; Brittany Amber Koon, PFC, Fort Hood, Texas—thank you for being here; Brook Pastor, who is in seventh grade at William Paca Middle School, Shirley, New York—thank you for being here, also; Destiny Raynor, who is in ninth grade at Winter Springs High School in Sanford, Florida—it is a little cold here, isn't it, compared to that; and Ms. Starnica

Rodgers, from Truman College in Chicago, Illinois. Thank you all for being here.

With that, without objection, your written statements will be made a part of the record, and then you will each be recognized for a 5-minute summary of your testimony.

So we will start with you, Brandon Dunlap.

**STATEMENT OF BRANDON DUNLAP, CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

Mr. DUNLAP. Good morning. Thank you for having me here today to testify in support of H.R. 32.

I am from Chicago, Illinois. I graduated from Kendall College and currently work in the food and beverage department of the Union League Club. I am proud of what I have accomplished so far but it has been very difficult. A safe and secure place to live would have been very helpful to me in many ways.

For most of my childhood, I did not have a stable place to live. My parents separated when I was young. After they split, my mom, sister, and I ended up living with different relatives and friends.

Since then, my mom got and lost a number of apartments, and when we were not together, I had to move from place to place. The summer before my junior year, I received a phone call just before work from my sister stating that the sheriff was there to put our things on the street. My mother was nowhere to be found.

I went to work with tears in my eyes, not knowing where I was going to go for the night. The tears wouldn't stop, so my manager offered to let me go home. The tears came even stronger than possible because I had no home to go to.

That night, I stayed with my cousin. However, he didn't allow me to have a key to come and go as I pleased, and there wasn't enough room for me or even a bed. I slept on the floor under the pool table.

Some nights, I would travel a long distance on public transportation from school to work, often in bad weather, only to find that my cousin was not home and I needed to find somewhere else to stay for the night. I would scramble to call different friends and family members and then get back to the bus to travel a long distance to another place to stay.

I developed a rotation theory in which I would try to avoid staying in the same place two nights in a row. I had to have a plan, and then a backup plan, and then more plans just in case the backup plan didn't work.

The time and energy it took for me to figure out where to sleep each night and travel to get there, plus my job at Subway, left little time for homework. I have faced many barriers to housing in my life. My mom had issues she needed help with, but if she had had stable housing and services, she may have been able to address those issues, and my homelessness could have been prevented.

After I was on my own in high school, I could not afford my own housing, and even if I could have, no one would rent to a teenager. Although people at my school were helping me with other things, nobody was able to help me with my living situation. I would have loved some place to live that was safe, warm, and consistent, and a healthy place to do homework, go to school, work, eat, and live my life.

It would have been very difficult to verify my living situation growing up. To ask for proof that an adult allowed me, a homeless child, to live with them for only 14 days would possibly cause some adults to feel guilty or worry that they could get in trouble.

I didn't want anyone who was helping me to get tired of my presence. Asking them for verification would be another burden for them.

For the same reasons, I would not feel comfortable asking them to state that I moved twice within 60 days. Most people knew only what I told them about my living situation and didn't keep track of the number of days or moves.

Also, family members would have been reluctant to verify something that might show my parents were not caring for me. I also didn't want to risk doing anything that might involve any authorities because I didn't want them going after my parents.

If, in order to access housing services, I had to show that I would likely be homeless for a long time, that would be difficult for me, as I always hoped that I wouldn't be homeless for too long.

I would also like to repeat something I said in the beginning of my statement: I am proud of what I have accomplished. When I was homeless, it was like steering a ship in a storm on the open ocean. Above all else, this situation has forced me to look to myself for success.

However, I hope that other young people do not have to go through what I went through. I hope that the situation of young people who are staying temporarily with friends and families is considered homeless by all government agencies, and they are given assistance with a stable place to live.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my experience with you today.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Dunlap can be found on page 66 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you so much.

Rumi Khan, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF RUMI KHAN, 6TH GRADER, LAMBERTON  
MIDDLE SCHOOL, CARLISLE, PENNSYLVANIA**

Mr. KHAN. Good morning, Mrs. Biggert, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for holding this hearing so you can learn about homelessness from how we see it as kids.

My name is Rumi Khan, and I am 11 years old. I am in 6th grade at Lambertton Middle School in Carlisle, PA.

Me and my mom are homeless. We got that way because my dad was abusing me and my mom. He hit me, and called me stupid and retarded. He tried to choke my mom.

We left our home in June last year and went to stay in a hotel for a couple of nights. She tried to find a shelter for us to stay in but they didn't have any room.

One of her friends from work offered to let us stay there. Her friend changed and would get really mean with me. Sometimes she was nice, but you never knew when she would smack her son or pull his hair.

Once the lady pushed me up the stairs and she was really mad at me. When my mom said something to her about pushing me up the stairs, she told my mom to leave.

Another friend that my mom grew up with heard about our situation and invited us to stay with him. It turned out that he had mental problems and was a big liar.

My mom tried to get us into shelters for families who have been abused but we couldn't because of me. They don't allow older boys like me to stay there.

We were in one shelter for a little while, but had a time limit, so they moved us into a hotel. It was really scary because drug dealers stood around outside. Sometimes men would knock on our door, and when my mom would open it they would just look at us and my mom would try to not say anything to make them mad and tell them they had the wrong door.

I didn't want anyone to know where I was staying. When the school bus dropped us off, I waited until no one would see me, and I then went to the hotel.

Another friend said he had a spare room we could stay in, but then his wife got mad, and we got kicked out. So we went and stayed at a motel for one night. It was better not being around all the fighting, but we couldn't afford to stay there longer than one night.

We had to change States to find a place to stay. My mom's friend invited us to stay with her until we could find a place. It was really hard having to start all over again.

We had to leave there, too, and stay in another hotel for one night, and then we got into Safe Harbor.

Staying with other people was tough. It was really hard adjusting to families' different lifestyles. If we crossed the line for some reason—boom—we were out.

The hardest part of having to move so much and stay in so many different places was we lost everything. It affected my attitude because I lost all my friends over and over again. I was afraid to get close to people because I knew we had to move again.

I struggled in school and came to school very exhausted because of having to sleep in different places, constantly moving and not being able to rest. I know my mom was thinking that we should maybe go back to my dad. I missed him a lot, but I knew he hadn't gotten any help, and I was too afraid that he would hurt us again.

Now we are at least in one place, and I don't think we will get kicked out, at least not for just nothing. Moving around and staying with so many different people was really hard.

I hope that now that we are at Safe Harbor, we will be able to stay for a while and find a place to live. Thanks for listening to what homelessness is like for me and my mom.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Khan can be found on page 85 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you so much.

Brittany Koon, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF BRITTANY AMBER KOON, PFC, FT. HOOD,  
TEXAS**

Ms. KOON. Good morning. Thank you, all the members of the subcommittee, for this opportunity to share my story today.

My name is Brittany Amber Koon. I was born in a little house in Upper Arlington, Ohio, that had been in the family for years until it was foreclosed on in the middle of my 7th grade year.

My mom, my sister, my brothers, and I doubled up with a neighbor. That was the beginning of a long, scary journey of instability and lonely transition that would lead me to foster care and homelessness, but finally success as a proud member of the United States Army.

After aging out of foster care during my senior year of high school, I became homeless again. I had a scholarship to college but I lived in my car and on the couches of some relatives and friends for 2 months before college. Housing solutions just didn't really exist.

I made it through my first year of college, but as the year ended, I was again without housing. I crashed out on the couch of a girl I met at a party. After a couple of weeks, I was buying all the groceries, and because she did not have a car and I did, I was expected to drive her and her kids wherever they needed to go. I was not able to find other housing, so I felt stuck.

This happens a lot when you are doubled up. You feel indebted to the people who are letting you stay, but then you are taken advantage of by them. They took my money and then told me I had to leave.

I started hanging out at bars and nightclubs so I would have somewhere to go at night. I know it sounds dangerous, but I was making friends at the bars because they would let me come back and crash on their couches.

At the time, I thought staying with these people was better than my car, but it really wasn't. In my car, I was in control and didn't have to worry about what would happen to me, or people who would try and touch me when I was asleep. I wondered why there was no help.

As it got colder, I asked Angela, from the Youth Empowerment Program, to take me to a shelter, but there was a waiting list. I decided to move in with my boyfriend. Then, my relationship went bad and he kicked me out. I was so stressed that I had to quit school for the second time.

That is when I talked to Angela's husband about going into the military. I decided to go active duty so I would have training and a stable place to live.

I am now stationed at Fort Hood, Texas. Even though I feel more stable and supported than I have in years, I still don't have a place to call home. I am coming back from Fort Hood for the holidays, but I still have to couchsurf while I am home.

I feel that making youth document their homelessness through the people they couchsurf with will only create problems and stress on us and more frustration with the system. None of the people I lived with would have been willing to document that I was living there. They would have been suspicious and afraid of getting in trouble. Also, I didn't know many of them well enough to ask them.

I believe that allowing homeless education liaisons and others to help youth document their situation would be best because it would be easier for a youth to trust adults we know. Most youth who are doubled up are getting used. This is true of too many youth. In fact, Danielle Jinx and Shannon McDaniels are here to support me today, because they also have been in my situation.

It is very important for HUD to count doubled-up youth, because I don't think people realize how hard it is for them. If we were not counted, we could never be served effectively.

Recognizing that there are limited resources, I would suggest increasing resources to those programs so that every youth could be housed. But ignoring us has only reinforced our knowledge that our community has abandoned us and that nobody cares about us.

Like me, you have chosen to serve your country—you here in Washington, and me in the field. Just as you have faith in me that I will be out there protecting you, it is my hope that you will use your power here to protect youth like me.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

[The prepared statement of PFC Koon can be found on page 88 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you so much.

Next, Brooklyn Pastor is recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF BROOKLYN PASTOR, 7TH GRADER, WILLIAM PACA MIDDLE SCHOOL, SHIRLEY, NEW YORK**

Ms. PASTOR. Hello. My name is Brooklyn Pastor. I am 12 years old and I am in 7th grade at William Paca Middle School in Shirley, New York. I am here today with my mom, and also Ms. Benjamin, from Parent-Child Home Program.

I have lived in over 16 places in my life—6 shelters, 4 times doubled up with many different people, and we had our own house 6 times. We had to go to emergency motel rooms many other times in between shelters and houses.

I really hate moving from place to place. It is so hard because you get to know people and then you have to move. It made my life hard.

When we lived with other people, they were not nice to us. We couldn't ask them for anything. They were mostly mad that we were there and did not want anyone else to know, especially their landlord.

They would never let us stay where we were. My mom couldn't tell anyone where we lived or for how long. It was like being invisible.

The hardest thing about living with other people is watching my mom cry because the people would yell at my mom because we did not have any money and they would yell at us to get out. It hurt me to see my mom hurting and I couldn't do much to help her.

I am always trying to help my younger sister and brother to decrease my mom's load when I come home from school. Mom has enough to do so I try to play with them and keep them happy. So I do that at home and maybe not so much homework.

I do not have time to socialize because I am looking to see if I can help Mom. I follow her around to try to keep things going. If

my mom is late for a bill, I worry and get afraid, and do not ask her for anything until it is paid.

It is especially hard for my 2-year-old brother because he does not understand why Mom is always crying. He cries, too. He asks her not to cry.

He wants Mom's attention. She has to go out a lot to work and to appointments. He has to stay with different people.

He has no daycare or preschool because there is no money for that transportation and no openings near us. There are no services for his age except the Parent-Child Home Program that comes to us.

We are in a house now, but things are not perfect. We had a hurricane and the roof caved in, and my ceiling is still hanging, and it is not fixed, and the landlady yells at my mom.

I do not want to ever be homeless again. I think the only way we will never be homeless again is if my mom got a different job—a real job in an office or something. She works in a restaurant, and I hope that will happen soon.

This year, my mom got her high school diploma and a driver's license and she is going to school in a few weeks to be a certified nurse's assistant.

The thing that helped us go all through this is being close to my mom, and being close to God. Mom does good things for people even when we don't have enough money, and I know God will help us.

I would like people to know that it is different going through this than just hearing about it. You never experienced being homeless. It is worse than hearing about it or watching a movie about it. You are in it. There are a lot of kids going through it.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Pastor can be found on page 92 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you so much.

Destiny Raynor, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF DESTINY RAYNOR, 9TH GRADER, WINTER  
SPRINGS HIGH SCHOOL, SANFORD, FLORIDA**

Ms. RAYNOR. Hello. My name is Destiny Rayner, and I am a freshman at Winter Springs High School in Florida. I am here today with my father and my sister, Kimberly. I would also like to introduce you to the Metzger family—Austin, Arielle, and their dad. They were homeless in central Florida, too.

My parents used to have this thrift shop and a beauty store. We lost our housing when the economy got really bad and we had to close all of our stores. Neither of my parents had a job, and they just kept looking for several months.

That summer, the power and water got shut off. We didn't have electricity or water for 6 months. We had to eat at the gas station at the corner because they had a microwave.

The toilet smelled really bad because we couldn't flush because the water was shut off. We had to bring buckets to a local church to fill with water for the toilet bowl.

My parents didn't want to go to a shelter because the shelter split families up and we wanted to be together. So after we lost our

home, we ended up moving in with my grandmother. This was horrible. It is a three-bedroom mobile home but only two rooms were usable.

My mother, sister, and I slept in one bed. My dad slept on a small couch and my brother slept on a lazy boy chair. We stayed there for 2 to 3 weeks until we couldn't take it anymore. My grandmother was also dying of cancer so it was really hard.

With our last bit of money, we moved into a motel. The school district homeless coordinator, Beth, met us after 1 week and started to help us.

My parents pay the bill if my dad is able to make money at the day work labor place. When we don't have the money, Beth pays from her donations from her program. Beth is here today, too.

The hardest thing about living in a motel is being on a bus and watching all of the other kids getting off knowing that they are going to their own home and I am going back to a one-room motel. It makes me feel really upset.

Prior to planning the trip to Washington, I only told one friend, Jona, about the situation. I was afraid that people would talk badly about the situation and we would be called poor and homeless.

My teacher announced in class that we should all donate and help the homeless kids because they are poor. She was talking about me.

I know how bad it feels. It is just that any minute, you can be kicked out of the motel if you do something wrong or if your parents don't have the money. You just can't go to your own room and have your own privacy.

I was doing really well in school—As and Bs. But since this has happened, three of my grades dropped to Cs and Ds. I am now working on bringing them back up.

Once the school program, Families in Transition, started helping, it made it easier and took a little weight off my shoulders. Now, I feel that I can focus more on my school rather than the home situation.

It is still hard for me and my family. Everyone is just too loud in one room and my brother always gets a headache. He gets so much more aggravated than he used to get.

My parents have no personal bonding time with each other anymore. They are always busy making sure that we are taken care of and they have enough money to pay for the room.

I have seen my dad cry in the last month more than I have in my entire life. When I see my father cry it hurts me a lot because I know he is trying his best and it just still isn't good enough.

It makes me feel scared that we will never get out. Last week, he went the whole week without getting a job and it was horrible.

The Families in Transition program from the school was the biggest relief because they helped with so much. They helped set up a school bus so my parents wouldn't have to stress about getting us to school.

They helped sign us up for a free breakfast and lunch program and sign us up for a backpack program so every Thursday, our backpacks are filled with food. Our food stamps didn't cover the whole month and we would always run out the last 2 weeks.

There are some programs that provide housing help, but we don't qualify because my dad doesn't have a regular job and he doesn't make enough money. When Beth pays for the motel room, we are considered homeless; when my dad pays for the hotel room, we are not considered homeless. That doesn't make any sense to me. It is the same hotel room and it is hard to live in when you are young, no matter who pays.

What we really need is a home of our own, and since two nights ago, that has now happened. Because of the "60 Minutes" segment, our community came together and provided my family with a home.

I now know that my family's basic needs will be met, and I can concentrate on what is really important—my education. My prayer for today is that not only has our community stepped up for us, but now for our government to stand up for us as well and help all of the other homeless children so that they, too, can get a home, as well.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Raynor can be found on page 105 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you so much for your testimony.

We have been joined by another Member from Illinois, Danny Davis. I ask unanimous consent that he be allowed to participate. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Starnica Rodgers, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF STARNICA RODGERS, TRUMAN COLLEGE,  
CHICAGO, ILLINOIS**

Ms. RODGERS. Good morning, everyone. My name is Starnica Rodgers. I am 18 years old, and I have lived in Chicago my whole life.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. It is a true honor.

Currently, I am a student at Truman College. I just finished my first semester and received one A and two Bs. I am also 8 months pregnant and I am expecting my baby boy next month. Don't worry; I checked with my doctor and she said it is safe to fly.

Right now, I am staying at a shelter for parenting teens on Chicago's north side. It is run by the Night Ministry.

When I first got there, I was very nervous. I was worried about being in a new environment. But now, I realize that everyone is there for the same reason: We are all homeless and alone.

Since I have been there, I have found support from other girls and staff. They helped me with my homework and found clothes for me to wear to school and they are helping me find a more permanent place to live.

I have been homeless on and off for my whole life. My mom was a single mother with four kids and has worked minimum wage jobs her whole life. I remember watching my mother struggle to pay the rent and us having to go to a shelter when I was five. I want my life to be better.

As I grew up, my mom and I started getting into a lot of fights. She was verbally abusive to me and sometimes physically abusive.

By the time I was 16, I knew I had to leave for my own safety. There I was, 16 and homeless.

I went from house to house, staying for 2 or 3 days at other family members' houses, not knowing where I was going to end up. Throughout the struggles, I was dedicated to graduating from high school, no matter what.

I worked with the McKinney-Vento counselor so I could get free transportation to get to school. I graduated this year and I am very proud of that accomplishment.

I am now in college. I am on the drama team and I was elected to student senate. I will graduate college no matter how hard the obstacles may be.

With a college degree, I know that I will be able to get a good-paying job with a guaranteed salary. My dream is to be a social worker and help people who are going through the same struggles I have faced.

Right now, I am working into a transitional program also run by the Night Ministry. The program receives Federal HUD funding, but there are not enough housing programs in Chicago for people like me. Before I got into the program, I had to call over 25 different programs but they were all full or had a wait list.

I have had to struggle my whole life to find a place to call home, so I hope that you understand how important stable housing is to a young person. Without these programs, I know that I wouldn't be able to attend college. I would be too busy worrying about where I was going to stay every night.

Thank you for listening to my story, and thank you for the supporting programs that are helping me. I hope that you will think about the 10,000 youth in Chicago who are homeless or the teens in your town who don't know where they are going to sleep tonight. Our country should give more money to programs that help homeless youth so we can be able to break the cycle of homelessness and become successful adults.

Thank you.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Rodgers can be found on page 110 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you so much.

And thank you all for your compelling testimony. I don't know, this must be your first time testifying, but I think you have a career. That was very, very, very good.

We are now going to have questions from the Members of Congress, and we will each take 5 minutes to ask questions. And I will yield myself 5 minutes to start.

Brandon, if I may call you Brandon, you said you were concerned about HUD's documentation requirements, and I think you said that in order for you to be successful in accessing housing services, you had to show that you would be homeless for a long time. Does that kind of—

Mr. DUNLAP. Sixty days, if I am not mistaken, or 14 days in more than one place. And that would be really inconvenient to put on the person I was staying with. I didn't want to overstay my welcome; I was already asking a huge favor, and to ask for documentation I think would be—I didn't want to jeopardize my situation.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. It seems, too, that certainly you didn't want to be homeless for a long time, so that it defeats the purpose of—

Mr. DUNLAP. Yes.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. —HUD helping.

And then you also said that in school—schools that really recognized the homeless and provided the services.

Mr. DUNLAP. Yes.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. And I think that has been mentioned a couple of times that—we are trying to not—and we have already worked with the schools and the definition there. We are really trying to move this into Health and Human Services and HUD to provide such help. Why do the schools seem to have the ability to help the homeless?

Mr. DUNLAP. At school, the teachers would be able to recognize certain patterns in students, and no representative from HUD knew my situation, and I wouldn't tell them if they asked because I didn't know this person. But at school, I am familiar with the teacher; if the teacher asked and showed genuine concern, I would share information.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

And then, Rumi Khan, you testified about finding Safe Harbor. Could you tell us a little bit more about Safe Harbor, how you got into that, and what it means to you?

Mr. KHAN. Me and my mom came in and asked for a place to stay and they gave—first we were in the emergency side for a little while and—

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Who is they?

Mr. KHAN. Safe Harbor.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Okay.

Mr. KHAN. Safe Harbor gave us a place to stay which is on the emergency side, and we stayed there for a little while and then they got to move us up to the transitional side, and it is like a little apartment. And we have our own space, we have our own room, and it feels very safe.

And sometimes, I don't feel homeless because I do have a roof over my head. And me and my mom are together in that room, and we have neighbors and we have friends in there.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. How did you find Safe Harbor? Was it recommended to you by somebody?

Mr. KHAN. Yes.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. That was fortunate, wasn't it?

Mr. KHAN. Yes.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

And, Brooklyn, you said that your mother now is going to school to get a diploma and a driver's license and then is going to be trained to be a nursing assistant. Who helped your mother during the hardest times and how did she figure out how to do that as well as take care of you?

Ms. PASTOR. I would say Ms. Benjamin helped us the most through everything.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. What kind of help do you wish your mother had when you were moving between places?

Ms. PASTOR. I don't know. I just wish—because she was always there for everyone else, even when we didn't have it, and I wish that they would have done the same for her when we needed help, but they didn't.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

And then, Brittany Koon, you certainly had some bad experiences, and—but it seems like with—you are wearing the uniform, that things have really straightened out for you?

Ms. KOON. Yes—

Chairwoman BIGGERT. In your statement, you said that ignoring the youth has only reinforced your knowledge that your community abandoned you and that nobody cared about you. Do you still, as you have moved on, feel that way, that—

Ms. KOON. Honestly, yes, I do.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Okay. Thank you.

My time has expired and, Mr. Cleaver, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

I really have reservations about asking you a lot of questions, or any, for that matter. In my State of Missouri, we have approximately 24,000 homeless children, which means, to me at least, there is a certain level of invisibility, and some of you kind of mentioned it, and that is you try to stay under the radar, you don't want to be noticed.

I am wondering, as you have struggled, have you met other young people who were in your same situation, and if so, how did—was there any attempt to measure each other's situation to see if there was a place or a way to get help? Did any of you meet others in your same situation?

Which even promotes the whole issue that it is probably more severe than this invisibility. They wouldn't want anybody to notice, to be accurate.

Ms. RODGERS?

Ms. RODGERS. Yes. I am actually in a program now where there are several other girls in my situation, and we all connected and asked, "Okay, how did you get here and did you call other resources that maybe turned you down or that we can get in, because we all are in the same situation?" Well, we are. We are either pregnant or have a child.

So the programs that they were into we just asked, "Okay, well could we get into those programs?" and the answer was always no. This is probably the best way for us to go is to stay in this shelter.

Mr. CLEAVER. One final question: My wife and I took in a young man and kept him and actually sent him off to school with our kids—our twin boys. He was later killed in a ValuJet crash in the Everglades. But the one thing that we discovered was that he had never been to a dentist. He had never been to a doctor, for some obvious reasons.

And I don't need any details, but I am wondering how much health care you have had—going to dentists or getting checkups. Anybody?

Mr. DUNLAP. As a child, I was well taken care of, but as the years went on, like in high school, I don't recall ever really going

to the doctor. It is a question of how did I get past the physicals now, so I am just—no doctor visits, no dentists, nothing.

Mr. KHAN. I have, also. I go to the doctor or the dentist, too, all the time.

Ms. KOON. I didn't have a lot of health care, but I had to go do a lot of work at the dentist in order to get into the Army.

Mr. CLEAVER. Thank you very much—

I yield back the balance of my time.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

The gentleman from Ohio, Mr. Stivers, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. STIVERS. Thank you so much, Madam Chairwoman.

I think many of you mentioned in your testimony—I think Brandon, and Brittany, and I think Destiny all talked a little bit about—or maybe it was Brooklyn—about grades, and how your housing situation really impacted your schooling and your ability to continue your education. Can you just help me understand—obviously those businesses are linked, and it then can change the course of your life in a negative way because you don't get the education you are pursuing or you don't get as good an education.

Do any of you want to expound upon the—sort of the impact and the connection between your experience when you were homeless and—or having to jump between home and home, and what it meant to your schoolwork and your ability to ready yourself for your future?

Mr. DUNLAP. It was very difficult to study, given the long distance traveling, and maybe even traveling again after I traveled the initial long distance. There was no real time for homework. It was a lot of planning and, okay, it is late now; I have to go to sleep because class starts at 8:00.

Mr. KHAN. It is hard for me because I lack sleep, too, and when we were moving, it was very stressing and tiring, and staying up late was affecting my schoolwork because I couldn't focus in school, and my grades have gone down a little bit, but I am trying to go to sleep earlier and bring my grades up so I can get As.

Ms. KOON. It affects you that when you are sitting in class you are sitting there worried about where are you going to go after, where are you going to eat, how are you going to get your homework done? Half the time, you don't have Internet access, or if you break a pencil, you might not have a pencil sharpener to complete it.

And then, you are worried about all night, well, am I going to be safe? What is going to happen to me?

Do I have the gas—for me, I was living in my car—do I have the gas to get back to school tomorrow? Should I sleep in the school parking lot and let the cops bang on my door again and wake me up? You are always worried about something.

Ms. RODGERS. Yes. I can speak on that.

In high school, it was harder than college because there were people I grew up with and it was hard to let them know that I was homeless or that I needed help. But in college, I got more help at the shelter that I am living in, like I got more help with my essays.

In high school English, I had to do a lot of papers, and I didn't have a lot of the equipment that I needed to do the papers with.

And the after-school programs that I was involved in didn't help me either.

But going on into college, I got a lot more support at the shelter I have lived in. But when I was homeless, my grades were maybe Ds and Cs. I was barely passing. And in high school, I got As and Bs for my first semester.

Mr. STIVERS. I think many of you talked about the HUD requirement on documentation, and I think Chairwoman Biggert had asked the question before. But obviously that came up in multiple testimonies from you, and I think that is something we need to take a pretty serious look at because obviously, I think Brandon did a good job of explaining how it created a hassle on the people who were trying to help you, and a lot of you brought it up, and so I know that is something else we need to take a serious look at.

Are there any other specific issues that you think we should take a serious look at? I think the chairwoman's bill addresses a lot of things that will help homeless youth. Does anybody have anything other things that—like that that this—through the system that you experienced?

Ms. RAYNOR. When you live in a motel, if you can pay for it at least for 14 days, you are not categorized as homeless, but it is still not your home. Because, as I mentioned, at any moment you can be kicked out for anything.

We had a lot of help from Beth. Like, when someone else paid for it for you, you were homeless. If you can pay for it for 14 days, you are not.

But it is the same room either way it goes. It is not your home. You don't have your own privacy. You are all crammed in one little room.

That makes no sense because it is the same place. And I think that should be changed.

Mr. STIVERS. Great. Thank you.

And I appreciate your time. It looks like my time has almost expired. I really appreciate you sharing your stories and experiences with us, and we are going to work hard to do the best we can to help. So thank you so much.

And I yield back.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Stivers.

Ms. WATERS, do you have any questions?

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much—

Chairwoman BIGGERT. You are recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. WATERS. Yes.

I would like to first thank all of our young panelists who are here today for coming to share your stories so that we can be better informed and know how best to use our public policy influence to do much better than we are doing about homelessness. I would like to share with you that recently I decided to walk through the systems in Los Angeles, and what I saw disturbs me greatly. I do not think the systems are working the way we think they are from up here.

And for the last 3 or 4 weeks, I have been trying to get a family—a mother with three children—placed in transitional to permanent housing, and I have not been able to do it. So I have gone to the big agency, called the oversight agency, and I am confronting

them on how the systems are not working. And I think that the members of this committee, Mrs. Biggert—under her leadership—we should all not just visit shelters and sit down and talk with people who are supposed to be implementing what we think is public policy; we have to walk through the system with people who require shelters and are—transitional housing or permanent housing.

I discovered that this mother with three children was being asked for all kinds of documentation before she could get into this shelter. They wanted the birth certificates of all the kids, which is unreasonable, and some other documentation that they were asking for.

So let me just say to you that a priority on my list of how I spend my time will be to try and correct some of these problems. Other things I discovered: In one shelter, they had to be in by 4:00 or they lost their bed, and this person had stayed out till 5:00 so I had to put them in my car and take them back and tell them that I wanted them to be sheltered despite the fact he had missed by 1 hour. And it goes on, and on, and on, so I know what you are going through.

One question I may follow up on from Mr. Stivers, and that is, I am very concerned about while you are trying to get into permanent housing, your families—what is happening with your education and school? Because long distances—many of our homeless young people are long distances from the schools.

Would it help if somehow we could put something in the system that would require tutoring at every shelter where there are children? What kind of assistance could help while your families are working on getting permanent housing? Do you have any suggestions what we could do to help with—how we could give support so you don't fall behind and you don't get bad grades simply because you can't sleep at night because you are in a situation where you don't feel safe, or there is noise?

Would tutoring help, with someone on the site, or places where you have numbers of young people? Would it help to try and get some assistance from the school district to have teachers or a teacher on site? Would any of that help?

Mr. DUNLAP. I definitely feel tutoring would help a lot. And I also feel that someone trained to deal with children in high-stress situations would also help.

Mr. KHAN. I think transportation to school would help a lot because I ride my bike to school and it is very tiring, and I get to school very exhausted and my legs hurt.

Ms. WATERS. How many schools have you gone to, or stories about young people who may have gone to three, four, five schools in a year? Have you heard that?

Ms. RODGERS. Yes. I actually tried to stay at the same school, which I shouldn't have done because I was—I missed so many days going from house to house. I was going from the south side and my school was on the west side. And I should have transferred schools but I knew that I wasn't going to be on the south side for long.

So either way, it was hard.

Ms. WATERS. So if you had a teacher or a tutor who was in the area of the shelter who could keep you on track until you could get

in a permanent place so you wouldn't lose time or lose grades, would that help?

Ms. RODGERS. Yes. That would help a lot. And it would especially help high school students. Because I know the classes that are mandatory, those are the classes that I need help with the most. Those are the classes that the tutor can help me with.

Ms. WATERS. So if there was a teacher who was helping you and then could help you transfer your work to your permanent school once you got permanent placement and be like an advocate and a support person, that would be helpful?

Ms. RODGERS. Yes.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much. I yield back.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

Let me just say that the first thing that we did work on in this whole issue was the education, and to make sure—this was a—it was put into No Child Left Behind and it was to make sure that no homeless child was turned away from school. And we didn't have to have the records; you didn't have to have your grades and whatever, but you could be enrolled immediately in school where you were homeless living at the time or where you had been in school. And I know that it took us, then, several years—and this was under Mr. Miller's committee at the time, and—

Ms. WATERS. Would the gentlelady yield for a second?

Chairwoman BIGGERT. —and just was that—go ahead—

Ms. WATERS. I just wanted to add to that, that is absolutely very helpful, but the real problem I am running into is the number of schools—

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Right.

Ms. WATERS. —that the young people end up going to while they are homeless, and they lose credit.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. And having to switch so often, and you are absolutely right. But we did add transportation, too. I think that took us a long time to get that in.

But I think you are absolutely right that we should really look at maybe the tutor or the teacher actually at these shelters. That would be a big help. And that would go through the HUD. But that is something we should look at for this bill, so I appreciate it.

Ms. WATERS. Thank you very much.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Mr. Green, from Texas, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman.

I also would like to thank the ranking member, Mr. Gutierrez, for his efforts in these areas, as well.

I am very concerned about your indications that you were homeless but you did not want anyone to know that you were homeless. And I understand why. You have all spoken quite well, and let me compliment you. It took a lot of courage to do it as well as you have, and I thank you for the courage that you have exhibited today.

But you all said that you didn't want people to know. Was there, on any of the school campuses, a counselor or someone who had some degree of responsibility to work with you and help you from the school campus? Did anyone have a counselor or anyone on the campus that you were able to work with?

Mr. DUNLAP. There were counselors on staff at school but I didn't speak to them until I had a connection from someone who didn't work at the school.

Mr. GREEN. Until you had—did you say a connection?

Mr. DUNLAP. Yes.

Mr. GREEN. Would you—

Mr. DUNLAP. Rhonda Perwin—she helped me get scholarships and introduced me to the Coalition for the Homeless, and from that point on, that is when I talked to the counselor, Mr. Murphy, at my high school, but he didn't help any.

Mr. GREEN. Was there any outreach? Did you feel that you were in an environment wherein you could go to someone at the school and say, "We need help. We have this situation and I just want to talk to someone?" Did any of you feel that there was any avenue, any means available for you to do this?

Mr. DUNLAP. I personally didn't reach out because I didn't want any authorities going after my parents.

Mr. GREEN. Yes, Ms. Raynor?

Ms. RAYNOR. I didn't have on-school help, but we had a coordinator named Beth. She is actually here today. She is helping with a few hundred families, helping them with food, places to stay, making sure they keep up with their education.

If it wasn't for her, I would still be staying in a motel, and my grades would still be horrible. At my school, we don't have anyone on campus, really, who helps, but there are a lot of kids there.

We had a program that everyone got to come and have a free lunch and stuff. We had hundreds and hundreds of kids there who came because they were homeless, and there is nothing—there is no one at the school to help, but most of the kids don't want everyone to know. There is no point in telling people if nothing is going to happen.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Ms. Raynor.

Ms. RODGERS?

Ms. RODGERS. Yes. I actually didn't feel comfortable telling everybody that I was homeless because I knew that they were going to look at me differently. I was afraid that it would get out in the whole school and that I was going to have to transfer because the people were looking down on me.

But I did talk to this one lady who came up to the school and who got me into the McKinney-Vento program that gave me bus cards so I can get to school, and they noticed that I was homeless because of my attendance, and I was coming in late—like, I was doing all the work and I was getting good grades doing the work, but my attendance was affecting my grades. So they actually came to me, but I didn't actually tell anyone my whole story.

Mr. GREEN. Yes, Ms. Koon?

Ms. KOON. It is not always that you don't want to share, because I am very open when it comes to sharing with people. It is just that society puts a label on you.

Like, I was talking to people in my unit about—they asked me what I was going to D.C. for, and I let them know, and they laughed at me. They said, "You can't get into the Army if you are that way," or, "Why are you going to this expensive college and you

are living in your car? That is not possible.” People just label it based on what you are doing with what you have.

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Khan?

Mr. KHAN. Also, I haven’t gone to my friends because I am embarrassed and I am afraid that they are going to make fun of me because they have everything and I am homeless, and it is kind of embarrassing for me. And I don’t go to the counselor at my school, but me and my mom went to a counselor and she was supposed to come to the school every other week or something, and she has never come, and I can’t share with anybody but my mom.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you very much.

Madam Chairwoman, I just think I will close with this: We all have a duty to do all that we can, even if it is not enough. We have a duty to all that we can, and from my perch, I am convinced that we are not doing enough. There is more that we can do that we are not doing.

And while we have addressed the young people who have spoken, I do want to thank the adults who came today who are with them, whether you are a mother, father, brother, significant other—whatever. I just want to thank you for the role that you are playing in helping us to give these young people a brighter future.

And with this, I will yield back the balance of my time. Thank you.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Green.

And let me just say that we are very happy that you have told us, because—and not been afraid to come to the U.S. Congress, because things are going to change, and it is—we are working on this bill, and just giving us a lot more to put into it. So we really appreciate that.

Mr. Miller, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman.

Let me certainly begin by thanking you so much for coming and sharing your stories with us, as Members of Congress. The legislation that is under consideration this morning is really designed to address many of the things that you have mentioned, and some parts of the Federal law already do that, and other parts are inconsistent with that, and we are trying to remove those barriers so it would be easier for you, and your parents, and the counselors to access the services that you need while you and your family members are homeless.

So that is our goal is to address exactly what you have told us in person here today. But I think it is very important that we hear from you.

And I want to tell you that you just—all of you just exhibit a remarkable strength and maturity beyond your years, and I recognize that adverse situations, such as being homeless, can make you grow up very fast, and that is unfortunate. But you have obviously responded to help other members of your family in this same situation, and it is an exhibition of strength and character that sometimes we don’t always see.

But also, I want to just commend you for your own achievements in school, as difficult as it has been. There have been ups and downs, but you have persevered, and you should really feel very

good about yourselves, and certainly we feel very good about your willingness to come here and to publicly demonstrate to us the need for this legislation so that it would be easier for you and your families and for other homeless children.

On the other side of this ledger, on the education side, we have put many provisions into the law to try to reduce the barriers and the obstacles to you getting services in schools—transportation and counselors being required. But again, when they go to some of the housing agencies, they find that there are barriers, and we are trying to reduce those. So hopefully, your testimony will turn out to be very valuable to us and very helpful to us.

And you look back and you will remember this, when you made this kind of contribution on behalf of others who will be homeless in the future. So I hope you take that away from this hearing. And thank you again so very, very much.

And obviously, our very best wishes for you and your families and that circumstances will change for the better for all you. Thank you.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. The gentleman yields back.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER OF CALIFORNIA. Yes, I yield back.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. The gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Davis, is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. DAVIS. Thank you very much, Madam Chairwoman. And let me first of all thank you not only for calling this hearing, but certainly for giving me the opportunity to participate, though I am not a member of this particular committee.

I also want to commend you. We get an opportunity to ride back and forth together on the airplane, and sometimes we even get seated in the same row. And I want to commend you for your passion and your sensitivity to this issue. I know of it firsthand because we do get a chance to talk, and I am aware of how high you hold this as a priority and the work that you have done on it over the years, so I thank you very much for that.

I also want to commend Representative Miller for the leadership he has provided as chairman and now ranking member of the Education Committee, trying to make sure that we merge together the housing and social service needs with the educational needs of students who are homeless.

I want to commend all of the witnesses. I have been totally intrigued by your testimony and I appreciate your level of understanding and recognition of where our country not only is, but where we need to go.

Particularly do I want to welcome Brandon and Starnica, since both of them are from Chicago, where I come from. And I think the Night Ministry, which I am very familiar with, is one of the most innovative and creative programs I have ever heard about, read about, participated with, or observed what it does not only with homeless youth but with other homeless individuals, and we are fortunate that the Coalition for the Homeless has been one of the most effective advocacy groups for homeless persons in this country, at least for the last 20 years. And so, I would commend them.

Brandon, I didn't get a chance to hear your testimony, unfortunately. Are you associated with a program, or what program are you connected with?

Mr. DUNLAP. I am here with the Coalition for the Homeless.

Mr. DAVIS. All right. So you are connected with the Coalition for the Homeless, and I am sure you can verify what I said about them, because not only do they pinpoint the need for services, but they are so inspirational in terms of their approaches to doing it.

Starnica, where do you get your health care?

Ms. RODGERS. Iriteen, which was connected with the Night Ministry. The recommended me over to Iriteen.

Mr. DAVIS. Is it a clinic? Is it a—

Ms. RODGERS. It is the clinic.

Mr. DAVIS. Is it a school-based clinic?

Ms. RODGERS. No.

Mr. DAVIS. It is not a school-based clinic but is it a community health center clinic?

Ms. RODGERS. It is for teens, so it is a teen clinic.

Mr. DAVIS. It is a teen health clinic, which I think also do fantastic work. So I am just delighted that you all came to share with us.

Chicago is somewhat fortunate. Truman College, which you attend, which is a part of the city college system, does, in fact, have a level of sensitivity to all kinds of students. It is also a college that is a united nations of students, and so they pay particular attention to the needs of young people, the needs of their students, and they are located in an area where I think individuals from every race, creed, nationality, color—everybody lives in Uptown, in the area where it is located, and I think that also helps.

The Chicago Board of Education has tried—I happen to be very much aware of what they do because the woman who directed their homeless program for several years happened to have been my sister's classmate in college, so I became very familiar with them. The one question that I wanted to ask is, do any of you know other homeless young people who have not been able to connect with any program?

Ms. RODGERS. Yes.

Mr. DAVIS. So you know young people who are not connected to a program or a service?

Ms. RODGERS. Yes.

Mr. DAVIS. Brandon, do you know young people who—a few. A few.

And that kind of projects and indicates that we not only need the legislation, but we also need to make sure that there is adequate funding for the programs that are authorized.

So again, I thank you all for coming, for your participation.

And I thank you, Madam Chairwoman, for your diligence and for the opportunity to be here. And I yield back.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

We have a second panel, but we—I have just one question, so if people would like the second round, if you could keep it to 2 minutes so that we could have the second panel.

But I just want to come back to—Rumi, you talked about the fact that you and your mother were turned away from a shelter because you were an older boy.

And I think, Destiny, you talked about the fact that going to a shelter, you were afraid that the family would be split up. So I wanted to come back to that.

If you two could explain a little bit more. I know that this has been true, and I have heard this before, that they don't want to take in older boys. But what happened, and did this happen in other places, too?

Mr. KHAN. It has happened in—like in Safe Harbor, they don't accept older males or single males. I guess it is because they don't want to start relationships in a shelter. That is my best guess.

And, yes, that has happened to me, and I am not sure why it has happened. So, yes, I—

Chairwoman BIGGERT. That is something we will have to look into, then. Thank you.

And Destiny?

Ms. RAYNOR. Most of the shelters down in Florida separate the males and females not depending upon the age, and we all wanted to stay together because it would separate my younger brother and my dad. They would go to a separate shelter and it would be me, my little sister, and my mom. And we didn't want that to happen.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. What would happen, let's say, to a family that has—the father and two daughters who are young?

Ms. RAYNOR. They would be separated. The children would go to a different shelter, and I guess the leaders of the shelter would take care of them.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you. We will look into this, too. Thank you.

Mr. Cleaver, do you have anything just—okay. Thank you.

Mr. Stivers?

Mr. STIVERS. Thank you. I will be brief.

I just wanted to say to Brandon, and Rumi, and Brittany, and Brooklyn, and Starnica how proud we are of you and what a great job you did on your testimony today. We are proud of your accomplishments, your college graduation, joining the military, but we are also proud of your perseverance and your passion on this subject.

I want to share just a really quick story so you understand that while homelessness affects a lot of people, it certainly does not have to get in your way. We have a colleague—a good friend of mine named Hansen Clarke, from Detroit, Michigan—who was homeless, and after his homelessness he went on to college, and then became a State representative, State senator, and now he is a Member of Congress.

So I just want all of you to know that you have bright futures. You have a lot to offer our society. And we, as a society and as an institution here in Congress, need to do a better job of trying to help get folks the resources they need, and that is what I think the chairwoman's bill is about. And I am looking forward to supporting that and I appreciate your testimony today, and we are going to take it and try to address the situations you brought up. But I just wanted to make sure you know how proud of you we all are. Thank you.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

Mr. Green, do you have any comments?

Mr. GREEN. Just a brief comment, Madam Chairwoman. I think these young people have given us an opportunity today to understand that this is not a problem for Democrats or Republicans or conservatives or liberals. This is an American problem and it deserves an American solution.

I look forward to working with you to reach that solution. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Mr. Miller? Thank you.

Mr. Davis?

Mr. DAVIS. Madam Chairwoman, the only thing that I would say is, I remember my mother telling me when I was a young person that problems are like babies—the more you nurse them the more they grow—and that it is not always what your problem does to you but it is a matter of what you do with what could have been your problem.

I think you all are well on the way to not having problems but having solutions.

Thank you very much.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

And with that, we will excuse this panel, and there are seats available for you to listen to the other panel.

The Chair notes that some Members may have additional questions for this panel which they may wish to submit in writing. Without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 30 days for Members to submit written questions to these witnesses and to place their responses in the record.

If we could have the second panel come up.

I know it is going to be hard to top that panel, but thank you all for being here, and I will now introduce the second panel: Ms. Alicia Cackley, Director of Financial Markets and Community Investment, U.S. Government Accountability Office; Mr. Seth Diamond, commissioner, New York City Department of Homeless Services; Ms. Maria Estella Garza, homeless liaison for the San Antonio Independent School District; Mr. Mark Johnston, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Special Needs, Office of Community Planning and Development, U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, commonly known as HUD; Ms. Barbara Poppe, executive director, U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness; and Dr. Grace Whitney, director of Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office, Connecticut State Department of Education.

Thank you all for being here, and you will be recognized for 5 minutes.

We will start with Ms. Cackley.

**STATEMENT OF ALICIA PUENTE CACKLEY, DIRECTOR, FINANCIAL MARKETS AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENT, U.S. GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE**

Ms. CACKLEY. Chairwoman Biggert and members of the subcommittee, good morning. I am pleased to be here to participate in today's hearing on homeless children and youth.

The Census Bureau indicates that 22 percent of all children in the United States lived in poverty in 2010, and the Department of Education identified nearly 940,000 homeless students during the

2009–2010 school year, an 18 percent increase since the 2007–2008 school year. Multiple Federal agencies administer programs designed to address the needs of children and youth experiencing homelessness, but some programs use different definitions to determine eligibility. These definitions range from people living in emergency or transitional shelters or on the street to those living with others because of economic hardship or living in motels or campgrounds because they lack other adequate accommodations.

My statement today is based on GAO's June 2010 report on differences in the Federal definitions of homelessness and other factors that impact the effectiveness of programs serving persons experiencing homelessness. In that report, we found that definitional differences have posed challenges to providing services for persons experiencing homelessness, including children and youth. In particular, children and youth living in certain precarious situations, such as doubling up with others or living in motels, historically were excluded from receiving government-funded housing services, and we certainly heard about that this morning.

In our work, we also found that the data collected on the homeless have a number of shortcomings, and consequently do not fully capture the true extent and nature of homelessness. Further, counts of homeless children and youth vary by agency, partly because various Federal programs have used different definitions.

Congress enacted the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009, the HEARTH Act, which broadened the general definition of homelessness and provided great statutory specificity concerning those who should be considered homeless. Last month, HUD issued a new rule on the definition of homelessness, adding a new category: unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth who are defined as homeless under other Federal statutes.

The HEARTH Act and HUD's recent definitional changes may alleviate some challenges previously faced by children and youth in accessing services. In particular, some children and youth who previously were not considered homeless by HUD will now qualify as homeless. However, not enough time has passed for us to assess the impact of these changes, and the broadening of the definition does not mean that everyone who meets the new definition will be entitled to benefits in all homeless assistance programs. Constraints on resources will likely continue to restrict access to housing services for many children and youth.

Another finding in our 2010 report was that different definitions of homelessness make effective collaboration across Federal programs more difficult. Based on our work, we recommended that Federal agencies develop a common vocabulary for homelessness.

The agencies agreed with our recommendations and have taken some steps toward implementing them. For example, in January of this year the Interagency Council convened a meeting of experts to discuss the development of a common vocabulary and issued a report to Congress in June that summarized the feedback received during that meeting. The report notes that a common vocabulary would allow Federal agencies to better measure the scope and dimensions of homelessness and may ease program implementation and coordination.

Recently, Interagency Council staff told us that they held three meetings this fall to discuss implementation of a common vocabulary and data standard with key Federal agencies. The Interagency Council also noted that individual Federal agencies have taken some positive steps to create this common data standard and improve coordination across agencies. For example, HHS and VA have been working with HUD to plan the potential transition of some of their data collection and reporting to HUD's Homeless Management Information System.

To sum up, we believe that a common vocabulary and data standard used by all the Federal agencies that provide services for the homeless is an important step toward the goal of providing efficient and effective programs to end homelessness. It would allow for the collection of consistent data that agencies could use to better understand the nature of homelessness and it would allow for more effective communication and collaboration across Federal, State, and local programs that serve the homeless.

Chairwoman Biggert, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be happy to respond to questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Cackley can be found on page 50 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you so much.

Mr. Diamond, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF SETH DIAMOND, COMMISSIONER, NEW YORK CITY DEPARTMENT OF HOMELESS SERVICES**

Mr. DIAMOND. Thank you.

Good morning, Chairwoman Biggert, and members of the subcommittee. I am pleased to be with you today to discuss New York City's ongoing efforts to prevent family homelessness and to work with those who are homeless to return to the community as quickly as possible.

New York City's approach mirrors President Obama's Federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness. It emphasized preventing homelessness, increasing economic security through employment, improving access to mainstream programs, and improving the health and stability of vulnerable populations.

As we heard so powerfully this morning, shelter can be particularly difficult for children, many of whom have to leave their school and community they know when coming into the shelter system. There are 16,500 children in New York City's shelter system, and we work closely with all our families to ensure we can bring as much stability as is possible into the lives of children living in shelter.

The most important service we can provide for children is to make sure they are enrolled in school and are attending each day. We recognize that teachers and Education Department officials are critical in those efforts. We try and place families in shelter as close as possible to the school where their youngest child was enrolled, and staff from the City's Department of Education is located at our family intake center to assist families and enroll children in a new school if that turns out to be necessary.

Once families are placed in shelter, education staff collaborates with shelter-based staff to ensure children have transportation to

reach school. We have also begun to provide attendance data to shelters so they can track how children are attending school and work with families where attendance is an issue. We have also established homework rooms in shelters as a quiet place for students to work and receive tutoring from the many not-for-profit organizations that partner with us.

It is far better for families not to be in shelter at all. To help those already in shelter, we have worked to increase our employment efforts, and this year, alone 7,500 shelter households have moved into jobs providing not only income, but greater stability.

For those at risk of homelessness, New York City prevents homelessness primarily through a network of 13 prevention offices, called Homebase, located throughout the City. These offices use a range of services in their efforts to fight homelessness. Among the services is a close coordination with local schools. Homebase does regular presentations to parent and teacher groups and school officials so that if they become aware that a family is dealing with housing issues they can be referred for services.

The service mix that Homebase offers is different in each case, but our offices are operated under two important principles. First, those who ask for assistance must take concrete and verifiable steps to improve their situation, and assistance is contingent on their taking those steps.

Individuals working with a caseworker must design a plan to address the circumstances that put them at risk of homelessness and put that plan into action. The plan might include, for example, an aggressive job search, looking for a new apartment, or attending financial counseling.

Second, as called for in the Open Door report, Homebase is an evidence-based effort where we continuously and rigorously review our work to ensure it is efficient and cost-effective. Especially at a time of limited resources, it is critical that our services be based on solid and reliable data. Homebase meets that test and its programs are continually evaluated to both ensure we are targeting those most in need of services and that wherever possible, we are providing the services that are not only beneficial to the family but will prevent those households from needing shelter.

To further ensure Homebase prevention services are effective, we have undertaken a series of independent evaluations of the program. These reviews, conducted by leading researchers at universities across the country, as well as a random assignment study undertaken by Abt Associates, one of the Nation's leading social sciences research firms, looks at a series of the most critical questions involving our prevention efforts. The research is under way and we look forward to sharing the results as those findings become available.

Prevention efforts have become a greater part of the national discussion of homelessness, and we are gratified that the new Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) supports prevention work. We think this change will be critical in encouraging communities across the country to direct more resources towards prevention, and believe if those programs are established and operated under the high standards we have used, they can be effective, and believe it would be

a good investment of taxpayer dollars to expand the ESG funding to allow additional prevention resources to be put in place.

HUD resources now are primarily dedicated to shelter, however, should be focused on those with the greatest need. With financing already stretched thin, to further dilute those allocations would hurt the substantial efforts being made in New York and across the country to assist those in shelter.

Dedicated resources are essential to provide those in shelter with needed housing, employment, and rehabilitative and case management services. While those living with others may be in need of services, those needs can be addressed through other funding streams, such as ESG. Existing allocations, such as the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, also provide an opportunity to assist those at risk of homelessness.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify and look forward to answering your questions.

[The prepared statement of Mr. Diamond can be found on page 63 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

Ms. Garza, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF MARIA ESTELLA GARZA, HOMELESS LIAISON,  
SAN ANTONIO INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT**

Ms. GARZA. Thank you.

Good morning, Representative Biggert, Representative Gutierrez, and members of the subcommittee. My name is Estella Garza, and for the past 17 years I have been the homeless liaison at San Antonio Independent School District in San Antonio, Texas.

Last year, we enrolled 3,171 homeless students in San Antonio ISD. That is a 56 percent increase over the year before, and we are on track for another increase this year.

About 80 percent of the homeless students we serve live in doubled-up situations, staying with other people because they have no other place to go. We can debate HUD homeless versus Ed homeless, but in reality, they are all the same kids. Families and youth can't find spaces in the shelters or the shelters don't have the space to serve families or unaccompanied minors, so they are all—what is left is just for them to be doubled up.

And they bounce from one situation to another. In San Antonio there isn't a double-up population, a motel population, and a shelter population; it is all one group—a homeless population.

However they are defined, they are here and they will be here. If they are not counted in our view of homelessness, it will be extremely skewed.

And when we talk about ending homelessness in 5 or 10 years, we must realize that we cannot do that without addressing the needs of our doubled-up children and youth because if they continue to experience the instability of doubling up as their norm, then they will become the chronic homeless adults of tomorrow.

As we heard from our youth who testified earlier, doubled-up children live in extremely overcrowded and stressful conditions that affect every aspect of their development. We work hard to serve our families and youth despite their constant mobility, but

since they have no way to access stable housing, ultimately school districts are losing children.

Example: I assisted a mother this October who had been doubled up in 5 different homes in a 2-month period. She didn't know where to enroll her son. That same day, he was enrolled, but I couldn't help to access HUD's services. She was not homeless, according to HUD.

Another family who comes to mind is a mom, a veteran with a high school son. They were living in a motel in a terrible neighborhood in one room with no cooking facilities—not even a microwave or a refrigerator.

I remember her son's exact words: "This life is for the birds, not humans." Housing services? Mom paid the hotel. They are not homeless, according to HUD.

I had hoped the changes to the HUD definition and the HEARTH Act would allow San Antonio to provide housing and supportive services to the children and youth I serve. However, after reading the regulations, and particularly the documentation requirements, I realized that the new definition would not make any difference for the vast majority of my families and youth.

For example, it will be impossible for a doubled-up family to provide verification from the host family about how long they can stay, how many times they have moved, or even confirming they were actually staying there at all. Host families don't want to admit to any agency that they have two families in their apartment when their lease and occupancy indicates one family.

I have seen families get evicted from HUD-subsidized housing for going over the occupancy limits by housing a doubled-up family, so now we have two homeless families, not one. So it is understandable that even a case manager calling a host family will be threatening and likely to result in the host family asking the doubled-up family to leave immediately.

If HUD's goal is to create a high degree of anxiety and animosity among family members in my community, these documentation requirements are an excellent way of doing that. They will destroy families' support networks, create more mobility for my kids, more stress, and even greater challenges. It seems like HUD is trying to keep their old definition of homelessness and eliminate my doubled-up families and youth by requiring too much documentation.

I understand HUD categorizes these families and youth as at-risk, but the services my families and youth need most are housing and supportive services, which are not available for at-risk families. Plus, the at-risk population, again, won't be counted, which again creates a false picture of homelessness in my community.

H.R. 32, the Homeless Children and Youth Act, would be more efficient than HUD's paper chase and it would help our COC identify common needs and pursue common goals with one mindset. I am used to certifying homelessness for other Federal programs, such as the USDA free meals at school, HHS Head Start, and the College Financial Aid for Unaccompanied Homeless Youth. I certainly will be glad to accept the responsibility of certifying children and youth who are in clearly homeless situations under the U.S. Department of Education's definition so that we can serve them and prevent them from becoming tomorrow's homeless adults.

Thank you so much for your time.  
[The prepared statement of Ms. Garza can be found on page 70 of the appendix.]  
Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.  
Mr. Johnston, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF MARK JOHNSTON, DEPUTY ASSISTANT SECRETARY, OFFICE OF SPECIAL NEEDS, U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT**

Mr. JOHNSTON. Chairwoman Biggert, Ranking Member Cleaver, and Mr. Green, thank you for the opportunity to testify today on this very important issue. I want to also thank you for having the young, courageous witnesses on the first panel, and they are certainly evidence that all of us need to do more to help so many in this Nation who have no place to call home.

Families with children make up too large a share of our homeless population, making up nearly 40 percent of all people living on our streets and in our shelters. Sadly, one in five homeless families are living in cars and other unsheltered places.

This week, HUD released its national Point-In-Time count for homeless persons. HUD partners with communities each January to count the number of persons at a point in time who are either unsheltered—that is, living outside—or are in homeless shelters. These counts do not include persons who are at risk of having no housing, such as persons living with other family or friends, of which there are many, especially in these very difficult economic times.

The number of persons living unsheltered or in shelters declined by just over 2 percent between 2010 and 2011. Importantly, this overall decline reflects reductions in all subgroups—individuals, the chronically homeless, veterans, and families with children. The reduction in homelessness among families was 2.4 percent from 2010 and 5 percent since 2007.

While we as a Nation have a long ways to go, given high record poverty rates and unemployment rates, it is heartening that we are seeing at least some progress again in reducing homelessness. These reductions are a testament to both recent nationwide homeless prevention efforts as well as continued funding of proven programs authorized by this subcommittee that provide supportive housing to homeless families and individuals.

The HEARTH Act provides communities, for the first time, a full range of tools to prevent and end homelessness. In particular, HEARTH expressly allows for HUD programs to serve persons who are defined as “at risk of homelessness” and expands the definition of who is considered homeless.

HUD began to train this week, on Tuesday, on the definition of homelessness with our over 8,000 local grantee partners. It is important to note that as grantees begin to use the new, more expanded definition of homelessness and the definition of at-risk homelessness we continue to receive essential flat funding year after year. We are obviously in a time of great fiscal constraint, and it will be very challenging to serve more people without additional resources.

Related to the definition, I would like to acknowledge the good work of GAO in assessing the need for a common vocabulary when it comes to the issue of homelessness. I enthusiastically support the finding that there should be a common vocabulary.

The HEARTH Act was the result of many years of hard work from those on this committee and in the Congress in general, the advocacy community, homelessness service providers, and HUD. I was personally involved in these efforts from the beginning and I was very heartened to see Congress pass this bipartisan bill.

In addition to broadening the definition of homelessness, the HEARTH Act also consolidates three HUD programs into one, creates the Emergency Solutions Grants program, and the Rural Housing Stability Program. So now, for the first time, HUD's homeless assistance programs will have the full range of tools that communities need to confront homelessness for families and children, from prevention for those who are at risk of losing their housing to emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent housing.

To implement the HEARTH Act amendments, HUD has developed and is issuing six sets of regulations, the details of which are in my written testimony.

Finally, we realize that solving homelessness will require more resources than are available through HEARTH. We are involved in several initiatives to help reduce and end homelessness for families with children and for youth that attempt to both bring more resources to the table and to find the best strategies to deal with this problem.

In conclusion, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today, and I look forward to answering any questions you may have.

[The prepared statement of Deputy Assistant Secretary Johnston can be found on page 79 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you, Mr. Johnston.

Ms. Poppe, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF BARBARA POPPE, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR,  
UNITED STATES INTERAGENCY COUNCIL ON HOMELESSNESS**

Ms. POPPE. Good morning, Chairwoman Biggert, Representative Green, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on the impact of homelessness on children and youth.

I want to thank Chairwoman Biggert for her leadership on the passage of the HEARTH Act. Today, we are here to discuss three requirements in that Act: a change in HUD's homeless definition, a GAO study on Federal definitions, and the development of a Federal plan.

I am pleased to report that we have made progress on all three. HUD's new definition reflects the agreement that was reached in the HEARTH Act, and we have followed up on the GAO's study to advance Federal work on a common vocabulary. And, as you know, we have the first ever Federal strategic plan to prevent and end homelessness.

It is horrifying in a Nation as wealthy as ours that nearly 1 million children and youth experience homelessness. The testimony we have just heard underscores this tragedy.

As Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Johnston has noted, the latest HUD data shows that nearly 240,000 family members were homeless on a single night in January of 2011. While the 2011 Point-In-Time count is less than the 2010 count, other trends are not so positive.

There is significant mismatch between income and housing. More families are experiencing foreclosure. The shrinking affordable housing stock, falling household incomes, and increased competition from higher-income renters have really widened the gap between the number of low-income renters and the number of affordable units.

The needs of family, youth, and children vary, and often require not only housing and employment but also attention to education, health care, and other needs. These operate out at different silos at a local level, often managed by different jurisdictions. Instead of a tailored and holistic response, families and youth confront a highly fragmented, uncoordinated set of services that they are usually left to navigate on their own.

Not only is this tragic for homeless families, there is a growing body of evidence that repeated housing instability is costly to public systems. The good news is that there are solutions. Investing in more housing assistance now can save money over the long term for schools, child welfare, the health care system, and other public institutions.

In June of 2010, the Obama Administration acted. For the first time, the Federal Government set a goal to end family, youth, and child homelessness by 2010. Opening Doors is based on a growing body of evidence that shows how targeted, comprehensive solutions are more cost effective than temporary fixes.

Affordable housing is a cornerstone of any effort to reduce and ultimately end homelessness. The preservation and expansion of affordable housing through rehabilitation, new construction, and rental assistance is critical to ending family homelessness.

Unfortunately, though, the trend lines for affordable housing are going in all the wrong directions. Too many Americans cannot afford a safe place to call home. Despite the growing need, housing assistance programs are threatened at all levels of government in the current budget environment.

Next to affordable housing, prevention is also critical. Targeted interventions that keep families from losing a home in the first place spare children the trauma of homelessness, absences from school, or changes in schools. The key drivers are access to affordable housing, financial assistance, and support during a crisis.

Another proven solution is rapid re-housing. Short-term assistance helps families quickly move out of homelessness and into permanent housing. HPRP made an enormous impact around the country and helped many communities shift to more cost-effective programs focused on prevention and rapid re-housing.

Housing stability, though, over the long term requires the right types of support provided in a highly coordinated way. These in-

clude good health care, education, transportation, child care, and a job that pays enough to meet household needs.

Federal collaboration is moving from silos to solutions that connect these systems to prevent homelessness whenever possible, and when it does not happen, to resolve it as quickly as possible. That is work we are doing across Federal agencies. So, too, this needs to occur at State and local levels.

What gets measured gets done, and this Administration has improved data collection, analysis, and reporting. Agencies within HHS and VA are coordinating with HUD on these efforts.

Our Nation has faced economic uncertainties during the first 18 months of Opening Doors implementation, but one thing remains clear: Homelessness is an urgent problem. Not only is it devastating to families and individuals who experience it, but it is costly to society as a whole.

Republicans and Democrats in Congress and across the country have collaborated for decades to fight homelessness. Family, youth, and child homelessness is an outrage that should know no partisan boundaries and is an area where we can make a real difference together.

We need to invest in what works; we need to invest in our future—our children. Let us work together to ensure that by 2020, not a single American child or youth experiences homelessness.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify, and I look forward to your questions.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Poppe can be found on page 94 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you so much.

Dr. Whitney, you are recognized for 5 minutes.

**STATEMENT OF GRACE-ANN CARUSO WHITNEY, PH.D., MPA,  
IMH-E (IV), DIRECTOR, CONNECTICUT HEAD START STATE  
COLLABORATION OFFICE, CONNECTICUT STATE DEPARTMENT  
OF EDUCATION**

Ms. WHITNEY. Good morning, Chairwoman Biggert, Representative Green, and members of the subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today.

My name is Grace Whitney. For the past 15 years, I have served as director of the Head Start State Collaboration Office for the State of Connecticut. The Head Start Act requires that State collaboration offices be in each State to partner with States in specific priority areas, one of which is children experiencing homelessness.

For babies, toddlers, and preschoolers, living doubled-up in motels and other homeless situations creates toxic stress, causing developmental challenges such as physical delays and failure to thrive, higher incidence of persistent illness, mental health problems such as trauma and depression, irritable behavior, and trouble eating and sleeping. Young children's neural networks, their actual genetic expressions, and the architecture of their young brains are being created based on repetition of experiences. Unhealthy conditions accumulate and seriously jeopardize their potential for a healthy future.

For instance, one of our former Head Start managers explains that children living in motels "live in extremely crowded rooms

with numerous family members and often have very limited food preparation options.” Often, these environments are full of transient adults and outdoor areas are unsafe so children are forced to stay inside these cramped quarters, certainly not ideal for young children and, of course, as you know, infants and toddlers who must move. Many of these families would be excluded using the HUD definition.

Families living in unstable conditions, including those who reside in motels or doubled-up, often move repeatedly. This is extremely stressful for babies and young children who need consistency and routine for healthy development and emotional stability.

Relocating often requires families to re-qualify for essential services, provide documentation yet again, and they can lose their place in line. High mobility is stressful for parents, too, and often leads to depression, which interferes with parenting, further compromising child development.

In Connecticut, we find that even young children in HUD shelters often are not getting adequate services and there are delays in accessing services due surely to the lack of awareness of the needs of babies, toddlers, and preschoolers. Head Start focuses its services on those families most in need. Head Start uses the McKinney-Vento education definition of homelessness, which recognizes the full range of family and child homelessness that Head Start programs see every day.

Head Start is a mainstream program without sufficient capacity to serve all eligible children. In fact, with current funding, Head Start nationally serves about 50 percent of eligible preschoolers and less than 5 percent of eligible infants and toddlers.

Yet, Head Start programs are required to identify and prioritize doubled-up or other homeless children due to their dire living circumstances. Homeless families are allowed to enroll immediately while documentation is obtained. Head Start staff strive to begin services right away, to offer or obtain all needed services quickly, and to work in whatever ways they can with community partners to remove barriers.

In serving homeless children, Head Start is a natural partner for HUD homeless and housing service providers. Head Start is a comprehensive, two-generational program that provides a full range of health, mental health, education, and social services to children and their families.

Since roughly half of children in HUD shelters are age five and under, these are children who are not on the radar screen of the schools. Our services complement those of HUD providers and are a critical strategy to meet the multiple needs of homeless families that may otherwise go unmet.

However, since HUD does not consider many doubled-up families or motel families to be homeless, this can present a barrier to Head Start programs who cannot then provide these families with the critical referrals to HUD-funded programs. Even those who might qualify under HUD’s definition may still face barriers due to requirements for documentation, which can not only be stressful but impossible for families. Such requirements can create delays in achieving stability for babies and young children, consume precious staff time and resources, and create circumstances which put the

needs of vulnerable children last, setting them further back developmentally.

Most beneficial for young children are policies and practices that recognize and align with their unique needs and promote rather than hinder their health and future success.

In closing, we all share the goal of ending family homelessness. However, without dedicated attention to the needs of young children, working together for multiple systems, we will fall far short of this goal.

To break the cycle of homelessness, we must evaluate all homeless and housing policies, including the definitions of homelessness from a child development perspective, and ensure housing policies take into account the threat to further lives of these young, the very dire consequences to literally the well-being of our Nation, of doing anything less.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my experiences and those of the Head Start programs in the State of Connecticut.

[The prepared statement of Dr. Whitney can be found on page 112 of the appendix.]

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you so much.

And now, we turn to the questions by Members, and I am glad to see there are a couple of us here. It really is important, and it is a shame that there is so much going on and that this happens with—when we talk about homelessness, that we keep pushing and pushing for this.

And so, I will yield myself 5 minutes.

The definition of HUD—as you know, I worked on the definition for Education, and I think that is when we realized what—the discovering of—and really getting to know the numbers of how many homeless children there were because of enrolling in schools and then being able to do that right away, and then finding out that HUD didn't match that.

And really, the first generic definition of HUD was this is an individual who lacks a regular and adequate nighttime residence. And it was really addressed for what we would call the people who were living on the street or under the bridge, and it was very important that they were protected by this.

But moving, then, towards young people, children, and expanding that was very slow. We had the HEARTH Act, and working on that, and I can remember that at that hearing—and there were a few people there, but it was a most important hearing, and one of our Members of Congress testified. It was the first time he had ever talked about the fact that he was homeless and had been abused. And I have to say, we were all in tears—all five of us. And it had such an impact so that we really worked on changing the definition there. But it wasn't enough.

If you look at the HUD definition, with Title 1, obviously, it is the general definition. But then the things that you have to go through, still, that an individual or family who will immediately—imminently lose their housing, including the housing they own, rent, or live in sharing with others, rooms in hotels or motels not paid for by a Federal, State, or local government program, court order, individual or a family having a primary night residence that is a room in a hotel or motel and where they lack resources to re-

side there for more than 14 days, or credible evidence that the owner will not allow the person to stay more than 14 days, has no subsequent resident identified, lacks the resources needed to obtain other permanent housing, unaccompanied youth and homeless families with children, having experienced a long-term period without living independently in permanent housing, having experienced persistent instability as measured by frequent moves, can be expected to continue in status for an extended period of time.

We really just can't make these kids jump through all those hoops. Most of the children—homeless children—recognized by the Department of Education would not meet the HUD standards, and I think this is what has happened to some of the children that were here today.

And they don't qualify. If they don't meet the requirements they don't qualify for the homeless housing and supportive services.

We really have to make this change, and I really am happy to see that you are bringing this up, and talking about it, and doing it. But I think that we really have to have a definition that is the same as the other agencies, that is the same as the Department of Education, if we are going to get all of this together. And that is why we have H.R. 32, as well as doing some other things.

I don't think that the kids on panel one or most of the homeless kids are recognized as homeless, as I said, by the Department of Education should be considered at-risk. These kids are homeless. That is their problem and their challenge. And so, HUD needs to recognize this fact, and I think Congress and every Federal agency needs to work together to help these homeless kids.

And I would hope that we can work together and continue to do that. And as you do rulemaking, too, it is very important that you don't put up more and more barriers to do that.

Ms. Garza, throughout your testimony you mentioned that you couldn't help certain families secure housing or assistance through HUD's programs, and the reasons why families, children, and youth can't secure is important. Can you address that quickly?

Ms. GARZA. As I indicated, 80 percent of our families that we identified are in doubled-up situations. Many of these families are chronically homeless. We work with these families on an ongoing basis, year after year after year.

Because they are in a doubled-up situation, they really don't qualify for HUD services, and these families, being that they have been chronically homeless, there are a lot of mental health issues, so the supportive services are especially—would be very beneficial for the families that I serve.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. And I think we heard today in the testimony that moving—and they would be doubling up with somebody and then they would be asked to leave. It is for various reasons. Sometimes because they were—people might be afraid that they—they have rented for one family and suddenly there is another family living there so they are somewhat illegitimate.

But I think just the idea that they are being kicked out of someplace and they have nowhere to go, and this keeps happening, is just—

Ms. GARZA. Because they are doubled-up—going from doubled-up to doubled-up they are—they have already exhausted a lot of their

family connections, their family support systems. They have gone from family member to family member to family member to family member, and in every location they have overstayed their welcome. And so, because of that then, again, their limitation or their resources become very limited as to where they can go

So it gets to be a really challenging situation when they actually just move in, because they have to be somewhere in a relative's house, and then have to ask them for documentation to support that they really are homeless for HUD. That would be really, really challenging.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you.

We are hearing so much about this, and having this panel was great. And we have a couple people here today who are really active in this. One is Diane Nylan, who has traveled all over the country visiting homeless throughout the country and then did a documentary that is called "Heroes," and I hope that you have all had an opportunity to see that. And then Alexandra Pelosi did one called, "The Motel Kids," and it was about the kids in Florida that was very moving.

And, of course, "60 Minutes" has had a program on this lately, and then we have Barbara Duffield here, from the National Coalition on Homelessness, that has done so much. So we have all the tools and we have the help, we just have to get this done.

And with that, I recognize the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Green, for 5 minutes.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Again, I thank the witnesses for appearing today. It has been said and I will say it again, it is better to build a strong child than to repair a broken adult. Now, for those who deal in the social sciences—the psychologists, psychiatrists, the criminologists, paleontologists—I just want you to know, I don't necessarily like the language of a "broken" adult, but I need to communicate, so just allow me to communicate.

I would be interested in knowing if you have seen any empirical evidence on the number of people who are incarcerated or were incarcerated who were homeless for some period of time in their lives. Anyone with anything that you can point me to? I am sure that Google will help, but you may give me a head start if you have some empirical intelligence.

Mr. JOHNSTON. One or two observations I have is, years ago we did a study that looked in part at that topic and about 50 percent of homeless adults had had some experience with the criminal justice system, either in prisons or in jails. I know, having visited Rikers Island before and seeing their homeless prevention program out there, there are tremendous challenges we have in our cities and communities everywhere with people coming into the jail system because they were homeless and often leaving the jail system because they are homeless. And so, prevention really is a key factor here.

Mr. GREEN. Now, someone indicated that people move from one State to another because they find that in State A they don't receive the resources that they can receive in State B. To what extent do you find this to be the case, where we have people who literally will hear, "If you go over to State A, you will get some help."

Ms. Poppe?

Ms. POPPE. Certainly, the implementation of Federal programs at State and local levels varies quite widely because a great amount of discretion is given to locals and States as to how they implement the Federal programs. But the other piece that occurs is that the resources that States and local governments contribute to the solutions also vary. So some States contribute and support heavily in homeless programs to provide assistance; other States provide very little if no assistance at all.

And so, the resources available to families vary greatly. I think you can see that most in the unsheltered numbers is the high rate of unsheltered children and youth that we see primarily in southern States and in California is reflective of a lack of investment by often State and local governments in real housing solutions to address the problem. And so, certainly, that variation is quite different from what services are available in the State of New York, say, and what would be available in the State of California.

Mr. GREEN. Do you find that people will migrate based upon knowledge that they receive about these benefits from one State to another?

Ms. POPPE. Most of the studies that I have seen indicate that people are moving for reasons of greater economic opportunity, so they are moving to find the jobs. And then, sometimes, those jobs don't pan out, and in that case, they experience homelessness.

So it is not that they moved for homeless services per se. They moved because they were seeking a better job opportunity than they had in that situation. I think an exception to that will be domestic violence victims who often are fleeing abusive situations, and they do try to leave the State or other communities simply for safety reasons.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you.

Mr. Johnston, would you care to add something to this, please?

Mr. JOHNSTON. I remember being in St. Petersburg a few years ago and there was a statewide conference on homelessness that I was going to be speaking at the next morning, and I was walking around the City talking with people who were out on the streets at night in a park, and this one particular gentleman observed that he is actually from Ohio but he comes down in the winter time to stay in Florida. He is increasingly staying there time and time again.

I was intrigued with that, and as we looked at our data within communities all across the country, the vast majority of people do tend to stay within—where their family is from, frankly, although there certainly are examples, as Barbara is mentioning, that if they need greater economic opportunity, they are going to be searching wherever that might be.

And I did want to also emphasize the point: I have seen huge disparities on the level of assistance provided. "60 Minutes" contacted us before they did the story; we provided them all of the data that we had and they therefore picked the State of Florida in large part because two-thirds of all homeless families live outside in Florida.

There are very few places like that in the country, but every State is somewhat different. And that is certainly a huge concern that families with children will be living outside.

Mr. GREEN. I really would like to explore this more, but my time is limited, so I will move onto something else.

We have heard a good indication that one can be housed yet homeless—housed yet homeless—doubled-up, as you have put it, living with a friend. And the intelligence that you accorded us with reference to how this impacts the formative years of very young children is very, very disturbing, which gets us to this notion of a need for a common definition, but a common vocabulary. A common vocabulary could be of great benefit across agencies, as I am understanding your testimony today.

I also understand, and I want you to help me with this, is the genuine appeal for assistance, that these definitions were promulgated because there was a need that they were trying to meet so they arrived at a definition that would work for a given need, which developed these silos and definitions and stovepipes that did not function well across lines. How do we deal with the different needs that have to be met with a common definition?

And I am hopeful and believe that we are moving in the right direction. I just want to hear from the experts on the record as to how we get it done. So which of the experts would like to be first?

Mr. Johnston?

Mr. JOHNSTON. About 2 years ago, HUD, the Department of Health and Human Services, and the Department of Education launched an effort and submitted a proposal to Congress to try a demonstration in particular for homeless families, and another one for currently homeless persons. And we were trying to link up mainstream resources that HUD has with HHS and Education.

And it was interesting—this went on for about a year, in terms of really fine-tuning a proposal that we could use, and when we spoke the word “homeless”, it certainly was used in different ways, from my good friend, Joe McLaughlin, from Education, as he would describe what homelessness meant from their statutory definition versus ours.

So I think the need for a common vocabulary is incredibly valuable. When we interviewed with the GAO, we certainly supported that and look forward to that, and I know ICH has taken great leadership to move forward on that, because the challenge in this country is there are so many different needs—huge housing needs—that we have to be able to converse very well across agencies at Federal and local levels to solve this problem.

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Diamond?

Mr. DIAMOND. I would agree that there are tremendous needs, and I certainly think that we should do more to invest both in people in shelter and in people who are living in precarious living situations of all kinds. New York City has made a great effort, and the HPRP funding that we have we have really used in a targeted way for at-risk families, in particular.

Our concern with broadening a definition, though, is diluting the resources. At a time of level or even declining funding, broadening the definition away from shelter potentially means taking resources away from the shelter system to use in other situations.

There are other needs, clearly, and there are funding streams available. But we really need to make sure we continue our investment in those in shelter, because those are high-need families who

have a variety of case management and other kinds of services that need to be provided if they are going to be able to leave the shelter system.

Mr. GREEN. Mr. Poppe, would you care to respond?

Ms. POPPE. What I wanted to add is that as we have heard all of the testimony this morning from the young people they, in fact, were all eligible for HUD programs related to providing mainstream housing assistance. But the reality is, those mainstream housing programs are oversubscribed. HUD programs can only meet about one-fourth of the need for those who are eligible.

And so, the larger issue goes back to the need for the resources to meet those needs, and that is why the Interagency Council has worked across the definitions toward this end of creating a common vocabulary so that even in these places we can talk about the different eligibility criteria and how we can try to effectively use the scarce resources that are available to get families who are living precariously and doubled-up in really difficult circumstances the best access to affordable housing, which is what I heard each of these young people testify about, was what they were really looking for was a safe, stable home.

We just, as a country, haven't yet made that commitment of the resources that the Federal, State, and the local, and the private sector resources to make that occur. And that is the work that sits before us, and that is the larger call to end homelessness.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you very much, Mrs. Biggert. I will wait. If there is another round I will wait. Thank you.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Let's do another round.

Let's go to Mr. Sherman first for 5 minutes.

Mr. SHERMAN. We have a shortage of housing for the homeless. We have an incredible shortage of money here in the Federal Government. And we have an enormous surplus of boarded-up houses, at least in some communities.

Is there any way that we can use the housing stock that has already been constructed to meet these needs? And knowing that some of these houses that are boarded-up are 2,000 or 3,000 square feet, is there any way that they can accommodate more than one homeless family?

I will ask Mr. Johnston.

Mr. JOHNSTON. We do have an initiative that we have had for years, and it certainly is much more active during years where we have huge foreclosures, like in the recent past, where discounts can be made to allow these houses to be used for a variety of different reasons, including housing homeless persons.

Mr. SHERMAN. It is one thing to find somebody who is homeless but somehow has the finances to make reduced mortgage payments. Is that the kind of program you are talking about, or are you talking about a program by which community organizations acquire use or ownership of these structures?

Mr. JOHNSTON. It was really the latter, in terms of foreclosed properties.

Mr. SHERMAN. How many of these foreclosed properties have been turned over to those housing the homeless in the last year?

Mr. JOHNSTON. I will get that answer for you because I do not know.

Mr. SHERMAN. Because everywhere I look in—well, not everywhere I look—in many places where you look around the country, the homes are being boarded up, they are being torn down. The ones that are being torn down are in bad shape when measured against good housing. They are palaces compared to sleeping in your car, and even better compared to sleeping in the car you don't have.

So we are in this bizarre circumstance where we have boarded-up houses and people sleeping on the streets, and that—on another night, can you tell me what—

Mr. JOHNSTON. Actually, it just occurred to me, I did not refer to the Neighborhood Stabilization Program—multibillion program funded by Congress that has been tremendously helpful, to look at distressed areas with high foreclosure rates, to be able to rehabilitate and get those houses back into service. And it is in many, many tens of thousands—

Mr. SHERMAN. That is back into service for people who are going to own the homes, which really get people out of apartments and into homes that they can—single family homes they can live in, which is an outstanding idea. I don't know if that affects the problems that we are talking about today, although it could be an—

Mr. JOHNSTON. When we did the training for and launching of this program, we also encouraged the use of these properties for nonprofit organizations to house persons with special needs, including homeless persons.

Mr. SHERMAN. Okay. Gotcha.

What problems are you having administering the HEARTH Act?

Mr. JOHNSTON. I am sorry. What problems what?

Mr. SHERMAN. The HEARTH Act?

Mr. JOHNSTON. We are just now launching the implementation of the HEARTH Act amendments. The definition of homelessness, for instance, comes into effect on January 4th; the first program coming out of line is the Emergency Solutions Grants program, which is January 4th, as well.

I will mention that we have identified a few technical challenges—technical errors that we have found in the law that are going to be limiting communities. For instance—and one of the most concerning ones to—

Mr. SHERMAN. When did you discover these errors and when did you bring them to the attention of members of this committee?

Mr. JOHNSTON. Committee staff recently received a copy of them to look at; we briefed them on it.

Mr. SHERMAN. When did you discover the problems?

Mr. JOHNSTON. We discovered the problems probably a year-and-a-half, 2 years ago.

Mr. SHERMAN. Okay.

Mr. JOHNSTON. And let me say, the Senate was hopeful to actually be enacting changes to this.

Mr. SHERMAN. So you found the problems a year-and-a-half ago, you waited a year-and-a-half to tell the House, but somebody in the Senate did know about the problems and was trying to do something about it.

I yield back.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. So you sent it to the House of Lords, which takes a while to get to these things. Could we see a copy of it please?

Mr. JOHNSTON. Yes.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. I have not received anything.

Mr. JOHNSTON. Okay.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. I appreciate it. Thank you.

Dr. Whitney, you highlight some very compelling evidence for many of the barriers that have prevented the children and youth from getting the housing assistance and services from HUD, and I won't read them over again, that is in your testimony. But I just want to say thank you for all that you are doing.

And I had the opportunity years and years ago—I am a lawyer and I had been clerking for a judge on the U.S. Court of Appeals who was waiting for my job that was going to start in September, so I spent the summer volunteering at Head Start in Hull House, in Chicago, and it was the first year. It had just opened. And so that was—I won't tell you how long ago that was, but it was a long time. And it was really, I think, for the help—that was kind of the start of really helping preschool kids to be ready to go to school, and we just need more and more of that right now.

And we need the kids who are homeless—I guess I am not asking questions, really, but I really would hope that we could all work together to really to solve this and really take a look at removing these barriers, because the more regulations that we get in the harder it is.

And I know, Mr. Diamond, it seems like you don't really like H.R. 32.

Mr. DIAMOND. I am certainly supportive of the concept of investing in people who are in difficult housing situations, and the City makes a major investment in trying to help those families. And we have offices throughout the City that provide services.

Our concern is that shelter is a very expensive and needed resource. In New York City, it costs \$3,000 a month to keep a family in shelter. And if we are going to take money away from the shelter system, it will have an impact on our ability to effectively serve those families.

So that is our concern. Not that there isn't a need, not that if there were increasing resources available we wouldn't want to invest in everyone who has needs, but our concern is taking resources away from those who are in the shelter system.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. That really is a different issue, but I know that this is something that—even when we were trying to do the HEARTH Act, to get that through, to try and get everybody on board was difficult. But I think everybody now realizes the importance of it.

And I think New York is probably doing more than a lot of the States, really, in the programs that you have. I was impressed by that. But I really would like to see us all being on board with making sure that there aren't these barriers.

So, Ms. Cackley, we haven't asked you any questions. Would you like to make another comment from—

Ms. CACKLEY. I do just have one comment. I wanted to also make the point in talking about the benefits of a common vocabulary is,

one of the other things that it does is it allows you to do a much better job of measuring homelessness, which then allows you to know what it is you are dealing with in a much more complete way. Prioritizing does have to take place, but you can't really even prioritize if you don't know the extent of the problem. So for that purpose, having a common vocabulary allows measurement to happen.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Thank you. And then all the measurement would be the same, hopefully.

Ms. CACKLEY. That would be the hope.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Okay.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. Green, do you have something briefly?

Mr. GREEN. Yes, ma'am. I will make it very brief. Thank you.

I would like to, if I may, Mrs. Biggert, thank the staff. They just provide us an inordinate amount of intelligence, and it means a lot to have people to assist us to the extent that they do.

Following up on what you said, Ms. Cackley, do others agree that a common definition would yield greater intelligence on the length, breadth, width, and depth of the problem? Is there anyone who differs?

Mr. JOHNSTON. I think there is a distinction between common vocabulary and common definition, in the sense that if we all understand the terms we are using, we have a common dictionary that we can all use, then we can understand each other, we can communicate, and we can implement programs.

I, too, have a concern, as does Mr. Diamond. If you were to expand HUD's homeless definition, which is in the law, to, for instance, the Education definition, it has some big challenges with it.

And what I mean by that is, we have enough funding from Congress for 3 years in a row to house 200,000 people in transitional and permanent housing. Expanding the definition greatly does not allow us to serve a single additional person, and that is sort of the concern we have about having one common definition when the resources that we provide are very, very expensive.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Would the gentleman yield?

Mr. GREEN. Of course, Madam Chairwoman. Of course.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. I might have said that the wrong way. What we are looking for is that if a child is homeless under the definition—Education—then they should be considered homeless. It doesn't really put that definition into HUD. It doesn't expand it to adults.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

Let me move to another area rather quickly, and this is in the area of veterans who are homeless, and they have children, too, of course. And all children are important. No child should be elevated to some status higher than another.

But I am curious, do we have, Ms. Poppe, any intelligence on the children of veterans?

Ms. POPPE. Thank you, Mr. Green, for that question. This is an area that has been a strong focus of the President and VA Secretary Shinseki, to focus on the needs of homeless veterans, and that we might one day end that by 2015.

Just this week, we reported a 12 percent reduction in the percentage of veterans experiencing homelessness. There are a couple of new programs—or programs that have been really pushed out by this Administration.

One is the HUD–VASH Program. The VASH Program provides rent subsidies through HUD combined with health care services and other supports through the VA, and that program is able to serve veterans' families, including the children in them. And so, it is a holistic response to veterans' homelessness.

The VA has also just put together, with the support of Congress, the Supportive Services for Veterans Families. That program provides flexible assistance that, too, can serve families with children.

Historically, the VA services have been limited to the veteran themselves, and with these two initiatives, they can now serve family members who are part of that. So yes, we are seeing veterans' families, unfortunately, experiencing homelessness, and yes, we are able to respond and we believe that these responses is what is contributing to the overall reduction in homelessness among veterans.

Mr. GREEN. Thank you.

Madam Chairwoman, I want to thank you again, and alert the witnesses that the Chair recently marked up a piece of legislation styled "Homes for Heroes," and this piece of legislation would station a person in HUD whose sole responsibility would be to monitor homelessness among our veterans and there would be a report accorded Congress. So I want to thank you for allowing that legislation to receive a markup, and hopefully, it will matriculate through Congress and get to the President's desk.

Thank you very much.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. The gentleman is very humble. It was his legislation that passed.

Just one further thing for clarification.

Ms. Cackley, you note in your testimony that the Department of Education identified nearly 1 million homeless students during the 2009–2010 school year, and that there was an 18 percent increase since the 2007–2008 school year. So you note that some evidence suggests that homelessness among children is increasing.

How do you explain the discrepancy between the HUD report—numbers that were just reported by the Administration on Tuesday and the Education numbers?

Ms. CACKLEY. I haven't looked at them in great detail, but I would assume that part of the discrepancy is the definitional differences, still.

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Okay. Thank you.

With that, I ask unanimous consent to insert the following materials into the hearing record: December 7th, 2011 letter from Women Against Abuse; December 8th letter from National Center on Family Homelessness; letter from the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless; letter from the National Human Services Assembly; letter from the Social Work Association of America; letter from the American School Counselor Association; letter from First Focus Campaign for Children; letter from Hear Us; letter from the Homeless Prenatal Program; letter from the National Association of REALTORS®; letter from the National Coalition for Homelessness; letter from the National Center for Housing and Child Welfare; let-

ter from the National Network for Youth; letter from the Western Regional Advocacy Project; letter from the National Health Care for the Homeless Council; letter from Alliance for Excellent Education; letter from the National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty; letter from the National Association for Education of Homeless Children and Youth; letter from Family Promise; letter from Family Promise of Midland; letter from the National Network to End Domestic Violence; letter from Horizons for Homeless Children; letter from the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Augusta; letter from Family Promise of Greater Helena; letter from Interfaith Hospitality Network of Burlington County; letter from Family Promise of Morris County; letter from the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Essex County; letter from the Family Promise of Forsyth County; letter from the Road Home; letter from the Family Promise of Albuquerque; letter from the Fort Bend Family Promise; letter from the Interfaith Hospitality Network of Northwest Philadelphia; letter from the Family Promise of Monmouth County; letter from the Family Promise of North Idaho; letter from the Family Promise of Hawaii; letter from the National PTA; letter from the National Association of Secondary School Principals; report from the National Center on Family Homelessness; and the June 2011 data collection summary report from the U.S. Department of Education.

Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. GREEN. Madam Chairwoman, I have a unanimous consent, as well, from the National Low Income Housing Coalition. I would like to ask—

Chairwoman BIGGERT. Without objection, it is so ordered. We left one out?

And thank you all. Really, thank you for being here and thank you for your testimony.

The Chair notes that some Members may have additional questions for the panel which they may wish to submit in writing. Without objection, the hearing record will remain open for 30 days for Members to submit written questions to these witnesses and to place their responses in the record.

And there is one more request for unanimous consent—the National Association of Home Builders. Without objection, it is so ordered.

With that, thank you so much. You have all been great witnesses, and you have been a great panel. Thank you.

The hearing is adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 12:45 p.m., the hearing was adjourned.]

# **A P P E N D I X**

December 15, 2011

United States Government Accountability Office

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**GAO**

Testimony  
Before the Subcommittee on Insurance,  
Housing, and Community Opportunity,  
Committee on Financial Services,  
House of Representatives

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For Release on Delivery  
Expected at 10:00 a.m. EST  
Thursday, December 15, 2011

## HOMELESSNESS

### To Improve Data and Programs, Agencies Have Taken Steps to Develop a Common Vocabulary

Statement of Alicia Puente Cackley, Director  
Financial Markets and Community Investment





Highlights of GAO-12-302T, a testimony before the Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity, Committee on Financial Services, House of Representatives

### Why GAO Did This Study

According to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) estimates of shelter use, the number of homeless families increased by 20 percent from 2007 to 2010 and families currently represent a much larger percentage of the shelter population than ever before. Multiple federal agencies administer programs designed to address the needs of children and youths experiencing homelessness, but some programs use different definitions of homelessness to determine eligibility. The definitions range from people living in emergency or transitional shelters or on the street to those living with others because of economic hardship or living in motels or campgrounds because they lack other adequate alternative accommodations.

This testimony discusses differences in the federal definitions of "homelessness" and other factors that may influence the effectiveness of programs serving persons experiencing homelessness, including children and youth. In completing this statement, GAO reviewed and updated, as appropriate, its June 2010 report, *Homelessness: A Common Vocabulary Could Help Agencies Collaborate and Collect More Consistent Data* (GAO-10-702). In that report, GAO recommended that federal agencies develop a common vocabulary for homelessness and determine whether it would be cost-effective to use this common vocabulary to develop and implement guidance for collecting consistent federal data on housing status. The agencies agreed with our recommendations. This statement also discusses the progress federal agencies have made in implementing these recommendations.

View GAO-12-302T. For more information, contact Alicia Puente-Cackley at (202) 512-8678 or [cackleya@gao.gov](mailto:cackleya@gao.gov).

December 15, 2011

## HOMELESSNESS

### To Improve Data and Programs, Agencies Have Taken Steps to Develop a Common Vocabulary

#### What GAO Found

Definitional differences of homelessness have posed challenges to providing services for children and youth. Children and youth living in precarious situations, such as living with others or in hotels, historically were excluded from receiving government-funded services. Congress enacted the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act of 2009 (HEARTH Act), which broadened the general definition of homelessness and provided greater statutory specificity concerning those who should be considered homeless. In November 2011, HUD issued a final rule on the definition of homelessness, adding a new category of homelessness—unaccompanied youth, and families with children and youth who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes. The HEARTH Act and HUD's recent definition changes may alleviate some challenges previously faced by children and youth in accessing services, but not enough time has passed to assess the impact of those changes. Some children and youth who previously were not considered homeless by HUD will now qualify as homeless. However, the broadening of the definition does not mean that everyone who meets the new definition would be entitled to benefits in all homeless assistance programs, and constraints on resources will likely continue to restrict access for some children and youths.

As of December 2011, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (Interagency Council) and federal agencies had taken steps to develop a common vocabulary for discussing homelessness and related terms, as GAO recommended in its June 2010 report. In January 2011, the Interagency Council convened a meeting of experts to discuss the development of a common vocabulary and the extent to which differences in definitions create barriers to accessing services. The Interagency Council issued a report to Congress in June 2011 that summarized the feedback received during the meeting. The report notes that a common vocabulary would allow federal agencies to better measure the scope and dimensions of homelessness, and may ease program implementation and coordination. As of December 2011, Interagency Council staff told GAO that they held three meetings—in August, September, and October 2011—to discuss implementation of a common vocabulary and data standard with key federal agencies such as HUD; the Departments of Commerce, Education, Health and Human Services (HHS), Labor, and Veterans Affairs (VA); and the Social Security Administration. The Interagency Council also noted that individual federal agencies have taken some positive steps to create this common data standard and improve coordination across agencies. For example, HHS and VA have been working with HUD to plan the potential transition of some of their programs to HUD's data system (Homelessness Management Information Systems). As GAO has reported in the past, a common vocabulary would allow agencies to collect consistent data that agencies could compile to better understand the nature of homelessness, and it would allow agencies to communicate and collaborate more effectively.

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Chairman Biggert, Ranking Member Gutierrez, and Members of the Subcommittee:

I am pleased to be here to participate in today's hearing on the barriers that homeless children and youths face in securing services. The Census Bureau indicates that 22 percent of all children in the United States (16.4 million), lived in poverty in 2010, and some evidence suggests that homelessness among children is increasing. For example, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) estimates of shelter use, the number of homeless families increased by 20 percent from 2007 to 2010 and families currently represent a much larger percentage of the shelter population than ever before.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the Department of Education (Education) identified 939,903 homeless students during the 2009-2010 school year, an 18 percent increase since the 2007-2008 school year. Multiple federal agencies administer programs designed to address the needs of children and youths experiencing homelessness, but some programs use different definitions of homelessness to determine eligibility. The definitions range from people living in emergency or transitional shelters or on the street, to those living with others because of economic hardship or living in motels or campgrounds because they lack other adequate alternative accommodations. Counts of homeless children vary by agency, partly because various federal programs have used different definitions. For example, Education's counts of homeless children have differed from HUD's counts, partly because Education's counts also include children doubled up in private residences or living in hotels or motels while HUD's have not.

My statement today is based on our June 2010 report on differences in the federal definitions of "homelessness" and other factors that may influence the effectiveness of programs serving persons experiencing homelessness, including children and youths.<sup>2</sup> To improve federal agencies' understanding of homelessness and help mitigate the barriers

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<sup>1</sup>The technical term is "homeless persons in families" and includes households with at least one adult and one child. This data point is according to HUD's 1-year estimates of shelter use. According to HUD's 2010 estimate, about 59 percent of the members of these homeless families—335,000—were children under age 18. Data limitations about homeless children and youths are discussed later in this statement.

<sup>2</sup>See GAO, *Homelessness: A Common Vocabulary Could Help Agencies Collaborate and Collect More Consistent Data*, GAO-10-702 (Washington, D.C.: June 30, 2010).

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posed by having different definitions of homelessness, we made two recommendations in that report to federal agencies—working through the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (Interagency Council). We recommended that they

- Develop joint federal guidance that establishes a common vocabulary for discussing homelessness and related terms. Such guidance may allow agencies to collaborate more effectively to provide services to those experiencing homelessness.
- Determine whether it would be cost-effective to use this common vocabulary to develop and implement guidance for collecting consistent federal data on housing status for programs that address homelessness.

Specifically, this statement focuses on how differences in the definition of homelessness may influence the effectiveness of programs, as well as the progress federal agencies have made in implementing our recommendations.

For our 2010 report, we reviewed relevant laws, regulations, and government reports across a number of programs specifically targeted to address issues related to homelessness. We also interviewed officials at HUD; the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education; the Interagency Council; and the Departments of Justice and Labor. We conducted in-depth interviews with a variety of stakeholders, including advocates and researchers, as well as service providers, state and local government officials, and HUD field staff that had extensive experience with homeless programs. We conducted four site visits to large and medium-sized urban areas that were geographically distributed across the United States. To update information for this testimony, we interviewed officials from the Interagency Council and reviewed relevant documents related to actions taken to implement our recommendations.

This statement summarizes our June 2010 report that was based on work conducted between May 2009 and June 2010. We updated our work in November and December 2011. Both of these performance audits were conducted in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards. These standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objectives.

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## Background

### Definitions of Homelessness

Congress first provided a general definition of homeless individuals in 1987 in what is now called the McKinney-Vento Act.<sup>3</sup> In 2002, Congress added a definition for homeless children and youths to be used in educational programs.<sup>4</sup> In 2009, Congress enacted the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH Act).<sup>5</sup> The HEARTH Act broadened the general definition of homelessness and provided greater statutory specificity concerning those who should be considered homeless. In November 2011, HUD issued a final rule to implement changes to the definition of homeless in the HEARTH Act.<sup>6</sup> The rule expands who is eligible for various HUD-funded homeless assistance programs. The broadened definition adds a new category of homelessness, which includes unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth who are defined as homeless under other federal statutes—such as the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act and the Head Start Act.<sup>7</sup> As a result, persons meeting other federal statutes' broader definitions of homelessness also can be eligible for HUD programs.

### Data on Homeless Children and Youths

The data on those experiencing homelessness have a number of shortcomings and consequently do not fully capture the extent and nature of homelessness. According to the Interagency Council's 2010 federal strategic plan, the actual number of youths experiencing homelessness is unknown. As we reported in 2010, these data shortcomings derive from the difficulty of counting a transient population that changes over time and lack of comprehensive data collection requirements. For example, HUD, HHS, and Education each collect data for its own purposes, resulting in

<sup>3</sup>The act was originally named the Stewart B. McKinney Act but was changed to the McKinney-Vento Act in 1989.

<sup>4</sup>Before the inclusion of this definition in the McKinney-Vento education subtitle in 2002, similar language was contained in policy guidance issued by Education in 1995.

<sup>5</sup>Pub. L. No. 111-22 § 1001, et seq. (May 20, 2009).

<sup>6</sup>The rule was published in the *Federal Register* on December 5, 2011 (76 Fed. Reg. 75994) and will be effective January 4, 2012.

<sup>7</sup>42 U.S.C. 5701 et seq. and 42 U.S.C. 9831 et seq.

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differences in what data are collected and how they are aggregated. Often agencies solely count those receiving federally funded services, and because unaccompanied youth are often not connected to services or shelters, they are difficult to count. Furthermore, Education may not fully capture the extent of homelessness among school-aged children because, as we reported in 2010, districts we visited used a system of referrals and self-reporting to identify these children. As we reported in 2010, many school officials and advocates said the term "homeless" carried a stigma that made people reluctant to self-report.

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#### The Interagency Council

The McKinney-Vento Act authorized the creation of the Interagency Council as an independent establishment whose membership is statutorily defined.<sup>8</sup> The HEARTH Act directed the Interagency Council to coordinate the federal response to homelessness and create a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to reduce and end homelessness.<sup>9</sup> The Interagency Council is also required to develop and annually update a federal strategic plan to end homelessness, as well as perform several other duties such as collecting and disseminating information relating to homeless individuals, developing joint federal agency initiatives to fulfill its goals, and providing professional and technical assistance to states, local governments, and other public and private nonprofit organizations. In fiscal year 2011, Congress appropriated \$2.68 million for the Interagency Council to carry out its responsibilities. We are presently reviewing potential fragmentation, overlap, and duplication in federal homelessness programs, including agencies' and the Interagency Council's role in coordinating programs, and will issue a report in spring 2012.

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<sup>8</sup>The Interagency Council was established by title II of the McKinney-Vento Act, Pub. L. No. 100-77 § 20, as the "Interagency Council on the Homeless." In 2004, Congress renamed it "United States Interagency Council on Homelessness." Pub. L. No. 108-199 § 201 (Jan. 23, 2004). The Interagency Council includes members from the following: the Departments of Agriculture, Commerce, Defense, Education, Energy, Health and Human Services, Homeland Security, Housing and Urban Development, Interior, Justice, Labor, Transportation, and Veterans Affairs; Corporation for National and Community Service; General Services Administration; Office of Management and Budget; Social Security Administration; U.S. Postal Service; and the White House Office of Faith-Based and Community Initiatives (now known as the White House Office of Faith-Based and Neighborhood Partnerships).

<sup>9</sup>See Pub. L. No. 111-22 § 1004.

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### Definitional Differences Have Limited Providers' Ability to Serve Children and Youths

Definitional differences of homelessness have posed challenges to providing services for children and youths. As we reported in 2010, many advocates, government officials, service providers, and researchers we interviewed identified differences in definitions of homelessness as an important barrier to providing services, and several noted that families and youths living in precarious situations historically were not eligible for federal assistance under a narrow definition of homelessness. Some said that families and youths who were doubled up or living in hotels because of economic hardship often had similar or greater needs for services than those who met narrower definitions, but were excluded from receiving government-funded services. Those that cited differences in definitions as a barrier also said that families and youths with severe housing needs had to be on the street or in shelters to access some federally funded homeless assistance but shelters were not always available or appropriate for them. For instance, a researcher and a service provider suggested that adult shelters were not appropriate for unaccompanied youths or young adults, and few shelters were designed specifically for them. Furthermore, some family facilities do not provide shelter for males above a certain age, so families with male teenage children might not be able to find shelter together.

As we reported in 2010, many of those involved in homeless programs with whom we spoke were particularly concerned about the exclusion of families and youths from programs that addressed the needs of chronically homeless individuals.<sup>10</sup> Before the passage of the HEARTH Act, families who otherwise met the criteria for chronic homelessness programs were not able to participate because chronic homelessness was defined to include only unaccompanied individuals. Our interviewees noted that the emphasis on funding programs for chronic homelessness meant that families have been underserved. A youth service provider further noted that youths effectively were excluded from programs for

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<sup>10</sup>Before enactment of the HEARTH Act, there was no statutory definition of chronic homelessness. In a 2003 *Federal Register* release announcing a joint agency initiative to end chronic homelessness, HUD, HHS, and the Department of Veterans Affairs defined the term to mean "an unaccompanied homeless individual with a disabling condition who has either been continuously homeless for a year or more, or has had at least four episodes of homelessness in the past three years." Notice of Funding Availability for the Collaborative Initiative to Help End Chronic Homelessness, 68 *Fed. Reg.* 4018, 4019 (Jan. 27, 2003). In an amendment to title IV of the McKinney-Vento Act (which authorizes the emergency shelter and transitional housing programs administered by HUD), the HEARTH Act added a definition of "chronically homeless" that includes individuals or families who qualify under the definition. Pub. L. No. 111-22 § 1101, 123 Stat. 1669.

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those experiencing chronic homelessness because youths generally did not live in shelters or keep records of where they had been living or for how long.

While the HEARTH Act and HUD's recent definition changes may alleviate some challenges, not enough time has passed to assess the impact of the changes. The broadening of the definition of homeless does not mean that everyone who meets the new definition would be eligible for or entitled to benefits in all homeless assistance programs. For some programs, the definition of homeless determines whether individuals are eligible for program benefits and meeting the definition entitles the individual to certain benefits. For example, the Education of Homeless Children and Youth program entitles students to certain benefits as long as they meet the definition. However, for other programs, such as HUD's homeless assistance grants or HHS's Runaway and Homeless Youth programs, benefits are limited by the amount of funds appropriated for the program. For these programs, meeting the definition of homeless does not necessarily entitle individuals or families with children to benefits. Additionally, these programs have other eligibility criteria such as income levels, ages, or disability status to help determine and prioritize who receives the benefits.

Although more children and youth may be eligible for HUD programs under HUD's new definition, barriers to serving them may persist. For example, according to our 2010 report, HHS officials told us that in the 2009 program year, less than half of families in Head Start who experienced homelessness acquired housing. HHS attributed this to a lack of affordable housing and long waiting lists for housing assistance, not necessarily definitional differences. Also, officials at HHS acknowledged that Head Start programs across the country sometimes were not using the appropriate definition of homelessness to identify children who qualified for services. As a result, some homeless families did not receive Head Start services.

We also reported in 2010 that some interviewees stated that definitional differences of homelessness made collaboration more difficult. Because homelessness is a multifaceted issue and a variety of programs across a number of departments and agencies have been designed to address it, collaborative activities are essential to reducing homelessness in a cost-effective manner. According to some interviewees, different definitions of homelessness and different terminology to address homelessness have made it difficult for communities to plan strategically for housing needs

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and for federal agencies to collaborate effectively to provide comprehensive services.

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### Federal Agencies Have Taken Steps to Develop a Common Vocabulary

As of December 2011, the Interagency Council and federal agencies have taken steps to develop a common vocabulary for discussing homelessness and related terms, as we recommended in our June 2010 report. The HEARTH Act mandated that after the completion of our June 2010 study, the Interagency Council convene a meeting of experts to discuss the need for a uniform federal definition of homelessness and the extent to which differences in definitions create barriers to accessing services. In January 2011, the Interagency Council held a meeting with 85 participants from a variety of stakeholder organizations and issued a report to Congress in June 2011 that summarized the feedback received during the meeting.<sup>11</sup> According to the June 2011 report, developing a common vocabulary would entail developing shared terminology for talking about the many different types of homelessness, such as living on the streets, in shelters, or doubled up with family or friends. However, each federal agency still would maintain its own program eligibility criteria as defined by statute, regulation, or administrative rules. The June 2011 report notes that a common vocabulary would allow federal agencies to better measure the scope and dimensions of homelessness, and may ease program implementation and coordination.

During the January 2011 meeting, participants also identified next steps for building a common vocabulary and data standard on housing status, which, according to the Interagency Council, would allow measurement of homelessness across agencies or at the federal level. As part of the next steps for building a common vocabulary, the Interagency Council developed an interagency workgroup that will conduct an inventory of current data standards across agencies to build on common reporting requirements. Additionally, the workgroup will focus on classifying existing reporting requirements into a common vocabulary that describes the varying conditions of homelessness that different federal agencies target. As of December 2011, Interagency Council staff told us that they held three meetings—in August, September, and October 2011—to discuss implementation of a common vocabulary and data standard with key

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<sup>11</sup>U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Report to Congress: Community Forum to Discuss GAO Recommendation to Develop a Common Federal Vocabulary on Housing Status*, June 2011.

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federal agencies such as Education, HUD, HHS; the Departments of Commerce, Defense, Labor, and Veterans Affairs (VA); the Social Security and General Services Administrations; and the Office of Management and Budget.

The Interagency Council also noted that individual federal agencies have taken some positive steps to create this common data standard and improve coordination across agencies. In an update to its strategic plan in October 2011, the Interagency Council noted that agencies such as HHS and VA have been working with HUD to better coordinate data collection, analysis, and reporting.<sup>12</sup> For example, HHS, HUD, VA, and the Interagency Council issued joint guidance and hosted a webinar on strategies to improve the accuracy of HUD's point-in-time counts of people experiencing homelessness, particularly for youth and veterans. Additionally, HHS and VA have each been working with HUD to plan the potential transition of some of their programs to HUD's data system (Homelessness Management Information Systems, or HMIS). The Interagency Council has a goal of transitioning two other federal agencies to HMIS by December 31, 2014.

In conclusion, changes to the definition of homeless based on the HEARTH Act and HUD's final rule may alleviate some of the challenges the narrower definitions previously presented. Also, federal agencies' efforts to develop a common vocabulary and data standard will likely allow agencies to measure homelessness more consistently. However, a broader and more consistent definition of homeless does not mean that everyone who meets the new definition would be entitled to benefits in all homeless assistance programs, and constraints on resources will likely continue to restrict access for some children and youth.

Chairman Biggert, Ranking Member Gutierrez, and Members of the Subcommittee, this concludes my prepared statement. I would be pleased to respond to any questions that you may have at this time.

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<sup>12</sup>The Interagency Council issued its first strategic plan in June 2010, which included an objective to strengthen capacity and knowledge, including creating a common data standard and uniform performance measures if feasible. See U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*, June 2010. For the 2011 update, see *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness Update 2011*, October 2011.

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**Testimony of New York City Homeless Services Commissioner Seth Diamond**  
**Subcommittee for Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity**  
**Committee on Financial Services**  
**United States House of Representatives**  
**December 15, 2011**

Good morning Chair Biggert, Representative Gutierrez I am Seth Diamond, Commissioner of New York City's Department of Homeless Services and I am pleased to be with you today to discuss the city's ongoing efforts to prevent family homelessness and to work with those who are homeless to return to the community as quickly as possible. New York City's approach emphasizes preventing homelessness, increasing economic security through employment, improving access to mainstream programs and improving health and stability for vulnerable populations.

The Department of Homeless Services administers a number of programs designed to assist those who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. The largest service we run, in cooperation with a range of not for profit providers, is the city's shelter system. These shelters are temporary housing for those with no other options. Shelter residents are temporarily placed in 250 locations throughout the city, some for single adults with no children and others for families. During that time they receive the services necessary to allow them to leave shelter and to return to the community.

We have found employment assistance is an essential element of ensuring families who leave the shelter system find greater stability in the communities to which they move. Employment is important not only for the income it provides but for the structure and foundation it can bring to a family. Shelter residents want to work and our responsibility is to create the environment in shelter that will assist those residents in initially entering the work force and in retaining the employment they need to support their families and re establish themselves in the community.

This year alone 7,500 shelter residents have gone to work. The available employment varies but includes opportunities in health care, tourism, security and retail among many others. Some residents have found jobs on their own but many have done so with the assistance of employment and training providers under contract to New York City. These providers are generally the same ones who serve those enrolled in the city's broader TANF program. Just as in the TANF program, shelter residents who can work, must work and we want to help them in their efforts to do so. We continue to improve our services to those in shelter and to find ways to help those beginning jobs to move up the economic ladder. A solid employment system is an essential component of efforts to assist shelter residents.

The city's support for working shelter residents does not end when they begin a job or even when they leave shelter. Through a range of programs many with special features designed to assist working New Yorkers, the city helps those beginning entry level jobs to gain stability and raise their income, particularly in what can be those difficult early months. Food Stamps, health insurance, child support and course child care are critical

benefits that can ensure a parent does not just enter work but is also able to retain that job.

We do not however believe the definition of homelessness should be expanded to include those identified by school and child care professionals and other groups. We agree with H.R. 32 that teachers are critical partners in our efforts to better serve homeless families. In New York City staff from the Department of Education work closely with shelters to ensure children are enrolled and attending school. Attendance data is provided to shelter staff so they can check that parents are working to get their children to school every day. We also work with school staff on a range of tutoring and homework initiatives designed to improve academic performance.

HUD resources however should be focused on those with the greatest need. With financing already stretched thin, to further dilute those allocations would hurt the substantial efforts being made in New York and across the country to assist those in shelter. Dedicated resources are essential to provide those in shelter with needed housing, employment, and rehabilitative and case management services. While those living with others may be in need of services, those needs can be addressed through other funding streams, such as ESG. Existing allocations such as the TANF program also provide an opportunity to assist those at risk of homelessness. In New York City for example one time TANF grants can help families who have an ongoing ability to pay rent but have fallen behind due to an unforeseen emergency. We certainly should do all we can to assist families from becoming homeless but we cannot let those efforts come at the cost of services to those in shelter.

Administering the shelter system is the most well known part of our agency, but we also work tirelessly to prevent homelessness. While there are no families sleeping on the street of our city, there are single adults and we deploy a range of providers 24 hours a day, seven days a week to work to move those individuals as quickly as possible to housing. Through these efforts with our providers we have seen the number of unsheltered individuals reduced by 40 percent in the past five years.

Our family prevention efforts recognize that it is far better wherever possible to keep a family in their home, where their children are enrolled in school and where they have community supports, than forcing that family to be uprooted to come to shelter to receive services. Shelter is an expensive resource and in many cases, prevention services can be administered more cheaply than a stay in shelter. It is not always possible to avoid a family entering shelter but in many cases early action in which the family takes an active and accountable role, can help them avoid a stay in the shelter system.

New York City prevents homelessness primarily through a network of 13 prevention offices called Homebase located throughout the city. These offices use a range of services to assist families in stabilizing their housing situation.

The service mix is different in each case but our Homebase offices are operated under two important principles.

First those who ask for assistance must take concrete and verifiable steps to improve their situation and assistance is contingent on their taking those steps. Individuals, working with a case worker, must design a plan to address the circumstances that put them at risk of homelessness and then put that plan into action. The plan might include, for example, an aggressive job search, actively looking for a new apartment or attending financial counseling. While some initial help may be provided, proof of compliance with a service plan must be presented before further assistance will be given.

Second, as called for in the Open Door report, Homebase is an evidence-based effort where we continually and rigorously review our work to ensure it is efficient and cost effective. Especially at a time of limited resources, it is critical that our services must be based on solid and reliable data. Homebase meets that test and its programs are continually evaluated to both ensure we are targeting those most in need of services and that wherever possible, we are providing the services that are not only beneficial to the family but will prevent those households from needing shelter.

To further ensure Homebase prevention services are effective, we have undertaken a series of independent evaluations of the program. These reviews, conducted by leading researchers from universities across the country as well as a random assignment study undertaken by Abt Associates, one of the nation's leading social sciences research firms, look at a series of the most critical questions involving our prevention efforts. Researchers are examining if communities served by Homebase send fewer families to shelter than those not served by Homebase, how can Homebase services best be targeted, but for Homebase services would targeted individuals have entered the shelter, how can services best be designed to target those most in need and a variety of related questions. The research is underway and we look forward to sharing the results as those findings become available.

Prevention efforts have become a greater part of the national discussion of homelessness and we are gratified the new Emergency Solutions Grants supports prevention work. We think this change will be critical in encouraging communities across the country to direct more resources toward prevention and believe if those programs are established and operated under the high standards we have used, they can be effective and believe it would be a good investment of taxpayer dollars to expand ESG funding to allow additional prevention services to be put in place.

I thank you for the opportunity to testify and look forward to answering your questions.

**Testimony of Brandon Dunlap**  
**Subcommittee for Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity**  
**Committee on Financial Services**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**December 15, 2011**

Good morning. Thank you for giving me the chance to testify today in support of H.R. 32. My name is Brandon Dunlap and I am 25 years old and I am from Chicago, Illinois. I currently work in the Food and Beverage Department of the Union League Club of Chicago. I graduated from Kendall College in Chicago in 2010 with a bachelor degree in hospitality management and an associate degree in culinary arts. I am a graduate of Curie High School in Chicago. I am proud of what I have accomplished so far but it has been very difficult because I have not had a stable housing situation growing up. A safe and secure place to live would have helped me in many ways.

For most of my childhood, I have not had a stable place to live. My parents got separated when I was young. After they split up, my mom, my sister and I ended up living with my aunt and five cousins. It was crowded and we were hungry a lot. I remember that it was hard to do my homework. It was distracting and difficult to focus because there were so many people in the house. Since then, things came together and fell apart on more than one occasion.

My mom got an apartment when I was entering the 4<sup>th</sup> grade. We lived there for about a year or so when we were evicted. My mom, sister and I split up. My sister lived with my aunt while I lived with neighbors the summer going into 5<sup>th</sup> grade. That was a tough summer for me. My caregivers' old age limited their ability to take care of me; they let me out to play as early as 7am and didn't worry about me until around 6pm, when their day was winding down. After that summer, I moved in with my aunt where my sister was, and her five children. My mom was in and out of the apartment and did not always stay with us. Eventually, my mom got another apartment but again lost the apartment. After this apartment loss, I lived with a close friend I call my sister. I was best friends with her little brother in 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and ate at their house regularly.

One cold winter night during my sophomore year, after work, my mom called me and asked if we were still meeting up, as we previously planned. I told her I was really tired and requested we meet another time but she insisted on us meeting up. I got on the bus and we met on 71<sup>st</sup> and Prairie. We walked up to an apartment and she opened the door and said welcome home. She said she got this apartment for me and I was relieved. Relieved to have a place to call home after such a long time and relieved I didn't have to get back on the bus on that cold wintery night. I believe we lived there only until the following summer. That summer during my junior year, I received a phone call, just before work, from my sister, stating that the sheriff was there to put our things out on the street. My mother was nowhere to be found. I went to work and told my manager what was going on and he lent me his car to save anything I

could. My sister went to another cousin's place and I went to work, with tears in my eyes, not knowing for the first time where I was going for the night. The tears wouldn't stop so my manager offered for me to go home. The tears came even stronger than I thought possible because I HAD NO HOME TO GO TO.

Right after my sister called me, I had called my cousin to inform him of the situation and he suggested I go to work and figure things out later. After one of the longest shifts I ever worked, my cousin showed up at my job and relieved my worries and said I could stay with him.

However, he didn't allow me to have a key to come and go as I please. This proved to be very difficult for me. My cousin, a young man in his mid-twenties, wanted to live his life. Some nights, my cousin wouldn't be home after I left work. I would not find out that he was not there until I arrived there after taking public transportation. I would travel a long distance from work or school, often in bad weather, only to find that my cousin was not home and I needed to try to find someplace else to stay that night. When my cousin wasn't home, I'd scramble to call different friends and family members to find a place to stay for the night and then get back on the bus to travel a long distance to another place to stay. On one occasion, I called my grandmother and thought I was welcome to stay there. Once I arrived there, she seemed upset about many things. My uncle, her brother, had just moved in with her due to some circumstances I know nothing about. She started venting about how people will not just move in on her so I decided to leave and stay with my aunt that night.

From that night on, I developed a rotation theory in which I would utilize all my resources to try to avoid staying in the same place two nights in a row, unless it was my cousin's place. I was always aware that I didn't want to be a burden on anyone, including my cousin. I could pick up on a situation where people were not happy with my being there and felt the need to constantly diversify my living situation to avoid being a burden. Figuring out where I would stay each night and travelling to get there took a lot of my time and energy. I had to be strategic about where I would stay night to night. I had to have a plan, then a back up plan, and then more plans, in case the back up plan did not work out.

Staying with my cousin was not a good situation. I slept on the floor under the pool table. There really wasn't room for me to stay there. I was uncomfortable and did not sleep well. That had its effects the next day when I would be tired and find it hard to focus at school. Nobody was making sure that I got up and went to school. My cousin left the house early for work. I recognized the click-clack of his shoes and knew it was time to get up. My cousin lived in the Beverly neighborhood of Chicago on the south side and my school was far away, near Midway Airport.

After I graduated high school, I finally got stable housing. Two weeks after graduation, I moved into student housing in downtown Chicago with Kendall College's Culinary Camp under special circumstances. I remember taking the train to move all of my stuff in and being so happy to have a place of my own. I had a stable environment, I was comfortable and I had my own place to be. It was home to me and I was the only high school graduate in the program so they allowed me to work and live a somewhat normal life. In the fall, I started at Kendall College and my dorm room was my stable housing. It was such a stress-reliever to know that I had my dorm to go to each night to sleep and study.

My unstable living situation had many negative effects on me. The first was academics. Academics wasn't easy outside of school, and, in a lot of ways, it would've been so much easier to drop out. I only went because if I was anywhere else at the time, the police would want to contact my parents and I didn't want that extra drama for me or them. Doing homework was tough for me and there was no one to push me to study and that made the situation worse. I skated through high school doing mostly class work and participation, minimal studying and sometimes last minute extra credit at semester ends. Doing homework and studying was also a very difficult task for me due to the lack of consistent, stable environment. Books were heavy and trips were long. The time and energy that it took for me to figure out where to sleep each night left little time for homework. I struggled because I never developed good study habits as a child. It was really hard to study throughout my life because of my living situation. I feel that I was only an average student because of my lack of a stable environment and not having good study skills. In college, I did two programs. The culinary program was based on performance and punctuality and I did well in that program. The B.A. program required more reading, studying and bookwork and I struggled with that part of the program.

In high school, I couldn't do things that other kids did like sports and extracurricular activities. I couldn't take part in that because I had other responsibilities. I went to school, I worked at Subway throughout high school and I spent time trying to find a place to stay each night. I was forced to grow up fast. I only dreamed of having a stable home and family. It was really lonely. I wasn't able to develop socially in high school and I still have anxieties about social situations. In adolescence, I developed a shyness for fear of not being accepted. As an adult, that shyness has almost, completely reversed. It made me develop trust issues with mostly everyone.

One person I met through my high school's culinary program helped me a lot. Her name is Rhonda Purwin. Rhonda always showed genuine care for me. She helped me with competitions, writing essays, getting scholarships, getting into culinary camp and college. However, she was not able to help me with my housing situation.

I have faced many barriers to housing in my life. As a child, my mother was not able to afford and maintain stable housing for my sister and I. If she had some assistance – a housing program with services, things would have been much better for us. My mom had issues she needed help with but if she had stable housing with services, she may have been able to address those issues. If such a program had been available to my family, my years of homelessness could have been prevented. After I was on my own in high school, I also had many barriers to housing. Even though I worked throughout high school, there was no way I could afford my own housing, or find someone to rent an apartment to a teenager. Although people at school helped me with other things, nobody was able to help with my housing situation. I would have loved someplace that was safe, warm and consistent to live – a healthy place to live my life, go to school, work and go to one place to do my homework and eat. A consistent place to stay with a caring adult would have been wonderful. It would have saved me lots of energy that I could have put toward school. That is something that was never available to me.

It would have been very difficult for me to verify my living situation when I was growing up. As a homeless youth, I would not want to ask for proof from an adult that I could stay with them for only 14

days. To ask for proof that an adult allowed me to live with them for only 14 days would possibly cause some adults to feel guilty to put in writing that a homeless child could only stay for 14 days, or worry that they could be in some trouble. Being in that situation, 14 days is a really long time. I would have accomplished a lot if I could stay in one consistent place for 2 weeks. My philosophy was to not stay in one particular place for more than a couple of days at most. The reasoning for this was not to overstay my welcome. I didn't want anyone that was helping me to get tired of my presence. Asking them for verification would be another burden to them.

For the same reasons, I would not feel comfortable asking them to sign off on a piece of paper stating that I had moved twice within 60 days. Most people know only what I told them about my living situation and didn't keep track of days and numbers of moves so they would not be able to verify how many times I had moved within 60 days. Also, family members would be reluctant to put something in writing that might show that my parents were not caring for me. I also didn't want to risk doing anything that might involve any authorities because I didn't want DCFS to go after my parents. If, in order to access housing services, I had to show that I would likely be homeless for a long time, that would be difficult for me. I always hoped that I would not be homeless for too long. I also don't know how I would have proven that I'd likely be homeless for a long time.

I believe that all government agencies should recognize the situation that I lived in as homeless. I did not have a home or a stable place to stay. I did not know where I was going to sleep from night to night. Schools are important to identifying students who are homeless because they see the students the most and have the most information. If a school determines a child is homeless, they should be able to help the child find a housing program that will help them. All government agencies should provide adequate assistance to children who, like me, live place to place. The government agencies should know what a child needs and provide that – especially a safe, stable place to live.

When I was homeless, it was like steering a ship in a storm on the open ocean. I hoped the waters didn't throw anything at me I couldn't handle. I was the only one on the ship, steering it and all the crew members were offshore trying to assist a lost person at sea. Above all else, this situation has forced me to look to myself for success. It was my decision all the way through and I, with minimal guidance, made it through. I learned how to quickly evaluate and eliminate a problem for the longest temporary solution I could find. I developed a great appreciation for what others did for me and I'll hold that characteristic as long as I live.

However, I hope that other young people do not have to go through what I went through. I hope that the situation of young people who are staying temporarily with friends and family are considered homeless by all government agencies and given assistance with a stable place to live.

Testimony of Maria Estella Garza  
Homeless Liaison  
San Antonio Independent School District

Before the  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Insurance, Housing, and Community  
Opportunity Subcommittee  
Financial Services Committee

Hearing Entitled “The Homeless Children and  
Youth Act of 2011: Proposals to Promote  
Economic Independence for Homeless Children  
and Youth”

December 15, 2011

Good morning Representative Biggert, Representative Gutierrez, Members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on this very important subject. My name is Estella Garza. I am the Homeless Liaison for the San Antonio Independent School District (SAISD) in San Antonio, Texas. I have been in this role in SAISD for 17 years. My duties as Homeless Liaison include identification of eligible children and youth, service provision, conducting training and awareness workshops, advocacy for enrollment, accessing resources in the community at large, coordinating with our local Continuum of Care, and overall program administration, including data management and budgeting.

#### Homeless Children and Youth in San Antonio

SAISD has an overall student population of approximately 55,000, with 93% economically disadvantaged. So far this school year, we have identified and enrolled 1,350 homeless students in school. We have identified roughly 700 additional homeless children and youth who are not enrolled in school, either because they are too young for preschool, are unable to enroll in preschool due to capacity issues, or are older youth we identified, and for whom we provided services in an effort to entice them to enroll, but who chose not to enroll. We are on pace to exceed the number of homeless students we identified last school year. In 2009-10 we identified and enrolled 2,033 homeless students. Last year we identified and enrolled 3,171 students (with over 4,000 children and youth identified as homeless in total). That's a 56% increase in one year.

Part of that increase is due to our training and presence in the schools, as well as our hiring of additional outreach staff with ARRA funds. SAISD school personnel are more cognizant than ever of homelessness, and are more apt to refer homeless students to my office. Of course, the economic recession overall in our community has had a serious impact on our homeless population. Our population tends to rely on low-paid, low-skill employment that has disappeared with the economic downturn. Many have lost rental apartments when the property was foreclosed because the landlord did not pay the mortgage. It was very evident a few years ago when the foreclosure crisis hit San Antonio, and we had an increase in mobility and homelessness among families. Even the increase in gas prices has created significant challenges for our families.

Unfortunately, homeless services have not increased along with the rate of homelessness. For years, most of our homeless families have lived in doubled-up situations. These families are sharing the housing of others due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason, so they qualify as homeless under the education definition of homelessness. However, as homelessness has increased, the doubled-up proportion also has increased. The shelters are full, and families and youth have nowhere to go. For example, in the 2010-11 school year, 79.5% of the homeless children and youth SAISD enrolled were living in doubled-up situations. That's 2,522 children. Only 15.9% (505 children and youth) were living in shelters. 44 students were living in motels at the time we identified them as homeless. However, we know that many more

children and youth actually lived in motels as a form of emergency housing during their time of homelessness. Finally 3.2% of our students (100 children) were unsheltered—living in parks, campgrounds, abandoned buildings, and public spaces.

The thousands of doubled-up children and youth I serve face severe challenges. They live in extremely overcrowded conditions, faced with the instability of not knowing whether they'll be allowed to stay from one day to the next. There is often a lot of tension between the host family and doubled-up family. For children in that kind of living situation, it's very difficult to concentrate or focus. There is no quiet place to study or do homework—sometimes there is no place at all to study. There is no calm place to sit down with your parents and talk about your day. The child himself or herself may see it in a more simplified manner: "I don't have my bedroom; I don't have my toys; I don't have any privacy." There are so many people in the home that the particular developmental needs of each child are not being addressed. In fact, they often are not even being considered. As Maslow's hierarchy of needs explains, the family is concentrating on the basic needs of shelter, food, and clothing, and everything else falls by the wayside, including school enrollment and attendance. The result is a negative impact on the child's education, behavior, physical and mental development, fine and gross motor skills—it affects every aspect of the child. Unfortunately, this situation is becoming the norm for many of our homeless families. It's the only norm many of our children have ever known, spending their childhoods bouncing from one place to another. So when we talk about ending homelessness in five or ten years, we must realize that we cannot do that without addressing the needs of our doubled-up children and youth. Because if they continue to experience the instability of doubling-up as their norm, they will become the chronic homeless adults of tomorrow.

In my work at SAISD, I see every day that many families cannot escape homelessness. Just as one example, we've had a family who has been homeless for the past four years. It's a family of six—four children and two parents. We've been working with them the entire time, as the family has bounced all over the city—from emergency shelters, to doubled-up situations, to motels, to wherever they could find a roof over their heads. In the emergency shelter, they can only stay for a short period of time, and then they have to leave. As a result, they have been in different doubled-up situations most of the time they've been homeless. They have lived doubled-up in houses where all six of them are in one room, and where some of them are sleeping on the floor. They've lived with other family members who have a family of four, so there are ten people in a 2-bedroom home. That kind of overcrowding is common among our families. Although they have bounced all over the city, we have been able to keep the children in the same school each year, particularly the three younger students. The older youth has faced greater instability, and right now he is in an alternative program, trying to get his high school diploma. It's to his great credit that he is still going to school, despite the chronic instability and upheaval in his family and his life. We have not been successful in connecting this family to any housing services. We provide them with transportation, school supplies, immediate enrollment, free meals—anything we can do from a school

or academic perspective, we're there to help them out. We also were able to get some additional services for them one Christmas, thanks to the generosity of a patron in our community. Early in the school year, the mother told me she'd finally received a letter from the housing authority informing her that if she could assemble certain documents and \$1400 in a short time frame, she could get into housing. We immediately sprung to action helping her get the documents together, and when she was \$40 short on the fee, we came up with that money for her. She was able to submit everything on time, but about a month later she called me to tell me it had all fallen through, because someone had stolen her husband's identity, resulting in problems in his credit report. They had an attorney assisting them with the credit issues, but regardless, they were denied housing. She ended up finding housing from a stranger she met on the bus, who had personal circumstances that resulted in her home being available, and she is essentially donating the home to this family.

We strive to keep serving our families and youth despite their constant mobility. We try to follow them, but since they have no way to access stable housing, ultimately, school districts are losing kids. We don't know how to find them. It's common for me to get calls from mothers in October or November, trying to enroll their children who have been out of school since the previous spring. They are so unstable that they don't know how or where to enroll. As a result, the children miss large chunks of the school year. I assisted a mother this October who had already been doubled-up in five different homes in two months, and she didn't know where to enroll her child. Once she called me, we got him in school immediately. However, I was not able to help her access HUD services, because she was not "homeless" according to HUD.

We also have many families who live in motels, where they are able to stay for a short period of time based on how much money they can piece together. One family in particular was a mother with a high-school aged boy. The mother was a Veteran of the Armed Forces. They were living in one room with no cooking facilities—not even a microwave oven or refrigerator. She asked us to help with food, which we did, but since they had no way to store perishable food or prepare any food, they ate their meals out of cans and boxes. Outside their single room, the motel opened up onto an unsafe and unsavory neighborhood. I remember her son's exact words were, "This kind of life is for the birds. This isn't meant for humans." I couldn't help this family access HUD homeless programs, either – the fact that the mother was paying for the motel room meant they did not meet HUD's definition of homelessness.

#### Collaboration Between SAISD and the HUD Continuum of Care

Over my 17 years in this position, I have worked closely with shelters in San Antonio and with our Continuum of Care (CoC). Our relationships have grown and matured. However, the differing definitions of "homeless" continue to be very problematic. I speak my language, they speak theirs. I speak out about the families and youth I serve, and my CoC and shelter colleagues know my population is larger than theirs due to the

definition. But because of the different definitions, as a community we constantly have to shift from one mindset to another. It's a challenge to identify common needs and pursue common goals. It's a challenge to help them understand my population. "They're not homeless," they say. Yes, they are. How do we include my families in the Point in Time Count? How do we include them in the services the CoC provides? They simply don't qualify for many services, period, sometimes because of where they live and sometimes just because they are a family or an under-age youth. And sometimes I have to push and prod and do whatever it takes to get a family into a shelter, just so they can access the other supportive services they need to get out of homelessness. I have a good relationship with my shelters, and I push them. It's a horrible situation to have to put another agency's back against the wall, but the only way I can get services for my kids is to get them inside the shelter. It's a nonsensical waste of my resources and those of the shelter. And sadly, more often than not, I am not successful getting them into shelter.

That's the trouble with the HUD definition. If you're doubled-up in the community, you're not "homeless", so you can't get services. But we don't have nearly the shelter capacity for all our families. So they can't get in the shelter, and therefore can't get any services. It's a cycle: doubled-up families can't get in the shelter, so they can't get services, so they remain doubled-up. As a result I'm forced to pressure my shelter colleagues to squeeze in desperate families, because it's the only way the families can access the supportive services they need. When you're 20 people living in a 3-bedroom apartment, children and youth and adults all on top of each other, literally rolling over onto each other in the night, suffering extreme hardship, sometimes without lights or running water—there is no kind of emergency assistance available for that kind of homelessness. There is no assistance for those children. They can apply for housing, and they can be placed on a two-year waitlist. They don't need the assistance in two years. They need it now. And they need supportive services now.

How can we begin to prioritize our families who are doubled-up for housing and support services without them having to pass through a shelter? How can they get from homelessness to housing without a shelter in between? I understand HUD categorizes those families and youth as "at-risk." But in San Antonio, the "at-risk" category doesn't help those families and youth. I know my community very well, and I am not aware of any services in my community for at-risk families, at all. From my understanding, the services that might be available for "at risk" families under the new HEARTH Act do not include most of the services my families need, such as transitional housing, permanent housing, and supportive services such as job training and mental health services. I also understand that only a tiny fraction of HEARTH funding is available for those families. In any case, calling these families and youth "at risk" doesn't do justice to the awful conditions they are living in, and it doesn't help the language barrier and the different mindsets in our CoC. It keeps my families and youth invisible – out of sight and out of mind.

The HEARTH Act's Definition of "Homeless" and HUD's Regulations

I had hoped the HEARTH Act's changes to the HUD definition of homeless would allow San Antonio to provide services to the children and youth I serve. However, upon reading the regulations, and particularly the documentation requirements, I realized that the new definition would not make any difference for the vast majority of my families and youth.

For example, it will be impossible for our doubled-up families to provide documentation, written or oral, from host families regarding how long the doubled-up family or youth can stay, or even confirming they actually are staying there at all. Hosting homeless families and youth often violates rental agreements and occupancy limits. Host families are extremely hesitant to admit to any authority or agency that they have ten people in a 2-bedroom apartment, when their lease and occupancy limits allow only four. In this context, even phone calls to the host family from case managers will be intrusive and likely to result in the host family asking the homeless family to leave immediately. In many instances the host family is in HUD subsidized housing. Will they be evicted? How will HUD treat these families?

If HUD's goal is to create a higher degree of anxiety and animosity among family members in our community, these documentation requirements are an excellent way to do that. The reality of family and youth homelessness in San Antonio is that due to lack of housing, families and youth bounce from relative to relative and friend to friend. When they go through all their support networks, they try to start the cycle all over again. They know they can't stay any one place for long. However, because they lack any other options, they stay longer than their hosts prefer—they wear out their welcome. This creates tension within the family, estranged relationships, anger and frustration, and ultimately the family having to leave and move on to another doubled-up situation. Expecting the host family to provide any documentation about how long the family can stay, or how often they've moved, will only add to that tension. In addition, the host family will now feel obligated to force the homeless family out within 14 days, for fear of charges of fraud or liability. They will be less likely to accept that family back in the future or to provide shelter for anyone. That will become a host home that our homeless family can never return to.

Ironically, this documentation requirement will actually help families meet another one of HUD's requirements: that the youth or family lacks the support networks needed to obtain other permanent housing. By systematically destroying families' support networks, it will make it easier for our families to assert that they have no support networks. Ultimately, it will plague our community with more instability for our families and children, higher mobility, more stress, and greater challenges.

Another example of documentation that will create insurmountable barriers for our families and youth is the acceptable evidence to prove that the family or youth can be

expected to continue in their current status for an extended period of time. It can be extremely difficult for the families and youth we serve to obtain written diagnoses of chronic physical health or mental health conditions. There are not a sufficient number of licensed professionals available to serve this community. By the time a youth or family is able to get through the process of getting this documentation and verification of a physical or mental health issue, the child is gone; we have lost them. We may not know where they are, and we won't be able to provide any services to the family. I also wonder what kind of impact this requirement will have on Medicaid services and providers, which, for most of our families, is the only access they would have to such professionals. This requirement could have a very severe, drastic impact on many different agencies and professionals in San Antonio.

Furthermore, it's simply not right to force an unaccompanied homeless youth to obtain a diagnosis of a chronic physical or mental health condition, a substance abuse problem or history of abuse as a condition to provide that youth with services he desperately needs. It forces him to establish and accept a written record that says he has little hope of breaking free of homelessness as a condition to having his basic needs met and being safe. It's not right, and it's not fair. Our kids shouldn't have to do this. For unaccompanied homeless youth to have to present this kind of evidence is creating a generation of kids with instability in their records. Why should they have to do that just to get services? It's horrendous.

In a sense, what HUD is trying to do is return to their old definition of homelessness, eliminating our doubled-up families and youth by requiring so much documentation. That's what the regulations say to me.

#### HR 32: A Better Way to Serve Our Nation's Families and Youth

I am familiar with HR 32, the Homeless Children and Youth Act proposed by Representative Biggert. In fact, I am used to the process of certifying homelessness for other federal programs, as I do with a streamlined system for free school meals for our students, and to allow unaccompanied homeless youth to complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) as independent students. I will gladly accept the responsibility to certify children and youth who are homeless under the U.S. Department of Education's definition. My families and youth need transitional housing, permanent housing, rapid rehousing and supportive services like case management, job training, and mental health support. Those kinds of services would make a huge difference for my families and youth, both those who need urgent, short-term help to get rehoused, and those who need ongoing support to undo what years of repeated homelessness has done to them.

One example of a family who could have been helped by HR 32 is a two-parent family I recently served. The family included six kids from middle to high school, and a father working low-wage jobs. They were at risk of homelessness for some time due to the

father's employment instability, and when the father ultimately lost his job, the family lost their apartment and moved into a doubled-up situation. If he had been able to access rapid rehousing or homelessness prevention services, he could have left the doubled-up situation immediately, or perhaps even avoided homelessness altogether. However, due to not meeting HUD's definition of "homeless," I was not able to obtain any such services for the family. In two or three months, they were displaced several times. With a great deal of logistical support and transportation costs, we were able to keep the kids stable in their schools over those months of upheaval. Eventually, the father found another job, and the family was able to get another apartment. However, if I could have accessed services for them, we could have rehoused them immediately and avoided the displacement and upheaval in the lives of these six youth. We were lucky none of them dropped out of school due to the instability, or in an effort to get a job and support the family.

Another family that could have benefited from HR 32 was a mother with a high-school-age daughter. They were doubled-up, and the mother needed a deposit and first-month's rent for an apartment. She was able to get some of the money, but was \$400 short. We couldn't get services for them, we couldn't get them connected to a rapid rehousing or other assistance program, and we couldn't find the \$400 for them. They are still homeless today. This was the perfect opportunity for a program to end this family's homelessness, to be able to celebrate getting a homeless family into permanent housing, but they weren't eligible for services. They've been homeless for a year and half now. They recently lost another doubled-up situation and had to move into a boarding house, where they are sharing one room. We are serving the youth and trying to keep her on track for high school graduation.

#### Conclusion

"HUD homeless", "ED homeless" – regardless of the legal definitions, in reality, these are all the same families. There is not a "doubled-up population" and a "shelter population." There is a homeless population. Families and youth can't find space in the shelter system, so they have to double up. Or the shelters don't serve families or unaccompanied minors, so they have to double up. Or the emergency shelter time limit runs out, so they double up. And then they are forced out of one doubled-up situation into another, or into a shelter if one is available, or into a motel if they happen to have the money. These are all the same families. They make the rounds. It's a means of survival. They're moving in and out of "HUD homelessness," with no consistency, no continuity, and almost no possibility of accessing HUD services.

If HR 32 were enacted, we could begin to break this vicious cycle of homelessness. We could eliminate HUD's bureaucratic paper chase, we could be more creative and sensible in our use of existing federal programs, and we could put children and youth first, so they don't become tomorrow's homeless adults. Thank you for allowing me to

Speak on behalf of the thousands of homeless children, youth, and families in San Antonio, and across the nation.



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HOUSING AND URBAN DEVELOPMENT  
WASHINGTON, DC 20410

**Written Testimony of**

**Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Johnston  
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**Hearing before the House Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing and Community  
Opportunity  
"The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011: Proposals to Promote Economic  
Independence for Homeless Children and Youth"**

**Thursday, December 15, 2011**

Introduction

Chairman Biggert, Ranking Member Gutierrez, members of the Subcommittee, it is an honor to testify before you today about ways in which homeless and vulnerable families with children as well as unaccompanied youth can be housed with HUD resources. The fact that there are Americans with nowhere to call home is an absolute shame; that any child, much less many thousands of children, live on our streets is unacceptable. Homelessness is more than the loss of housing; it impacts a child's health, emotional well-being, and ability to achieve in school.

The Obama Administration keenly recognizes this and developed a comprehensive Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness. In 2010, it was through the leadership of the US Interagency Council on Homelessness, with Secretary Shaun Donovan as the Chair that year and Barbara Poppe as Executive Director, the Federal government reached out to stakeholders nationwide and developed a truly comprehensive plan. The explicit goals in the plan are to finish the job of ending chronic homelessness by 2015, ending veteran homelessness by 2015, and ending family and youth homelessness by 2020.

Given that no child should be without a home, ending family and youth homelessness is a key part of the Federal Strategic Plan. Families with children make up too large a share of our homeless population. Based on our most recent Annual Homelessness Assessment Report, families with children make up 37% of all people living in homeless shelters, or, worse yet, in

unsheltered locations, such as on sidewalks, in cars, and parks. Sadly, 1 in 5 homeless families are unsheltered.

This week HUD released the national Point-In-Time count for homeless persons. HUD partners with communities each January to count the number of persons at a point in time who are either unsheltered (e.g., living outside) or are in homeless shelters. These counts do not include persons who are at risk of not having housing, such as persons living with other family members or friends.

The number of persons living unsheltered or in shelters declined by just over 2 percent from 2010 to 2011, to approximately 636,000 persons. Importantly, this overall decline reflects reductions in all sub-groups: individuals, the chronically homeless, veterans and families with children. The reduction in homelessness among families was 2.4 percent from 2010 and 5.0 percent since 2007. Given the difficult economy and high poverty rates, it is heartening that we are seeing some progress again in reducing homelessness. These reductions are a testament to both nationwide homelessness prevention efforts which I will be articulating later as well as continued funding of proven programs authorized by this Subcommittee that provide supportive housing to homeless families and individuals.

#### Defining Homelessness

The Homeless Emergency and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act, which amends the McKinney Act of 1987, provides communities, for the first time, with a full range of tools to prevent and end homelessness. In particular, HEARTH expressly allows for HUD programs to serve persons who are defined as at risk of homelessness, it expands the definition of who is considered homeless and now includes qualifying families and children in the definition of chronically homeless.

Allowing HUD programs to serve persons who are at risk of homelessness enables communities to reach out and stabilize families and youth, thus preventing them from falling into homelessness. HEARTH also expands the homeless definition, which will help ensure that more families with children and unaccompanied youth are *eligible* for HUD homeless assistance. The new homeless definition includes many persons, especially families, children and unaccompanied youth, who had previously not met HUD's statutory homeless definition. In particular, the definition of homelessness under HEARTH now includes, for instance, persons who are not yet without housing but will be within two weeks. This important provision will help ensure that families do not have to sleep on the streets for a night in order to be eligible for homeless assistance. The definition would also include families with children and unaccompanied youth defined by any other Federal statute as homeless who meet the statutory vulnerability tests. In addition to defining at risk of homelessness and expanding the definition homelessness, the law also allows families, and not just individuals, who meet the statutory tests to be considered chronically homeless.

During the proposed rulemaking phase for the new homeless definition, we received more than 200 comments. We carefully reviewed each and made a number of important changes in the final rule based on these comments. For example, historically, HUD did not have an explicit definition of *youth*, but rather defined children as under the age of 18 and adults as 18 and older. During the comment period, many recommended HUD define *unaccompanied youth*. Commenters provided a wide range of ages to make the distinction, including ages 17, 21 and under 25. Through these comments, we recognized the need to define the term and reached out to our Federal partners to identify the ages used in youth-targeted programs.

Based on their feedback, we decided to define *youth* as persons under age 25, which will allow us to more accurately capture the broad range of ages of youth. More importantly, it will allow communities to better target resources to their particular needs. Another example involves the number of moves it takes before someone has *persistent instability* and can be considered homeless. The HEARTH Act defines *persistent instability* as measured by “frequent” moves over a “long-term” period. To clarify these terms, HUD proposed that *persistent instability* be measured by three or more moves during a 90-day period. Many commenters thought that for families and youth in particular, that three or more moves was too high a standard and that 90-days was too long, and that the combination of the two would have been disruptive. Based on that input, in the final rule *persistent instability* is now defined as *two* or more moves during a *60-day* period. This will allow communities to reach more families with children and youth at imminent risk for homelessness that should be eligible for HUD assistance.

HUD is now beginning to implement the definition with its over 8,000 local grantee partners. We have held and will continue to hold national training on the definition. It is important to note that as grantees begin to use the new, more expanded definition of homelessness, we have for several years received essentially flat funding. We are obviously in a time of great fiscal restraint, and it will be very challenging to serve *more* people who are either at risk of homelessness or are now defined as homeless without additional resources.

To put this in perspective, at current funding levels, HUD can house through its transitional or permanent supportive housing programs just over 200,000 persons. Unfortunately, there are nearly 650,000 people on any given day and 2 million people during the course of the year-- many of whom are families with children and youth -- who live either on the streets or in short-term homeless housing. These figures do not include persons at risk of having no housing. So, again, despite the expanded definitions under HEARTH, a realistic analysis of the available resources makes it clear that serving *more* people, including more homeless families with children and unaccompanied youth, will be very difficult, at least in the short term.

#### HEARTH Implementation

The HEARTH Act was enacted in May 2009 and was the result of many years of hard work from those in Congress, the advocacy community, homelessness service providers and HUD. I was personally involved in these efforts from the beginning and was very heartened to see Congress pass this in a bi-partisan way and to watch President Obama sign it into law. In addition to broadening the definition of homelessness, the HEARTH Act consolidates three homeless assistance programs administered by HUD under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act into a single grant program, revises the Emergency Shelter Grants program – the now renamed Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program -- and creates the Rural Housing Stability program to replace the Rural Homelessness Grant program.

The HEARTH Act also codifies in law the Continuum of Care planning process which has long been a part of HUD's application process, providing greater coordination in responding to the needs of homeless persons.

For the first time, HUD's homeless assistance programs have the full range of tools communities need to confront homelessness for families and children--from prevention to emergency shelter, transitional housing, rapid re-housing, and permanent housing.

To implement the HEARTH Act amendments, HUD has developed and is issuing six sets of regulations. The Emergency Solutions Grants program interim rule, with corresponding amendments to the Consolidated Plan, was issued on November 14 and published in the Federal Register on December 5. The rule goes into effect on January 4, 2012 and public comments are due February 3, 2012. We have already begun training on the basic provisions of the rule. The Homeless Definition final rule was also posted November 14, with a December 5<sup>th</sup> Federal Register date. The rule goes into effect on January 4, 2012 and our first training on the homeless definition took place on December 6, the day after it was published. In addition, HUD also recently issued the Homeless Management Information System or HMIS proposed rule which was issued on December 9; comments are due February 7, 2012. The Continuum of Care rule is in final clearance as is the rule for the new Rural Housing Stability Assistance program.

With the new Emergency Solutions Grants program now being implemented, I wanted to make a few observations. Its predecessor, the Emergency Shelter Grants, an original McKinney Act program, provided funding mainly to operate emergency shelters. While that program was vital, the HEARTH Act greatly expands its offerings under the new Emergency Solutions Grants program. ESG can now provide flexible homelessness prevention assistance and rapid-re-housing. Rapid re-housing provides families and youth who have fallen into homelessness with case management and other supports to quickly get back into housing. HUD was able to use the new ESG's prevention and rapid re-housing component even before enactment through the Recovery's Act's \$1.5 billion Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) program. In fact, when Congress created the HPRP Program, it used the HEARTH ESG language. To date, HPRP has been a huge success. This program primarily targets families with children and to date has prevented or ended homelessness for well over 1 million persons,

including over 750,000 persons in families. We would assert that HPRP is one of the primary reasons we have actually seen homelessness decrease during this recession. Going forward, grantees will be able to use their experience with HPRP to readily implement the new ESG program, albeit at lower funding levels. The introduction of flexible prevention in ESG as well as for high performers in the new Continuum of Care program and in the Rural Housing Stability Program will enable communities to prevent homelessness for vulnerable families as well as serve those who are homeless.

Given the lower than requested funding levels for 2012 to implement the HEARTH programs, HUD will determine which programmatic provisions -- in particular for the Continuum of Care program -- the agency will be able to implement this year.

#### Common Vocabulary on Homelessness

I would like to acknowledge the good work of GAO in assessing the federal data on homelessness, the research related to homelessness and how different definitions might impact the effectiveness of programs. I enthusiastically support the finding that there should be a common vocabulary for homelessness. With the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness as the Executive branch lead for this effort, I defer to Executive Director Barbara Poppe's testimony and leadership on this subject. I would, however, like to make several comments.

First, I personally appreciate the need to establish a common vocabulary across agencies if we are going to end homelessness. I experienced this firsthand when in 2009 and 2010 HUD and the Departments of Health and Human Services (HHS) and Education (ED) worked together to develop a demonstration program to provide mainstream housing and services for families and children who had no housing or were on the verge of losing their housing. I was the HUD lead on the effort and worked closely with my counterparts at Education and HHS. It was at times challenging to work together effectively without a clear and common vocabulary on the issue of homelessness.

Second, HUD has been very involved with the effort to explore a common vocabulary on homelessness so that agencies can better collaborate and collect more consistent information. HUD has worked closely with USICH to understand the challenges entailed and explore solutions. USICH held a summit, hosted by HUD, on this topic and actively participated in the session.

#### Mainstream Resources and Evaluation Efforts

Finally, we realize that solving homelessness will require both more resources than are available through McKinney and the HEARTH amendments and more data so that the resources we do

have can have the maximum impact. We are involved in several initiatives to help reduce and end homelessness for families with children and for youth that attempt to both bring more resources to the table and to find the best strategies to deal with this problem. We developed with the Departments of Education and Health and Human Services the framework for a demonstration to use mainstream resources such as TANF to house and serve families with children who are without housing or at risk of losing their housing.

We have sought funding to encourage public housing agencies to use their mainstream resources to house homeless families and youth and others.

We are currently conducting a national evaluation of the Impact of Housing and Services Interventions on Homeless Families, the largest evaluation on homelessness in which HUD has ever engaged. The evaluation will assess the impact of different interventions, including transitional housing, rapid re-housing and housing subsidies such as Housing Choice Vouchers. An interim report on the study will be available in the summer of 2012. The final report, which will include an assessment of housing placement over time, is due out in 2014. We are also funding grants to study: 1) the outcomes for children on variety of fronts, including health and school outcomes; 2) barriers to preschool enrollment for homeless children; and 3) academic achievement and school participation of homeless children.

In addition, HUD is conducting a project that focuses on the housing needs of the nearly 30,000 youth who “age out” of the foster care system each year. The study will catalog the range of housing programs that serve youth aging out of foster care, including their funding mechanisms; identify “model” programs with documented outcomes; conduct an in-depth review of communities who are using family unification program vouchers to serve this population; and identify opportunities to mitigate the risk of homelessness for youth as they transition out of the foster care system. We expect to issue research findings and a final report on the project in spring 2013.

Finally, in support of the Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness, HUD is conducting a research effort to explore and document how Public Housing Agencies currently serve and interact with homeless families. The goals of the study are: 1) to establish a baseline level of current engagement of PHAs in serving homeless households, 2) to explore barriers to, or concerns about, increasing the number of homeless households served or targeting homeless households, and 3) to identify mechanisms to address or eliminate barriers identified. Initial results will be available in later 2012.

In conclusion, I want to thank you for the opportunity to testify today and look forward to answering any questions you may have.

**Testimony of Rumi Khan  
Subcommittee for Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity  
Committee on Financial Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
December 15, 2011**

Good morning Mrs. Biggert and all the committee. Thank you for holding this hearing so you can learn about homelessness from how we see it as kids.

My name is Rumi Khan and I'm 11 years old. I am in 6<sup>th</sup> grade at Lamberton Middle School in Carlisle, PA. I'm here with my mother and another family from our shelter, and our friend Diane from HEAR US.

Me and my mom are homeless. We got that way because my dad was abusing me and my mom. When he started drinking alcohol it got worse. He would yell and put both of us down. He hit me and called me stupid and retarded. He tried to choke my mom. We went to court to get help but they didn't help us. We left our home in June last year and went to stay in a hotel for a couple nights. My mom didn't have enough money to stay longer. She tried to find a shelter for us to stay in but they didn't have any room.

One of her friends from work offered to let us stay there with her and her son. It was about an hour drive from where we used to live and where my mom worked. My mom had to drive every day to get to work and keep her job. I had to go with her because she didn't want me staying by myself at her friend's house. I didn't want to stay there either because her friend changed and would get really mean with me. Sometimes she was nice but you never knew when she would smack her son or pull his hair. Once the lady pushed me up the stairs and she was really mad at me. She made me feel down, afraid and not safe. I was really bored hanging around while mom worked. She tried to explain it to me, and I tried to understand. We stayed at this house for about a month. When my mom said something to her about pushing me up the stairs she told my mom to just leave.

My mom was really stressed and she was dealing with a lot of things. When this lady kicked us out we ended up packing our bags and having to walk really far on a hot day to a church to get help because our car had a flat tire and my mom was trying to get it fixed but we were kicked out before she got it fixed.

Another friend that my mom grew up with heard about our situation and invited us to stay with him instead of spending money on a hotel. My mom didn't tell him but we didn't have any money for a hotel or anything. Our car broke down as we were driving across a big bridge. She called her friend and he came to get us with the pastor from his church. It turned out that he had mental problems and he was a big liar. We were really hoping this would work out so my mom could get a job and a place to live, but it didn't.

She tried to get us into the shelter for families that have been abused but we couldn't because of me. They don't allow older boys like me to stay there. My mom kept trying to find a place for us because school was starting soon. We were in one shelter for a little

while but they had a time limit so they moved us into a hotel. It was really scary because drug dealers stood around outside. Sometimes men would knock on our door and when my mom would open it they would just look at us and my mom would try not to say anything to make them mad and tell them they had the wrong door. I made friends at the hotels but it was a small space and I didn't feel at home there. When I went to school the bus would pick me up. I didn't want anyone to know where I was staying. When the bus dropped us off I waited until no one would see me and then I went to the hotel. We were at that scary hotel for a few weeks.

Another friend said she had a spare room we could stay in. My mom didn't know they were having problems and were getting a divorce. They asked her to help out by cleaning houses. But then his wife got mad and we got kicked out again. At least he gave my mom money for her work. So we went and stayed at a motel for one night. It was better not being around all the fighting but we couldn't afford to stay there longer than one night.

We had to change states to find a place to stay. My mom's friend invited us to stay with her until we could find a place. My mom got me into school right away. It was really hard having to start all over again. We were moving around so much so I guess I had to. Staying with other people was tough. It was really hard adjusting to the families' different lifestyles, trying to be around them. It had a big impact. If we crossed the line for some reason, boom, we're out. I didn't want to cross the line because they would take it as disrespect, then, boom, we have to leave. We had to leave there too and stay in another hotel for one night, and then we got into Safe Harbor in Carlisle, PA.

The hardest part was having to move so much and stay in so many different places. We lost everything. It affected my attitude because I lost all my friends over and over again and I was afraid to get close to people because I knew we had to move again.

I struggled in school and came to school very exhausted, because of having to sleep in different places, constantly moving, and not being able to rest. It affected what I could do with my free time. I couldn't do much. When we lived with my dad at least I could see my dog and we had a backyard, but not in a motel. It was very confusing and not much fun. I used to play squash with my dad but now I can't. I miss my dog Rocky.

Everywhere we went it didn't work out no matter how hard we tried. We had a hard time contacting people to help us. My mom's friends couldn't help us. I was really getting stressed too because my mom was looking for a job everywhere and every day and she was so tired and sad. I know my mom was thinking that we should maybe go back to my dad. I missed him a lot but I knew he hadn't gotten any help and I was too afraid that he'd hurt us again. My mom keeps telling me that how my dad treated us was not our fault.

Now we're at least in one place and I don't think we'll get kicked out, at least not just for nothing. I like Safe Harbor but it's still really hard not knowing where we'll end up. We stayed in the room that was on the emergency shelter side for about a month and then we got to move to the other side into our little apartment. I'm not embarrassed any more but it's still hard.

Thanks for listening to what homelessness is like for me and my mom. Moving around and staying with so many different people has been really hard. I hope that now that we're at Safe Harbor we will be able to stay for a while and find a place to live.

**Testimony of Brittany Amber Koon**  
**Subcommittee for Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity**  
**Committee on Financial Services**  
**U.S. House of Representatives**  
**December 15, 2011**

Good morning. I would like to start by saying thank you, Representative Biggert, Representative Gutierrez, and Members of the Subcommittee, for this opportunity to share my story with you today.

My name is Brittany Amber Koon. I was born in a little house in Upper Arlington Ohio that had been in my family for years. I had never lived outside my neighborhood until my family's house was foreclosed on in the middle of my 7<sup>th</sup> grade year. During the foreclosure process, my parents split up. My mom, my sister, my brothers, and I all became doubled up with a neighbor, two doors down. That was the beginning of a long scary journey of instability, and a lonely transition that would lead me to foster care and homelessness, but finally success as a proud member of the US Army.

Homelessness began with my family. When we were doubled up with my neighbor, my school no longer recognized me as a student. After nearly nine years as a student, cheerleader, band member and wrestler, they kicked me out of school. They cut my lock and emptied my locker over Christmas break. When I tried to return, they wouldn't let me. That is when I remembered that my friend's mom, Angela Lariviere, worked with homeless kids. I walked over to her house and asked her to help me. Within a day, we were able to educate my school about the McKinney-Vento Homeless Education Law and I was back in school. However, my housing situation did not last long. My mom started trying to find a new place, but she wasn't holding it together for any of us, and we landed in foster care.

My sister and I were separated from my brothers. That was very hard. We were separated from our old neighborhood and our old friends. About a year after we went into foster care, we were told that our father had been murdered. That was the beginning of the end of our hopes to be a family again. Finally, we were separated from each other. When we were both teenagers, my sister chose to return to our mother. Knowing that going back to her was a bad idea, I decided to take my chances with the state. I was already one year behind in school. I worked really hard in high school. I was able to make up all my credits, join the band, and get a scholarship to Otterbein College. I was doing well. Then the next great tragedy of my life happened: I turned 18.

As a kid, you can't wait to be a grown up. But if you are in foster care, it can turn from a dream to a nightmare. This is true for many kids I know. A few months before graduation, I left my foster home and had to get an apartment. I had a job at McDonald's. I worked all the time. In desperation for housing, there were two things I forgot to consider. One was how much I needed to maintain transportation to get to work, and the second thing was the fact that I was due to move into the dorm, and would have to break my lease. I fell behind in my rent and got kicked out of the apartment, owing them \$1200. It was very lonely and stressful trying to maintain life on my own. My mother and siblings had moved to New York. I knew from the updates in their lives that they were not stable or healthy. I realized I would just be alone for a while. Then I remembered Angela and her Youth Empowerment Program (YEP) that had helped me before. I looked her up and came to visit her. She was as supportive as she could be trying to help me navigate my homelessness. I lived in my car and I doubled-up for two months before college. I stayed on the couches of some relatives and friends. This was not healthy, but I found support in YEP because I made a lot of friends who were also in my situation. They all support each other and encourage us to keep moving forward and focus on education. Housing solutions just didn't really exist.

Finally school started. I was excited because I had received a scholarship and Education Training Voucher (ETV) funds from foster care. But I was so stressed I began to struggle. It is so hard to try to fit and be a regular college student when you are constantly worrying about what you are going to do and where you are going to live on breaks. I knew that Angela had been in the same place I was, she had been homeless when she attended Otterbein. I leaned on her for advise and support. She helped me finish the year.

As the year ended, I was again without housing. I had hoped to return to Otterbein. I was again living in my car when I met a girl at a party. She was alone and had three kids. She told me I could crash out on the couch in her apartment. I had only lived there a couple of days when I was told I had to pay the electric bill. I was happy to pay this bill, because I was glad to get a place to sleep. I was only working part time, but I was hoping I could save money to pay off the other apartment and get housing. After a couple of weeks, I was buying all the groceries and because she did not have a car and I did, I was expected to drive her and her kids wherever they needed to go. I was not able to find other housing so I felt stuck. This happens a lot when you are doubled up. You feel indebted to the people for letting you stay, but then you are taken advantage of by them. After about a month, I was told that they were getting evicted if they couldn't pay \$1600 in back rent. I gave them all the money I had saved, believing that at least I could stay while waiting to go back to school. They took my money, then told me I had to leave.

I was back to my car. I also would stay at other friends' houses. I started hanging out at bars and nightclubs so I would have somewhere to go at night. It was scary sleeping in my car at night. I know it sounds dangerous, but I was making friends at the bars because they would let me come back and crash on their couches. At the time, I thought staying with these people was better than my car. But it really wasn't. In my car, I was in control and I didn't have to worry

about what would happen to me, or people who would try to touch me when I was asleep. I still worked with YEP and realized that a lot of youth were in my situation. I wondered why there was no help. In the fall, I knew it would be a better choice to transfer to community college to save money and try to get out of my homelessness.

It took me longer to transfer than I thought. Things actually got worse for me as I couldn't find any place to stay for more than a week or two. As it got colder, I asked Angela to take me to a shelter, but when we went the lady at intake told us there was a waiting list. It was very scary there, with a lot of older homeless men standing outside keep trying to talk to us. The woman told us that she sees a lot of young kids who don't choose to stay at the shelter or get on the waiting list because of those men. We left.

I used Angela's house as my permanent address for a while. While I could come over for holidays and to do laundry and use the computer, she already had other youth with her and her house was not big enough for me. I decided to move in with my boyfriend. A couple of months later I registered for school again. I was doing well, then my relationship went bad. Because the apartment was in my boyfriend's name, he held it over me and eventually kicked me out. I was so stressed that I had to quit school for the second time.

That is when I talked to Angela's husband about going into the military. He went with me to talk to the ROTC recruiter. I liked the idea of taking my leadership skills to the next level to serve my country. I decided to go active duty so I would have training and a stable place to live.

I recently graduated from boot camp and AIT. I am now stationed at Fort Hood, in Texas. Even though I feel more stable and supported than I have in years, I still don't have a place to call home. I am coming back from Ft. Hood for the holidays, but I will still have to couch surf while I am home.

I could feel bad about my story, but I feel worse knowing how many other youth are out there who are barely hanging on. I am fortunate to have people in my life to encourage me to hang on and move forward. Many other kids don't. I feel that making youth document their homelessness solely through the people they couch surf with will only create another barrier and more frustration with the system. None of the people I lived with would have been willing to write letters or sign papers to document that I was living there. They would have been suspicious and afraid of getting in trouble. Also, many of them I didn't know well enough to ask them.

I also think it is very important for HUD to count doubled-up youth, because I don't think people realize how hard it is for them. It is hard to get housing assistance if you are not in a homeless shelter, and most shelters are full and not safe for youth. Recognizing that there is limited resources, I would suggest increasing resources to those programs so that every youth could be housed. But ignoring us has only reinforced our knowledge that our community has abandoned us and that nobody cares about us.

Finally, it is very critical to not create more barriers to success. Making homeless youth jump through more system rules and hoops to get basic services will only cause them to continue in their current situation. I believe that allowing homeless education liaisons and others to help youth document their situation would be best because it would be easier for a youth to trust caring adults who are already trained and sensitive to their situation. Most youth who are doubled up are getting used. They are not able to become stable enough to get out on their own. When the people we are staying with get tired of us, we get thrown to the streets like stray cats.

This is true of too many youth. In fact, with me today is Danielle Jinx and Shannon McDaniels. They are here to support me, because they also have been in my situation. If we are not counted, we can never be served effectively. If we are not served, we just will be left to start where we were in the first place, in a never-ending chain of instability and abuse.

Like me, you have chosen to serve our country. You here in Washington, and me in the field. Just as you can have faith that I will be out there protecting you, it is my hope that you will use your power here to protect youth like me.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

**Written Testimony of Brooklyn Pastor  
Subcommittee for Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity  
Committee on Financial Services  
U.S. House of Representatives**

**December 15, 2011**

Hello, my name is Brooklyn Pastor. I'm 12 years old, and I'm in 7<sup>th</sup> Grade at William Paca Middle School in Shirley, New York. I'm here today with my mom, and also with Ms. Benjamin, from the Parent-Child Home Program. She used to bring us books and toys when I was 2 and 3 years old and in a shelter. She brought things for us to paint and draw.

Today I live in my own house, but I didn't always live there. I've lived in over sixteen places in my life: six shelters, four times doubled-up with many different people, and we had our own house six times. We also had to go to emergency motel rooms many other times, in between shelters and houses. Three times we lost our housing because the landlord was selling or losing the house. Sometimes we lived with my older sister's grandparents, but they did not want us there. Once we lived in a house where there were people downstairs who the landlord let take our oil and electricity, and we had to leave, because we could not pay it.

I really hate moving from place to place. It is so hard because you get to know people and then have to move. It has made my life hard.

My grandmother abandoned my mom as a child. My mom lived from relative to relative and then she was alone on the street at age 14. She could not finish high school or get a driver's license or have a car either to get a good job. My mom then became pregnant at a young age and was not able to support us easily.

When we lived with other people, they were not always nice to us. We couldn't ask them for anything. They were mostly mad that we were there and did not want anyone else to know, especially their landlord. They would never let us say we were there. My mom could never tell anyone where we lived, or for how long. It was like being invisible.

The hardest thing about living with other people was watching my mom cry. People would yell at my mom because we did not have any money, and they would yell at us to get out. I also remember that my mom did not eat until we ate. She would put the food on our plates and let us eat, and when we were done, she would take what was left for herself. We had to take showers down at the neighbor's house because we had no hot water for a year, and the landlady would not fix it. We could not bring our stuff for the shower in a bag, because they had cockroaches and we did not want to get them. We would carry the shampoo and conditioner down the street. I did not like that because I was getting older and did not want people to know what we were doing.

It hurt me to see my mom hurting and I couldn't do much to help her. I just wanted to be close to my mom. She took care of things and I felt safe when I was near her. As long as you were there with her, nothing would happen. I am always trying to help with my younger sister and brother to decrease my mom's load when I come home from school. Mom has enough to do, so I try and play with them and keep them happy. So I do that at home, and maybe not so much homework. I do not have time to socialize because I am looking to see if I can help Mom. I follow her around to try and keep things going. If Mom is late for a bill, I worry and get afraid and do not ask for anything until it is paid. I guess I socialize when I get to school, and that gets me into trouble at school. It has affected my grades this year.

I used to be in another school where I was on the student council. When we got this last house, it was considered permanent, so I had to go to another school. When you get your own place you have to go to the local school. I could have finished the year at the last school, but Mom could not drive us without a license and they did not send a bus. The new school is ghetto and there were lots of fights at first, and kids were jealous and picked on me. I had to fight every day to get by. It's better now. I am stronger for the experiences.

It is especially hard for my two-year-old brother because he does not understand why Mom is crying. He cries, too, and he asks her not to cry. He does not know what is going on. My sisters and I know why Mom is crying, and that it is not about us. He doesn't understand. He wants Mom's attention. She has to go out a lot to work and to appointments. He has to stay with different people. He has no daycare or preschool because there is no money for that or transportation and no openings near us. There are no services for his age except the Parent-Child Home Program. That comes to us.

We are in a house now, but things are not perfect. We had a hurricane and the roof caved in and my ceiling is still hanging and it is not fixed and the landlady yells at my mom.

I do not want to ever be homeless again. I think the only way that we will never be homeless again is if my Mom got a different job, a real job in an office or something. She works in a restaurant. I hope that will happen soon. This year she got a high school diploma *and* a driver's license and she is going to school in a few weeks to be a Certified Nurse's Assistant.

The things that have helped me to go through all this are being close to Mom and being close to God. Mom does good things for people even when we don't have enough money and I know God will help us.

I would like people to know that it is different going through this than just hearing about it. You may not have ever experienced being homeless. It is worse than hearing about it or watching a movie about it. You are in it. There are a lot of kids going through it.

Thank you.



**Written Testimony of Barbara Poppe, Executive Director  
United States Interagency Council on Homelessness**

**"The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011: Proposals to Promote Economic Independence for Homeless Children and Youth"**

Hearing before the House Financial Services Committee's Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity

December 15, 2011

Chairman Biggert, Ranking Member Gutierrez, and Members of the Subcommittee, thank you for the opportunity to testify today about the impact of homelessness on children and youth. My name is Barbara Poppe and I am the Executive Director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness.

It has been an honor to serve the Council and its 19 member agencies since November 2009. The mission of the Council is to coordinate the Federal response to homelessness and to create a national partnership at every level of government and with the private sector to reduce and end homelessness in the nation while maximizing the effectiveness of the Federal Government in contributing to the end of homelessness. Earlier this week, Department of Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius and Department of Veterans Affairs Secretary Eric Shinseki were elected to serve as the Chair and Vice Chair of the Council respectively.

I want to thank Chairman Biggert for her commitment to ending homelessness among families, youth, and children. In addition to Secretary Sebelius and Secretary Shinseki, I also want to recognize the commitment and hard work over the last two years by other members of the Council, HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, Labor Secretary Hilda Solis, and Education Secretary Arne Duncan.

Today, I will discuss the crisis our nation faces with nearly one million public school children who are experiencing homelessness. I will highlight the progress of the Council relative to the Opening Doors' goal to prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020. As requested, I will also provide an update on the Council's work towards a common vocabulary. My remarks will conclude with the critical steps that are needed for our nation to achieve the 2020 goal of ending family, youth, and children's homelessness.

In June 2010, in recognition of this crisis - we made history. For the first time the federal government set out a goal to end family, youth, and children homelessness. Nineteen federal agencies committed to ending it by 2020.

Reflecting the importance of this issue, the most recent Council meetings focused on family and youth homelessness. In September, the Cabinet Secretaries visited a Washington DC family homeless shelter and heard directly from service providers and parents about best practices. And this past Tuesday, the Council discussed the important next steps that are needed to reach the goal of preventing and ending youth homelessness by 2020.

USICH is continuing to review H.R. 32 and look forward to working with the Committee to ensure that we prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020.

#### **Crisis Facing our Nation's Children, Youth, and Families**

The Department of Education (ED) collects data on the number of students enrolled in public schools (preschool-12<sup>th</sup> grade) in the United States that are identified as experiencing homelessness during the school year. According to ED, 939,903 homeless students were identified during the 2009-2010 school year. More than 70 percent were living in doubled up situations. Most of the remaining balance were in shelters or hotels, but over 40,000 were unsheltered.

	<b>SY 07-08</b>	<b>SY 08-09</b>	<b>SY 09-10</b>
<b>Shelters</b>	164,982	211,152	179,863
<b>Doubled-Up</b>	502,082	606,764	668,024
<b>Unsheltered</b>	50,445	39,678	40,701
<b>Hotels/Motels</b>	56,323	57,579	47,243
<b>Total*</b>	<b>773,832</b>	<b>915,173</b>	<b>935,831</b>

Source: National Center for Homeless Education. *Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Data Collection Summary*. May 2011

\*Six states did not capture data on primary nighttime residence, thus totals in this table are less than overall totals reported by ED.

As HUD Deputy Assistant Secretary Mark Johnston has noted today, the latest HUD data shows that 236,181 persons in families experienced homelessness on a given night in 2011. According to HUD's 2010 Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, more families entered shelter directly from "housed situations" in 2010 than in previous years—most commonly staying with family. Due to the recession, more families with two adults may have become homeless, as well as more families with only a father present.

At 18 months, the 2007-2009 recession was the longest since World War II. The effects of the recession have been especially tied to the housing crisis. With the increased number of families experiencing foreclosure and exiting home ownership there are now more households competing for rental units. The competition for affordable units is even greater. In 2003, 16.3 million very low-income renters (less than 50% of area median income) competed for 12 million affordable and adequate rentals that were not occupied by higher-income households. By 2009, the number of these renters hit 18.0 million while the number of affordable, adequate, and available units dipped to 11.6 million, pushing the supply gap to 6.4 million units. Combined, the shrinking affordable housing stock, falling incomes, and increased

competition from higher-income renters have widened the gap between the number of very low-income renters and the number of affordable, adequate, and available units.

This supply gap has pushed many low-income households into “doubled-up” housing situations. The extent to which multiple individuals and families actually share housing units and how sharing has changed over time is not well documented. The US Census Bureau reports that the number of multifamily households jumped nearly 12 percent between 2008 and 2010—reaching 15.5 million (or 13 percent of all households). Even that figure, however, is believed to be an undercount of doubled-up households. The Census’ multifamily household figures, for example, do not include such situations as when a single brother and a single sister move in together, or when a childless adult goes to live with his or her parents.

The effects of this recession are still being felt throughout the country, and the long-term impacts are unclear. As these households continue to struggle to make ends meet, we expect some of these doubled-up households to end up in the shelter system. Since the Recovery Act’s Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) was a one-time appropriation, some communities have already exhausted their resources, while others are now beginning to ramp down programs.

The budgets of state and local governments are also under tremendous pressure. This fiscal challenge increases the impediments to preventing and ending homelessness for families and youth.

Ending homelessness is not only the right thing to do, it’s the smart thing to do.

As we have known for years about chronic homelessness, there is now a growing number of studies showing that many families experiencing homelessness, especially repeated housing instability, are costly to public systems. The Minnesota Supportive Housing and Managed Care Pilot documented a reduction in inpatient costs when families became stably housed. *Keeping Families Together*, a New York City supportive housing project targeted child-welfare involved homeless families, likewise shows a reduction in child welfare costs. More studies are documenting the relationship between housing instability, school mobility, and poor health. The traumatic and health effects on children are also well documented. Investing in smarter, quicker solutions costs less. Investing in more housing assistance over the long term can save money for schools, child welfare, the health care system, and other public institutions.

Recent research published in the *American Journal of Public Health* showed that housing insecurity is associated with poor health, lower weight, and developmental risk among young children. Researchers conclude that policies and investments that decrease housing insecurity prevent and end homelessness for families.

#### **2020 Goal to Prevent and End Homelessness among Family, Youth, and Children**

When USICH drafted *Opening Doors*, one of the resounding themes we heard from the field was that now more than ever, federal leadership was needed to set out clear goals, timeframes, and strategies to ensure that local communities have a real partner in Washington. And that’s what *Opening Doors* does. A fiscally prudent government response is imperative—local, state, and federal governments cannot afford to invest in anything but proven, cost-effective strategies. That’s why *Opening Doors* includes only those strategies that have been working at the local level.

Opening Doors is based on the idea that solving homelessness requires that mainstream programs develop ways to help people at risk of homelessness meet their needs and avoid homelessness. Mainstream programs are designed for people regardless of their housing status, programs like Medicaid, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program and Education. Historically, the “federal plan” to address homelessness focused on programs targeted to homeless populations like HUD’s Homeless Assistance Grants and HHS’s Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness (PATH) program which delivers services to homeless people with serious mental illnesses and co-occurring substance use disorders. Now it is recognized that to fully address the needs of homeless populations, it is critical that we also collaborate with mainstream programs that provide other key benefits and services needed by homeless families. Over the last 18 months, there has been unprecedented collaboration from federal agencies — with one another, and with state and local governments and nonprofits — in our efforts to implement the plan. The federal government is laying the groundwork for future successes through better collaboration, better data collection, better use of mainstream resources, and engaging states and local communities in the Plan’s goals and strategies.

While it is too soon to tell the full impact of *Opening Doors*, evidence is emerging that local and state efforts supported by federal mainstream and targeted resources—when coupled with partnerships with the private and nonprofit sectors—have made a significant difference. Such progress can be found in the Chicago area where families are being increasingly successful in getting into and staying in permanent housing, as well as in Salt Lake City, Utah where collaborative efforts have made significant progress on all types of homelessness.

The bold and measurable goals in *Opening Doors* are meant to catalyze efforts to prevent and end homelessness. For the first time, the federal government is measuring progress against clear numerical targets. Particularly noteworthy are the following achievements:

- **Breaking down silos.** Unprecedented collaboration and coordination across and within federal agencies have helped to ensure that resources are aligned with the Plan. This alignment improves both the efficiency and effectiveness of the use of government resources.
- **Better data collection, analysis, and reporting.** Agencies within HHS and the VA are working with HUD to coordinate data collection efforts. Good data is essential to measuring what works, what doesn’t and how we need to do better.
- **New definition of homelessness.** This fall, HUD published its new definition of homelessness per the HEARTH Act, which expands access to HUD’s programs for families with children. It allows for more people to be considered eligible for homeless assistance. There is also a new definition of imminently homeless in the recently published Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) rule that allows others to be assisted before becoming homeless.
- **Better use of targeted resources.** The Recovery Act’s Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP) has assisted more than 1 million people, already three times more than projected. Without HPRP, the numbers of families experiencing homelessness on a given night would likely be much higher.
- **Improved access of mainstream resources.** Affordable Care Act implementation has served as a major focal point in the past year, with HHS playing a catalytic role in helping communities begin to prepare for the opportunities that lie ahead. With careful planning now, the implementation

of the Medicaid expansion can significantly increase access to health care for people experiencing homelessness.

- **Increased engagement with states and local communities.** One example is work being led by HHS in partnership with HUD and ED to understand promising practices in the field on linking human services and housing supports to address family homelessness.

HPRP gave communities dollars devoted to homelessness prevention, that is, tailored emergency assistance to help a family stay in their home, as well as rapid re-housing, which can include short-term case management and assistance with rent, and security deposits and other help for a family to re-establish a home. HPRP's success paved the way for systems change in communities across the country by encouraging a new focus on prevention models and rapid re-housing techniques, which are most effective for families. It also created a learning opportunity to determine which strategies are the most successful in reducing the number of families entering shelter and the length of time they spend there. The success of HPRP has spurred action and informed VA planning efforts around the new Supportive Services for Veteran Families (SSVF) Program. In July, VA announced \$60 million in homeless prevention grants that will serve approximately 22,000 Veteran families at-risk of or experiencing homelessness. And earlier this month, VA announced an additional \$100 million for SSVF.

In addition, TANF agencies and local school district liaisons are working to break down silos and work in partnership to better align federal and state program to address family homelessness. Since housing and service program dollars enter communities through different agencies, on different geographic scales (e.g., county versus city), with different eligibility rules, and on different timelines, communities have historically had a difficult time figuring out how to combine mainstream services with housing to support families experiencing or most at risk of homelessness. By incenting local collaboration to access competitively-awarded housing vouchers, the federal government could learn more about what makes collaborations work, as well as what barriers presently inhibit such collaboration from occurring more naturally.

As part of the President's Budget in both FY 2011 and FY 2012, the Administration proposed a new initiative to couple housing assistance with comprehensive human services to reduce homelessness among families with children. This initiative would establish a mechanism for HUD, HHS and ED programs to be more fully engaged in stabilizing homeless families, ultimately resulting in a reduction in the costs associated with poor school performance and poverty. The pay-off to such a collaborative effort could be large. Research suggests that stable housing has a large positive impact for children – when children are not forced to move from place-to-place and school-to-school, they are more likely to succeed academically. Additional research suggests that families that are stably housed are in a better position to prepare for, find, and retain employment. Thus, by working together, HHS, ED, and HUD can help meet the goals of reducing child homelessness, reducing poverty, and fostering employment success.

Congress has not taken action to fund this initiative to build on what we know and to promote the development of effective solutions at scale. While states and local communities theoretically have the latitude to build local collaborations across mainstream housing and services systems, the difficult budget situations they face make it significantly less likely that they will pursue these in the absence of federal investment. Although without funding we will not have any research evidence coming from initiative, HHS's Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation (ASPE) is supporting a study entitled

“Linking Human Services and Housing Assistance in Communities for Homeless Families and Families at Risk of Homelessness” to document promising models that integrate human services and housing support.

#### **New Efforts to Focus on Ending Youth Homelessness**

In order to achieve the Plan's goal of ending youth homelessness by 2020, USICH and its member agencies are working with national organizations along with state and local agencies to develop a better understanding of the needs of youth who are at risk of and experiencing homelessness, as well as the best approaches to achieve the goal.

One Plan objective, to advance health and housing stability for youth aging out of systems such as foster care and juvenile justice, has seen positive movement as agencies focus on improving discharge planning; reviewing federal program policies, procedures, and regulations; and promoting targeted outreach strategies.

There is concurrence among participating agencies of the Council that better data on the number of youth experiencing homelessness is needed, as well as typologies that help classify the causes and nature of youth homelessness and predictors of appropriate program models and interventions. Towards that end, the following is being undertaken:

- HHS has led the Interagency Working Group on Youth Programs, which includes 12 Federal departments and agencies. A subgroup focused on transition-age youth is reviewing existing federal supports for addressing youth homelessness and identifying possible steps toward the goal.
- USICH staff has prioritized outreach to unaccompanied youth and youth-serving providers in visits around the country. Through meetings with organizations that are demonstrating the impact of effective public-private collaborations, touring programs that are getting consistent outcomes, and talking with youth themselves, we are gathering information to inform federal action.
- USICH and member agencies HHS and HUD collaborated to increase awareness of how local communities could better count unaccompanied youth during HUD's January 2011 PIT count. Baltimore and Minneapolis—Saint Paul have taken the initiative to improve and expand their youth census by coordinating with local agencies that serve youth between the target age range, which allowed for them to obtain a more accurate count of unaccompanied youth. While USICH hopes to see further improvement in this data, preliminary data from some areas suggest there is still much more that needs to be done to know how many youth experience homelessness across the country.
- HUD has commissioned a study of programs that assist youth who are aging out of foster care. This will be completed in the next year.
- The Department of Labor's Workforce Investment Act (WIA) youth programs, such as the WIA Youth Formula Program, Job Corps and YouthBuild, provide services to economically disadvantaged youth who face multiple barriers to employment including those who are

homeless, or a runaway, or a foster youth. These programs help youth gain post-secondary education credentials and enter into employment.

- HHS and USICH have worked together to reach out to youth-serving providers and to encourage partnerships with child welfare, schools, jobs programs, and housing authorities.
- USICH members are partnering to get a better understanding of the scope of homelessness for unaccompanied youth, best practice research, and the impact of related federal investments.

HUD has been a tremendous partner as they implement the HEARTH Act. In alignment with Opening Doors, HUD has been working to develop their new program regulations (as required under the HEARTH Act). The recently released Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program regulations built upon the lessons learned from HPRP—a key resource in recent years to prevent and end homelessness among families and youth—allowing communities across the country to continue this important work. HUD has also taken steps to better align its definition of youth with other Federal agencies. For the purpose of data collection and reporting, HUD currently groups all adults aged 18 to 30 in the same category. In the future, HUD will break out 18- to 24-year-olds so we can continue to learn more about the unique needs of transition-age youth. Since the release of the ESG and homeless definition regulations in mid-November, USICH has received very positive messages from youth advocates and providers in the field who believe the new HUD regulations demonstrate a true understanding of the special needs of homeless youth.

Ending youth homelessness requires collaboration at all levels of government and across sectors. Mainstream systems including schools, TANF and workforce systems, juvenile justice, child welfare, and health care will need to pay more attention to family unification and preservation. Toward that end:

- ED and HHS are working together on implementation of the Fostering Connections Act, a law reforming federal child welfare policy that was enacted in 2008.
- ED hosted the first-ever federal summit on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender youth in June 2011. This was the second annual Bullying Prevention Summit, a two-day event hosted by the U.S. Department of Education in partnership with eight other federal agencies that make up the Federal Partners in Bullying Prevention Steering Committee. One workshop specifically addressed homelessness among LGBT youth.
- ED and HHS also co-hosted “Child Welfare, Education and the Courts: A Collaboration to Strengthen Educational Successes of Children and Youth in Foster Care” during which USICH led a discussion on access to educational support for homeless youth.
- The Casey Family Programs, a national leader on youth issues, has provided four staff people to work at HUD, ED, HHS, and DOJ to help advance federal progress on the intersections between child welfare, housing, behavioral health, education, and juvenile justice.

#### **Progress on Common Vocabulary**

Numerous federal agencies administer either programs targeted exclusively to people experiencing homelessness (targeted programs) or available more generally to low-income populations (mainstream programs). Programs sometimes have different eligibility requirements and use different definitions of

“homelessness.” This can be confusing for people in need of services and service providers, and the differences can make collaboration and data collection difficult. The GAO published recommendations to work toward a federal common vocabulary and data standard in its June 2010 report.

The HEARTH Act mandated USICH to host a meeting of experts and stakeholders to discuss the feasibility of adopting a common vocabulary and data standard. Creating a common data standard related to housing status across targeted and mainstream programs is also a strategy of *Opening Doors*.

In January 2011, USICH and HUD hosted a meeting with a broad representation of stakeholders. This day-long meeting allowed USICH to hear both the benefits people saw in developing a common vocabulary and a common data standard, in addition to some of the challenges associated with moving in this direction. USICH received concrete suggestions for how we would go forward, as well as cautions of issues that need to be considered moving forward. Earlier this year, USICH submitted a report to Congress on a community forum to discuss the GAO recommendation to develop a common federal vocabulary on housing status. We are continuing to make progress in this area.

This fall, USICH convened agencies to assess the feasibility of moving forward to develop a common vocabulary and data standard as it relates to housing. A common vocabulary and data standard regarding housing status could create administrative efficiencies for grantees, simplifying data collection across multiple systems, and help to clarify differences in eligibility criteria across federal programs. Agencies assessed the work that has already been done, in particular between HUD homeless programs, VA homeless programs, SAMHSA’s PATH program, and ACYF’s homeless youth programs, to arrive at common language and move toward a common data standard. HUD’s leadership through its Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) has been critical to this work. These conversations have informed HUD’s development of a revised data standard for HMIS that will be released soon. In essence, these are first steps toward creating a common data standard regarding housing across these federal targeted homelessness programs. Once HUD’s new data standard is approved, VA, SAMHSA and ACYF need to make similar changes in their reporting mechanisms.

Agencies with targeted homelessness programs that have not had these discussions yet with HUD agreed to participate in conversations with HUD. This will not happen all at once; HUD will sequence them so as to manage the staff resources available to support this work.

#### **Solutions to the Crisis of Homelessness among Families, Youth, and Children**

The Obama administration is committed to doing all it can to encourage this growing trend in partnership with Congress, States, tribes, counties, cities, philanthropy, the business sector and non-profits. Beyond the progress noted above, there are four key areas where we need to make progress in order to meet the 2020 goal:

- Affordable Housing
- Jobs
- Mainstream services – health, human services, income supports, education, Head Start, and other children’s programs
- Coordinated local response and better collaboration

We can’t afford “business as usual” in today’s tight economy. We must ensure that only the most effective and cost-efficient policies and practices are utilized.

*Housing*

Housing needs to be affordable for those households with the lowest incomes who are most at risk of homelessness. The households most vulnerable to homelessness are those with no income to those with up to 30 percent of Area Median Income.

Access to affordable housing is especially vital for families. Affordable housing is the cornerstone of any effort to reduce and ultimately end homelessness. The preservation and expansion of affordable housing through acquisition, rehabilitation, new construction, and rental assistance is critical to accomplishing our goals. Unfortunately, the trend lines for affordable housing are going in the wrong direction. Too many Americans cannot afford a safe place to call home. More than 8 million renters pay more than half of their income on rent and utility costs, yet are extremely low income (ELI - less than 30% of area median income). There has been a 13% increase in ELI renter households over the last decade, while the number of units affordable to this population decreased by 14%.

As more Americans struggle to make ends meet, the affordable housing stock has actually decreased. During the boom years, units were upgraded to serve higher income tenants, converted to condos in strong markets, and demolished or lost to neglect elsewhere. Analysis of American Community Survey data from 2000 to 2007 shows that the number of units affordable to ELI households declined by nearly 900,000 units while the number of ELI renter households increased by over 1 million. Greater competition for a shrinking resource also drives rental prices up. Despite the growing need, housing assistance programs are at risk as tough budget decisions at the federal level and in state houses, city halls, and county seats across the country are debated.

We are seeing families falling into homelessness whose incomes have plummeted as a result of the recession - through foreclosures, evictions, layoffs, or health care costs. For most people, the threat of homelessness stems from the gap between their current income and the cost of housing. People are extremely poor at the time they become homeless. More affordable housing is needed for people with extremely low incomes who are most at risk of homelessness.

There has been an increased inventory of permanent supportive housing units for disabled individuals, families with children, youth, including Veterans and their families (including HUD-VASH). This type of rental housing is affordable and offers services for the specific needs of an individual or family who has a long term disability and a homelessness experience. However, the current inventory does not meet the demand.

While we have stressed to communities that they must continue to examine local performance outcomes to identify the most strategic and cost effective use of resources in order to help more people avoid or end their homelessness, more funding is needed to create the inventory necessary to meet the needs.

*Jobs*

Many have noted that the best defense against homelessness is a job that pays enough to cover the basics - including the cost of housing. With continuing high levels of unemployment, a good job remains elusive for too many Americans. Passage of the American Jobs Act, as proposed by President Obama, would prevent 6 million Americans looking for work from losing their benefits.

Specific to homelessness, the proposed legislation would create a new Pathways Back to Work Fund that would, among other things, build on the success of the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Contingency Fund (TANF/ECF) by supporting subsidized employment opportunities for unemployed low-income individuals.

#### *Mainstream Services*

To further family stability, mainstream programs need to be aligned at the local level to support families through better collaboration and greater accountability for housing stability. We can't have an ever-expanding homeless system—operating in isolation from mainstream systems—that becomes responsible for everything a homeless family needs from early childhood education, education generally, employment, to all types of health and human services.

Secretary Sebelius and her team at HHS have been working to expand access to health insurance and health care through the Affordable Care Act. Already, provisions are in places that allow young adults to stay on their families' health insurance and prevent screening out of children with high medical needs. Future provisions that create more affordable health insurance options for families will decrease the chances that an unexpected health event will lead to job loss or foreclosure, driving a family into homelessness. There will be new tools available to help families with the most complex health problems and related challenges get access to more holistic care and support through Health Homes and Accountable Care Organizations. Going forward, practitioners who work with families that are most vulnerable to homelessness need to collaborate with local health care policy makers and systems to ensure that the needs of families experiencing homelessness are taken into account in local implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

USICH would also like to note the work of Education Secretary Arne Duncan's team. ED is working to identify ways in which all its programs contribute to accomplishing the goals in the Plan. More work will be needed over the next year to get more local school systems on board and working with local Continuums of Care and local plans to end homelessness. USICH also expects that these local plans will consider ways to keep children in their same school without requiring long bus rides. Compliance with the protections under the McKinney Vento Act will continue to be important to assure all homeless youth and children have access to education.

#### *Coordinated local response and better collaboration*

As mentioned earlier, HPRP made an enormous impact and helped many communities make the important shift to more cost-effective programs focusing on prevention and rapid re-housing.

As HEARTH Act implementation begins with the new Emergency Solutions Grants, communities will be able to adapt the lessons learned about prevention and rapid re-housing as they work to re-tool their Continuum of Care system. One promising practice is to shift transitional housing to target those most in need. Another is re-purposing scattered site transitional housing to transition-in-place models that provide greater stability for children and their parents and can reduce school mobility. Helping kids stay stable in school can lead to improved academic achievements – a long term return on investment.

As has been demonstrated in Massachusetts, Columbus, Minneapolis, and in Seattle – by bringing all mainstream programs to the table with the homeless system, the sum of collaborative work is far greater than the parts.

**Going forward**

The country has faced economic uncertainties in the 18 months of Opening Doors' implementation, but one thing remains clear: homelessness is an urgent problem – not only is it devastating to families and individuals who experience it, but it is very costly to society as a whole. Years of research have documented significant cost savings for public systems when people with histories of homelessness become stably housed. While much of this research has focused on individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, recent research has expanded our understanding of the costs related to family homelessness as well. This evidence reinforces Opening Doors' core belief that ending homelessness is not only the right thing to do, but the smart thing to do.

Republicans and Democrats in Congress and across the country have collaborated for years to make progress on fighting homelessness. We also have Cabinet Secretaries working across party lines with our nation's mayors and governors on initiatives to put us on track to achieve the goals in Opening Doors. Ending family, youth, and child homelessness is an issue that should know no partisan boundaries and where we can make a real difference - together. Congressional support for Opening Doors is vital in our efforts to invest in cost-effective and proven solutions across the country.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify. I would be glad to respond to any questions.

**Written Testimony of Destiny Raynor**  
**Submitted to the U.S. House of Representatives**  
**Committee on Financial Services**  
**Subcommittee for Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity**  
**December 15, 2011**

My name is Destiny Raynor, and I'm a Freshman at Winter Springs High School in Winter Springs, Florida. I'm here today with my mother, and my sister Kimberly. I also want to introduce you to the Metzger Family – Austin, Arielle, and their Dad. They were homeless in central Florida, too.

My parents used to have a thrift shop and a beauty store. We lost our housing when the economy got really bad and we had to close all of our stores. We had to move all of the stuff from the store into the house. Both of my parents did not have a job and they just kept looking for several months. They kept applying for jobs.

During that time it was very rough. That summer, the power and water got shut off, and we did not have running water or electricity for 5-6 months. We had to eat at the gas station at the corner because they had a microwave. We went to friends' homes to shower, but they did not know what was going on. We spent most of the time during the summer at my friend's house. During the summer, it was very hot. Especially at night, when the candles added more heat. The toilet smelled really bad because we could not flush because the water was shut off. We had to bring buckets to a local church to fill with water to

fill the toilet bowl. We would buy sodas from a gas station and ended up eating a lot of junk food. I gained 10 pounds, my sister gained 13 pounds, and my brother gained 40 pounds. We had a cooler to keep drinks in.

My parents did not want to go to a shelter because they split families up, and we wanted to be together. No one knew where we lived, except for one friend. My life changed very quickly. We went from a lot of money from the store - my mom used to make maybe \$300 per day - to nothing. When we lost the electricity, we slept in our own bedrooms but kept the windows open. Once we started school, it was very difficult to focus. I could only think about what was going on at home. I worried all the time and that was the only thing that was on my mind.

After we lost our home, we ended up moving in with my grandmother. She has terminal cancer and hepatitis. This was horrible. It is a three-bedroom mobile home, but only two rooms were usable. My mother, sister and I slept in one bed, my dad slept on a small couch, and my brother slept on a lazy boy chair. We stayed there for 2-3 weeks until we could not take it any more. We could not shower there, because the water is not filtered. It was yellow and smelled. My grandmother also was dying of cancer, so it was really hard. With our last bit of money, we moved into a motel. The school district homeless coordinator, Beth, met us after one week and started to help us. My parents pay the bill if my dad is able to make money at the day labor work place that week. When we don't have the money, Beth pays from donations her program receives. Beth is here today, too.

The hardest thing about living in the motel is being on the bus and watching all of the other kids getting off, and knowing that they are going to their own home, and I am going back to a one-room hotel. It makes me feel really upset.

Sleeping arrangements are also hard. We fight about who will sleep in the bed, or who will sleep on the floor.

We don't have a stove at the motel so we have to eat all microwave food. We only have 4 drawers to put clothing in, and we don't even have our stuff here, it is in storage, and right now it is double-locked. We may lose all of our belongings. We have everything in there, all my clothing, photos, all of our furniture. It is really sad because it is all the memories and everything that we have.

Prior to planning this trip to Washington, I had only told one friend, Jona, about my family's situation. I told him because I trusted him not to judge or say anything. I was afraid that people would talk badly about the situation and that we would be called poor and homeless. My teacher announced in class that we should all donate and help the homeless kids because they are poor. She was talking about me! I know how bad it feels, it is just that any minute you can be kicked out of the hotel, if you do something wrong or if your parents don't have the money. You just can't go to your own room and have your own privacy. You can't even have friends over because it would be embarrassing. I was doing really well in school, A's and B's, but since this happened three of my grades dropped to C and D's: Algebra, History, and Art. I am now working on bringing them back up. Once the school program, Families in Transition, started helping, it made it

easier and took a little weight off of my shoulders. Now I feel that I can focus more on my school rather than the home situation.

My sister and brother were used to getting what they want, but now it is hard to get them anything. For example, my sister had wanted shoes for a while, and it was not that they were expensive, but every penny had been going into the motel. That was really hard when my mom said no. My brother in high school is very aggravated that he has to share a room with everyone. We listen to the opposite type of music and nothing seems to work when we are all together. Everyone is just too loud in one room and he always gets a headache. He gets so much more aggravated than he used to get. We just don't have our own space anymore.

My parents have no personal bonding time with each other anymore. They are always busy making sure that we are taken care of and they have enough money to pay for the room. I have seen my dad cry in the last month, more than I have ever in my entire life. When I see my father cry, it hurts me a lot because I know he is trying his best and it is just still not good enough. It makes me feel scared like we will never get out. Like last week he went the whole week without getting a job, and it was horrible.

Some of the things that have helped me are making friends at the motel so I can hang out and not think about things. Also, going to school gives me hours away from all of the stress. And just knowing that my parents are trying their best helps.

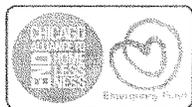
The Families in Transition program from the school was the biggest relief because they helped with so much. They helped pay for the room with donations, so we can stay here when my dad does not have

enough money to pay. And they helped set up a school bus so my parents would not have to stress about getting us to school. Our Food Stamps did not cover the whole month and we would always run out of food the last week or two. Families in Transition helped sign us up for free breakfast and lunch, which helped a lot with the food. They also signed us up for a backpack program, so every Thursday our backpacks are filled with food. Food Stamps do not cover everything, and there is a week or two that we run out of food. It has been really helpful and I feel so much better.

There are some programs that provide housing help, but we don't qualify because my dad doesn't have a regular job and he doesn't make enough money. When Beth pays for the motel room, we are considered homeless. When my dad pays for the motel room, we are not considered homeless. That doesn't make sense to me. It's the same hotel room, and it's hard to live there when you are young, no matter who pays.

What we really need is a home of our own. When I get in my own house again, everything will get so much better. It will make it a lot easier to focus in school, not be stressed about my living situation, or feel ashamed of where I live. We will be able to get all of our basic necessities and my family will not be stressed out and arguing. It will be so much better for everyone. Then I will be able to focus on what is really important like my education.

Thank you for the opportunity to be here today.



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**Testimony to the House Financial Services'  
Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity**

***Starnica Rodgers***

***December 15, 2011***

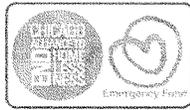
Good morning everyone, my name is Starnica Rodgers. I am 18 years old. I have lived in Chicago my whole life. Thank you for the opportunity to testify here today. It is a true honor.

Currently, I am a student at Truman College. I just finished my first semester and I received one A and two B's! I am also 8 months pregnant and I am expecting my baby boy next month. Don't worry, I checked with my Doctor and she said it was safe to fly here.

Right now, I am staying at a shelter for parenting teens on Chicago's north side. It is run by The Night Ministry. When I first got here, I was very nervous. I was worried about being in a new environment. But now I realize that everyone is here for the same reason: we are all homeless and alone. Since I have been here, I have found support from the girls here and the staff. They help me with my homework and found clothes for me to wear to school. And they are helping me find a more permanent place to live.

I have been homeless on and off my whole life. My Mom is a single mother with four kids and has worked minimum wage jobs her whole life. I remember watching my mother struggle to pay the rent and us having to go to a shelter when I was 5. I want my life to be better.

As I grew up, my Mom and I started getting into a lot of fights. She was verbally abusive to me -- and sometimes physically abusive. By the time I was 16, I knew I had to leave for my own safety. So there I was: 16 and homeless.



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I went from house to house, staying for two or three days at other family members' houses, not knowing where I was going to end up. Throughout the struggles, I was dedicated to graduating high school no matter what. I worked with the McKinney-Vento counselor so I could get free transportation to get to school. I graduated this year and I am very proud of that accomplishment.

I'm in college now. I'm on the Drama Team and I was elected to the Student Senate. I have to graduate college no matter how hard the obstacles may be. With a college degree, I know that I will be able to get a good paying job with a guaranteed salary. My dream is to be a social worker to help people that are going through the same struggles that I have faced.

Right now, I'm working to get into a transitional housing program also run by The Night Ministry. The program receives federal HUD funding. But there are not enough housing programs in Chicago for people like me. Before I got into this program, I had to call over 25 different programs but they all were full or had a wait list.

I have had to struggle my whole life to find a place to call home. So I hope that you understand how important stable housing is to a young person. Without these programs, I know that I wouldn't be able to attend college. I would be too busy worrying about where I was going to stay every night.

Thank you for listening to my story and thank you for supporting the programs that are helping me. I hope that you will think about the 10,000 youth in Chicago who are homeless or the teens in your town who don't know where they are going to sleep tonight. Our country should give more money to programs that help homeless youth, so we can break the cycle of homelessness and become successful adults. Thank you.

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**Testimony of**

**Grace-Ann Caruso Whitney, PhD, MPA, IMH-E (IV)**

**Director, Connecticut Head Start State Collaboration Office  
CT State Department of Education**

**Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity Subcommittee**

**Financial Services Committee**

**U.S. House of Representatives**

**“The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011: Proposals to  
Promote Economic Independence for Homeless Children and  
Youth”**

**December 15, 2011**

Good morning Representative Biggert, Representative Gutierrez, members of the Subcommittee. Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony today on this very important subject. My name is Grace Whitney. I am a developmental psychologist and have worked in various capacities with very young children and their families for my entire career. For the past 15 years I have served as the director of the Head Start Collaboration Office in the State of Connecticut.

The Head Start Act provides for a network of State Collaboration Offices (one in each state and one each for American Indians and Alaskan Natives and Migrant and Seasonal Head Start) that connect Head Start with state systems that offer many of the services Head Start families need. State Collaboration Offices also share the resources and lessons learned in Head Start with state systems. The Head Start Act articulates the role of the State Collaboration Offices to develop partnerships with states in specific priority areas, one of which is children experiencing homelessness. In that vein, State Collaboration Offices work with service agencies providing homeless and housing services, including those funded by HUD. I began focusing on this priority area about ten years ago, when State Collaboration Offices were required to participate as Interagency Homeless Council members. I have been involved ever since.

#### Homelessness and Head Start

Head Start is a natural partner for HUD homeless and housing service providers for several reasons. First, Head Start (including Head Start and Early Head Start) serves children from birth to age five and pregnant women and their families. Roughly half of children served in HUD-funded shelters are age 5 and younger. Second, Head Start is a comprehensive, two-generational program and therefore provides a full range of health, mental health, education, and social services and supports to young children and their families. Since families experiencing homelessness have multiple needs, Head Start is a perfect fit. Third, Head Start focuses its services on those families most in need. Head Start uses the McKinney-Vento education definition of homelessness. This is important because the education definition recognizes the full range of child and family homelessness witnessed by Head Start programs on a daily basis. Head Start is a mainstream program without sufficient capacity to serve all eligible children—in fact, with current funding, Head Start nationally serves less than 50% of eligible preschoolers and less than 5% of infants and toddlers. However, Head Start prioritizes doubled-up and other homeless young children due to their dire living circumstances and multiple risks that result which threaten their healthy development and learning.

In the 2010-2011 program year, 49,052 homeless children attended Head Start, and Head Start programs provided support for 44,242 homeless families. Through Family Partnership Agreements, Head Start helps families find stable housing. Finally, Head Start programs work closely with other service providers in their communities. They have experience in forming successful partnerships with other providers to better meet the multiple needs of families, and they work as community partners to address the challenges presented by homelessness.

#### Impact of Homelessness on Young Children

Homeless living situations introduce serious threats to a young child's healthy development and learning. We know from the research that such instability causes 'toxic stress,' which occurs

when stress levels surpass the family's ability to nurture. Toxic stress has profound, life-long effects on health and productivity. For babies, toddlers and preschoolers, toxic stress causes developmental delays, including: physical delays and failure to thrive; higher incidence of illnesses such as ear infections, digestive problems and asthma; mental health problems such as trauma and depression; withdrawn or irritable behavior; and trouble eating and sleeping. Young children who are homeless are far less likely to regularly attend high quality early care and education programs if they attend at all, causing them to fall further behind their more advantaged and stably housed peers educationally every day. Many parents experiencing homelessness suffer from depression, which diminishes their ability to nurture. It further adds to the stress caused by poverty and exacerbates threats to healthy growth. Parents are challenged in being parents when they are in shelters, motels, or other people's homes. Parenting must be done in public, others may intrude on their decisions, and there may be too much uncertainty or lack of access to resources for planning ahead.

Young children need for their basic needs to be met. They need consistency, stability, routine and nurturing relationships to be able to thrive. Their brains are particularly responsive to experiences during early childhood. Their neural networks and genetic expressions are being created through an ongoing interplay between their biology and the environment in which they live. The architecture of their young brains is being sketched by the repetition of experiences, day by day, both positive and negative. Unhealthy conditions (lack of play space for movement, overcrowding, repeated changes in surroundings, chaotic or sterile settings, etc.), trauma, loss, hunger, lack of health care and education, stressed caregivers and invisibility accumulate and seriously jeopardize their healthy growth and development and their potential for a healthy future.

#### Definitions of Homelessness

Families and children living in doubled-up and motel situations experience toxic stress. For example, one family served by a Connecticut Head Start program was doubled-up living in the basement of another family's house. There were tensions between the "host" family and the homeless family. The homeless family had nowhere else to go, and did not want to lose that arrangement. The host family did not want to hear the young children, so the children were not allowed to leave the basement. The children were compromised physically and emotionally and Head Start staff reported it to be very difficult to do home visits in such a restrictive and tense situation.

Doubled-up forms of homelessness put children at great risk, and create many barriers to services. One Head Start Family Services Manager described what she encounters this way: *"We have found that families do move from shelter to shelter or double up with one friend or family member then move to the next friend or family if the situation is crowded or issues arise. When they move from place to place they often have to re-qualify for services, provide documents yet again, or get at the end of a list. In most cases agencies are forgetting the needs of the children and focus on the adults in the family. Parents often cannot work on their goals if they do not have child care or support."* (Anneli Lisee, Head Start Home-based Manager, TVCCA Head Start/Early Head Start, Norwich, CT)

Similarly, living in a motel is not conducive to healthy child development, regardless of who pays for the motel room. A consultant in Massachusetts, where the state pays for families to stay in motels, shared her recent experience as a community volunteer with us this way: *"I know we have increasing homeless families with young children staying in motels including in my little sleepy town, Bedford. I volunteered in October cooking at the food pantry and met several families from the hotel. They have no kitchen, no food, and no child care arrangement for the preschool age kids. I think we all know the children need to have a safe place and nurturing conditions to thrive. We need to give the folks a universal check list to assure families with young children get what they need once they enter shelters or hotels."* (Shirley Fan-Chan, Consultant, former family shelter director and former Training Director, Horizons for Homeless Children, Bedford, MA)

In Connecticut, many families use what little money they have to pay for a motel room. A former Early Head Start Manager and current McKinney-Vento Grantee provider and manager of the CT Infant Mental Health Association described her experiences this way: *"I have encountered families - including the 'working poor' - who are struggling to maintain the motel payment themselves. These are families forced from their homes for varying reasons, and ending up in motels, but are people with jobs who are utilizing those funds to make the motel payments. Their children are extremely vulnerable, living in extremely crowded rooms with numerous family members, and often have very limited food preparation options. Often, these environments are full of transient adults and outdoor areas are unsafe due to traffic, etc., so children are forced to stay inside these cramped quarters. Certainly not ideal for young children and infants/toddlers who need to MOVE! We work very quickly to get these children enrolled in programming in order to reduce these stressors and to offer them opportunities to engage in something safe, stimulating and enriching. Many of these families would be excluded per the HUD definition."* (Anne Giordano, CT Association for Infant Mental Health, Litchfield, CT)

Clearly, young children living in motels and in doubled-up situations suffer from the uncertainty of these arrangements and could greatly benefit from expedited services and streamlined referrals. Shortening the duration of the stress these settings cause and their toxic effect on development must be the goal. For this reason, Head Start programs are required to identify homeless children under the McKinney-Vento education definition of homelessness for enrollment, and allow them to enroll while documentation is being obtained. Head Start staff work to obtain needed services as quickly as possible and work in whatever ways they can with community partners to remove barriers. Head Start services begin in whatever form is appropriate to prevent further disruption, to address the immediacy of need and to move children toward stability and security as quickly as possible.

In contrast, extensive documentation requirements, such as requirements for multiple moves, or "proof" that a family can only stay with another family for a short time, is difficult for families, if not impossible. Such requirements create additional delays, consume precious staff time and resources, and will set vulnerable young children even further behind. All young children experiencing homelessness need to be able to be identified and referred as homeless, including those in motels and doubled-up situations, to HUD-funded homeless programs in an efficient, expedited way. This recognizes the unique and urgent needs of very young children at a critical

juncture in their young lives. I understand that this is the policy envisioned by HR 32, the Homeless Children and Youth Act.

Efforts in Connecticut to Increase HUD Programs' Awareness of Young Children's Needs

The insurmountable barriers that families in motels and doubled-up situations face in accessing HUD services is a severe problem for Head Start programs and the families we serve. However, in Connecticut we have found that even young children in HUD shelters often are not getting adequate services, due to a lack of awareness of their needs. Children in shelters are connected to the homeless and housing system, with access to many housing and supportive services that children in motels and doubled-up situations cannot obtain. However, many HUD shelters have policies and practices that reflect an insufficient understanding of young children. Shelter and housing services staff is seldom focused on the needs of young children and, in comparison to school-aged children, there is no expectation that young children attend school and therefore gain access to a system of services that can address their individual needs. Babies, toddlers and preschool children are all too often totally invisible in homeless programs because they are not considered to be the client. This is what we found in our state, and we worked through Head Start to begin to bridge this gap.

After surveying our family shelters, we found that while several had strong components of their programs to address a wide range of family needs, many of our shelters did not have these same resources. To address this problem, we entered into a partnership to bring local family shelters and Head Start programs together. As a result of this effort, not only were young children being identified and enrolled in Head Start, but the shelters became more nurturing environments, and shelter staff became aware of ways they could serve young children as clients, too. Head Start brought the family shelters into their community of early childhood and family service providers, and helped shelters access the range of services that families of young children need.

We quickly learned, however, that a dedicated focus on young homeless children must be facilitated and emphasized on a continual basis. Several years after our in-depth work in family homeless shelters, the need came to my attention through another initiative that two children from a homeless shelter were coming to Head Start hungry every day. It was not that there was a lack of food for shelter residents, but that shelter practices, such as the catered meals, a rigid shelter meal time schedule, and strict rules against bringing into the shelter children's food items that teachers sent home, were inconsistent with the nutritional needs of young children. Shelter staff was not knowledgeable about children and nutrition and how hard it can be to keep children eating well, especially when they are stressed. In fact, the nutritional needs of infants, toddlers and preschoolers has become one of the top items for us to address. Another has been basic indoor and outdoor safety. We also have identified children living in homeless shelters with visible disabilities who were not yet receiving early intervention or special education services. I had seen this ten years ago when we conducted our first statewide survey of needs, but I was surprised to still be finding this. But staff change. Referral processes change. Budgets are stretched. And young children fall through the cracks. We must be vigilant with our efforts. The extreme needs of this population require extreme outreach to ensure that families receive the multiple services and supports they need to succeed and that young children stand a chance for healthy lives in the future.

For HUD to partner with Head Start and to be brought into the early childhood system could be very productive for children, families, and communities. Partnering with Head Start could help to inform HUD homeless policy about the needs of young children – after all, children are clients too. We can share information about the homeless families we serve, including those in motels and doubled-up situations. Families who are homeless experience multiple problems and it takes multiple systems working together to really support them through their crisis and on to success. None of us can do it alone.

#### Concluding Statement

In closing, we all share the goal of ending family homelessness. However, without dedicated, focused, and specific attention to the needs of all young children experiencing homelessness – shelters, motels, cars, campgrounds, and doubled-up situations – we will fall far short of this goal. Toxic stress has lifelong impacts, and predisposes young children to school failure, poor health outcomes throughout their lifetimes, ongoing unproductiveness and instability, and even homelessness as adults. To break these cycles, including the cycle of homelessness, we must evaluate all homeless and housing policies, including definitions of homelessness, from a child development perspective. We must ensure housing policies recognize the very dire and real consequences, to literally our health as a nation, of doing anything less.

Thank you again for the opportunity to share my experiences and those of local Head Start programs in the State of Connecticut with you today.

Bob Wise  
Governor of West Virginia, 2001–2005



December 12, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

The Alliance for Excellent Education is pleased to support the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011 (H.R. 32). Since the beginning of the “Great Recession,” the number of homeless students has increased by more than 40 percent. Your legislation will help these students receive the services they need to stabilize, succeed in school, and go on to serve as productive citizens.

Student homelessness is an all-too-often overlooked contributor to the nation’s dropout crisis. A recent study from the Government Accountability Office (GAO) finds that compared to stable students, students with more than two school changes from eighth to twelfth grade were twice as likely to drop out of high school. In order for homeless students to succeed in school, they must receive housing and other support that will stabilize their situations and enable them to concentrate on their education.

Unfortunately, federal policy may actually serve as a barrier to stability for homeless students. This is because under the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing (HEARTH) Act and subsequent regulations, students who are classified as homeless by the U.S. Department of Education and other federal agencies must meet a complex array of qualifications and documentation requirements in order to receive basic services funded by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act is critical because it would streamline federal policy for homeless students and make services much more accessible to some of the nation’s most vulnerable young people. I applaud your effort and thank you for your work on behalf of homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Bob Wise'.

Bob Wise  
President



December 9, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

The American School Counselor Association (ASCA) writes in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. It stands in contrast to HUD's recently released regulations on the definition of homelessness, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance. The simplicity of the Homeless Children and Youth Act is modeled on successfully implemented provisions of the Child Nutrition Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

For these reasons, ASCA strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

ASCA is a nonprofit, 501(c)(3) professional organization based in Alexandria, VA, representing over 29,000 school counselors worldwide and serves the school counseling profession by providing professional development, publications, resources, research, and advocacy. The association promotes student success by expanding the image and influence of professional school counseling through leadership, advocacy, collaboration and systemic change. ASCA helps school counselors guide their students toward academic achievement, personal and social development, and career planning to help today's students become tomorrow's productive, contributing members of society.

Sincerely,

Sincerely,

Kwok-Sze Wong  
Executive Director



CHICAGO COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS

December 8, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

The Chicago Coalition for the Homeless supports H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

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In the 2010-2011 school year, Illinois school districts identified a record 42,800 homeless students—a more than 60% increase from 2008-2009. The Chicago Public Schools served a record 15,580 homeless students in the 2010-2011 school year. The numbers of homeless students are rising drastically, but under the current HUD regulations the many of these children and youth are not eligible for housing services. The proposed changes



**CHICAGO COALITION FOR THE HOMELESS**

to the HUD guidelines would create housing opportunities for the thousands of Illinois families, children, and youth who are unstably housed.

For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

*Patricia Nix-Hodes*

Laurene M. Heybach  
Patricia Nix-Hodes  
The Law Project of the Chicago  
Coalition for the Homeless



71 Summit Avenue  
Summit, New Jersey 07901

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908-273-0030 fax  
info@familypromise.org

[www.familypromise.org](http://www.familypromise.org)

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

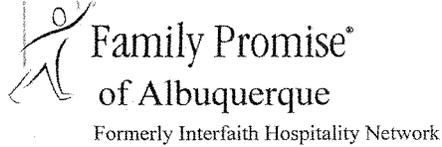
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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

Karen Olson, President



2801 Lomas Blvd NE B4  
Albuquerque, NM 87106  
Phone: 505-268-0331  
[ihndirector@gmail.com](mailto:ihndirector@gmail.com)  
[www.FamilyPromiseABQ.org](http://www.FamilyPromiseABQ.org)

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing as a shelter director in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

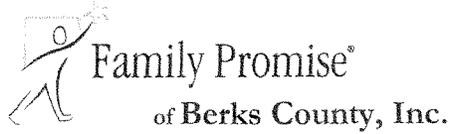
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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Broderick, LMSW  
Executive Director  
Family Promise of Albuquerque



325 N. 5th Street  
Reading, PA 19601-3088  
Phone: 610-373-3323  
Fax: 610-373-3327  
familypromiseberks@comcast.net  
www.familypromiseofberks.com

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

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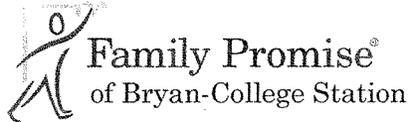
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gwendolyn F. Didden".

Gwendolyn F. Didden, MHS  
Executive Director

*Family Promise of Berks County, Inc.*

*People of faith working together to provide homeless families with HELP for today and HOPE for tomorrow!*

"Family Promise of Berks County, Inc. is 501 (c) (3) non-profit organizations-contributions to which are tax deductible to the fullest extent permitted by law."  
Federal EIN: 20-4557683



1806 Wilde Oak Circle  
Bryan, TX 77802  
979-268-4309 office

[familypromisebcs@gmail.com](mailto:familypromisebcs@gmail.com)  
[www.familypromisebcs.org](http://www.familypromisebcs.org)

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Phebe Simmons".

Dr. Phebe Simmons, Director



313 Hopkins Road  
Kernersville, NC 27284  
Phone: 336-245-1807  
www.familypromiseforsyth.org  
Email: director@familypromiseforsyth.org

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Debra K. Butner".

Debra K. Butner  
Executive Director



1424 FM 1092, Missouri City, TX 77459  
281/403-3923  
email: [fbfamilypromise@comcast.net](mailto:fbfamilypromise@comcast.net)  
website: [www.fortbendfamilypromise.org](http://www.fortbendfamilypromise.org)

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Vera L. Johnson".

Vera L. Johnson, Executive Director  
Fort Bend Family Promise

*Helping Homeless Families With Children In Fort Bend County*



*Ending homelessness, one family at a time.*

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

Gloria Edwards, Executive Director  
Family Promise of Gallatin Valley  
Bozeman, Montana



406-465-9467  
PO Box 939  
Helena, MT, 59624  
[www.familypromisehelena.org](http://www.familypromisehelena.org)  
[director@familypromisehelena.org](mailto:director@familypromisehelena.org)

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

In Helena, MT, our School District McKinney-Vento liaisons and Head Start Family Advocates are capable, thoughtful, thorough professionals with an excellent track record of connecting the right children with the right services. Therefore, I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011.

This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

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Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Brian Johnson", is written over a horizontal line.

Brian Johnson, Executive Director



P.O. Box 270128  
Las Vegas, Nevada 89127-4128  
Phone: 702-638-8806 Fax: 702-638-0004  
E-mail: [director@familypromiselv.com](mailto:director@familypromiselv.com)  
[www.familypromiselv.com](http://www.familypromiselv.com)

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Terry R. Lindemann".

Terry R. Lindemann  
Executive Director



2908 W. Ohio  
Midland, TX 79708  
432.218.7630  
FAX 432.218.7628

December 13, 2011

**Board of Directors**

Gary Groves - President  
Jeff Laufer - Vice President  
Donna Edney  
Nancy Betts  
Mollory Buck  
Tracey Dees  
Phyllis Mason  
Barbara Patterson - Treasurer  
Janet Pritchett  
Sarah Stringer  
Gigi Warrick

**Executive Director**

Tom Miller

**Host Congregations**

Grace Lutheran Church  
Grace Presbyterian Church  
Church on the Journey  
Fannin Terrace Baptist Church  
St. Ann's Catholic Church  
Trinity Presbyterian Church  
Calvary Assembly of God  
Midland First Assembly of God  
First Presbyterian Church  
North A Church of Christ  
Living Way Foursquare Church  
Mt. Rose Baptist Church  
Our Savior Lutheran Church  
Midland Lutheran Church  
St. Mark's United Methodist Church  
St. Luke's United Methodist Church  
First Christian Church

**Mission Statement:**

The mission of Family Promise of Midland, Texas, Inc. is to end homelessness - one family at a time!

Please visit our website at:  
[www.familypromisemidlandtx.org](http://www.familypromisemidlandtx.org)

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. It stands in contrast to HUD's recently released regulations on the definition of homelessness, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance. The simplicity of the Homeless Children and Youth Act is modeled on successfully implemented provisions of the Child Nutrition Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

For these reasons, I strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,  
*Thomas J. Miller*  
Thomas J. Miller  
Executive Director  
Family Promise of Midland, Texas

Building community, strengthening lives.



December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,



P.O. Box 1494  
Morristown, NJ 07962-1494  
Phone: 973-998-0820  
Fax: 973-998-0819  
[www.familypromisemorris.org](http://www.familypromisemorris.org)

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

Karen Olson, President



**Serving and Empowering Homeless Families  
to Achieve Sustainable Housing**

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

Cindy Wood, Executive Director  
Family Promise of North Idaho



**FIRST FOCUS**  
CAMPAIGN FOR CHILDREN

1110 Vermont Avenue NW • Suite 900 • Washington, DC 20005

p: 202.657.0677 • f: 202.657.0671

December 9, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez,

I am writing on behalf of the First Focus Campaign for Children, a bipartisan advocacy organization committed to making children and their families a priority in federal policy and budget decisions, to thank you for your leadership on the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011 (H.R. 32).

As an organization committed to securing a bright future for homeless children and youth, we applaud efforts to amend the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)'s definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel.

According to the Department of Education, there were nearly a million homeless children and youth enrolled in public schools during the 2009-2010 academic year. Yet many of these children are not able to receive HUD homeless assistance, for the current HUD definition of homelessness excludes people who are forced to live in other homeless situations, including people staying with others temporarily because they have nowhere to go ("doubled-up"), and people staying in motels. The regulations that HUD recently released impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before children, youth, and their families receives HUD homeless assistance.

This legislation would expand HUD's definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C. This would create a streamlined and efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services, and provide communities with the flexibility to serve and house this vulnerable population.

The inability of HUD to allow many homeless children, youth, and their families from accessing HUD homeless assistance has serious and far-reaching effects, including exclusion of these populations from critical services, continued invisibility in community planning on homelessness, and weak or non-existent coordination with key systems of care for children, youth, and families.

We are grateful for your leadership in making homeless children and youth a legislative priority, and we welcome the opportunity to work with you on this and other proposals to improve the well-being of America's children and youth.

Sincerely,

Bruce Lesley



**HEAR US Inc.**

*...giving voice & visibility to homeless children & youth...*

115 E Ogden Ave #117-329  
Naperville IL 60563  
diane@hear.us  
630/225-5012 vm/fax  
www.hearus.us

December 12, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Louis Gutierrez  
U. S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in strong support of H. R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011, amending the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's definition of homelessness.

H.R. 32's definition of homelessness reflects the reality of homelessness experienced by millions of children, youth and families. The number of disenfranchised and house-less families and youth continues to spiral as our national response to this life-threatening issue wavers. HUD's definition of homelessness will cause more suffering for those already in incomprehensible distress, while creating a horrendous task for agencies struggling to serve this population.

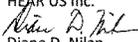
With many years' experience running large shelters (Hesed House in Aurora, and Will County PADS program—now Daybreak—in Joliet) I can speak to the logistical nightmare HEARTH regulations will cause. Documenting homelessness will be a time-consuming nightmare. Buckling under record-breaking requests for assistance, turning multitudes of desperate individuals and families away, and scavenging for operations funding to replace severe government cuts, new HEARTH regulations curtailing life-sustaining housing assistance will create a monster for shelters.

From the standpoint of families and youth, these new regulations impose impossible benchmarks creating unimaginable hardships. Homelessness doesn't come in neat packages, as the new regulations seem to assume. Those devising the criteria obviously are clueless about chaos, vulnerabilities, and desperation most homeless families and youth experience. Denying housing assistance because of ill-conceived and arbitrary policies reflects an inexcusably dismaying and disgusting insensitivity on the part of the federal agency charged with addressing homelessness.

H. R. 32 would eliminate the needless and onerous requirements for "proof" of homelessness. The homelessness definition used by the U. S. Department of Education reflects the reality of most of the homeless families and youth in our nation. Its simplicity does not encourage homelessness, but allows professionals to assess situations of individual circumstances without causing further suffering of persons without homes.

Our nation's tepid response to the extraordinarily excruciating experience of homelessness is shocking. Inadequate resources continue to plague the emergency solutions we try to implement. Imprudent regulations and policies create additional hardships on both those needing services and those providing services. I applaud the inherent simplicity of H. R. 32 and I encourage the subcommittee to fervently seek ways to implement changes before more suffer the anguishes of homelessness. Having witnessed and chronicled rampant homelessness throughout our nation, I would be negligent if I did not urge you to seek resources not only to strengthen our emergency response, but to restore the safety network of affordable, subsidized housing and support services to meet the needs of millions of Americans.

Thank you for your tireless pursuit of remedies for homeless families and youth.

Sincerely,  
HEAR US Inc.  
  
Diane D. Nilan  
President

**HORIZONS FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN**

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

On behalf of Horizons for Homeless Children, I am writing in support of The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011 (H.R. 32). This legislation would mitigate the impact of homelessness on young children and their families by expanding HUD's definition of homeless to include homeless children and youth and their families.

Horizons for Homeless Children is a non-profit, high-quality provider of child care and education for very young homeless children—ages 0-6—in Massachusetts. In addition to child care, we run a “playspace” program in shelters throughout the state that has provided thousands of homeless children the opportunity to benefit from developing appropriate play and learning. An important aspect of our program is to support the parents of our children and enable them to make the transition from shelters to a home and career.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. It stands in contrast to HUD's recently released regulations on the definition of homelessness, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance. The simplicity of the Homeless Children and Youth Act is modeled on successfully implemented provisions of the Child Nutrition Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

We in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations. We know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011 provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families and children who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. Local providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

We urge you to act swiftly to pass H.R. 32 to ensure that young homeless children and their families have access to the services they need to rebuild their lives.

Sincerely,

Asa Fanelli  
Chief Executive Officer  
Horizons for Homeless Children



## HOMELESS PRENATAL PROGRAM

2500 18th Street  
 San Francisco, CA 94110  
 (415) 546-6756  
 fax: (415) 546-6778  
 www.homelessprenatal.org

December 9, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington DC 20515

BOARD OF  
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Martha Ryan,  
*Founder &  
 Executive Director*

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

Martha Ryan  
 Founder and Executive Director, Homeless Prenatal Program



HUCKLEBERRY HOUSE  
1421 Hamlet Street  
Columbus, OH 43201  
(614)294-5553  
[www.huckhouse.org](http://www.huckhouse.org)

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

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At Huckleberry House we have three programs which specifically work with runaway and homeless youth: the shelter, street outreach and transitional living. The Transitional Living Program receives HUD funding. Many of the youth we serve are older homeless youth who have runaway or were thrown away. Living at home is not an option due to abuse, neglect, abandonment and severe family conflict. Not only do these youth find themselves homeless; but, they are abruptly faced with the task of transitioning to adulthood without the support and guidance of family.

I find it ironic that much of the debate about the Homeless Children and Youth Act focuses on making sure that these young people are truly in need and how to make sure they are homeless. The workers at Huckleberry House talk to hundreds of teens and young adults each year. Our first goal is always to rally the resources of the young person including access to living arrangements within their natural support system. We do this because we know that public resources are limited. More importantly, we know that those natural supports are a better option for long-term success. However, there are times when there are no options. It is at that point we look to our HUD services or homeless programs in the community.

These young people may not be in adult shelters or living on the land. They are, however, without reasonable living arrangements. They stay wherever they can often at the risk of their own personal safety. It seems to me that investing in these young people before they fall so deeply into homelessness is a good option for any community.

Please support HR 32. Thank you for your care and concern for our children and youth.

Sincerely,  
s/  
Becky Westerfelt, MSW  
Executive Director



**THE INTERFAITH  
HOSPITALITY  
NETWORK  
of Augusta, Inc.**

*A Community Response for Homeless Families*  
2177 Central Avenue • Augusta, Georgia 30904  
Phone 706-364-4462 Admin Office • 706-364-4463 • Fax 706-364-4001

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December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

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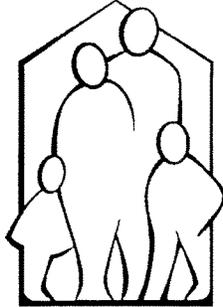
Sincerely,

Sarah MacDonald, Executive Director

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Church of Our Savior Episcopal • Church of the Good Shepherd Episcopal • Church of the Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church  
Covenant Presbyterian Church • First Baptist Church Augusta • First Baptist Church Evans • Good Shepherd Baptist Church  
Hillcrest Baptist Church • Infocus Church • Lewis Memorial United Methodist Church • Marvin United Methodist Church  
Reid Memorial Presbyterian Church • Saint Andrew Presbyterian Church • Saint James United Methodist Church  
Saint Mark United Methodist Church • Saint Mary on the Hill Catholic Church • The Hill Baptist Church • The Quest Church  
Trinity on the Hill United Methodist Church • Warren Baptist Church • Wesley United Methodist Church



Interfaith Hospitality Network  
Of Burlington County  
228 Mt. Laurel Road Mount Laurel, New Jersey 08054  
(856) 638-0110 Fax (856) 638-0115  
[IHNBC@aol.com](mailto:IHNBC@aol.com)

*A Community Response for Homeless Families*

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

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My agency works, on almost a daily basis, with homeless families and especially making sure homeless children retain access to the most important resources, such as school attendance.

Interfaith Hospitality Network of Burlington County is a United Way agency

For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

Patricia Lasusky, MSW, LSW  
Director



Interfaith Hospitality Network of Essex County, Inc.

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Tia Aery".

Tia Aery, Executive Director



P.O. Box 205  
Johnson City, TN 37605-0205  
(423) 202-7805  
www.ihnjc.com

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

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For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,  
Brian Rosecrance  
Executive Director



**Interfaith Hospitality Network**  
of Northwest Philadelphia

Hon. Judy Biggert, Chair  
Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity  
Committee on Financial Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Hon. Luis V. Gutierrez, Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity  
Committee on Financial Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

December 5, 2011

Dear Representatives Biggert and Gutierrez:

The undersigned are national organizations concerned with the continued problem of homelessness in the United States. We have appreciated the opportunity to work with the House Financial Services Committee and its members from both parties who share our concern. We write to oppose a provision in draft legislation that would increase allowable minimum rents in federal housing programs.

We support your subcommittee's longstanding efforts to improve the Housing Choice Voucher program and the Public Housing program. We are aware of the October 5th draft of the Section 8 Savings Act, which would make important changes in the HCV program along with some aspects of HUD's other rental assistance programs. (This letter refers to the discussion draft labeled 112SESA\INTRO\_001.XML)

These programs, providing help paying the rent for millions of Americans of limited means, are vitally important for preventing homelessness and for ending it when it occurs. In recent years the role of these programs in reducing homelessness has come to be recognized more broadly, as leading public housing agencies have become more involved in solutions to homelessness in their communities. We are concerned about an increase in minimum rents in the context of an important demographic trend over the past several years: a pronounced increase in the number of extremely poor families with no income from government benefits, and no or very little income from employment. This trend, largely the result of high rates of unemployment at the bottom of the labor market and changes in federal, state and local government support for low-income people, has contributed to increases in the number of people in "deep poverty," i.e. with incomes less than half the federal poverty level. These are the families that are most likely to become homeless without subsidized housing. Many face multiple barriers to employment.

The new draft of SESA would raise the allowable minimum rent from \$50 per month to \$75 or 12 percent of the applicable fair market rent, whichever is higher. Twelve percent of FMR will be higher for most families, including those in at least the high-rent areas of every state. For example, allowable minimum rent in Orange County, CA for a two-bedroom apartment would be \$198; in the Bronx, \$171; in Charlottesville, VA, \$123; in Birmingham, AL, \$90.

Current law, of course, already allows PHAs to establish minimum rents of up to \$50, and most have. Thus the idea that “everyone should pay something” has already been entrenched in federal law and local PHA practice. The existing policy affects households with the lowest income, who under normal 2 rent-setting rules would have a rental and utility obligation (generally 30 percent of income) of less than \$50; i.e. households with income less than \$167 per month. For the lowest-income people who are unable to find work, the obligation to pay minimum rent can leave them dependent on violent relationships or exploitive economic transactions. In the current job market, those with the least competitive resumes are unlikely to find other viable options.

Under the governing statute, PHAs and landlords are supposed to recognize “hardship exemptions” from minimum rent policies. There are no standards for requiring PHAs to coherently explain hardship exemptions to tenants who may have cognitive or psychiatric disabilities or severe educational deficits, or for making sure that explanations are given at a relevant time. Anecdotal reports from the field and the one available HUD study ([www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/Rent%20Study\\_Final%20Report\\_05-26-10.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/Rent%20Study_Final%20Report_05-26-10.pdf)) indicate that very few tenants receive hardship exemptions.

In some cases, the Committee’s draft bill would allow minimum rents to be doubled, tripled, quadrupled or more. The impact would be an economic burden on the very poorest households. While the amounts may seem trivial to people with professional salaries, for people struggling to survive and feed their children with sporadic low-wage employment, an increase of \$25, \$50, \$100 or \$150 per month can make the difference between housing stability and eviction. People evicted from assisted housing are known to be at extremely high risk of immediate homelessness. Larger families with many children are hit hardest: minimum rent for a four-bedroom in Orange County, CA, for example, would be \$323, more than six times that allowed by current policy. Large families often include people who have taken in other people’s children, a practice that in the reality of low income neighborhoods can be a bulwark against children’s homelessness. Under this draft, this practice could incur a substantial financial penalty.

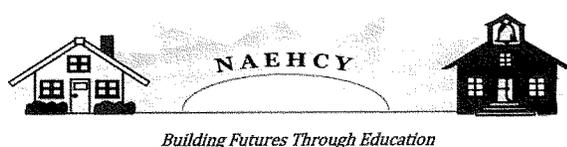
This is the one provision in the draft SESA bill that puts a greater financial burden on tenants. Unfortunately, it singles out the very poorest tenants, particularly the rising percentage of American families with no welfare or other benefits and with no income or very little income from work. This small and burdened minority faces a substantial increase in cost. Given the other kinds of difficulties faced by these families, nonpayment, eviction and homelessness are the inevitable result. We encourage the Committee to remove this provision at markup. We would support a thorough study of the impacts of the existing minimum rent rule, including its impact on people with disabilities, evictions and homelessness.

Sincerely,



Rachel Falkove  
Executive Director

Community Housing Partnership  
Community Solutions  
Consortium for Citizens with Disabilities Housing Task Force  
Corporation for Supportive Housing  
Covenant House  
Family Promise  
First Focus Campaign for Children  
Give US Your Poor: The Campaign to End Homelessness  
National AIDS Housing Coalition  
National Alliance on Mental Illness 3  
National Alliance to End Homelessness  
National Center on Family Homelessness  
National Coalition for the Homeless  
National Health Care for the Homeless Council  
National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty  
National Low-Income Housing Coalition  
Western Regional Advocacy Project



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION  
FOR THE EDUCATION OF  
HOMELESS CHILDREN  
AND YOUTH

December 12, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

The National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth ("NAEHCY") is writing this letter in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011.

Founded in 1989, NAEHCY is a national grassroots membership association serving as the voice and the social conscience for the education of children and youth in homeless situations. NAEHCY's membership is primarily composed of the local school district homeless liaisons and state coordinators established under Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Local school district liaisons and state coordinators are responsible for implementing the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act, including coordination with housing and homeless service agencies.

H.R. 32 will help homeless children and youth obtain the housing and services that they need to be successful in school, and in life. It is modeled successfully on two federal laws that NAEHCY's membership helps to implement every day: the Child Nutrition Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act. These statutes permit school district homeless liaisons to verify the homeless status of children and youth so that they are eligible for services under other federal programs. These laws have been very effective in reducing barriers and increasing access to school meals and to financial aid.

H.R. 32 stands in stark contrast to HUD's recently released regulations on the definition of homelessness, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance. As a practical matter, HUD's regulations will preclude numerous homeless children and youth, and their families, from access to the services that these highly vulnerable populations so desperately need. Children and youth living doubled-up or in motels face circumstances that are as threatening to their development and well-being as the situations faced by individuals who do qualify for HUD services under the regulations. The HUD regulations not only arbitrarily disqualify these children, youth, and their families from HUD services, but they also impose

onerous documentation requirements that actually threaten to *increase* the housing instability faced by children and youth who lack fixed, appropriate housing.

H.R. 32, by contrast, facilitates access to critical HUD services by homeless children and youth, and reflects the recognition of the critical needs of vulnerable children and youth who do not have a place to call home. Rather than tailoring the definition of "homelessness" to reflect outdated priorities and the customary practices of HUD and service providers, H.R. 32 focuses on the needs and vulnerabilities of children and their families, effectively mandating a new attention to their needs and an awareness of the realities of homelessness faced by so many children, youth, and their families. If we do not prioritize the needs of children and youth in federal homeless policy, we will never end homelessness.

For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mattie McVey Lord". The signature is written in a cursive, slightly slanted style.

Mattie McVey Lord  
President



**National Association of Home Builders**

1201 15th Street NW  
Washington, DC 20005

T 800 368 5242  
F 202 266 8400

www.nahb.org

December 15, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

**Government Affairs**

James W. Tobin III  
Senior Vice President & Chief Lobbyist

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

On behalf of the 160,000 members of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB), I am writing to support H.R. 32, *The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011*. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) definition of 'homelessness' to include verified children, youth, and their families so they can qualify for federal homeless housing assistance.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act would create a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. This bill provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance.

NAHB thanks you for this legislation that helps serve those in need. We strongly support HR 32.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "James W. Tobin III", is written over a faint, larger version of the signature.

James W. Tobin III

Cc: Members of the Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity Subcommittee



Maurice "Moe" Veissi  
2012 President

Dale A. Stanton  
Chief Executive Officer

**GOVERNMENT AFFAIRS DIVISION**

Jerry Giovaniello, Senior Vice President  
Gary Weaver, Vice President  
Joe Ventrone, Vice President  
Jamie Gregory, Deputy Chief Lobbyist

500 New Jersey Ave., NW  
Washington, DC 20001-2020  
Ph. 202-383-1194 Fax 202-3837580  
www.REALTOR.org

December 9, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
Chairwoman, Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing, and Community Opportunity  
Committee on Financial Services  
United States House of Representatives  
2113 Rayburn House Office Building  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairwoman Biggert:

The 1.1 million members of the National Association of REALTORS® are writing to thank you for introducing H.R. 32, the "Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011." This bill will ensure that children, who are verified by school or other program officials, can be defined as homeless. Current estimates are that 39% of the national homeless population is children.

H.R. 32 will amend the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to redefine "homeless," so as to include children. This will allow them to obtain the same housing benefits as other homeless individuals under the law.

The National Association of REALTORS® thanks you for this legislation, which will help protect a vulnerable population that needs our help.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Moe'.

Maurice "Moe" Veissi  
2012 President, National Association of REALTORS®



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[www.nassp.org](http://www.nassp.org)

December 14, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington, DC 20515

Dear Representatives Biggert and Gutierrez,

On behalf of the 25,000 members of the National Association of Secondary School Principals (NASSP), I write to express our support for the Homeless Children and Youth Act (H.R. 32) and thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act would amend the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel authorized under four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act would create a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD services. It stands in contrast to HUD's recently released regulations on the definition of homelessness, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD assistance. The simplicity of the Homeless Children and Youth Act is modeled on successfully implemented provisions of the Child Nutrition Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act would provide communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

Our nation's school leaders are very concerned about the adverse effects of homelessness on student performance. Homeless children often do not attend school regularly, which puts them at a high risk of dropping out of school. Overall, the academic achievement of homeless students is poor. Research indicates that 43 percent of homeless students repeat a grade, 25 percent are placed in special education, and 50 percent are failing academically. Other data reveal that only one-third of homeless students read at grade level compared to more than half of their same-aged peers.

Should you have any questions about our position on this legislation, please do not hesitate to contact me or Amanda Karhuse on my staff at [karhusea@nassp.org](mailto:karhusea@nassp.org) or 703-627-6421.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "JoAnn D. Bartoletti". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "J".

JoAnn D. Bartoletti  
Executive Director  
NASSP



December 6, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

On behalf of more than five million parents, teachers, students, and child advocates who comprise the National PTA, I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. It stands in contrast to HUD's recently released regulations on the definition of homelessness, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance. The simplicity of the Homeless Children and Youth Act is modeled on successfully implemented provisions of the Child Nutrition Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Betsy Landers".

Betsy Landers  
President  
National PTA



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON  
**Family Homelessness**  
*for every child, a chance*

December 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011, legislation to amend the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Campaign to End Child Homelessness is an initiative of The National Center on Family Homelessness that leads the effort to raise national awareness and galvanize action to ensure stable housing and well-being for families and children. We support H.R. 32 as it creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) homeless services. It stands in contrast to HUD's recently released regulations on the definition of homelessness, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance.

For nearly a decade, advocates for homeless families have raised concerns that limiting HUD's definition of homelessness to people living on the street or in emergency/transitional shelter unfairly penalized many homeless children, youth, and families. Many in this population have doubled up or lived in motels, often due to the lack of shelter access or unreasonable shelter policies requiring families to break up in order to receive assistance. In 2008 and 2009, 72 percent of all homeless children and youth enrolled in public schools lived in the situations described above, and therefore were not eligible for HUD homeless services.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

We strongly support HR 32 and thank you for championing all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

Ellen L. Bassuk, M.D.  
 Founder and President

STATE REPORT CARD ON CHILD HOMELESSNESS

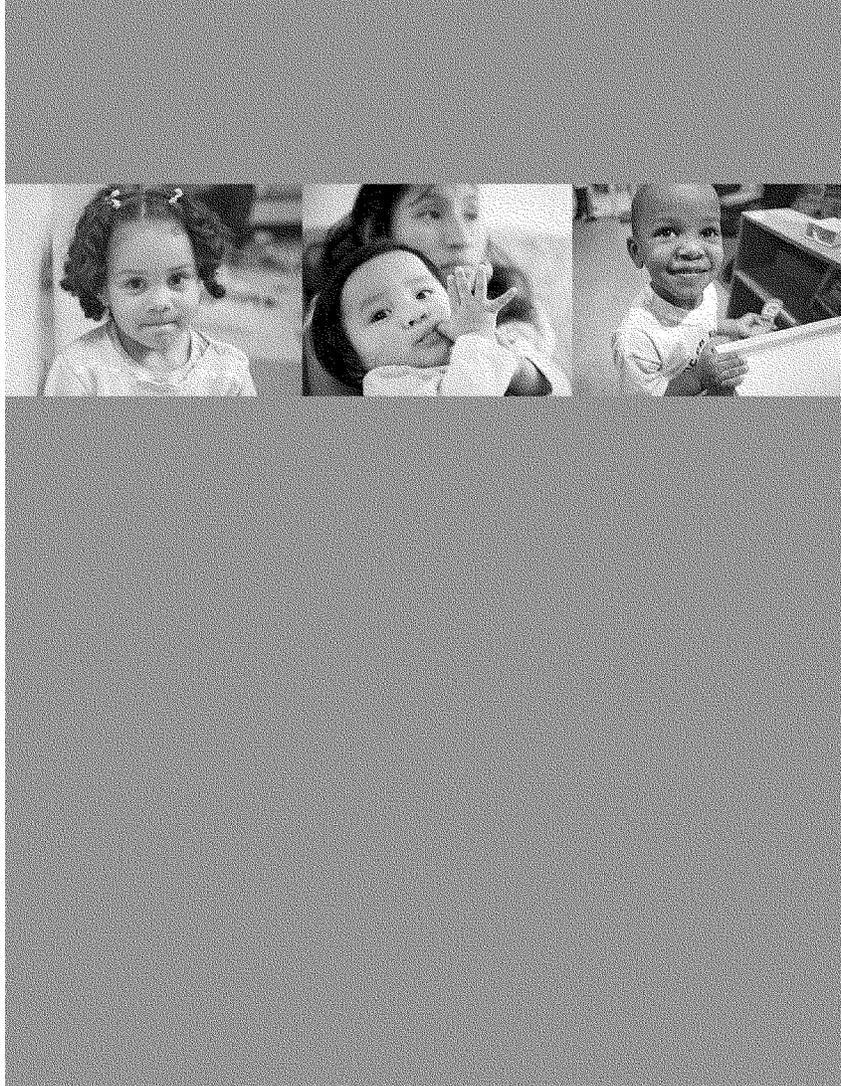


# AMERICA'S YOUNGEST OUTCASTS 2010



 THE NATIONAL CENTER ON  
Family Homelessness  
*for every child, a chance*

[www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org](http://www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org)  
December 2011



STATE REPORT CARD ON CHILD HOMELESSNESS

# AMERICA'S YOUNGEST OUTCASTS 2010



THE NATIONAL CENTER ON  
**Family Homelessness**  
*for every child, a chance*

Written by:  
Ellen L. Bassuk, MD  
Christina Murphy  
Natalie Thompson Coupe  
Rachael R. Kenney  
Corey Anne Beach



The National Center on Family Homelessness

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**Editor's Note:**

Each school year, Local Education Agencies identify and count the numbers of homeless children in their schools as mandated by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. These numbers are reported annually by school year (e.g., data reported from 2005-2006 are from the fall and spring semester of a single school year). To simplify our presentation of data in this report, we use 2006 for the 2005-06 school year, 2007 for the 2006-07 school year, 2008 for the 2007-08 school year, 2009 for the 2008-09 school year, and 2010 for the 2009-10 school year.

**We dedicate *America's Youngest Outcasts 2010* to:**

**Dawn Jahn Moses** for her courage, grace, and resilience in the face of extreme adversity. You are an inspiration to us all.

Our Board Chair, **Carol Lamont**, for her passion, dedication, and tireless support to people experiencing homelessness.

The **children and families** experiencing homelessness across our nation who provide us with the energy to end this national tragedy.

## Acknowledgements

This report has been a collaborative effort among many partners.

We extend our deep appreciation to the Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson Foundation, which provided financial support and encouragement for this project.

We are grateful to the many colleagues who helped prepare this report, particularly Rachael Kenney, Megan Grandin, Katherine Volk, and Justine Hanson of the Center for Social Innovation. We also appreciate the insights on young homeless children offered by Asa Panelli and her colleagues at Horizons for Homeless Children.

Special thanks to Jeannine Owens of Gliddon Owens Design for making our dense pages come to life and to Scott Martin of Jorley Media, and Andrew J. LoVuolo and Derek Hall of Graphic Illusions Studios for making this report available on our website. We thank Diane Fassino of Fassino Design who created the wonderful look of the first Report Card and the Campaign to End Child Homelessness.

The photographs that appear in the report were taken by John Soares and Ren Haoyuan. Many of the families and children who appear in the photographs participated because they want to end homelessness. We are humbled by their strength and thankful for their involvement.

Our Board of Directors provided insight and support throughout this project. As always, we are thankful for their heartfelt commitment, passion, and hard work.

This report would not have been made possible without the dedication and hard work of the following staff at The National Center on Family Homelessness: Ellen Bassuk, Corey Beach, Fred Berman, Christina Murphy, and Natalie Thompson Coupe. Dominique Burke worked closely with us throughout the process, and we are thankful for her contributions. We especially thank John Kellogg for his tireless efforts to make this project a success.

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[www.FamilyHomelessness.org](http://www.FamilyHomelessness.org)  
[www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org](http://www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org)

Photo Credits: John Soares ([www.johnsoares.com](http://www.johnsoares.com)); Ren Haoyuan  
Design: Jeannine Owens ([www.giddonowens.com](http://www.giddonowens.com))

We encourage you to use the information in the report, and ask that you cite it as follows: *America's Youngest Outcasts: 2010*. (2011). The National Center on Family Homelessness, Needham, MA.

Marie C. & Joseph C.  
Wilson Foundation

The Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson Foundation is honored to support the vital work of The National Center on Family Homelessness (The National Center). It is through The National Center's tremendous efforts, such as *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness*, the Campaign to End Child Homelessness, and Giving Homeless Children a National Voice, that the Foundation has worked toward improving the lives of vulnerable families and children.

Since the first Report Card was published, the country has not seen the economic recovery or administrative policies to eliminate family homelessness. But the conversation has begun, thanks to the initial report. Since the launch of the Campaign, policymakers have taken notice of the staggering data The National Center has provided. The media has a resource for presenting statistical facts along with the human face of homelessness. The new data are critical if we are to realize the goal that no child in America spends even one night without a home.

We applaud the tireless commitment The National Center has put into the fight to end family homelessness. With this Report Card and the work of all involved in this project, we hope to raise awareness around this national crisis and change systems so that no more families suffer homelessness.

**There is no time to waste.** Please join us in the *Campaign to End Child Homelessness*.

Sincerely,

Marie C. and Joseph C. Wilson Foundation

## Executive Summary

*America's Youngest Outcasts 2010* updates a previous report created by The National Center on Family Homelessness titled *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness*. Our earlier report, based on 2006 data about the extent of the problem, was itself an update of a landmark study we issued in 1999 that provided the first comprehensive profile of America's homeless children and families.

*America's Youngest Outcasts 2010* documents the numbers of homeless children in every state, their well-being, the risk for child homelessness, and state level planning and policy activities. Using findings from numerous sources that include well-established national data sets as well as our own research, we rank the states in each of four domains and then develop a composite of these domains to rank the states from 1 (best) to 50 (worst).

*America's Youngest Outcasts 2010* reports the following:

- 1.6 million American children, or one in 45 children, are homeless in a year.<sup>1</sup>
- This equates to more than 30,000 children each week, and more than 4,400 each day.
- Children experiencing homelessness suffer from hunger, poor physical and emotional health, and missed educational opportunities.
- A majority of these children have limited educational proficiency in math and reading.
- Not surprisingly, the risks for child homelessness—such as extreme poverty and worst case housing needs—have worsened with the economic recession, even though the total housing capacity for families increased by more than 15,000 units in the past four years, primarily due to the federal Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP).
- Despite this bleak picture, planning and policy activities to support the growth and development of these vulnerable children remain limited. Sixteen states have done no planning related to child homelessness, and only seven states have extensive plans.

Although the majority of homeless children reside in a few states (50% reside in six states; 75% reside in 18 states), thousands and tens of thousands of children in every state go to sleep each night without a home to call their own. The numbers of homeless children in 2010 are likely undercounted since data collection procedures changed in California, reducing California's reported total by 162,822 children in a single year, from 2009 to 2010. In the three previous data years (2007, 2008, 2009), California accounted for more than 25% of the nation's homeless children.

*America's Youngest Outcasts 2010* also analyzes trends in child homelessness since the publication of our first Report Card:

### 2006: A Natural Disaster Strikes— Hurricanes Katrina and Rita

- 1.5 million American children, more than one in 50 children, go to sleep without a home to call their own in 2006.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> See Appendix A for methodology.

<sup>2</sup> See Appendix A for methodology.

- A significant spike in child homelessness occurs due to 2005 Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, a historic natural disaster. The storms lead to one of the greatest mass migrations in our nation's history, accounting for the large numbers of homeless children in 2006.

#### 2007: Recovery from the Hurricanes Child Homelessness Drops by 25%

- 1.2 million American children, or one in 63 children, are homeless in 2007.<sup>3</sup>
- The numbers of children experiencing homelessness decrease dramatically as families resettle after the two hurricanes. There are more than 385,000 fewer homeless children in 2007 from 2006, a reduction of 25%.
- In the six states most impacted by Katrina and Rita, the numbers of homeless children decrease by more than 450,000 (Mississippi was an exception, with their numbers slightly increasing).

#### 2007-2010: A Man-Made Disaster Strikes, Pushing Child Homelessness Up by 38%

- Financial speculation sparks collapse of the housing market and financial institutions, a stock market crash, and the Great Recession. The numbers of homeless children increase by more than 448,000 from 2007 to 2010. 1.6 million (one in 45 children) are homeless in 2010—that is a 38% spike from 2007.
- Only five states report decreases in the numbers of homeless children from 2007 to 2010.
- Fallout from the man-made disaster is worse than the natural disaster, driving the national total of homeless children above the hurricane year (2006) by more than 60,000 children.
- All states are adversely affected by the economic downturn; changes in the structural determinants that contribute to the risk of homelessness vary by state.

In addition to documenting the extent of child homelessness, the well-being of homeless children, risk factors for child homelessness, and policy responses, *America's Youngest Outcasts 2010* offers solutions to this national tragedy. Mindful of the severe constraints that our struggling economy is placing on institutions and individuals, we recommend affordable policy strategies in the areas of housing, child care, education, domestic violence, and employment that will help stabilize children and families who are homeless or at imminent risk of homelessness. We also urge that programs addressing and preventing child and family homelessness not be cut further.

*America's Youngest Outcasts 2010* is a call to action for all of us to address child homelessness before we lose another generation. Please join us in demanding a rapid response now so our next Report Card can paint a brighter picture of our nation's most vulnerable children.

<sup>3</sup> See Appendix A for methodology.

## I. Background

Children experiencing homelessness are America's Youngest Outcasts. They have gradually become a prominent part of a Third World that is emerging within our own nation. Despite their growing numbers, homeless children are invisible to most of us; they have no voice and no constituency. Without a bed to call their own, these children have lost safety, privacy, and the comforts of home as well as their friends, possessions, pets, reassuring routines, and communities. These losses combine to create a life-altering experience that inflicts profound and lasting scars.

### America's Youngest Outcasts: The First Report Card

Committed to ensuring that not one child is homeless for even one day, The National Center on Family Homelessness (The National Center) gave them a voice by creating *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness*. The report presented vital information about the needs of these extremely vulnerable children and their families for the first time in a single document—including state-by-state data on (1) extent of the problem, (2) well-being of the children, (3) risks for child homelessness (e.g., structural determinants), and (4) the policy response. Each state was ranked in these four domains and an overall rank was computed based on a composite of the domains.

Based on data reported in 2006 by Local Education Agencies (LEAs), as mandated by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, the first Report Card documented that that 1.5 million, or more than one in 50, of our nation's children go to sleep without a home each year (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). We used this data source because schools are the only institution nationally that is legally responsible for identifying and serving homeless children.

The first Report Card described the well-being of children experiencing homelessness and found that many frequently go hungry, not knowing where their next meal will come from. Not surprisingly, these children had disproportionately high rates of chronic health conditions, asthma, traumatic stress, and emotional problems compared to their housed counterparts. Their educational proficiency in math and reading was extremely limited. To further understand why families and children are homeless in a country as affluent as ours, we created a risk index that focused on the structural determinants of family homelessness. We included indicators of poverty, household structure, housing market factors, and generosity of benefits—all at the state level.

Most important, we found that despite the severity of the problem, state level planning and policy responses were very limited. Few states in our first Report Card had developed strategies for combating child homelessness, although many had developed 10-Year Plans to prevent and end homelessness generally. Only six states had done extensive planning focused on ending child and family homelessness. After publishing the first Report Card, we launched a national Campaign to End Child Homelessness (see [www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org](http://www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org)).

### America's Youngest Outcasts 2010: The New Report Card

The National Center updated our original Report Card on Child Homelessness using the most recent national and state level information to continue to give these children a voice. This 2010 Report Card—based on the newest available data sets—is designed to shine a spotlight on their plight, raise awareness, and motivate critical policy change. The 2010 edition provides information about the numbers of children experiencing homelessness, their well-being, structural determinants of family homelessness, and policy responses. This information tells a disturbing story. The numbers of homeless children have increased to more than 1.6 million annually, or one in 45 children. Similar to other periods of economic hardship, many more families are homeless and precariously housed, and facing a Hobson's choice between paying for basic necessities or holding onto their housing. Despite some policy gains, the depth and duration of the nation's economic downturn has slowed the policy response.

It is time again to shine the spotlight on children experiencing homelessness. By updating our first Report Card, we hope to inspire families with homes, policymakers, and all relevant stakeholders to take action to end this national tragedy. By analyzing various trends and with the power of hindsight, we have learned more about the problem of child homelessness. *America's Youngest Outcasts 2010* can help us forge an effective policy response to end this tragic problem.

Children can't wait until our stagnant economy revives. We must not allow bleak forecasts about the economy to delay aggressive action. We must act now.

### Definition of Homelessness

This Report Card describes homeless children from birth to age 18 who are accompanied by one or more parents or caregivers. By definition, they comprise a homeless family. Our counts and descriptions do not include unaccompanied children and youth (e.g., runaway, throwaway, or homeless youth). The Report Card uses the definition of homelessness contained in Subtitle B of Title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title X, Part C, of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 and adopted by the U.S. Department of Education. The definition includes children and youth who are:

- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up);
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations;
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters;
- Abandoned in hospitals;
- Awaiting foster care placement;
- Using 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;
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or tram stations, or similar settings; and
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

### Homelessness is Traumatic for Children

Homelessness is devastating for children. Families move often; within a single year, 97% of homeless children move up to three times (Bassuk et al., 1997; Masten et al., 1993; The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). Before turning to emergency shelter, most double up in overcrowded apartments with relatives or friends (Bassuk, 2010). Others stay in motel rooms or sleep in cars or campgrounds (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). Families are forced to split up—with children placed with family members or friends, or in foster care (Barrow & Lawinski, 2009). When families turn to shelter—often as a last resort—they must quickly adjust to noisy, chaotic, unsafe, and overcrowded situations.

Homeless children and their parents are exposed to high levels of traumatic stress (Bassuk, 2010). Many family members have experienced childhood abuse and neglect, and domestic violence as adults as well as the stresses associated with poverty and the loss of their home, safety, and sense of security (Bassuk et al., 1996; Browne & Bassuk, 1997; Guarino & Bassuk, 2010). These experiences affect how children and adults think, feel, behave, and relate to others. Traumatic stresses are cumulative and increase the risk of developing health, behavioral, and social problems as adults (Browne et al., 2009).

Children who are homeless are more likely to suffer from acute and chronic medical illnesses. They go hungry at twice the rate of other children. They have three times the rate of emotional and behavioral problems, such as anxiety, depression, sleep problems, withdrawal, and aggression (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). These factors can have long-term effects on their ability to function and form sustaining, supportive adult relationships.

Given these circumstances, it is not surprising that children experiencing homelessness have difficulty in school. The level of fear and unpredictability in their lives is damaging to their growth and development, and ability to learn. An estimated 40% attend two different schools in a year, and 23% attend three or more different schools (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 1999). They are four times more likely to have delayed development and twice as likely to have learning disabilities. They are 16% less proficient at reading and math than their peers (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). One-third of these children repeat a grade (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 1999). The constant barrage of stressful and traumatic experiences has profound effects on their ability to learn, ultimately affecting their success in life.

More than 40% of homeless children are younger than 6 years old and are dependent on their mothers for nurturance, protection, and support. But more than a third of homeless mothers have chronic physical health conditions, including higher rates of asthma, anemia, and hypertension than in the general population (Bassuk et al., 1996). Mothers also struggle with mental health and substance use (Bassuk et al., 1997). Rates of depression in homeless mothers are four to five times greater than for women overall (Knitzer et al., 2008). Although mothers' depression is very treatable, it is often not identified and may lead to adverse outcomes in their children (Knitzer et al., 2008; Weinreb et al., 2006; Weissman & Olsson, 1995).

## Perspectives on Young Homeless Children

### From Horizons for Homeless Children

Forty-two percent of homeless children are age six or under. Current research establishes a strong connection between a young child's early experiences and the developing structure of his or her brain. According to a study by the Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University, early experiences determine whether a child's brain architecture will provide a strong or weak foundation for all future learning, behavior, and health.

Children in stable environments with access to stimulating early play and educational experiences develop neural pathways in the brain that lay a foundation for academic readiness, positive social skills, and emotional stability. Unfortunately, children who have experienced homelessness are often denied these early developmental opportunities. Homelessness hurts children in many ways:

**Brain development** Young homeless children experience more developmental delays, emotional problems such as anxiety and depression, and behavioral issues.

**Stress** According to the American Public Health Association, homelessness can result in "toxic stress" that triggers a range of harmful biochemical impacts on the developing child.

**Parenting** Given the tremendous challenges faced by homeless parents, young homeless children may experience little or no positive interaction with adults.

**School Readiness** Homeless children are eight times more likely to be asked to repeat a grade, three times as likely to be placed in special education classes, and twice as likely to score lower on standardized tests.

**Health and Well-being** A study by Jung Min Park of the University of Illinois School of Social Work found that "children with a homeless episode experienced higher rates of physical disabilities than other low-income children who were stably housed... These children also had nearly double the rate of probable emotional or behavioral problems."

Homelessness is damaging to mothers as well. Pregnant women experiencing homelessness are significantly younger, less educated, and less likely to be married than non-homeless pregnant women. Their infants are more likely to be born underweight and less likely to be breastfed. Homeless mothers often suffer from depression that can negatively impact the mother-infant relationship.

At Horizons for Homeless Children, we work to strengthen the parent-child relationship that is a core pillar of preparing children to succeed. We provide young homeless children with high-quality early education and intervention programs to reduce the negative effects of homelessness for children and their mothers. Please visit [www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org](http://www.horizonsforhomelesschildren.org) to learn more.

## II. America's Youngest Outcasts 2010

Similar to our first Report Card, *America's Youngest Outcasts 2010* describes the extent of child homelessness using the newest data collected by McKinney-Vento school liaisons, adjusted for age and state population size. The state-by-state numbers are aggregated to calculate a national total. Using other national data sets (see Appendix A: Methodology), we also report on variables comprising the three other key state-level domains: child well-being; risk for child homelessness, and state policy responses. These four domains are combined to create the composite state ranking.

### 1.6 Million Homeless Children

More than 1.6 million children are homeless in America: one in 45 children. Homeless families are everywhere in our nation—in most cities and many communities. They number in the thousands, tens of thousands, and even hundreds of thousands in our states (National Center for Homeless Education, 2011). In smaller states, their numbers are in the low thousands. In our largest states, startling numbers show that child homelessness has become a catastrophic social problem. States with the highest percentage of homeless children are generally located in the South and Southwest—reflecting the higher levels of poverty in these states. States with the lowest percentages of homeless children are generally located in the North and Northeast, where there is less poverty and stronger safety nets for children (National Center for Homeless Education, 2011; U.S. Census Bureau, 2007).

The national total of more than 1.6 million in 2010 is likely an undercount because the state of California, which accounts for 25% or more of the national total of homeless children in the majority of years between 2006 and 2010, changed its procedure for collecting 2010 McKinney-Vento data and reported challenges to implementing its new data collection process. As explained by Leanne Wheeler of the Title I Policy and Program Guidance Improvement and Accountability Division of the California Department of Education: "... many local educational agencies (LEAs) and homeless liaisons are still learning about the new system and the collection/input of their homeless students. We are continuously trying to work with our LEAs and homeless liaisons to better identify and report these students." The number reported by California for 2010 decreased from the previous year by 162,822 children (dropping from 496,953 in 2009 to 334,131 in 2010) at a time when numbers increased in every region of the nation, particularly in the larger states (National Center for Homeless Education, 2011). The accurate number of homeless children in California in 2010 will likely remain unknown.

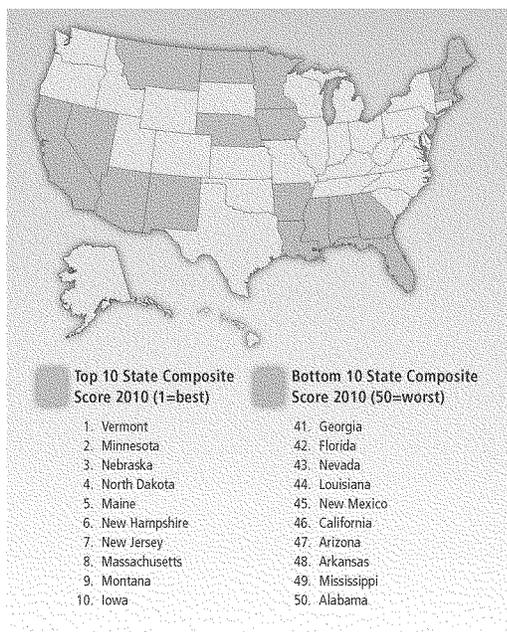
A. State Ranks

**State Composite Score**

Each state was assigned a score of one through 50. This score is a composite that reflects each state's overall performance across four domains:

- 1) Extent of Child Homelessness (adjusted for population size)
- 2) Child Well-Being
- 3) Risk for Child Homelessness
- 4) State Policy and Planning Efforts

Each state received a score for each domain. These were summed to compute the composite score. See Methodology section for more detail.



2010 STATE COMPOSITE	
State	Score
VERMONT	1
MINNESOTA	2
NEBRASKA	3
NORTH DAKOTA	4
MAINE	5
NEW HAMPSHIRE	6
NEW JERSEY	7
MASSACHUSETTS	8
MONTANA	9
IOWA	10
PENNSYLVANIA	11
CONNECTICUT	12
WISCONSIN	13
HAWAII	14
SOUTH DAKOTA	15
WYOMING	16
RHODE ISLAND	17
KANSAS	18
WASHINGTON	19
ILLINOIS	20
VIRGINIA	21
MICHIGAN	22
INDIANA	23
IDAHO	24
OHIO	25
MARYLAND	26
UTAH	27
ALASKA	28
NORTH CAROLINA	29
COLORADO	30
OREGON	31
MISSOURI	32
DELAWARE	33
WEST VIRGINIA	34
NEW YORK	35
KENTUCKY	36
SOUTH CAROLINA	37
TEXAS	38
TENNESSEE	39
OKLAHOMA	40
GEORGIA	41
FLORIDA	42
NEVADA	43
LOUISIANA	44
NEW MEXICO	45
CALIFORNIA	46
ARIZONA	47
ARKANSAS	48
MISSISSIPPI	49
ALABAMA	50



2010 EXTENT OF CHILD HOMELESSNESS (1=Best, 50=Worst)		2010 CHILD WELL-BEING (1=Best, 50=Worst)	
State	Score	State	Score
NEW JERSEY	1	NORTH DAKOTA	1
CONNECTICUT	2	MINNESOTA	2
MAINE	3	WYOMING	3
RHODE ISLAND	4	NEW JERSEY	4
NEBRASKA	5	IDAHO	5
NORTH DAKOTA	6	UTAH	6
VERMONT	7	KANSAS	7
MONTANA	8	COLORADO	8
PENNSYLVANIA	9	NEW HAMPSHIRE	9
OHIO	10	SOUTH DAKOTA	10
MINNESOTA	11	HAWAII	11
SOUTH DAKOTA	12	MASSACHUSETTS	12
WYOMING	13	VIRGINIA	13
INDIANA	14	VERMONT	14
TENNESSEE	15	MONTANA	15
VIRGINIA	16	NEBRASKA	16
NEW HAMPSHIRE	17	ILLINOIS	17
WISCONSIN	18	ALASKA	18
IOWA	19	NEW YORK	19
NORTH CAROLINA	20	DELAWARE	20
MASSACHUSETTS	21	PENNSYLVANIA	21
MICHIGAN	22	NORTH CAROLINA	22
MARYLAND	23	INDIANA	23
HAWAII	24	WISCONSIN	24
MISSISSIPPI	25	TEXAS	25
SOUTH CAROLINA	26	WASHINGTON	26
IDAHO	27	OREGON	27
GEORGIA	28	NEVADA	28
ILLINOIS	29	IOWA	29
TEXAS	30	CONNECTICUT	30
ARKANSAS	31	NEW MEXICO	31
KANSAS	32	MAINE	32
MISSOURI	33	ARIZONA	33
FLORIDA	34	CALIFORNIA	34
WEST VIRGINIA	35	FLORIDA	35
NEVADA	36	MARYLAND	36
WASHINGTON	37	LOUISIANA	37
DELAWARE	38	KENTUCKY	38
ALABAMA	39	MICHIGAN	39
COLORADO	40	SOUTH CAROLINA	40
OKLAHOMA	41	GEORGIA	41
UTAH	42	MISSOURI	42
NEW MEXICO	43	OHIO	43
ARIZONA	44	RHODE ISLAND	44
NEW YORK	45	TENNESSEE	45
CALIFORNIA	46	WEST VIRGINIA	46
ALASKA	47	MISSISSIPPI	47
LOUISIANA	48	OKLAHOMA	48
KENTUCKY	49	ARKANSAS	49
OREGON	50	ALABAMA	50



2010 RISK OF CHILD HOMELESSNESS (1=Best, 50=Worst)	
State	Score
VERMONT	1
NEW HAMPSHIRE	2
MAINE	3
NORTH DAKOTA	4
IOWA	5
NEBRASKA	6
WYOMING	7
MINNESOTA	8
PENNSYLVANIA	9
SOUTH DAKOTA	10
ALASKA	11
KANSAS	12
WASHINGTON	13
MONTANA	14
WISCONSIN	15
MASSACHUSETTS	16
CONNECTICUT	17
VIRGINIA	18
HAWAII	19
WEST VIRGINIA	20
RHODE ISLAND	21
MARYLAND	22
UTAH	23
DELAWARE	24
NEW JERSEY	25
NEW YORK	26
MISSOURI	27
OREGON	28
IDAHO	29
ILLINOIS	30
MICHIGAN	31
OKLAHOMA	32
COLORADO	33
OHIO	34
KENTUCKY	35
NORTH CAROLINA	36
INDIANA	37
CALIFORNIA	38
NEW MEXICO	39
TENNESSEE	40
NEVADA	41
TEXAS	42
ARKANSAS	43
FLORIDA	44
ALABAMA	45
LOUISIANA	46
MISSISSIPPI	47
SOUTH CAROLINA	48
GEORGIA	49
ARIZONA	50

2010 STATE POLICY & PLANNING EFFORTS (1=Best, 50=Worst)	
State	Score
MAINE	1
MASSACHUSETTS	2
IOWA	3
MICHIGAN	4
VERMONT	5
RHODE ISLAND	6
MINNESOTA	7
WISCONSIN	8
WASHINGTON	9
OREGON	10
NEBRASKA	11
ILLINOIS	12
HAWAII	13
CONNECTICUT	14
MONTANA	15
KENTUCKY	16
OHIO	17
NEW HAMPSHIRE	18
NEW JERSEY	19
MISSOURI	20
PENNSYLVANIA	21
LOUISIANA	22
MARYLAND	23
OKLAHOMA	24
INDIANA	25
SOUTH CAROLINA	26
NORTH DAKOTA	27
WEST VIRGINIA	28
GEORGIA	29
KANSAS	30
COLORADO	31
ALASKA	32
NORTH CAROLINA	33
UTAH	34
FLORIDA	35
CALIFORNIA	36
ARIZONA	37
SOUTH DAKOTA	38
IDAHO	39
DELAWARE	40
NEW MEXICO	41
ARKANSAS	42
TEXAS	43
ALABAMA	44
TENNESSEE	45
VIRGINIA	46
NEW YORK	47
NEVADA	48
WYOMING	49
MISSISSIPPI	50

### III. Analysis of Trends in Child Homelessness

#### Introduction

Child homelessness first surfaced in the U.S. as a social problem in the mid-1980s. Before that time, families and children were not homeless in significant numbers except during the Great Depression. Once child homelessness emerged, it continued to grow (Bassuk, 2010). This section of the report card analyzes trends, showing a steady upward increase in numbers that now reach more than 1.6 million children annually.

The major causes of homelessness for children are structural in nature. Poverty combined with our nation's lack of affordable housing have pushed the most vulnerable families out of stable housing onto a path towards homelessness (Bassuk, 2010; Bassuk et al., 1996). The picture is complicated by the ways in which traumatic experiences can precede and prolong homelessness for some parents, including veterans and young mothers who are breadwinners in families with young children (Clervil, Grandin, & Greendlinger, 2010; Guarino & Bassuk, 2010). Trauma for veterans is anchored in their battlefield and military experiences (Clervil, Grandin, & Greendlinger, 2010). Trauma for young mothers can begin in childhood and re-occur through adulthood, creating the circumstances for a family's economic and social collapse that leaves children without a home of their own (Bassuk et al., 1996; Browne & Bassuk, 1997; Guarino & Bassuk, 2010).

Homelessness can become catastrophic when natural or man-made disasters suddenly compound already existing social forces. Millions of people across the globe are affected every year by natural and man-made events that lead to displacement and forced migration that may be temporary or permanent. When a disaster threatens, flight or escape to a safe location may be immediate. In the aftermath, flight may be more organized (Oliver-Smith, 2006). Regardless of the nature of the disaster, it invariably leads to significant economic and health costs. Disasters can pose a public health challenge, since the coping strategies of affected communities may be overwhelmed. The psychosocial consequences have been extensively studied, with most researchers reporting that residents frequently developed significant distress and diagnosable mental health disorders. Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was most often reported, followed by depression and generalized anxiety (Benight & Bandura, 2004).

Man-made disasters can sometimes lead to more pernicious outcomes. A natural disaster is often viewed as "an act of God" or a force of nature that is unavoidable, whereas man-made disasters can have a more sinister and frightening aspect since the event might have been prevented. One of the most studied man-made disasters occurred in West Virginia in February 1972 when a dam collapsed, and 132 million gallons of black waste water rushed through the narrow Buffalo Creek hollow, killing 125 people, injuring 1,100, and leaving 4,000 homeless in a matter of minutes. Years before, the U.S. Department of the Interior had warned state officials that the dam was unstable and dangerous; the coal producer had received more than 5,000 safety violations at its mines; and when it began to rain continuously, residents were not informed. No actions were taken to protect the residents of the hollow despite the

severity of the threat and the near certainty of the outcome. Years later many residents were still displaced and the sense of community had not been re-established. As reported by Kai Erikson, "Many survivors experienced severe psychological problems for years after the flood. The trauma described by a World War II veteran who landed at Normandy was similar to that of numerous survivors of Buffalo Creek" (West Virginia Archives and History, 2011).

In recent years, two signature events have caused major spikes in the numbers of homeless children in America. The year reported in our first State Report Card marked the back-to-back natural disasters of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Just as the nation was recovering and the numbers of homeless children was starting to decline, a second disaster hit. This one was man-made in the form of reckless speculation in U.S. financial markets that triggered a global and national economic recession. With the damage still ongoing, the impact of the man-made disaster is more devastating than the damage caused by natural forces.

#### A. 2005-2006: A Natural Disaster Strikes

The first State Report Card on Child Homelessness reported on the numbers of homeless children in the school year that began in the fall of 2005. That year was marked by two major natural disasters—one following the other. On August 29, 2005, Hurricane Katrina—a Category 3 storm—hit the Gulf Coast, particularly the Louisiana/Mississippi border, setting into motion a series of events, many of them traumatic, that devastated communities and led to one of the largest mass migrations in recent U.S. history. Less than a month later, Hurricane Rita made landfall along the Texas/Louisiana border, leading to another massive evacuation. This was the first time on record that two powerful hurricanes reached Category 5 strength in the Gulf of Mexico in the same season (Myers, Slack, & Singelmann, 2010).

In the wake of these hurricanes, many residents fled. Based on data from the Current Population Survey (CPS), an estimated 1.5 million individuals aged 16 and older left their homes because of Hurricane Katrina; 75% of these individuals were living in Louisiana; 19% in Mississippi and 6% in Alabama (Groen & Polivka, 2009). Approximately 30% of the residents in these states evacuated, although this percentage was much higher in communities near the Gulf Coast (Groen & Polivka, 2009). Communities clustered in the "toe" of Louisiana experienced the greatest out-migration. Marginalized and socially disadvantaged groups were more vulnerable to displacement (Myers, Slack, & Singelmann, 2010). Among the hardest hit were low-income families of color who had poorer quality housing, fewer assets, and less social support.

Children and families endured countless traumas due to the hurricanes. Many were left in unfamiliar cities with nothing but the clothes on their backs. Living as nomads, they had to patch together the pieces of their lives and find food, housing, medical care, income, and education for their children. School systems around the country—particularly in Arkansas, Texas, and Georgia, and undamaged areas of Louisiana and Mississippi—opened their doors to displaced families, becoming de facto community centers providing safe havens. Community agencies already working with vulnerable populations began the arduous task of supporting long-term recovery by offering counseling, health care, and other vital human services to deal with evacuees' complex needs (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2006).

The number of homeless children reported in our first State Report Card (more than 1.5 million in 2006) reflected the migration of large numbers of families and children after

the hurricanes. Many of the families and children experiencing homelessness in 2006 had been displaced by the hurricanes—especially in Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, and Texas. States such as Louisiana were among the hardest hit, as reflected by the high numbers of children experiencing homelessness that year, which exceeded 200,000. Many families fled to Texas—which reported numbers of homeless children exceeding 300,000 that year (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). In the following year, the numbers in both states fell toward 60,000 per state, reflecting the re-equilibration of families after the hurricanes. Various states, as described above, were differentially affected—with their numbers of homeless children swelling disproportionately, then dropping to lower levels (National Center for Homeless Education, 2011).

In the following year (2007), the numbers of homeless children decreased significantly in most of these states and, thus, nationally. The impact of the hurricanes largely diminished over time, bringing the number of homeless children in 2007 (1.2 million children) to a level that more clearly mirrors the endemic nature of the problem—a decrease of more than 385,000 children from the hurricane year, or about one-quarter of the national total. Too many, this significant reduction in child homelessness was very heartening.

#### B. 2007-2010: A Man Made Disaster Makes Things Worse

As the nation and our homeless children recovered from Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, a new storm was brewing—a devastating recession touched off by overheated speculation in housing and financial markets that destabilized the nation's economy more profoundly than the hurricanes reshaped our geographic landscape. According to Michael Elsby and colleagues, the 2007 recession represented “the deepest downturn in the labor market in the postwar era” (Elsby, Hobijn, & Sahin, 2010, p.1). Similar to the severe recessions of 1973-75 and 1981-82, the recent economic recession lasted longer, involved above-average decreases in the Gross Domestic Product, decreased consumer spending, and widespread long-term unemployment (Knotek & Terry, 2009). This recession was accompanied by high rates of housing foreclosures. These factors combined to produce a chronically stagnant economy. Unemployment rates reached postwar highs, hovering between 9% and 10%, with 13.9 million Americans unemployed in November 2011 (Elsby, Hobijn, & Sahin, 2010). The duration of unemployment has been the longest since the 1940's, contributing to a “lackluster recovery” (Elsby, Hobijn, & Sahin, 2010; United States Department of Labor, 2011). According to The United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, the average length of unemployment in July 2011 was 40 weeks (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2011). Fundamental changes in labor markets and banking have contributed to continuing high unemployment rates (Knotek & Terry, 2009).

Home foreclosures compounded the picture. In 2006-07, when the housing bubble burst and housing prices plummeted, many families found themselves unable to meet mortgage payments, resulting in staggering numbers of foreclosures and increased rates of personal bankruptcy. According to the Center for Responsible Lending, approximately six million families lost their homes to foreclosures (Center for Responsible Lending, 2010). This figure may rise to 12 to 15 million before the housing market regains balance (Gilderbloom & Squires, 2011). Among those at greatest risk of housing foreclosures were individuals and families with subprime mortgages—many of whom were low income and minority borrowers

(Crandall, 2008). The decline in housing prices and the foreclosure crisis led to an increased “wealth gap” in which the median wealth among White households is now 20 times that of Black households and 18 times that of Hispanic households (Taylor, Kochhar, Fry, Velasco, & Motel, 2011).

The impact of housing foreclosures on families and communities is devastating and launches many families on a path of residential instability and downward mobility—increasing their risk of homelessness. Foreclosures lead to loss of financial equity, damaged credit ratings, and administrative costs, making it more difficult for families to get back on their feet. An estimated 20 to 40% of those facing eviction due to foreclosure are renters (National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009; Pelletiere, 2009). They are often at even greater disadvantage because of the lack of notice, tarnishing of their rental records, and forfeiture of security deposits and other payments.

Researchers have not yet systematically tracked what happens to families who are forced out of their homes. Fully understanding the relationship between homelessness and foreclosures requires longitudinal research that follows people from their loss of housing onto the streets; this research has not yet been conducted. However, the intuitive connection is strong. We know that poverty and the lack of affordable housing are the primary drivers of homelessness, and that many families have no place to go. Anecdotal reports from around the country indicate that many families doubled up, while others became homeless and turned to emergency shelter (Kingsley, Smith, & Price, 2009; National Coalition for the Homeless, 2009). The Urban Institute also conducted a study documenting the impact of the housing crisis. They found that food stamp caseloads increased by nearly 20% in 2008 in the states hardest hit by foreclosures (e.g., Nevada, California, Arizona, Florida) (Kingsley, Smith, & Price, 2009).

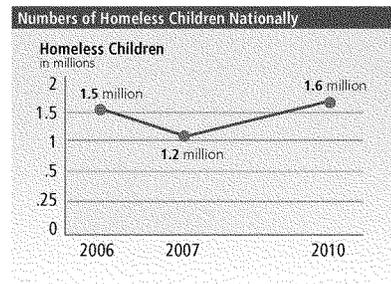
In its 2011 Update, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness further described the impact of the recession on the housing crisis. Higher-income renters who can no longer afford their housing or have been evicted due to foreclosures have joined the growing pool of low-income renters (Steffen et al., 2011). They are now competing for a shrinking number of affordable housing units. This has led to an affordable housing “supply gap” that has pushed many more low-income renters into doubling up with relatives or friends (Joint Center for Housing Studies, 2011; United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2011). Between 2008 and 2010, the number of multiple families living together increased by 12 percent—now approaching 15.5 million households—a number that is considered an underestimate given the difficulty of counting diverse living arrangements (Myka & Macartney, 2011; United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2011). The rate of overcrowding has increased dramatically (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2011).

According to the American Housing Survey (AHS), the number of renters with worst case housing needs drastically increased by more than 20% between 2007 and 2009 (from 5.9 to 7.1 million)—the highest jump in any two year period since 1985. Worst case housing needs refers to households that do not receive government housing assistance, spend more than 50% of their income on rent, or who live in severely inadequate conditions. Although every low-income group is affected, families with children represent the highest proportion of those with worst case housing needs (Steffen et al., 2011). They are among those most vulnerable to becoming homeless.

Given the impact and duration of the Great Recession, it is not surprising that more than 46 million Americans now live in poverty—the highest rate since 1993. With the recent use of an alternative, supplemental measure that includes both government benefits and expenses, the poverty rate in 2010 is estimated to include 16% of all Americans or 49 million people (up from 15.3% in 2009). The child poverty rate increased in 38 states in the last ten years, with the southern states hit the hardest. Of those under 18 years, 22.5% were considered poor. The child poverty rate is at 18.2% using the supplemental Census measure (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). Almost 18% of American children have at least one parent who is underemployed or unemployed—almost twice as many as those at the beginning of the recession in 2007 (Berman, 2011; Mishel, 2011).

The “poorest of the poor”—the numbers of people living at 50% or less of the poverty level—have also reached a record high of one in 15 people, or an estimated 20.5 million Americans. Comprising 6.7% of the U.S. population, this percentage is at its highest level in 35 years (DeNavas-Walt, Proctor, & Smith, 2011). In 2010, this group had an income of \$5,570 for an individual and \$11,157 for a family of four (Hayden, 2011). Over the same period, the proportion of very poor people living in high poverty neighborhoods increased from 11.2% in 2000 to 15.1% in 2010. The largest growth in high poverty areas occurred in newer Sun Belt neighborhoods (e.g., Las Vegas, NV; Cape Coral, FL; Riverside, CA) (Kneebone, Nadeau, & Berube, 2011).

In sum, the period from 2007 to 2010 will be remembered as a time when overpaid bankers, captains of industry and carmakers hobbled to Washington, hats in hand, begging for bailouts and infusions of billions of dollars. But even these bailouts were not enough to significantly reenergize the stagnant economy. Unemployment rates stagnated at unacceptable levels. To respond to the faltering economy, many critical domestic programs are being cut or threatened. Climbing out of poverty has become increasingly impossible. Amidst this man-made disaster, the numbers of homeless children have been climbing steadily during the Great Recession and by 2010 exceeded those of the natural disaster that struck in the fall of 2005. The hurricane year left one in every 50 children homeless in America. In the wake of the Great Recession, that number is now one in 45. As a society, we bear responsibility for creating this second disaster and for responding to its aftermath.



## C. State Trends in Child Homelessness: 2006-2010

**First Report Card to New Report Card:  
2006 to 2010**

The increase of more than 60,000 homeless children from our first Report Card in 2006 to our new Report Card in 2010 is distributed nationwide. Only eight states showed a decrease during this period. Of these eight states, four were states affected by Hurricanes Katrina and Rita, and three were smaller states that reported small decreases ranging from about 100 to about 1000 children. Pennsylvania also reported a decrease during this period.<sup>1</sup>

**Recovery From the Hurricanes: 2006 to 2007**

In the year after the hurricanes (2007), the number of homeless children decreased nationally by more than 385,000 or 25% from 2006. This decrease is largely accounted for by fewer numbers of homeless children in the hurricane-affected states, with the exception of Mississippi. In the five hurricane-affected states (Alabama, Arkansas, Georgia, Louisiana, Texas), the numbers of homeless children decreased by more than 450,000 children.

**Impact of the Recession: 2007 to 2010**

Child homelessness during the period from 2007 to 2010 increased by 38% to reach 1.6 million annually and exceed the total of the hurricane year. During this period, 45 states saw increases in homeless children. Some of these increases were dramatic, with 25 states increasing their numbers by 50% or more. Of the four states in which the number of homeless children decreased during this period, two were likely still recovering to pre-hurricane levels (Louisiana, Mississippi), and two were small population states with lower numbers of homeless children (North Dakota and Montana).

<sup>1</sup> In its report to US DOE for this data period, Pennsylvania acknowledged it did not capture all of the Primary Nighttime Residence data for homeless children, and acknowledged staff turnover among Regional Coordinators that resulted in variations in knowledge and experience obtaining and reporting data regarding homeless students. This seems to have been corrected for 2010 data. See [www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy07-08part1/pa.pdf](http://www2.ed.gov/admins/lead/account/consolidated/sy07-08part1/pa.pdf)

STATE COMPOSITE			
State	First Report Card	2007	2010 Report Card
ALABAMA	32	46	50
ALASKA	22	37	28
ARIZONA	36	43	47
ARKANSAS	48	48	48
CALIFORNIA	40	47	46
COLORADO	35	39	30
CONNECTICUT	1	7	12
DELAWARE	19	30	33
FLORIDA	43	25	42
GEORGIA	49	41	41
HAWAII	3	6	14
IDAHO	23	9	24
ILLINOIS	13	19	20
INDIANA	30	21	23
IOWA	11	4	10
KANSAS	28	16	18
KENTUCKY	42	44	36
LOUISIANA	46	49	44
MAINE	9	3	5
MARYLAND	18	23	26
MASSACHUSETTS	8	11	8
MICHIGAN	29	31	22
MINNESOTA	6	1	2
MISSISSIPPI	41	50	49
MISSOURI	27	33	32
MONTANA	33	22	9
NEBRASKA	34	2	3
NEVADA	45	40	43
NEW HAMPSHIRE	2	8	6
NEW JERSEY	16	10	7
NEW MEXICO	47	45	45
NEW YORK	38	35	35
NORTH CAROLINA	44	29	29
NORTH DAKOTA	5	15	4
OHIO	20	26	25
OKLAHOMA	31	42	40
OREGON	26	28	31
PENNSYLVANIA	14	13	11
RHODE ISLAND	4	18	17
SOUTH CAROLINA	39	38	37
SOUTH DAKOTA	12	17	15
TENNESSEE	24	34	39
TEXAS	50	36	38
UTAH	37	24	27
VERMONT	10	5	1
VIRGINIA	17	27	21
WASHINGTON	25	14	19
WEST VIRGINIA	15	32	34
WISCONSIN	7	20	13
WYOMING	21	12	16

## State Ranks First Report Card, 2007, 2010 Report Card

EXTENT OF CHILD HOMELESSNESS				CHILD WELL-BEING			
State	First Report Card	2007 Report Card	2010 Report Card	State	First Report Card	2007 Report Card	2010 Report Card
ALABAMA	39	36	39	ALABAMA	19	46	50
ALASKA	47	46	47	ALASKA	28	32	18
ARIZONA	40	43	44	ARIZONA	3	35	33
ARKANSAS	45	41	31	ARKANSAS	45	48	49
CALIFORNIA	48	49	46	CALIFORNIA	15	21	34
COLORADO	38	40	40	COLORADO	12	23	8
CONNECTICUT	3	2	2	CONNECTICUT	1	29	30
DELAWARE	30	33	38	DELAWARE	29	22	20
FLORIDA	29	27	34	FLORIDA	36	11	35
GEORGIA	43	19	28	GEORGIA	41	44	41
HAWAII	4	6	24	HAWAII	5	6	11
IDAHO	13	9	27	IDAHO	30	3	5
ILLINOIS	19	24	29	ILLINOIS	14	20	17
INDIANA	12	15	14	INDIANA	47	18	23
IOWA	31	7	19	IOWA	21	26	29
KANSAS	9	14	32	KANSAS	46	25	7
KENTUCKY	46	48	49	KENTUCKY	27	43	38
LOUISIANA	50	50	48	LOUISIANA	20	49	37
MAINE	7	5	3	MAINE	50	33	32
MARYLAND	18	25	23	MARYLAND	33	36	36
MASSACHUSETTS	27	30	21	MASSACHUSETTS	18	16	12
MICHIGAN	17	37	22	MICHIGAN	38	37	39
MINNESOTA	21	11	11	MINNESOTA	31	5	2
MISSISSIPPI	32	45	25	MISSISSIPPI	16	50	47
MISSOURI	41	35	33	MISSOURI	6	40	42
MONTANA	33	39	8	MONTANA	40	12	15
NEBRASKA	23	4	5	NEBRASKA	42	7	16
NEVADA	36	29	36	NEVADA	23	31	28
NEW HAMPSHIRE	5	26	17	NEW HAMPSHIRE	13	15	9
NEW JERSEY	2	1	1	NEW JERSEY	17	4	4
NEW MEXICO	37	32	43	NEW MEXICO	32	34	31
NEW YORK	22	38	45	NEW YORK	39	9	19
NORTH CAROLINA	14	21	20	NORTH CAROLINA	49	30	22
NORTH DAKOTA	11	31	6	NORTH DAKOTA	9	1	1
OHIO	8	12	10	OHIO	24	42	43
OKLAHOMA	6	34	41	OKLAHOMA	10	39	48
OREGON	44	47	50	OREGON	4	28	27
PENNSYLVANIA	34	10	9	PENNSYLVANIA	2	24	21
RHODE ISLAND	1	3	4	RHODE ISLAND	7	45	44
SOUTH CAROLINA	25	20	26	SOUTH CAROLINA	35	47	40
SOUTH DAKOTA	10	16	12	SOUTH DAKOTA	25	8	10
TENNESSEE	26	8	15	TENNESSEE	8	38	45
TEXAS	49	13	30	TEXAS	44	19	25
UTAH	42	44	42	UTAH	48	17	6
VERMONT	15	22	7	VERMONT	26	14	14
VIRGINIA	24	18	16	VIRGINIA	11	13	13
WASHINGTON	35	42	37	WASHINGTON	34	10	26
WEST VIRGINIA	28	28	35	WEST VIRGINIA	22	41	46
WISCONSIN	16	23	18	WISCONSIN	37	27	24
WYOMING	20	17	13	WYOMING	43	2	3

## State Ranks First Report Card, 2007, 2010 Report Card

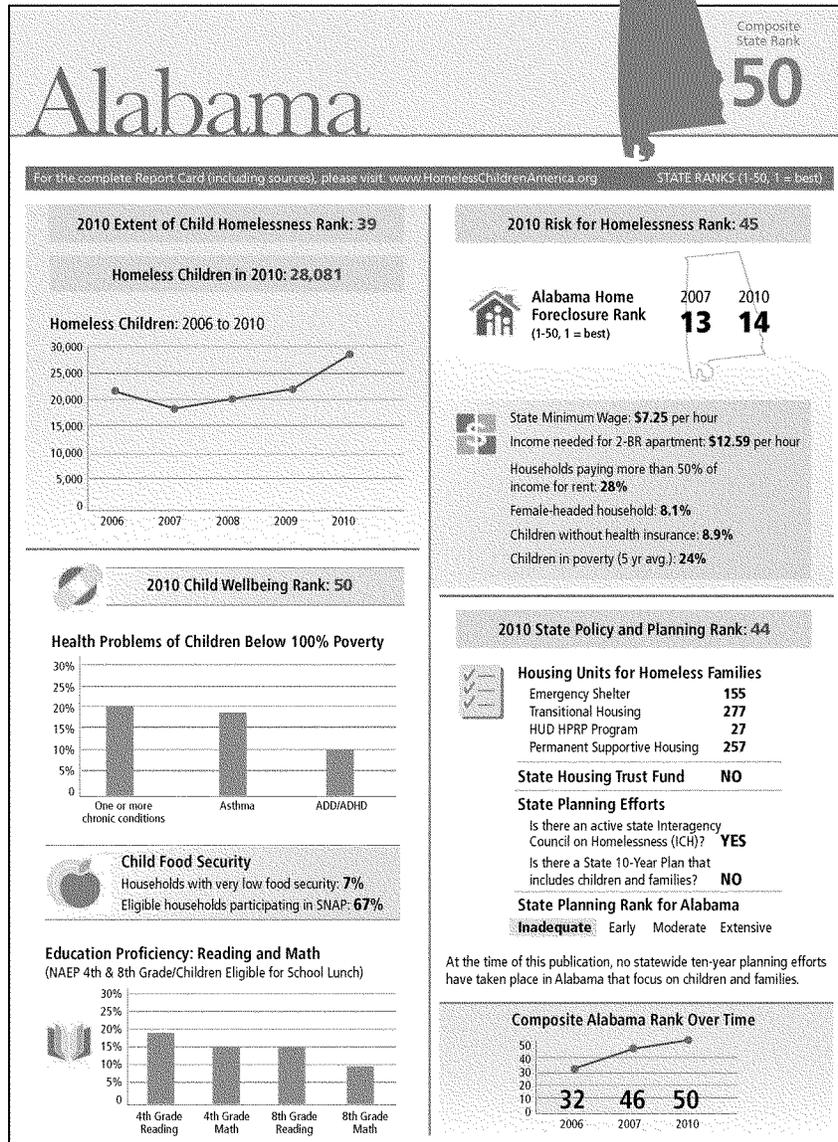
RISK OF CHILD HOMELESSNESS				STATE POLICY AND PLANNING EFFORTS			
State	First Report Card	2007	2010 Report Card	State	First Report Card	2007	2010 Report Card
ALABAMA	34	42	45	ALABAMA	19	35	44
ALASKA	7	22	11	ALASKA	14	30	32
ARIZONA	45	49	50	ARIZONA	34	28	37
ARKANSAS	43	40	43	ARKANSAS	32	37	42
CALIFORNIA	28	41	38	CALIFORNIA	44	50	36
COLORADO	32	32	33	COLORADO	37	41	31
CONNECTICUT	17	14	17	CONNECTICUT	4	9	14
DELAWARE	19	20	24	DELAWARE	13	32	40
FLORIDA	37	34	44	FLORIDA	38	29	35
GEORGIA	48	47	49	GEORGIA	43	42	29
HAWAII	10	8	19	HAWAII	18	31	13
IDAHO	15	18	29	IDAHO	39	33	39
ILLINOIS	33	28	30	ILLINOIS	9	8	12
INDIANA	29	30	37	INDIANA	22	21	25
IOWA	4	3	5	IOWA	16	11	3
KANSAS	13	9	12	KANSAS	33	25	30
KENTUCKY	35	43	35	KENTUCKY	28	22	16
LOUISIANA	49	46	46	LOUISIANA	40	26	22
MAINE	11	5	3	MAINE	1	2	1
MARYLAND	21	17	22	MARYLAND	15	13	23
MASSACHUSETTS	18	19	16	MASSACHUSETTS	2	1	2
MICHIGAN	36	27	31	MICHIGAN	10	6	4
MINNESOTA	1	4	8	MINNESOTA	6	5	7
MISSISSIPPI	39	48	47	MISSISSIPPI	49	49	50
MISSOURI	30	31	27	MISSOURI	21	14	20
MONTANA	14	24	14	MONTANA	30	10	15
NEBRASKA	12	7	6	NEBRASKA	42	24	11
NEVADA	40	36	41	NEVADA	47	46	48
NEW HAMPSHIRE	2	2	2	NEW HAMPSHIRE	8	17	18
NEW JERSEY	22	21	25	NEW JERSEY	45	38	19
NEW MEXICO	44	45	39	NEW MEXICO	50	47	41
NEW YORK	31	35	26	NEW YORK	35	44	47
NORTH CAROLINA	41	37	36	NORTH CAROLINA	41	16	33
NORTH DAKOTA	3	6	4	NORTH DAKOTA	36	34	27
OHIO	42	33	34	OHIO	20	15	17
OKLAHOMA	47	38	32	OKLAHOMA	48	43	24
OREGON	26	23	28	OREGON	23	4	10
PENNSYLVANIA	27	13	9	PENNSYLVANIA	12	23	21
RHODE ISLAND	25	25	21	RHODE ISLAND	7	7	6
SOUTH CAROLINA	38	44	48	SOUTH CAROLINA	29	20	26
SOUTH DAKOTA	16	15	10	SOUTH DAKOTA	24	36	38
TENNESSEE	46	39	40	TENNESSEE	17	40	45
TEXAS	50	50	42	TEXAS	46	48	43
UTAH	9	11	23	UTAH	25	27	34
VERMONT	5	1	1	VERMONT	26	12	5
VIRGINIA	20	26	18	VIRGINIA	31	45	46
WASHINGTON	23	16	13	WASHINGTON	5	3	9
WEST VIRGINIA	24	29	20	WEST VIRGINIA	11	18	28
WISCONSIN	8	12	15	WISCONSIN	3	19	8
WYOMING	6	10	7	WYOMING	27	39	49

## IV. State Reports

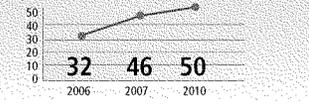


# AMERICA'S YOUNGEST OUTCASTS

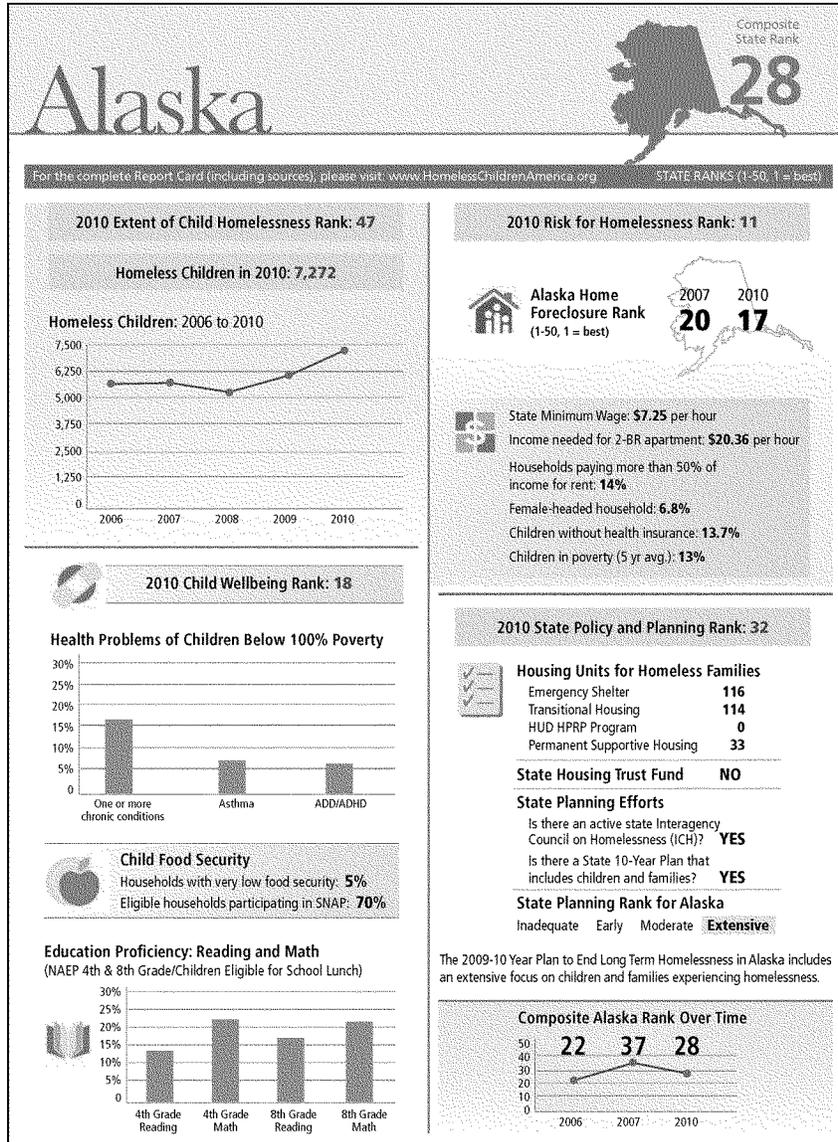


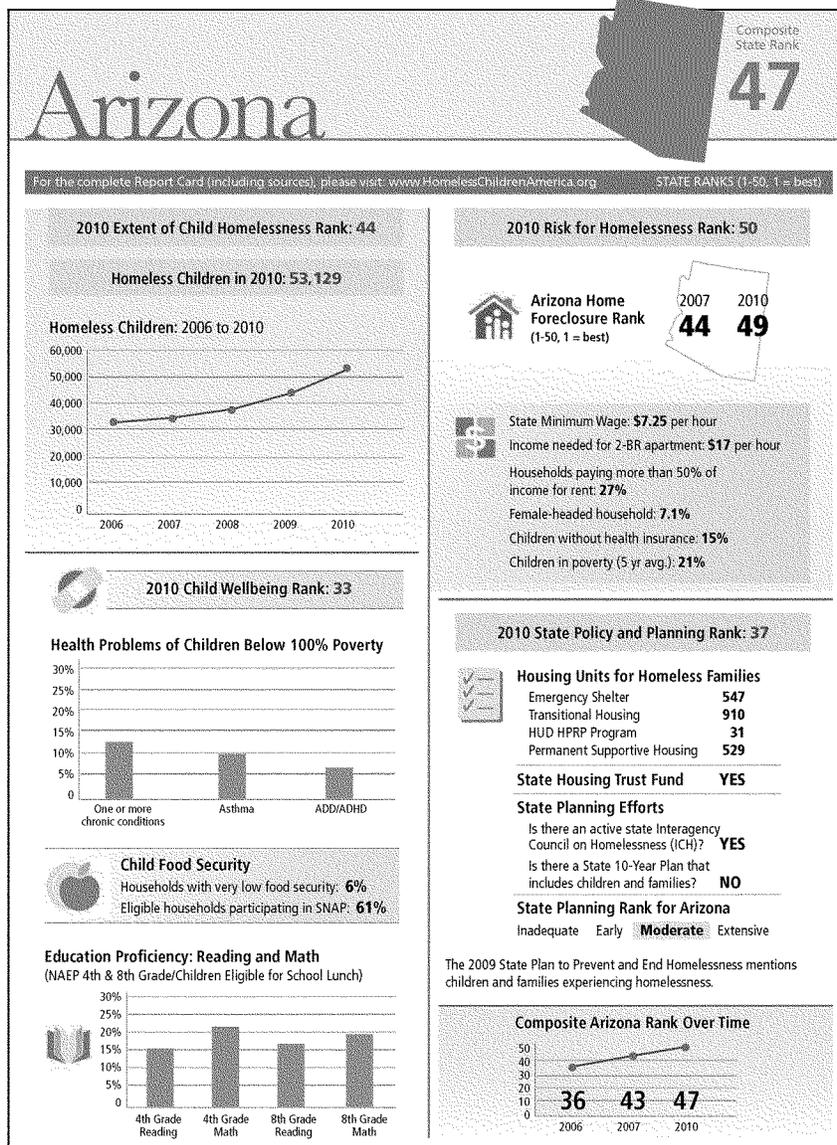


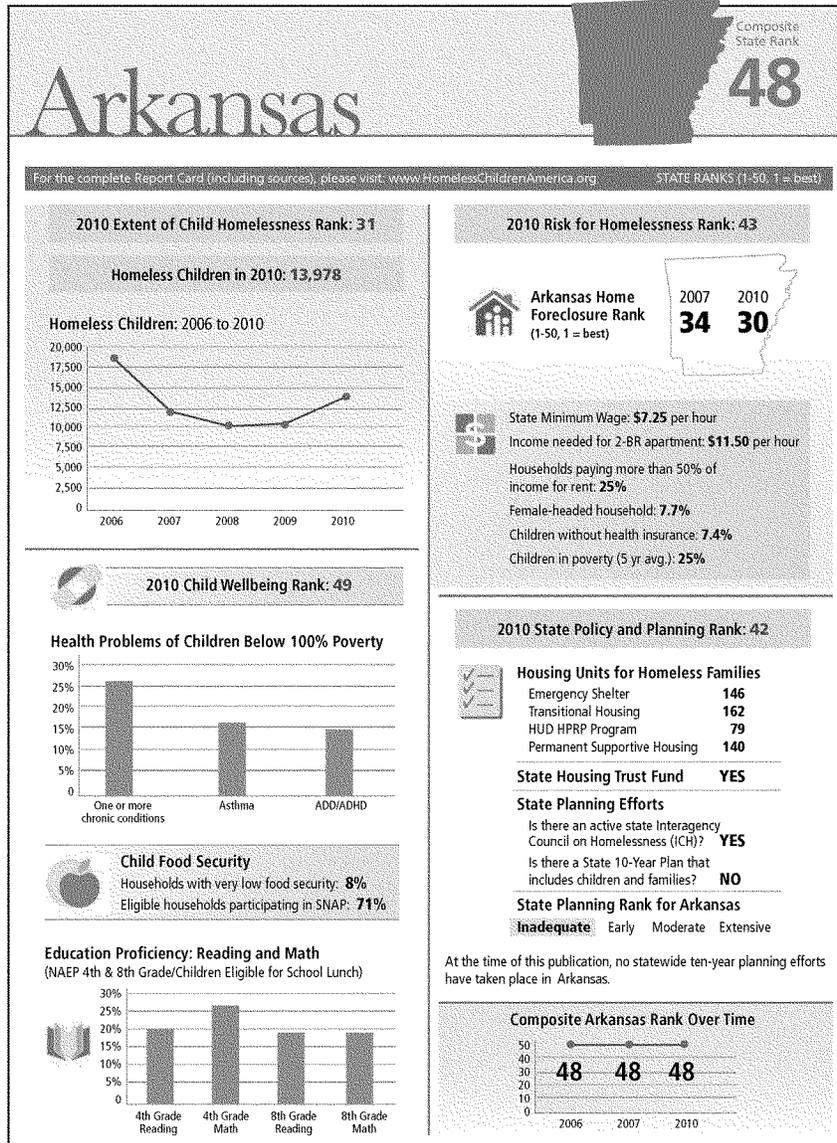
### Composite Alabama Rank Over Time

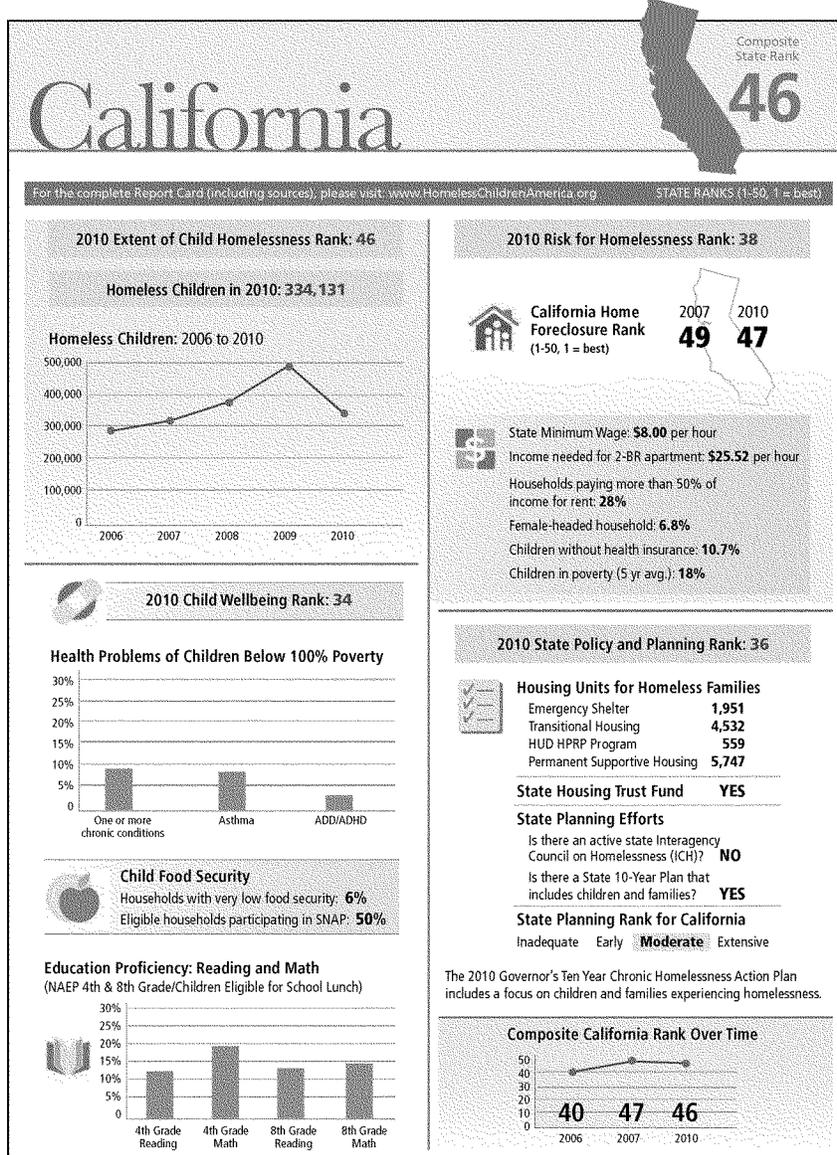


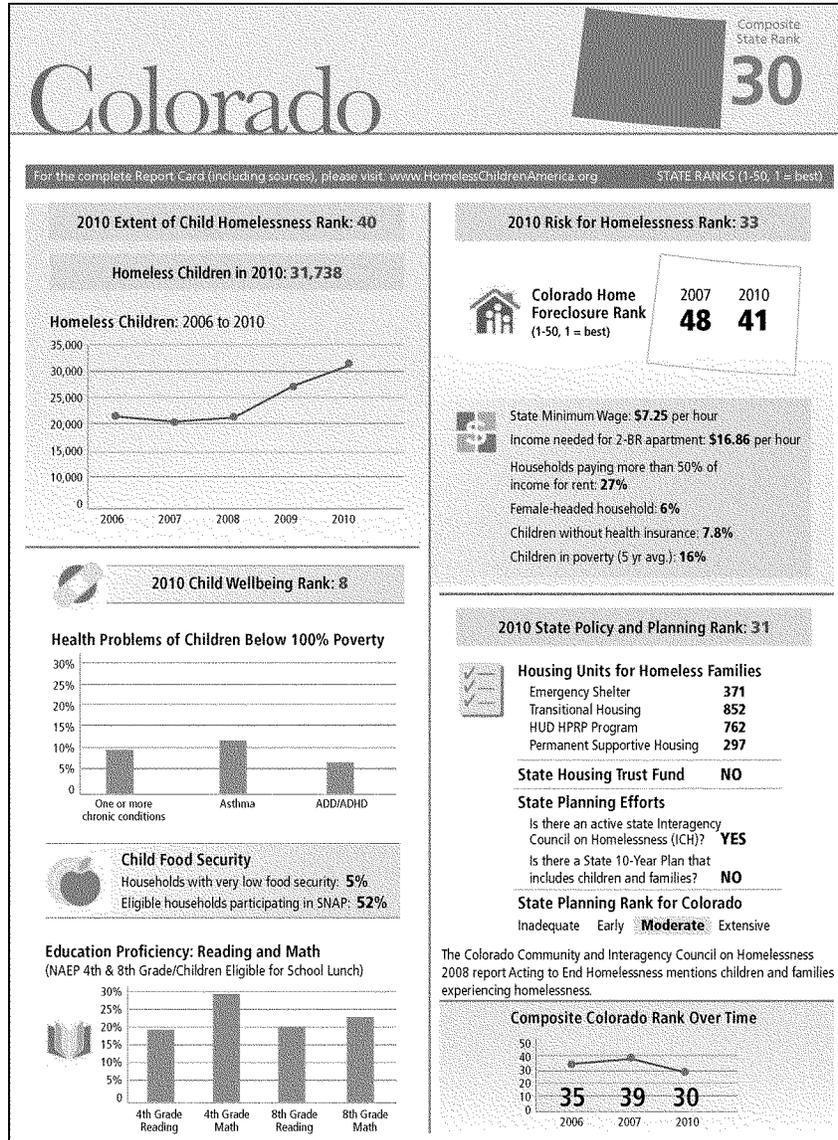
Year	Rank
2006	32
2007	46
2010	50

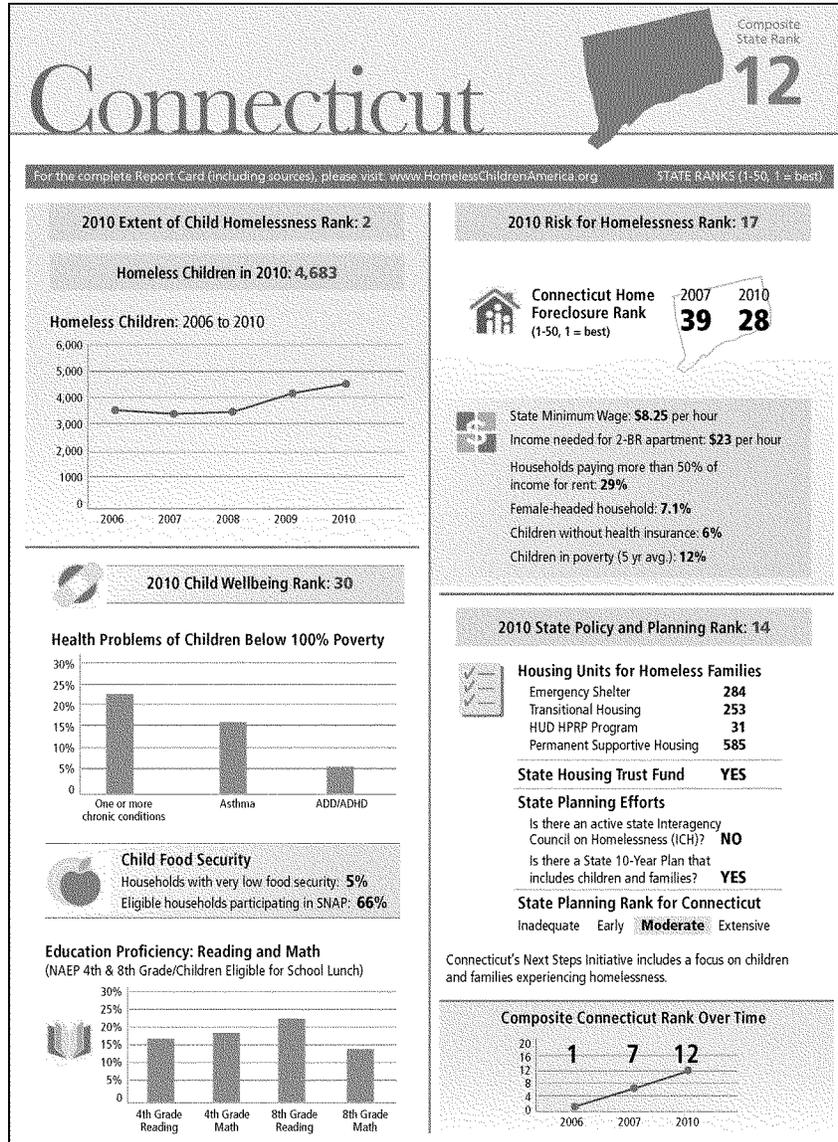


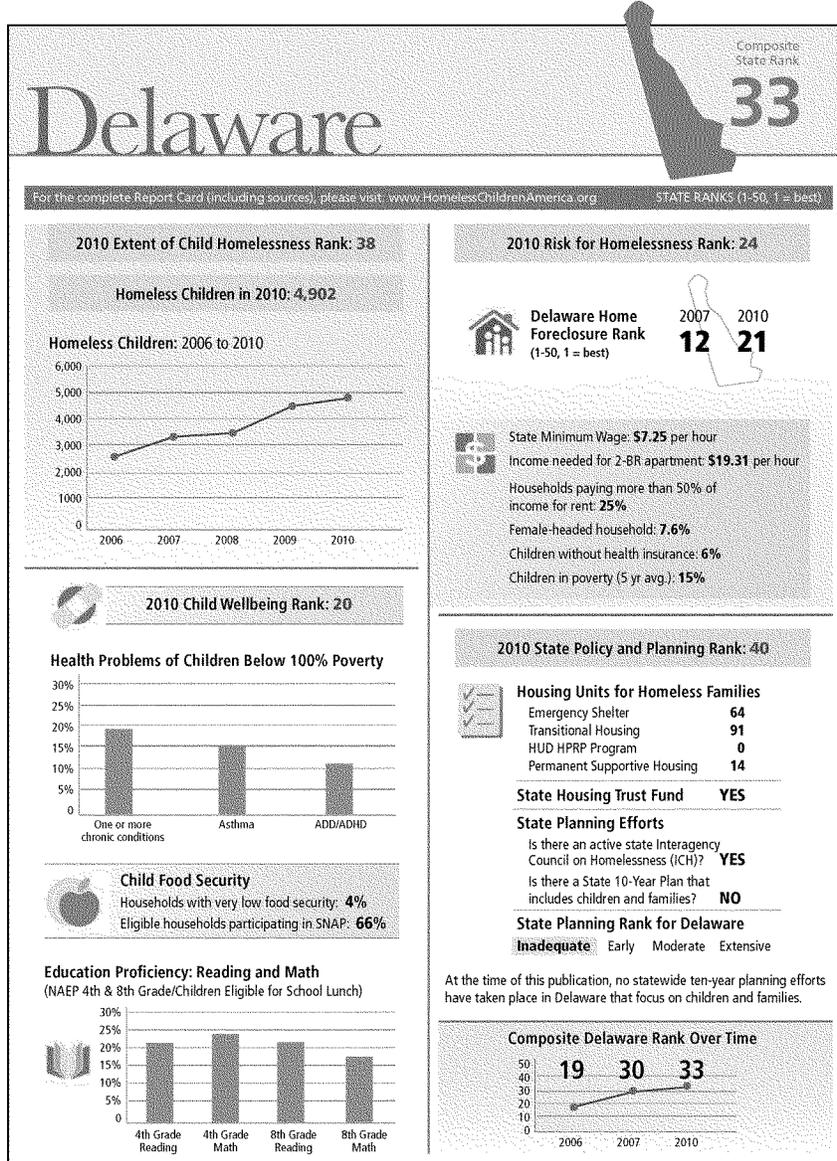












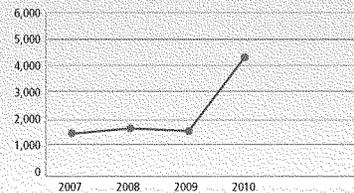
# DISTRICT OF Columbia

For the complete Report Card (including sources), please visit: [www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org](http://www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org)

### Extent of Child Homelessness

Homeless Children in 2010: **4,309**

Homeless Children: 2007 to 2010



### Risk for Homelessness

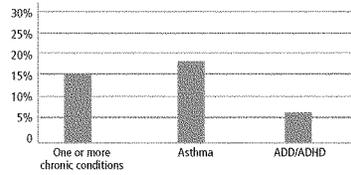


- State Minimum Wage: **\$8.25** per hour
- Income needed for 2-BR apartment: **\$28.73** per hour
- Households paying more than 50% of income for rent: **27%**
- Female-headed household: **7.9%**
- Children without health insurance: **5.1%**
- Children in poverty (5 yr. avg.): **29%**



### Child Wellbeing

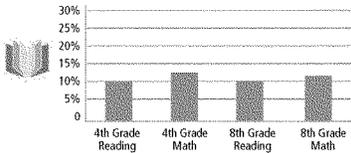
Health Problems of Children Below 100% Poverty



### Child Food Security

Households with very low food security: **5%**  
Eligible households participating in SNAP: **86%**

Education Proficiency: Reading and Math (NAEP 4th & 8th Grade/Children Eligible for School Lunch)



### State Policy and Planning



#### Housing Units for Homeless Families

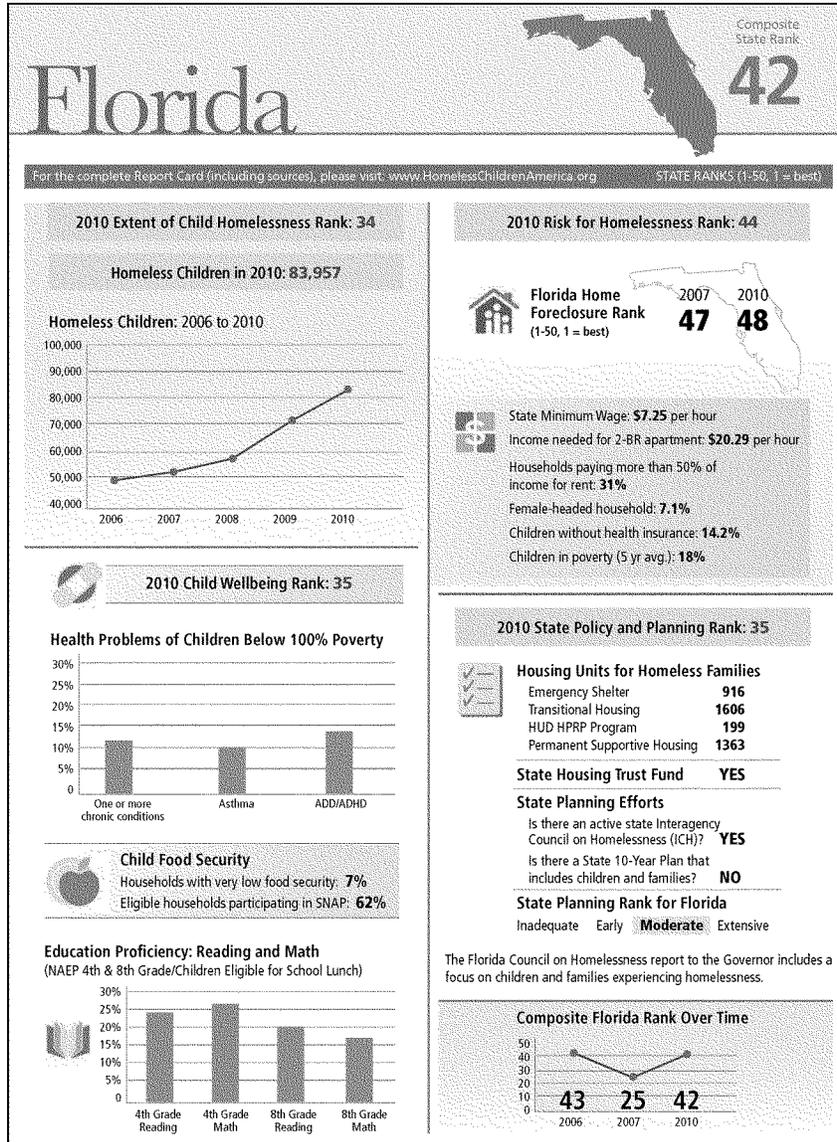
Emergency Shelter	<b>321</b>
Transitional Housing	<b>543</b>
HUD HPRP Program	<b>0</b>
Permanent Supportive Housing	<b>470</b>

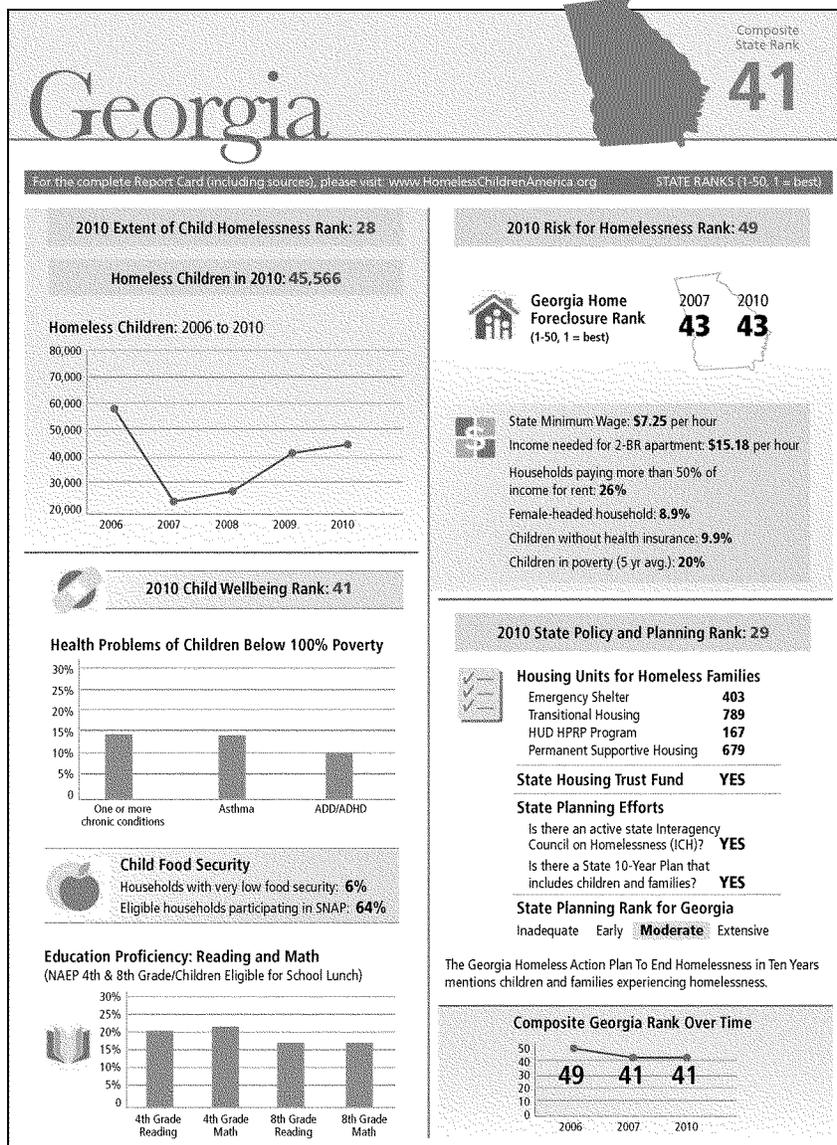
State Housing Trust Fund **YES**

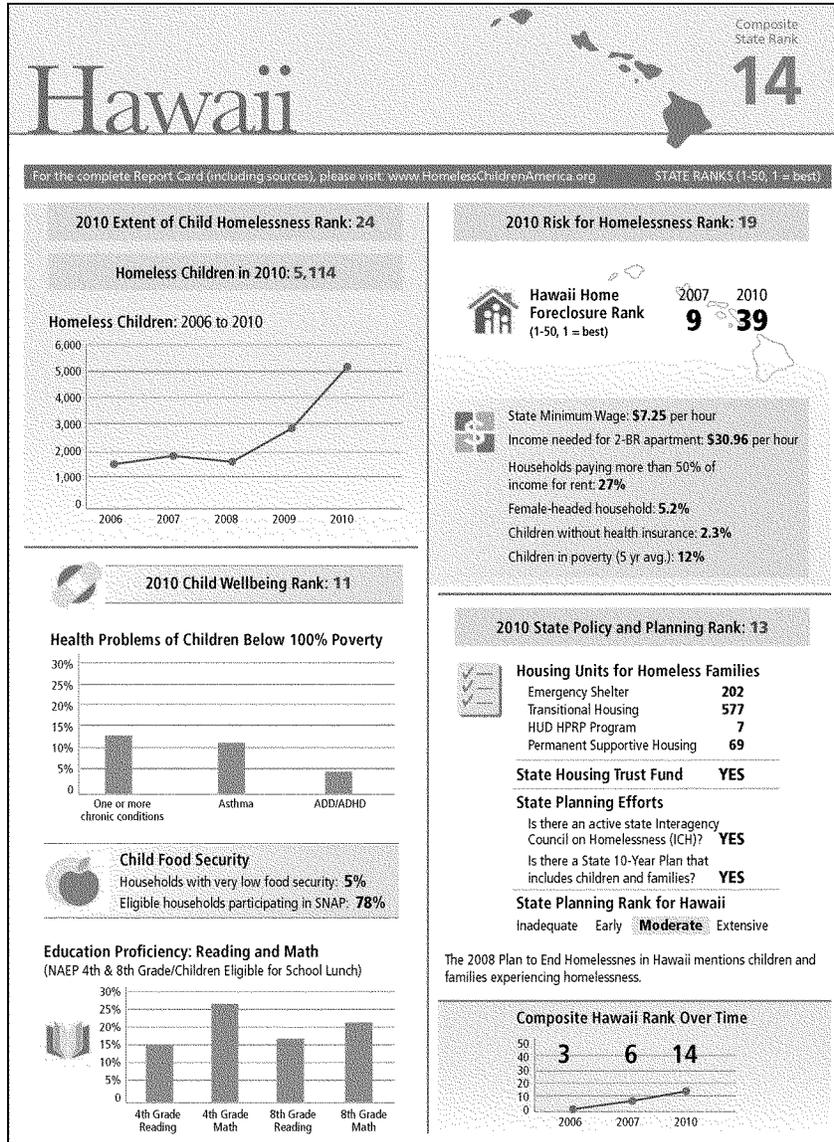
#### State Planning Efforts

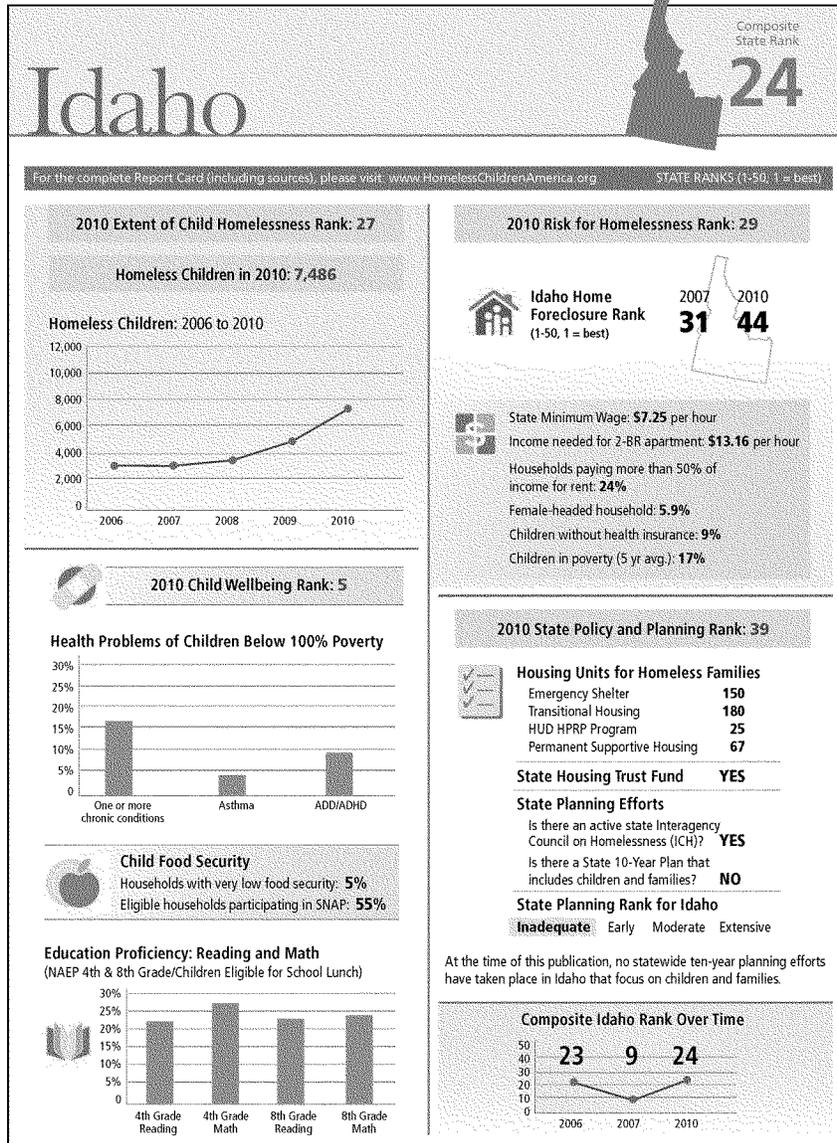
- Is there an active state Interagency Council on Homelessness (ICH)? **YES**
- Is there a State 10-Year Plan that includes children and families? **NO**

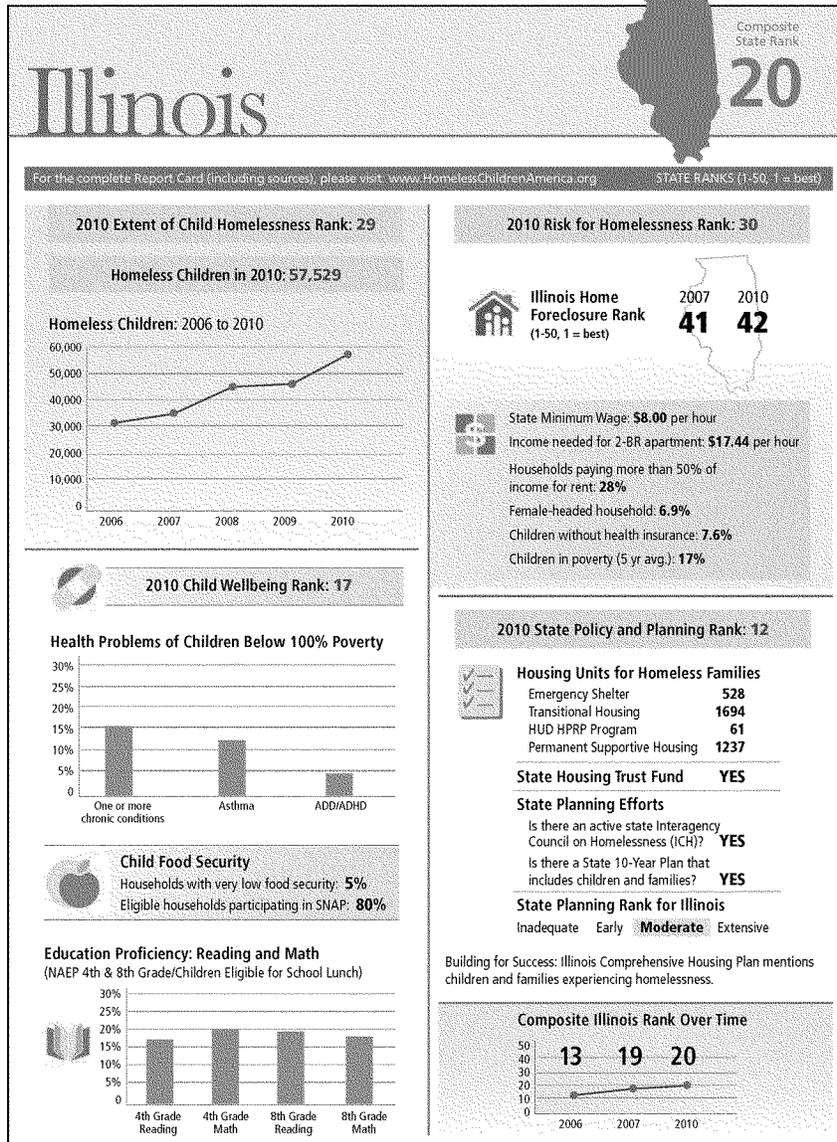
The 2010 District of Columbia Strategic Action Plan to End Homelessness mentions children and families experiencing homelessness.

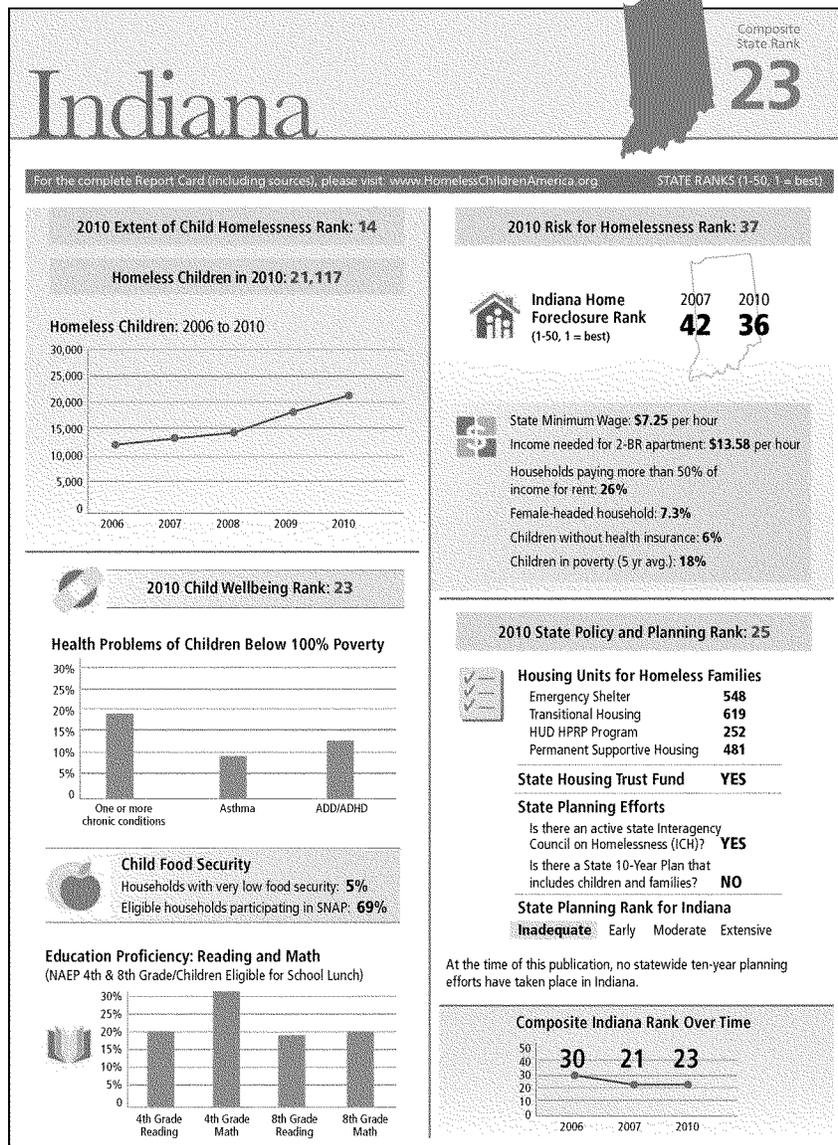


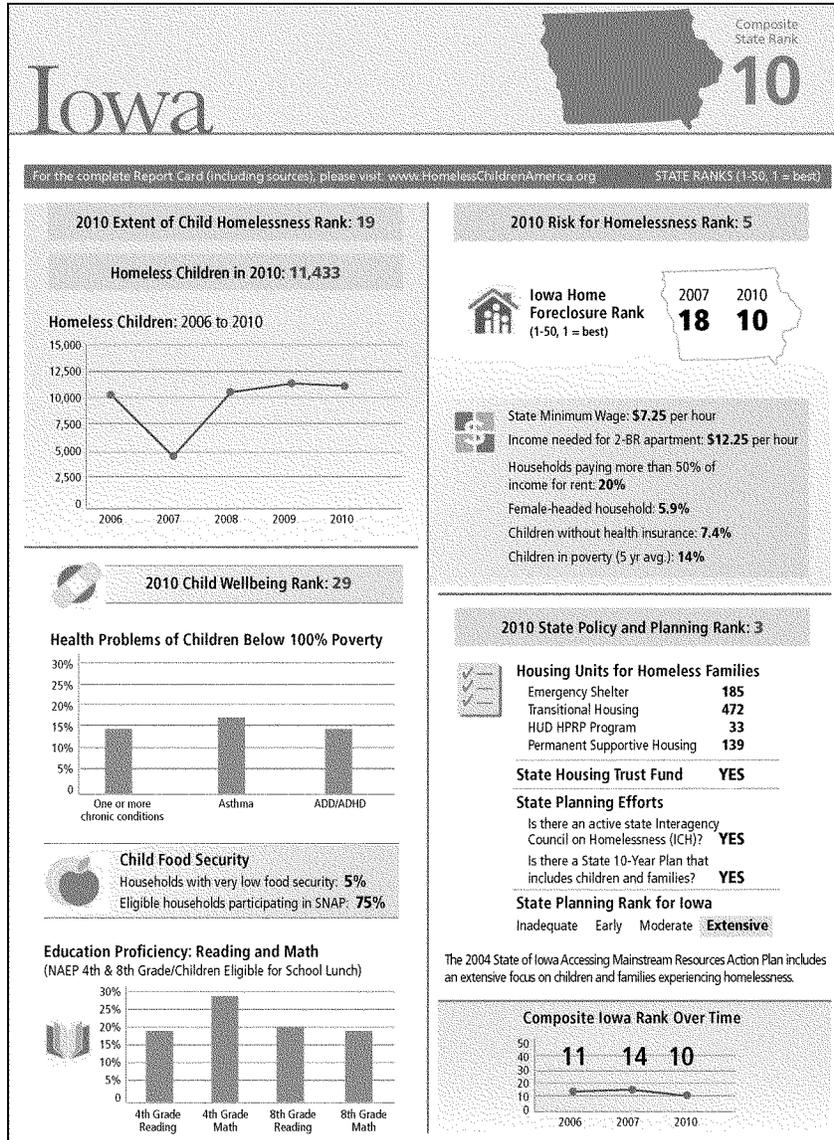


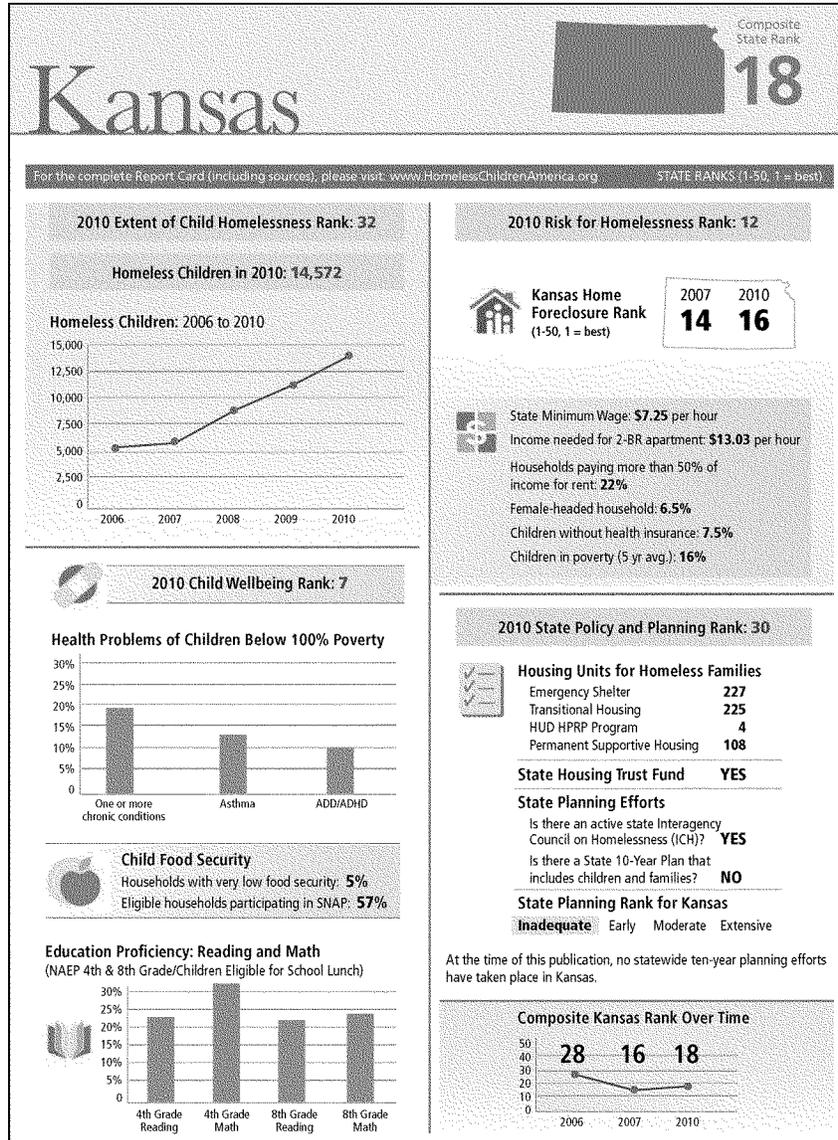


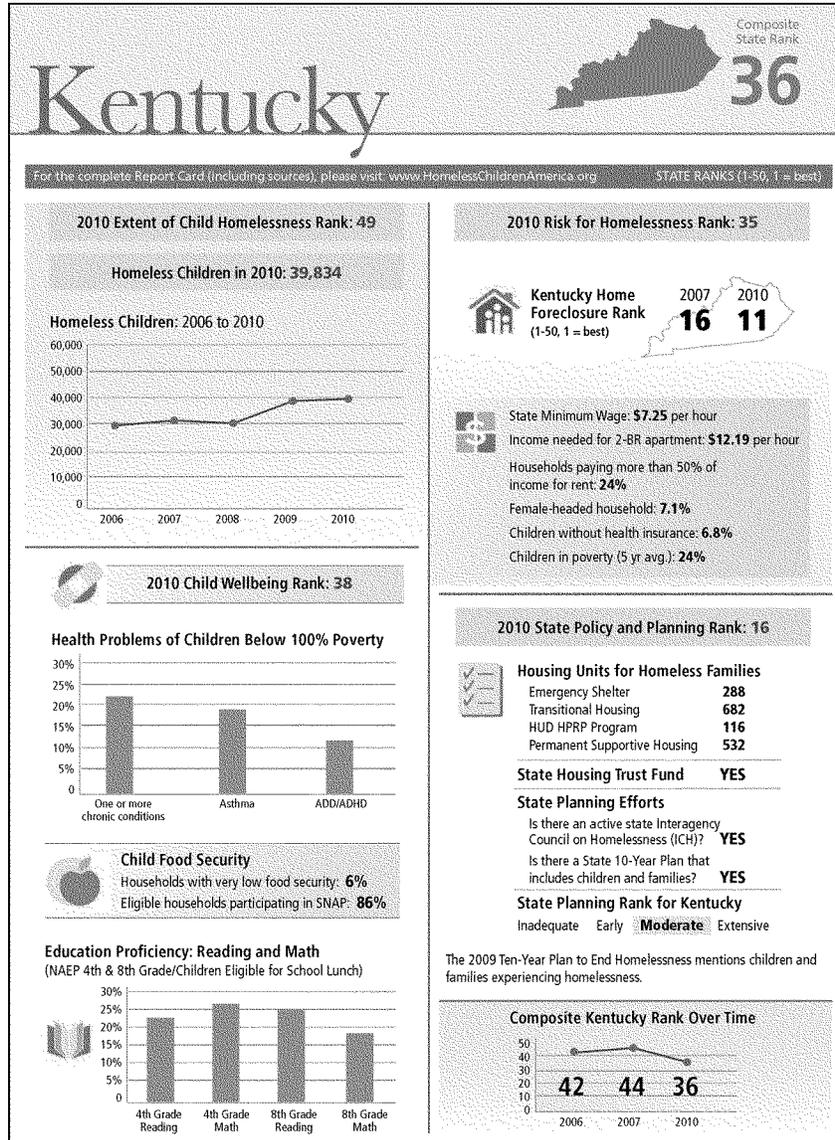


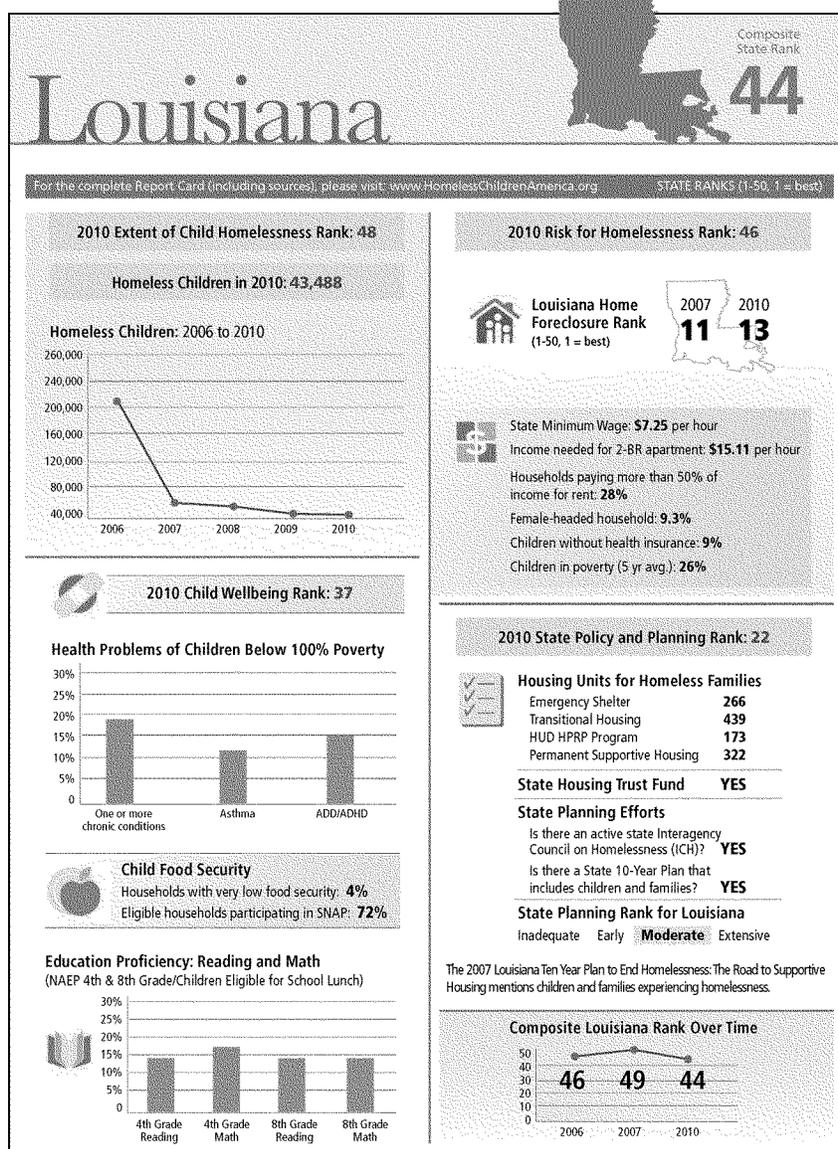


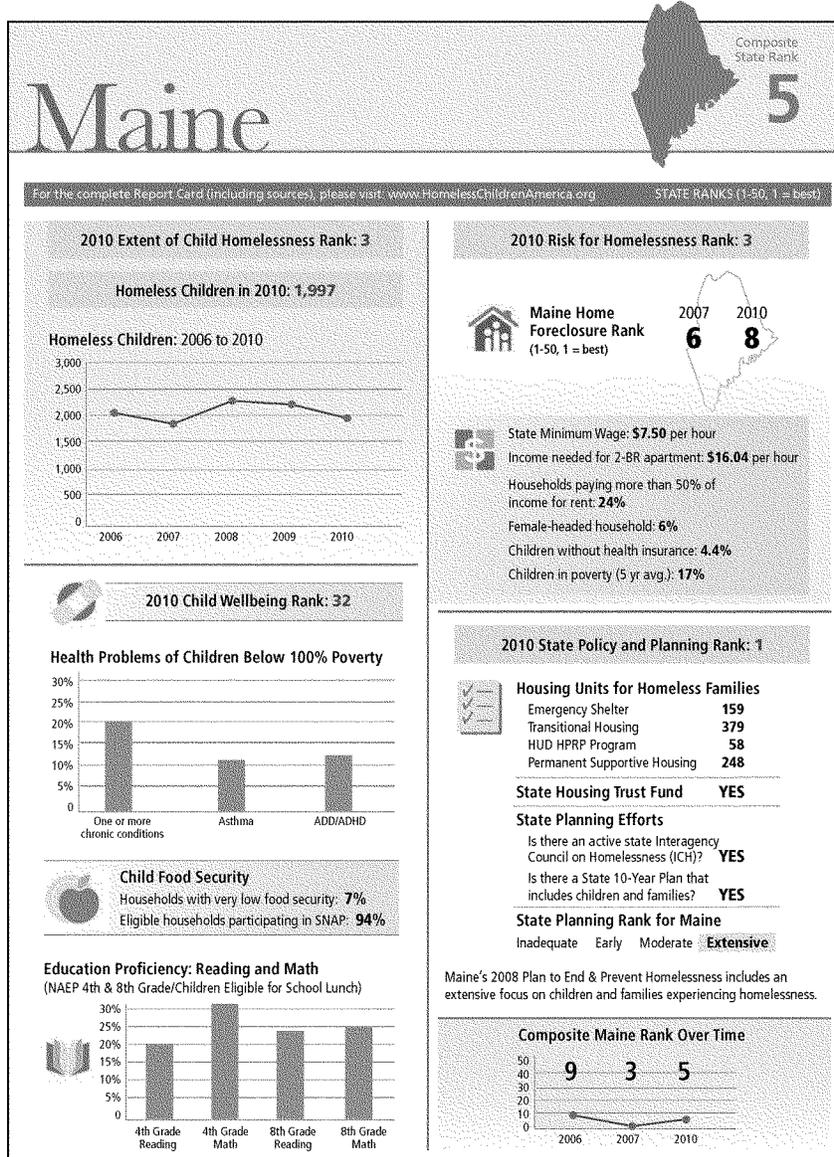


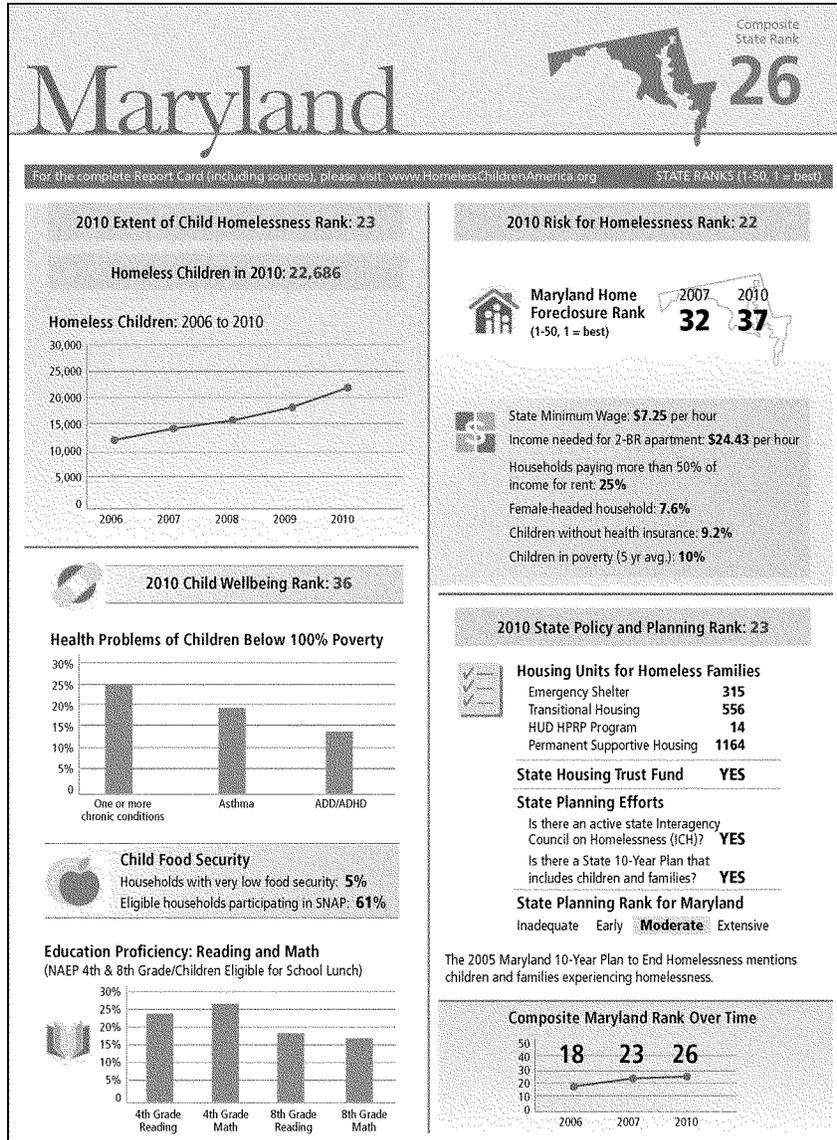


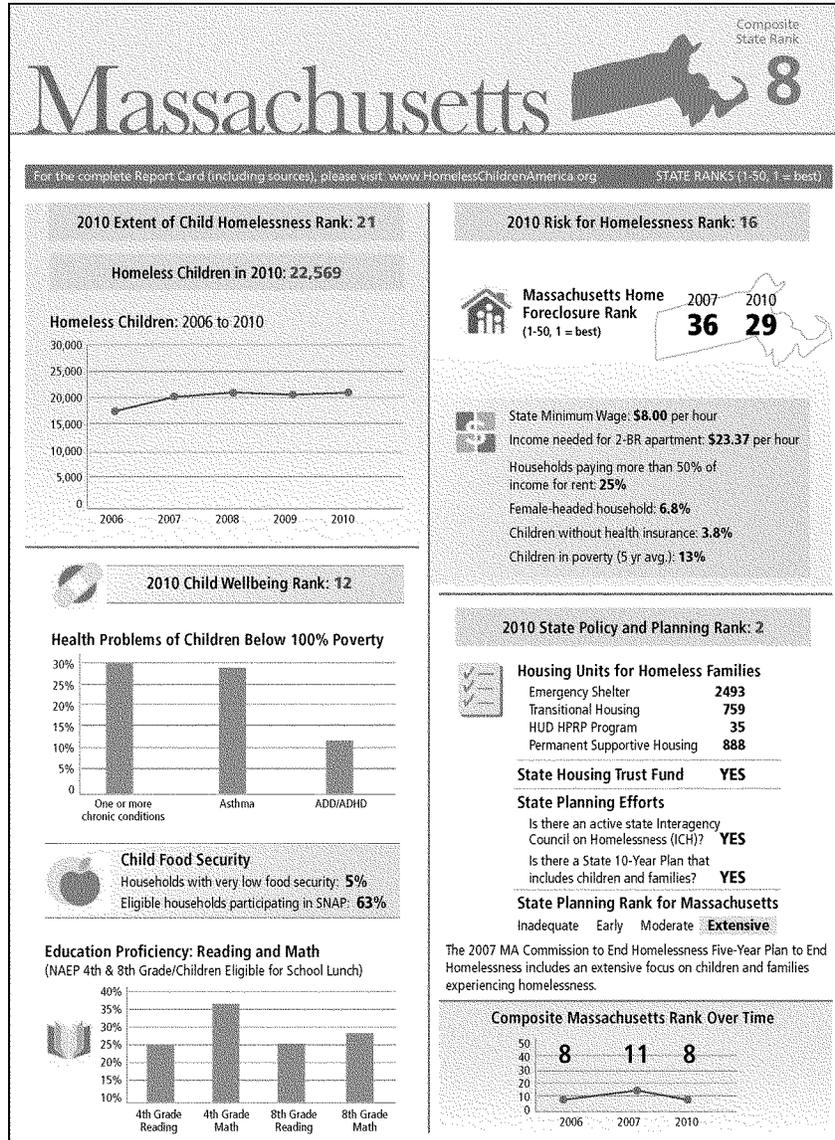


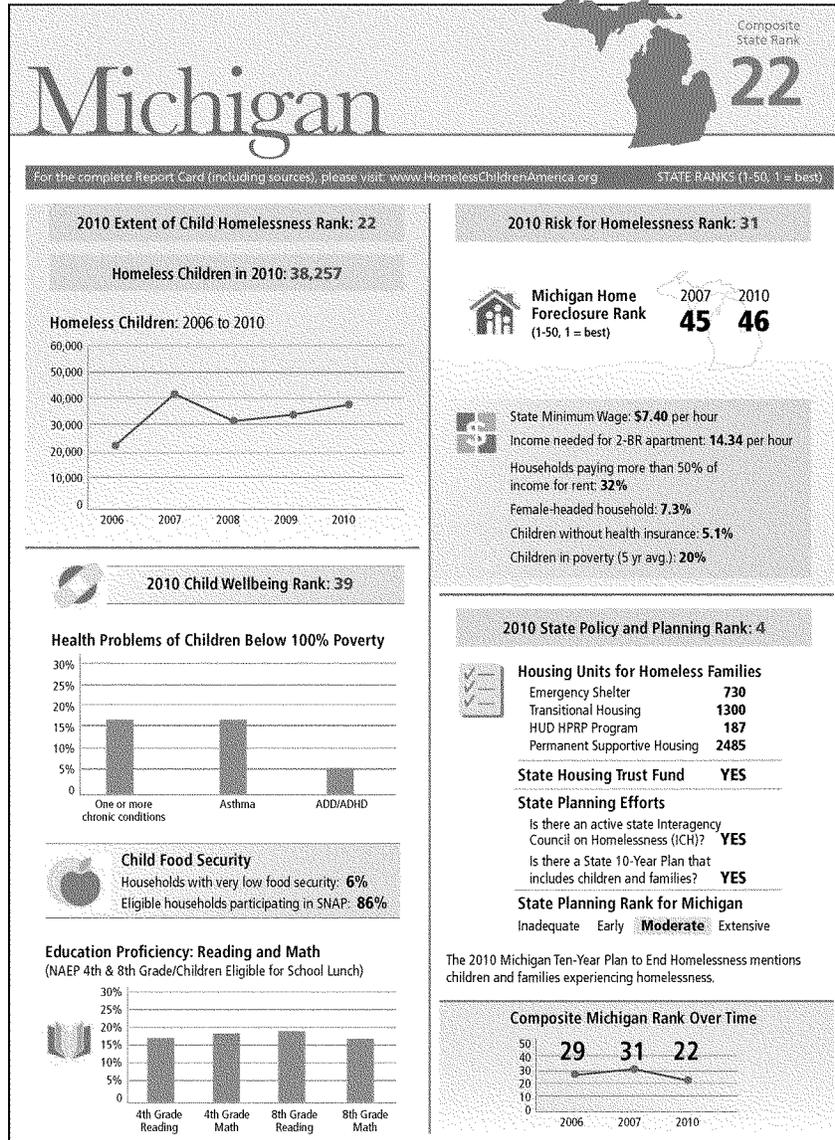


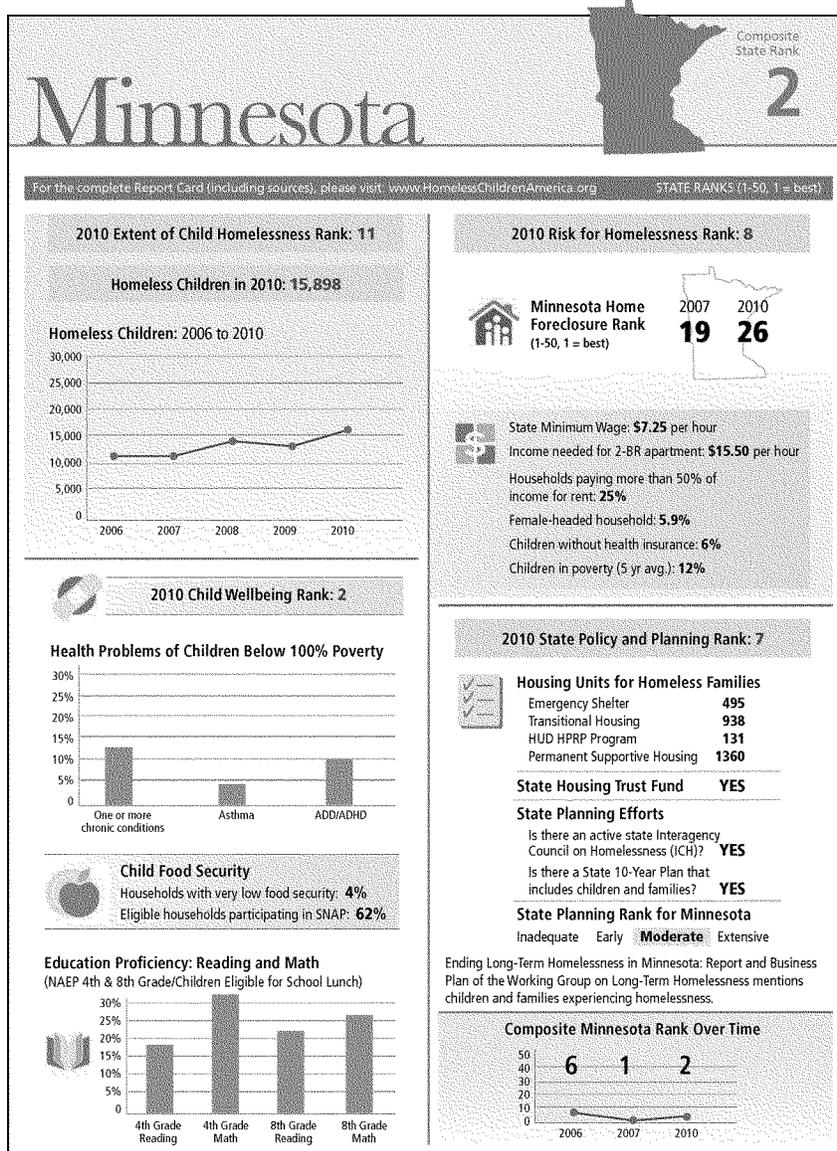


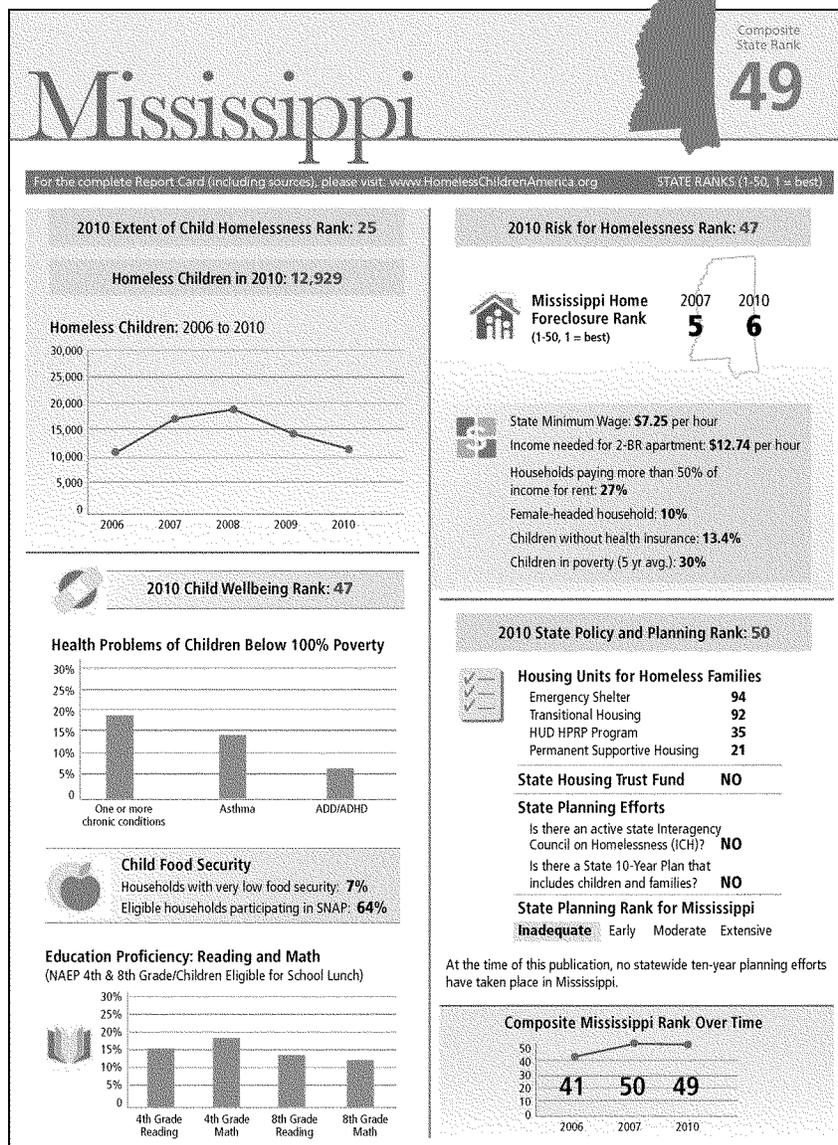


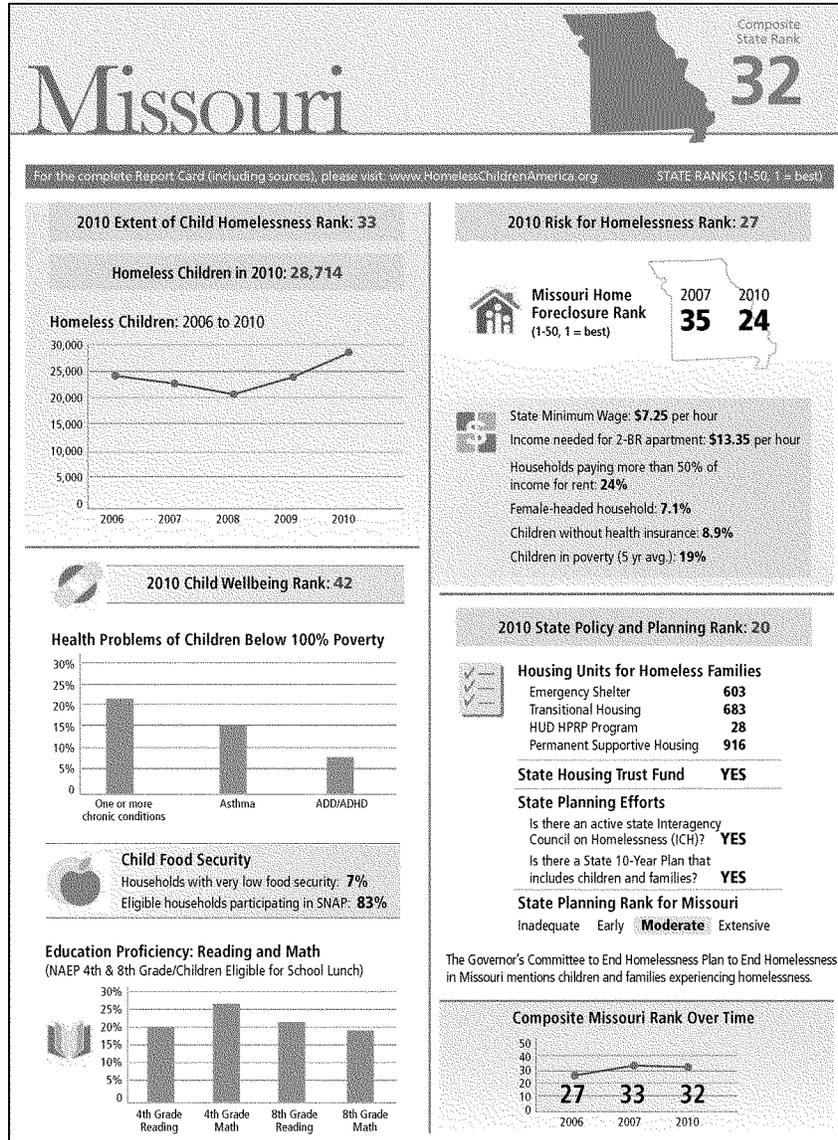


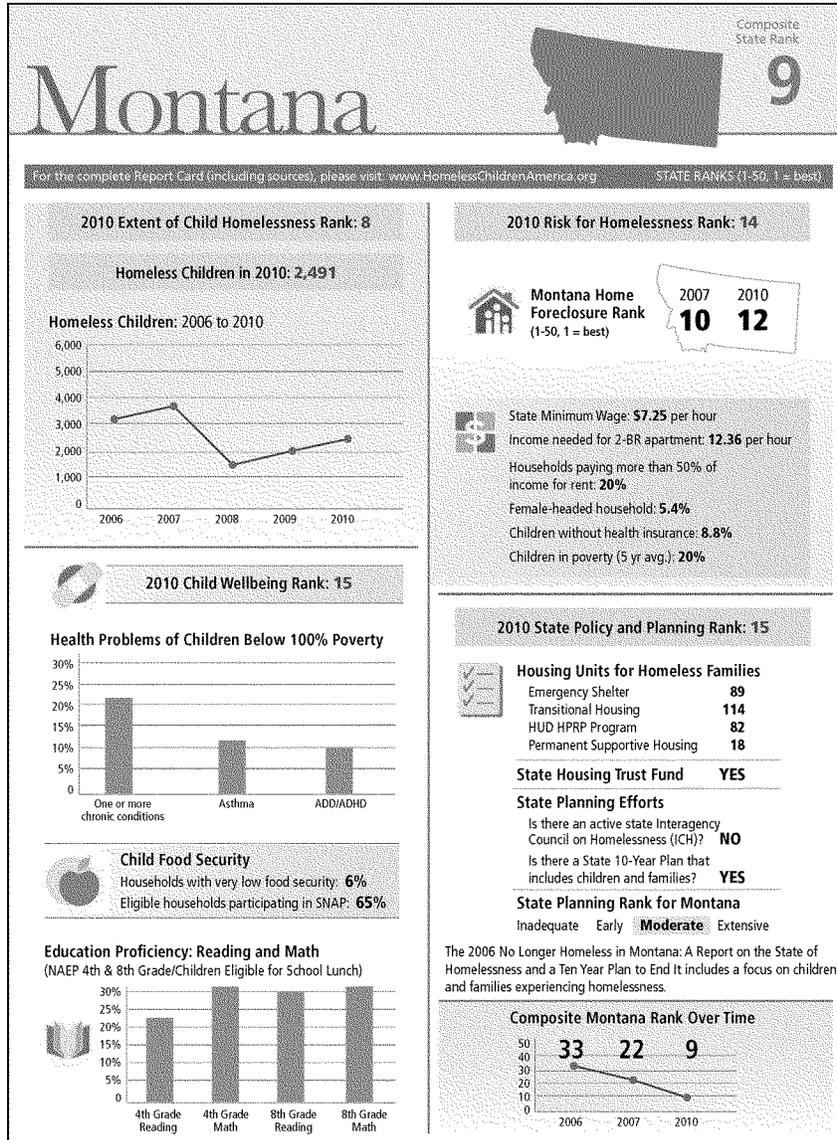


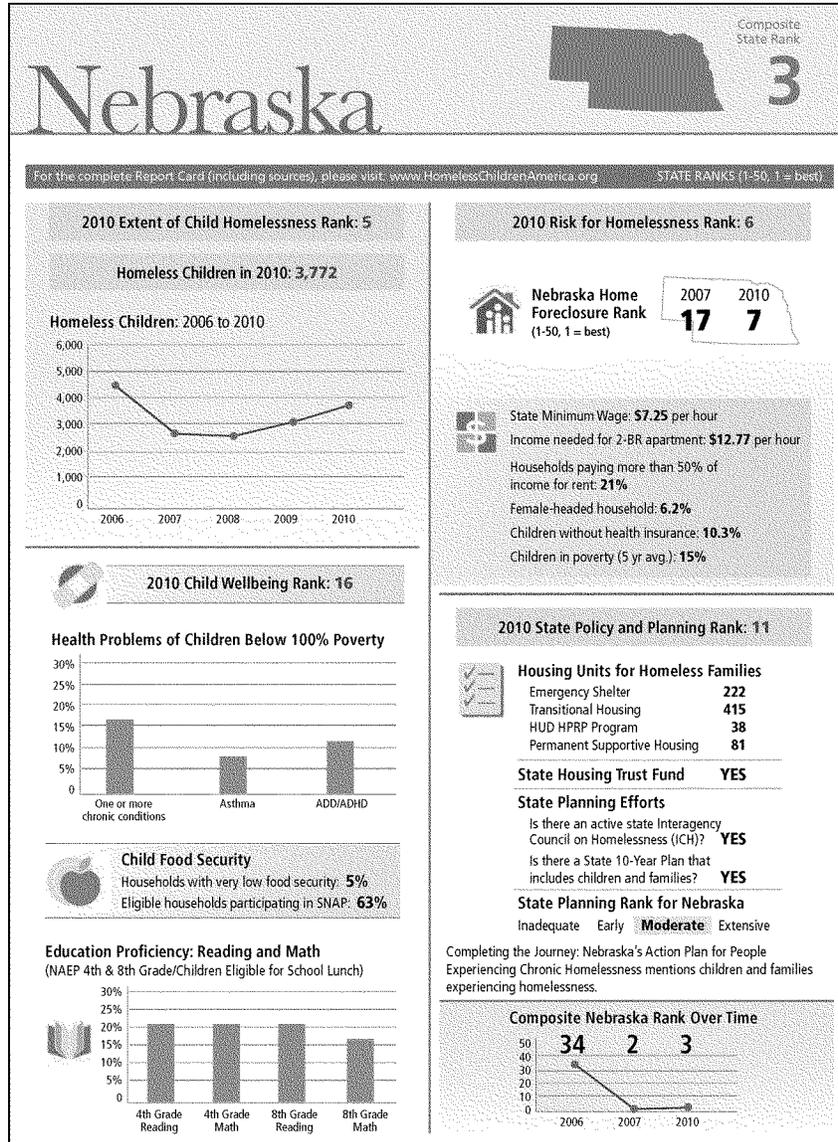


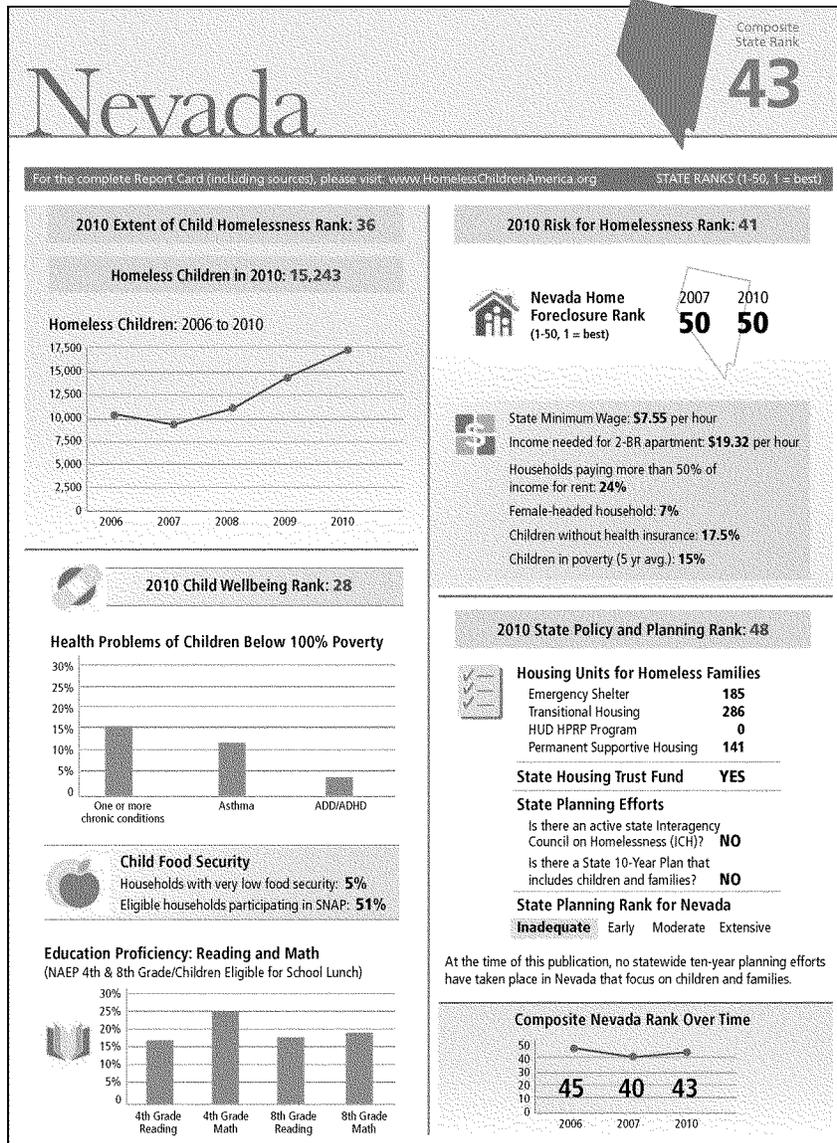


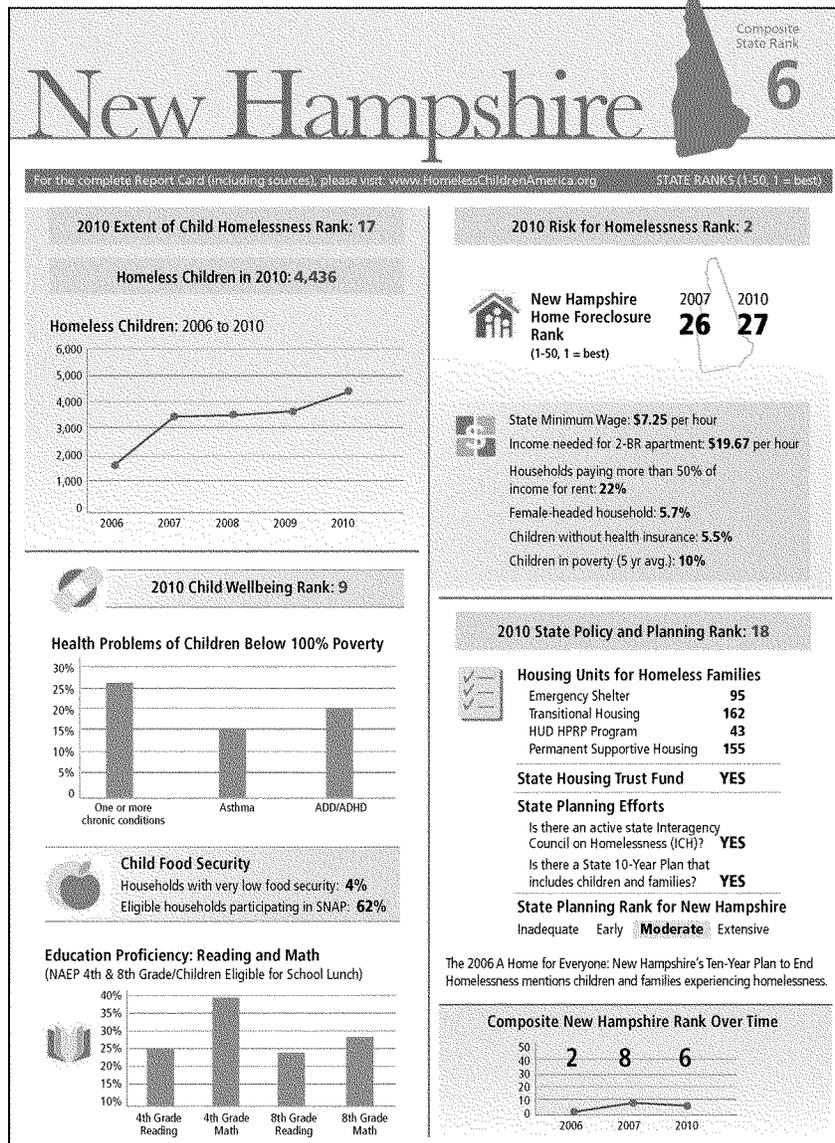


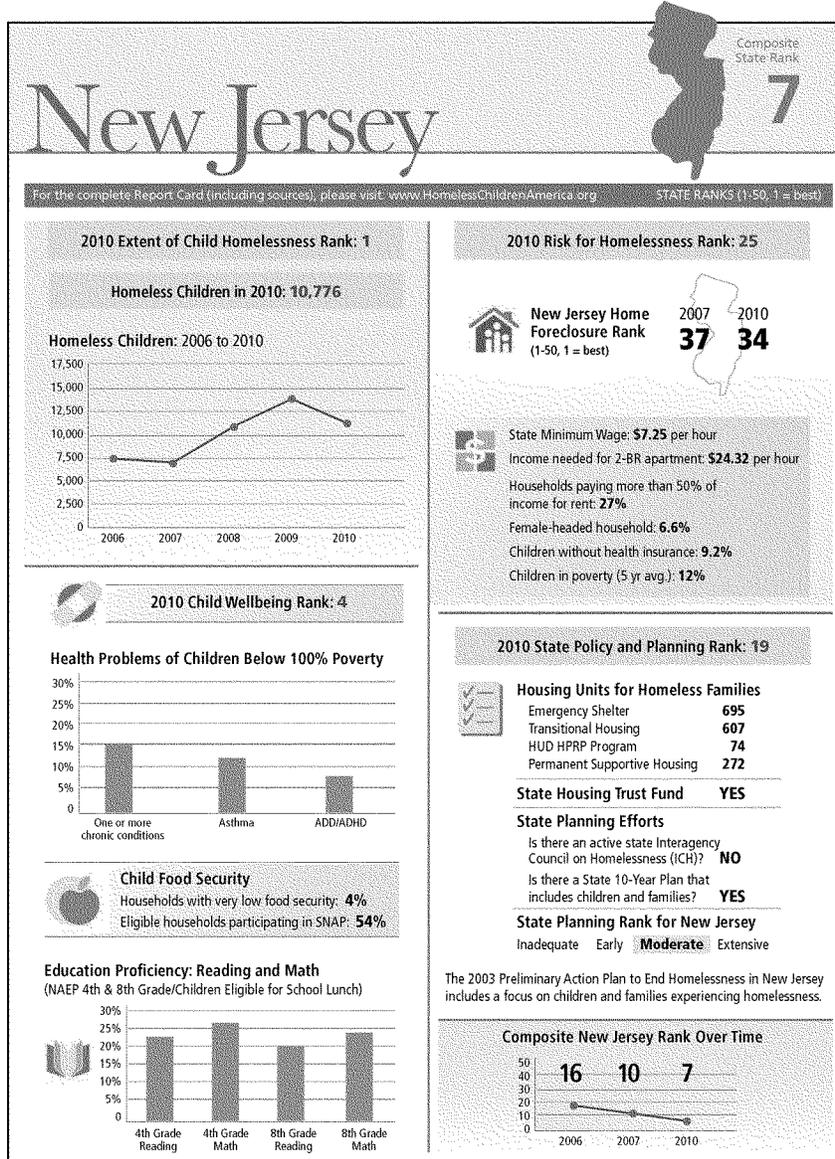


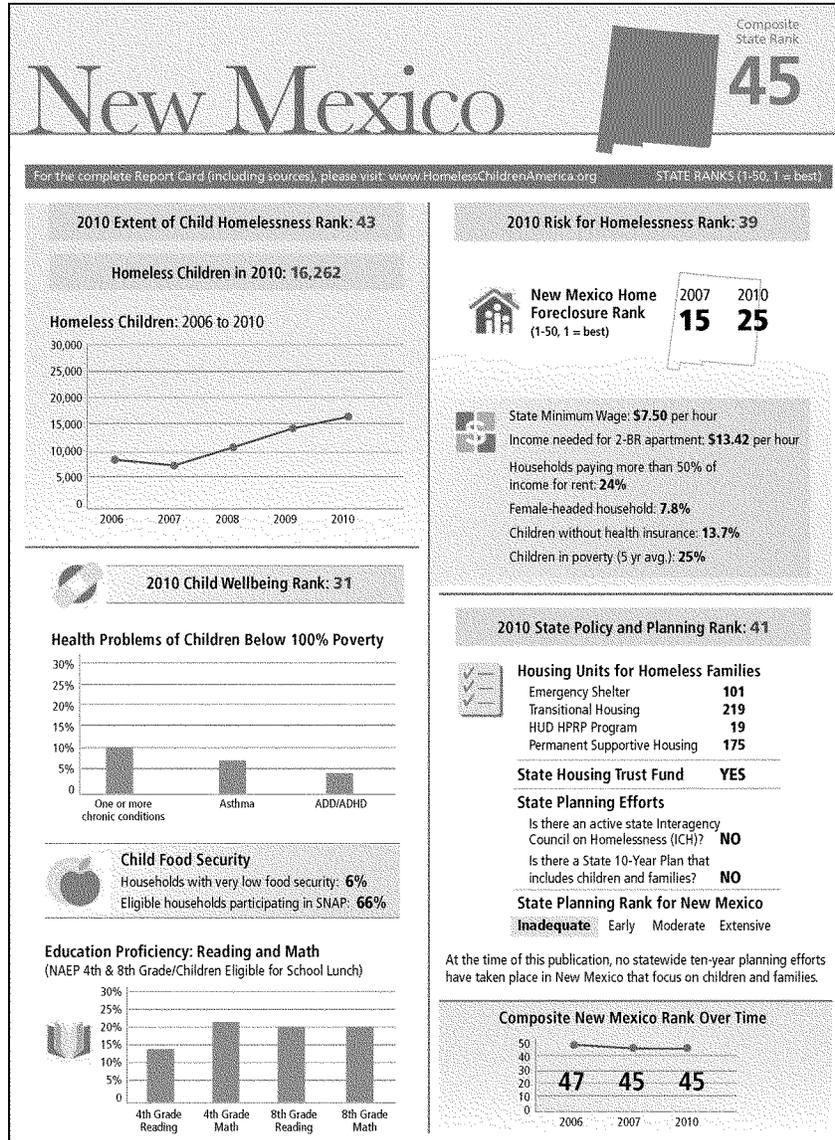


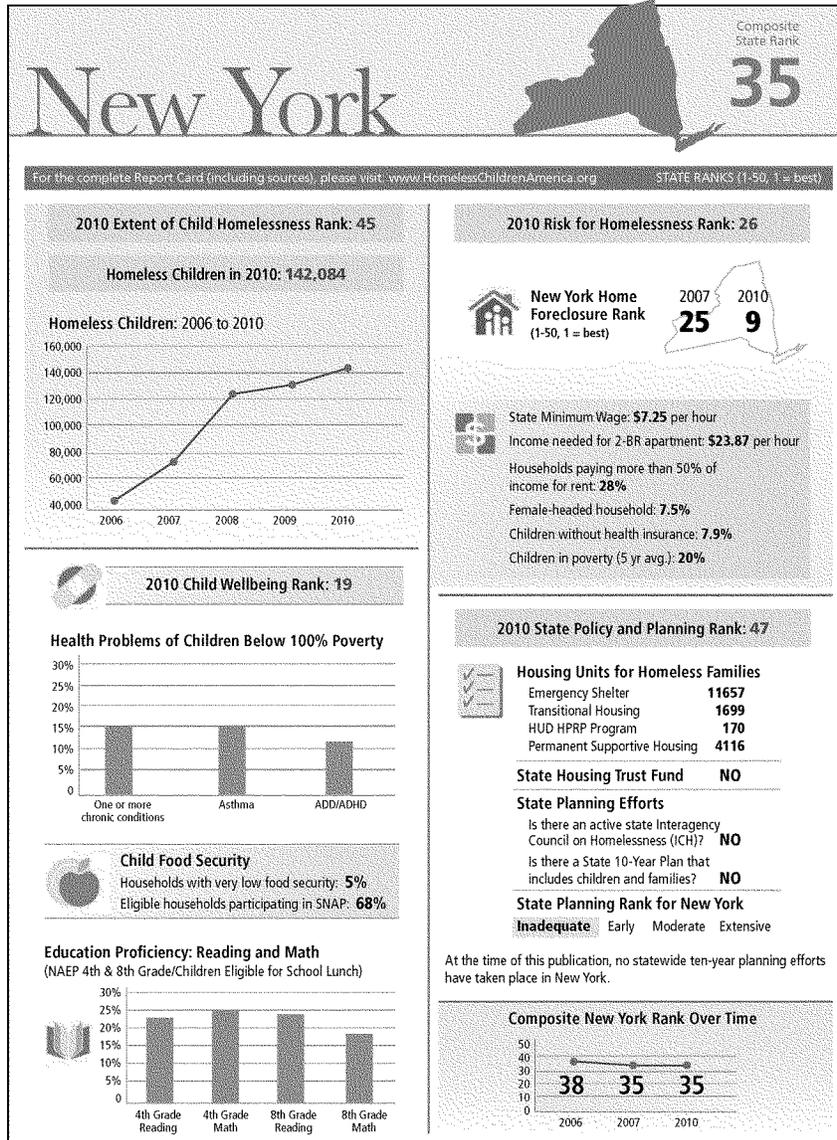


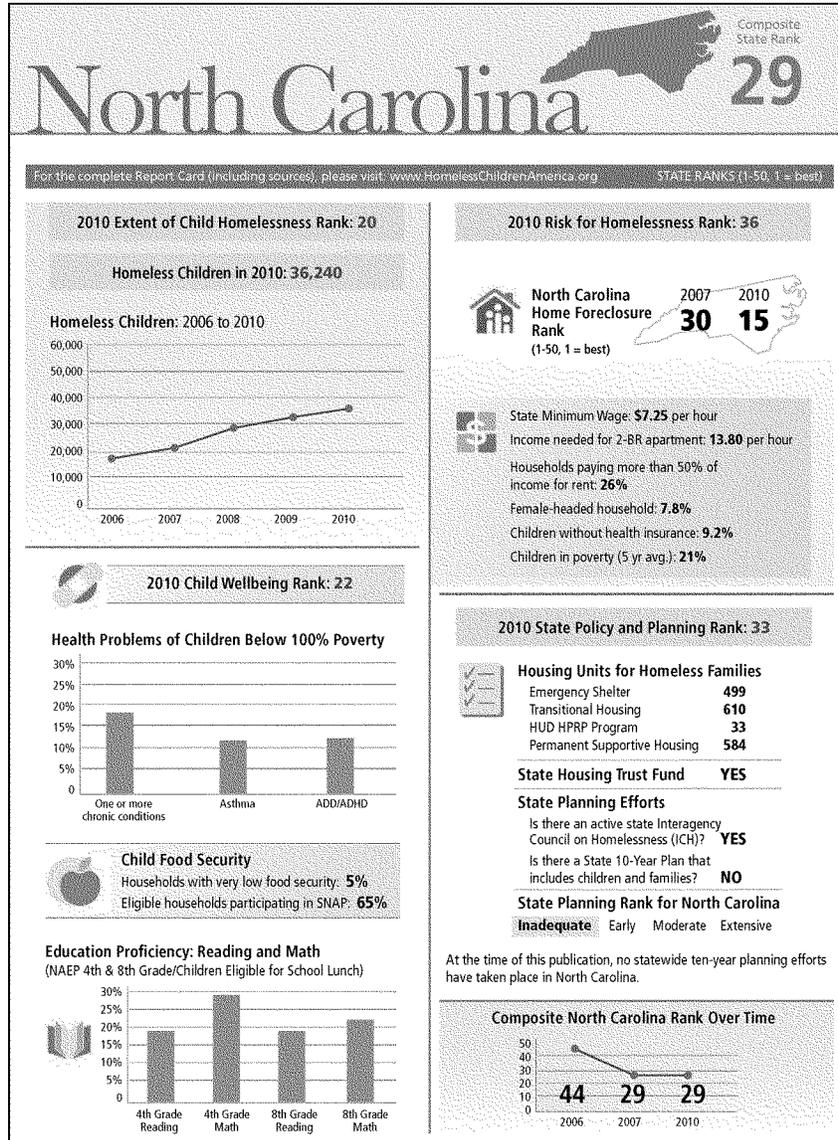


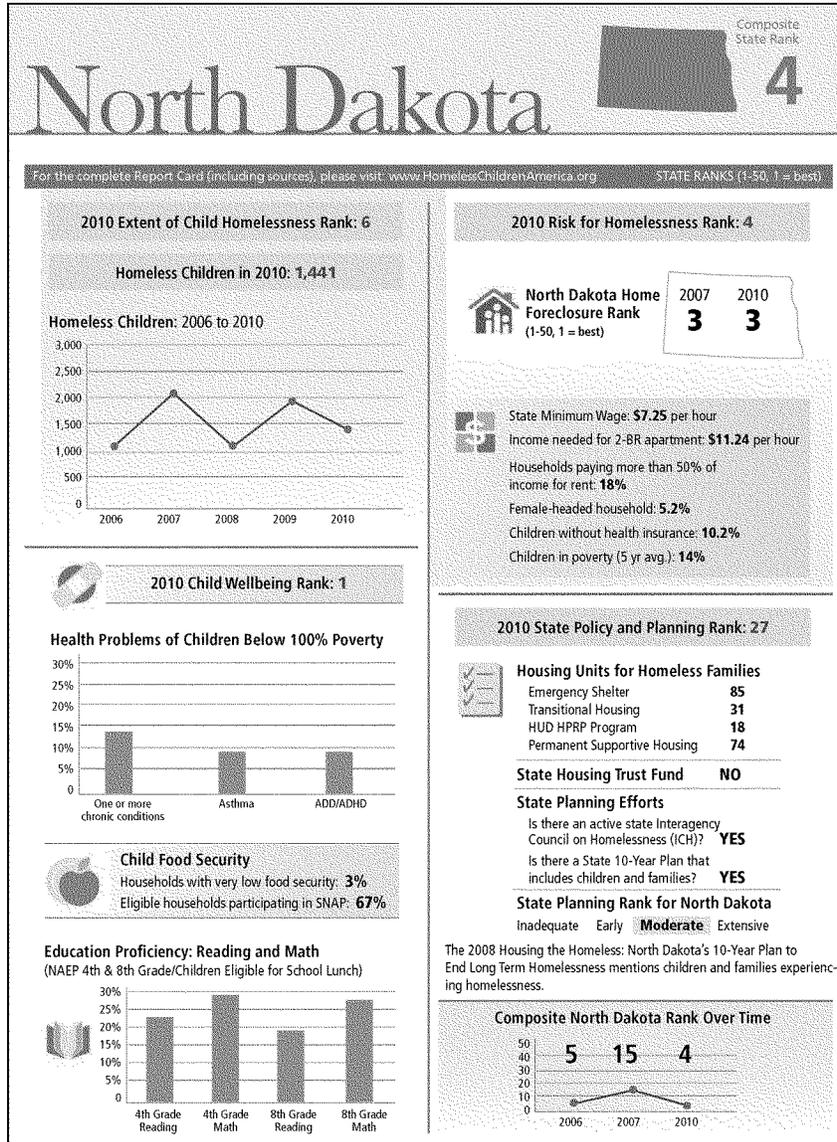


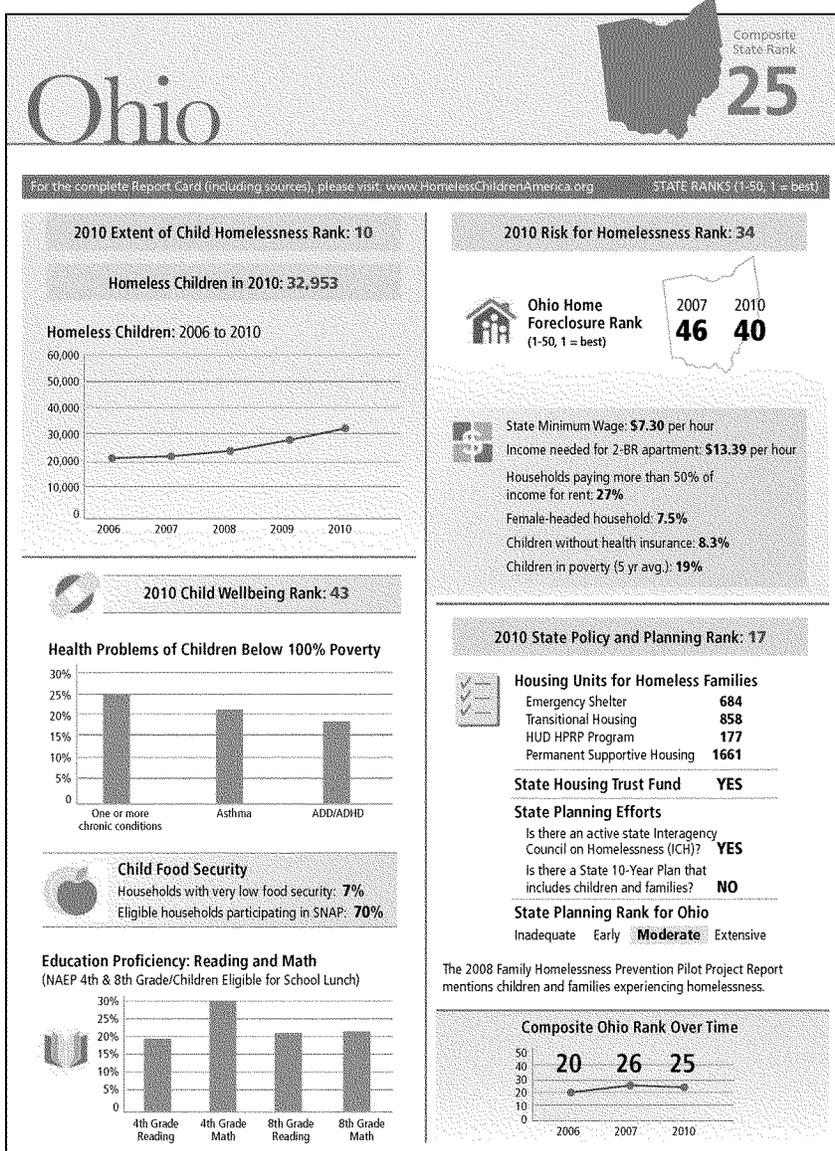


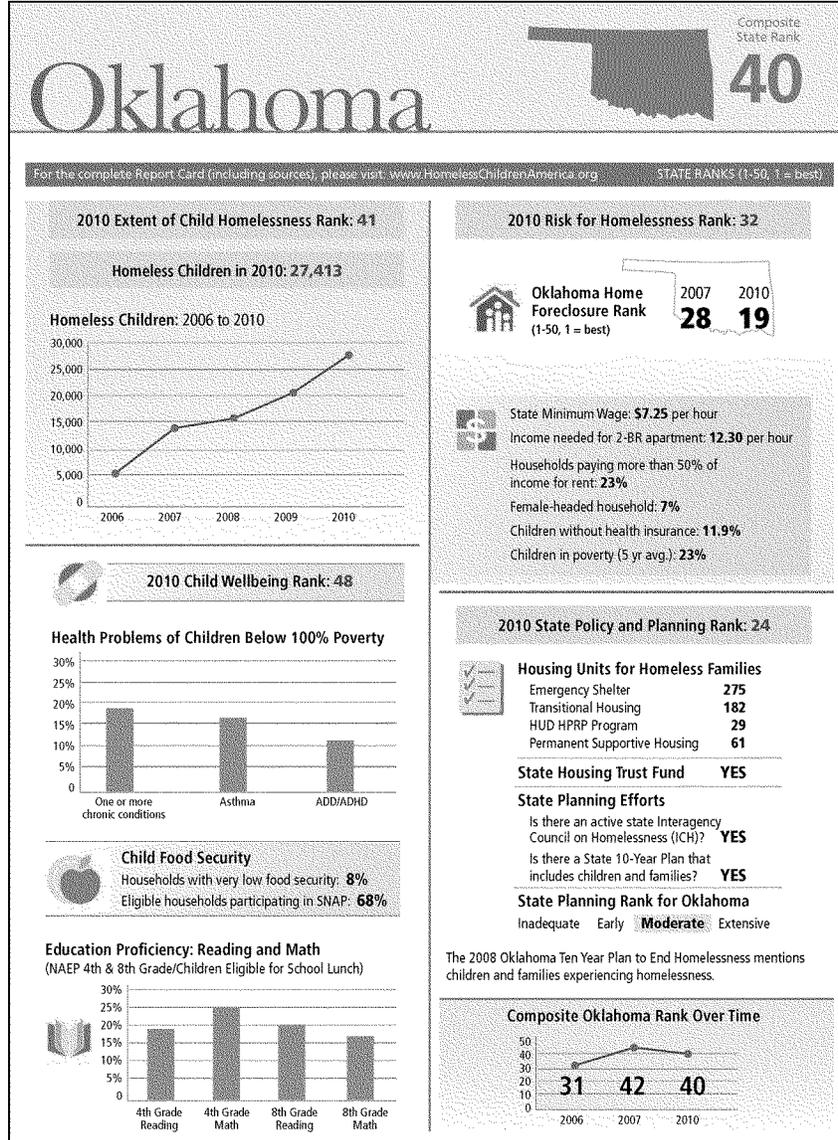


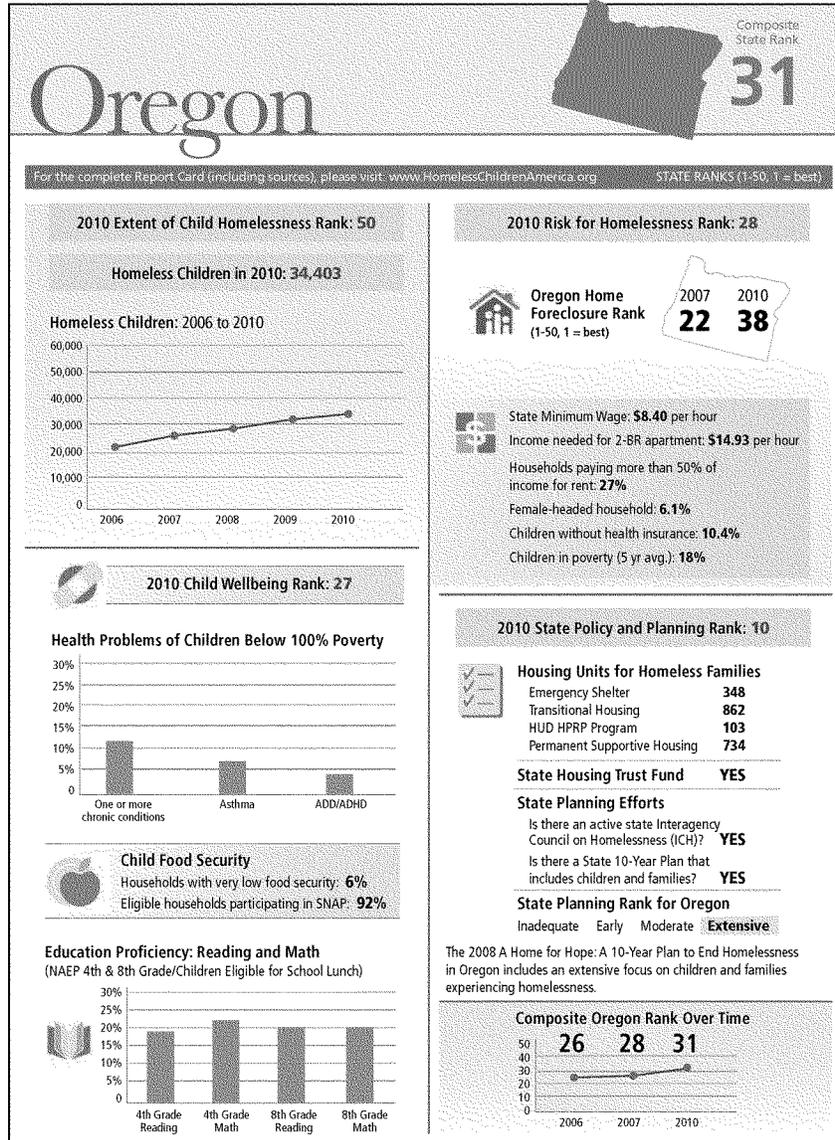


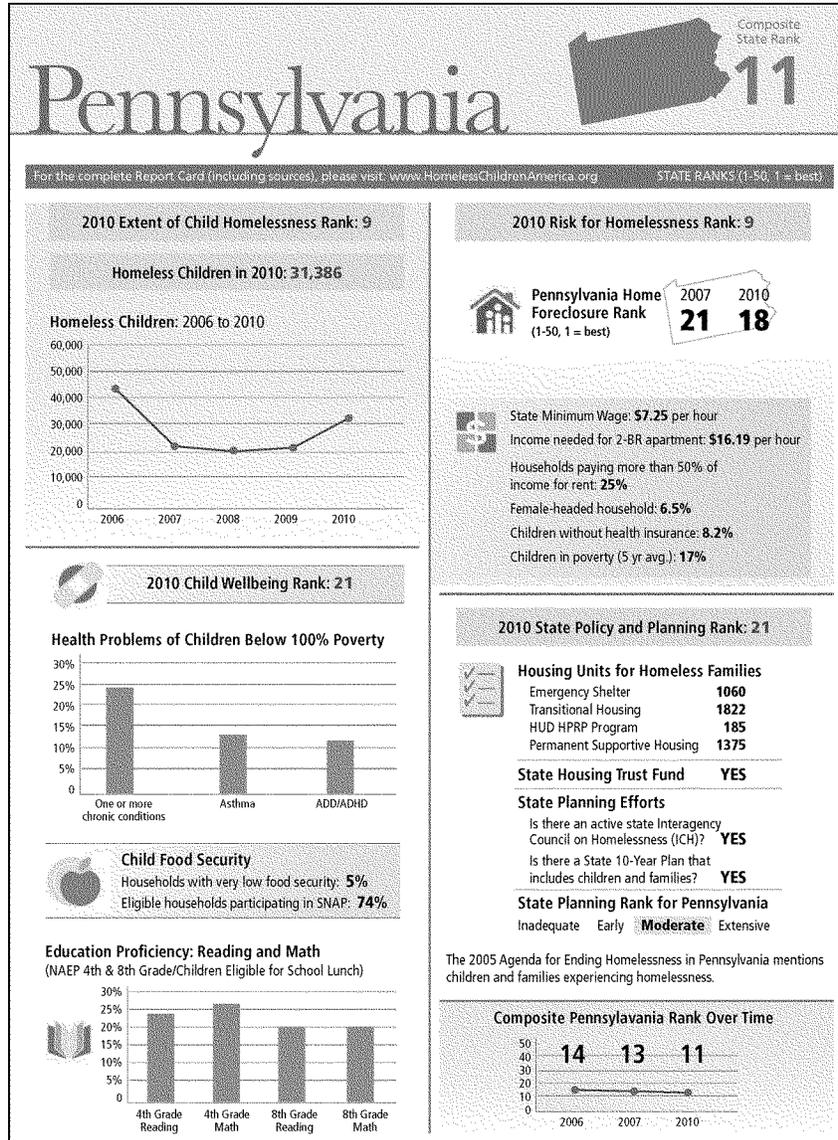


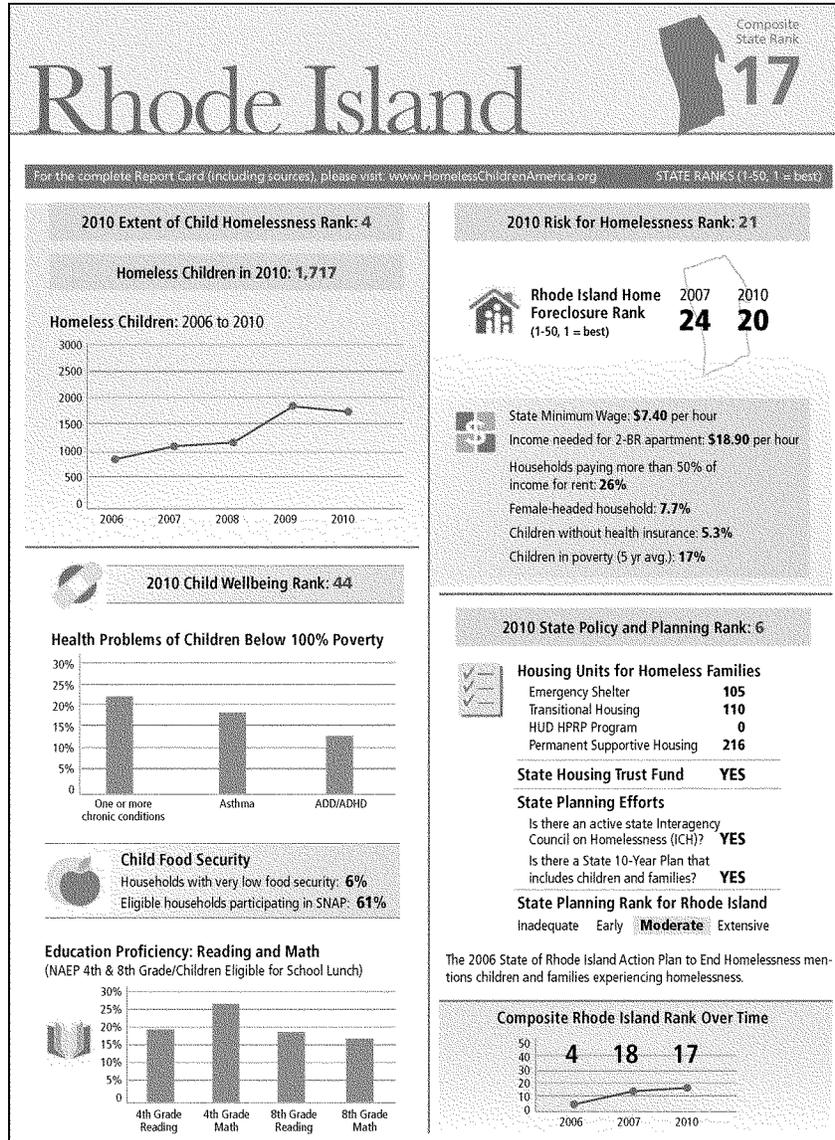


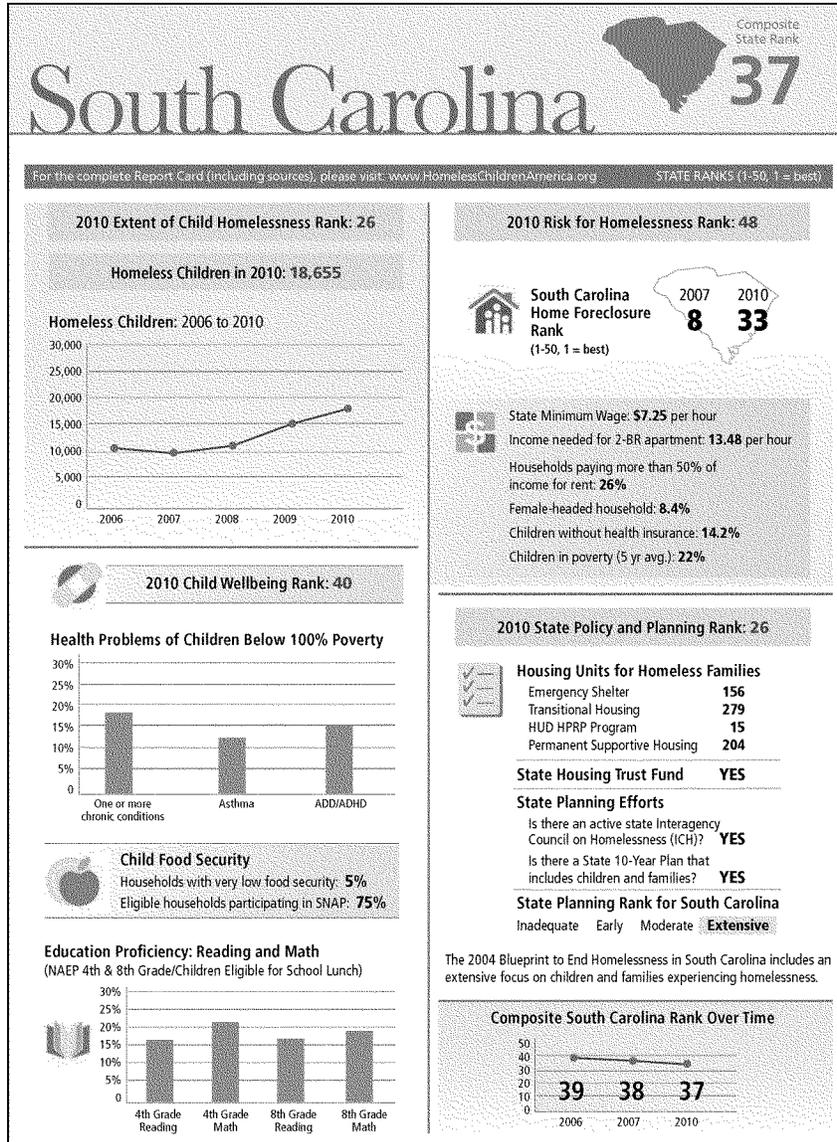


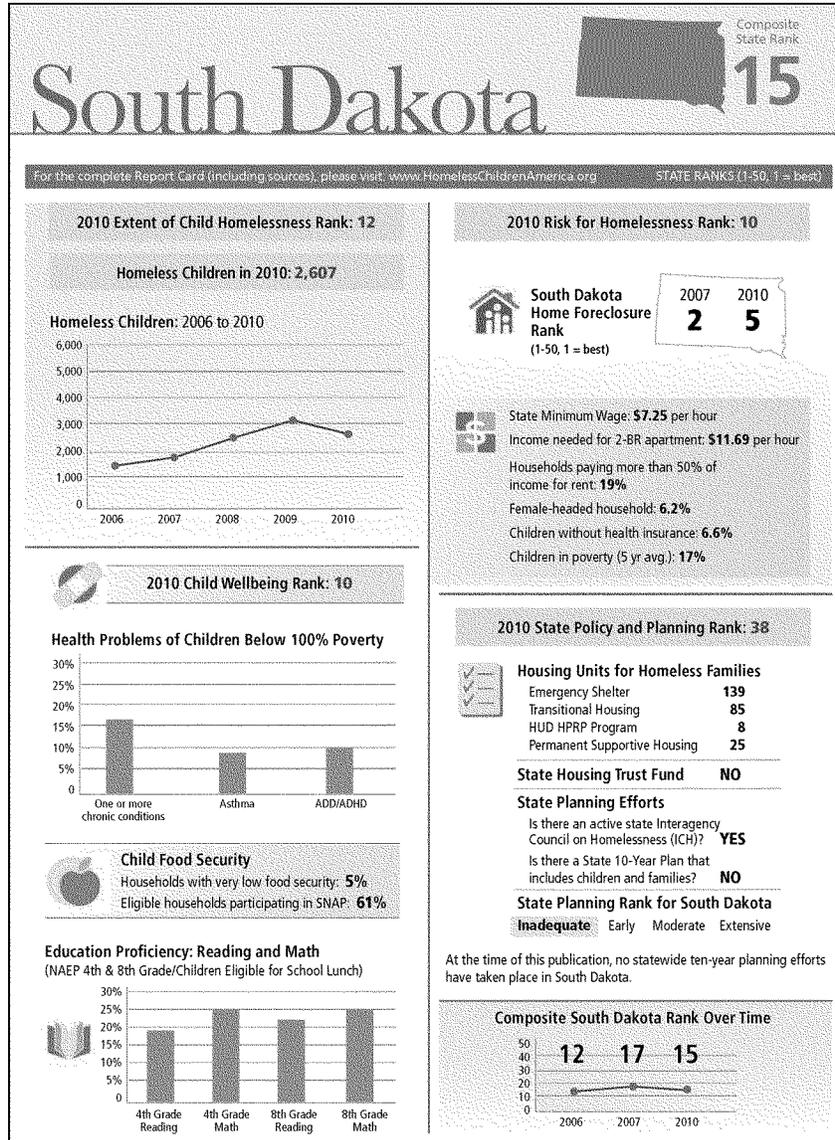


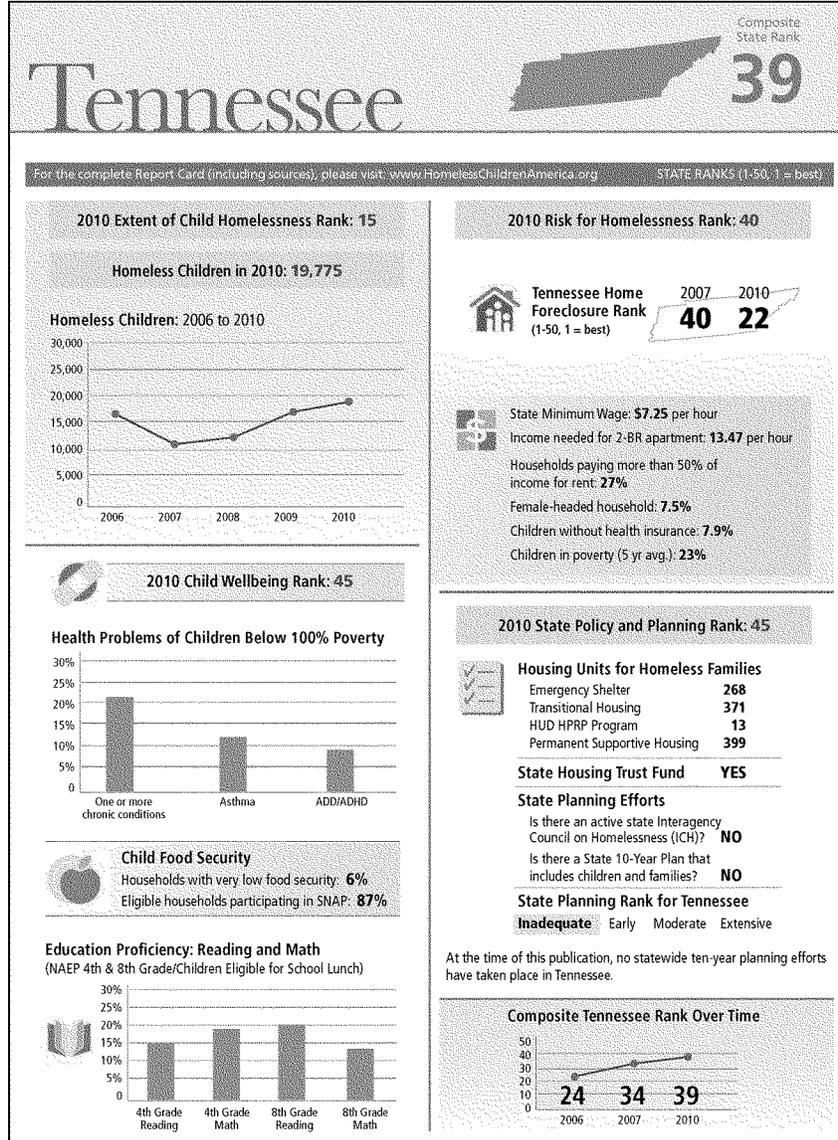


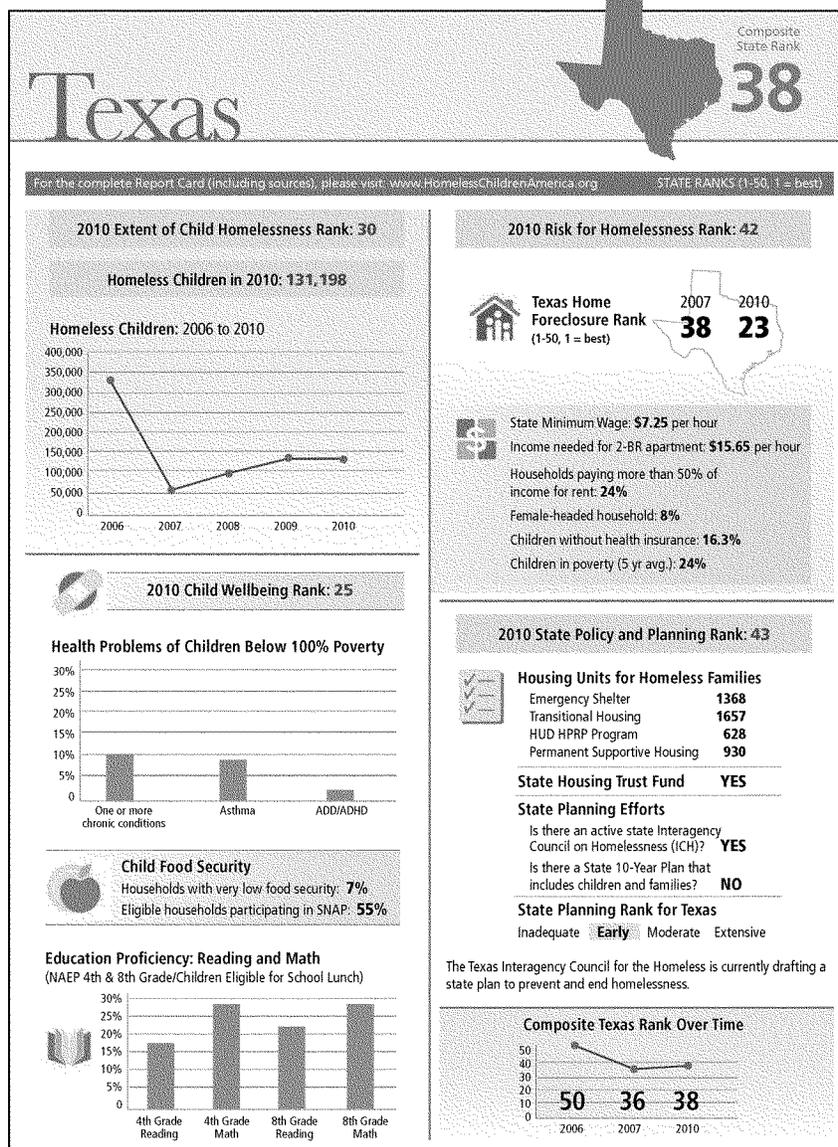


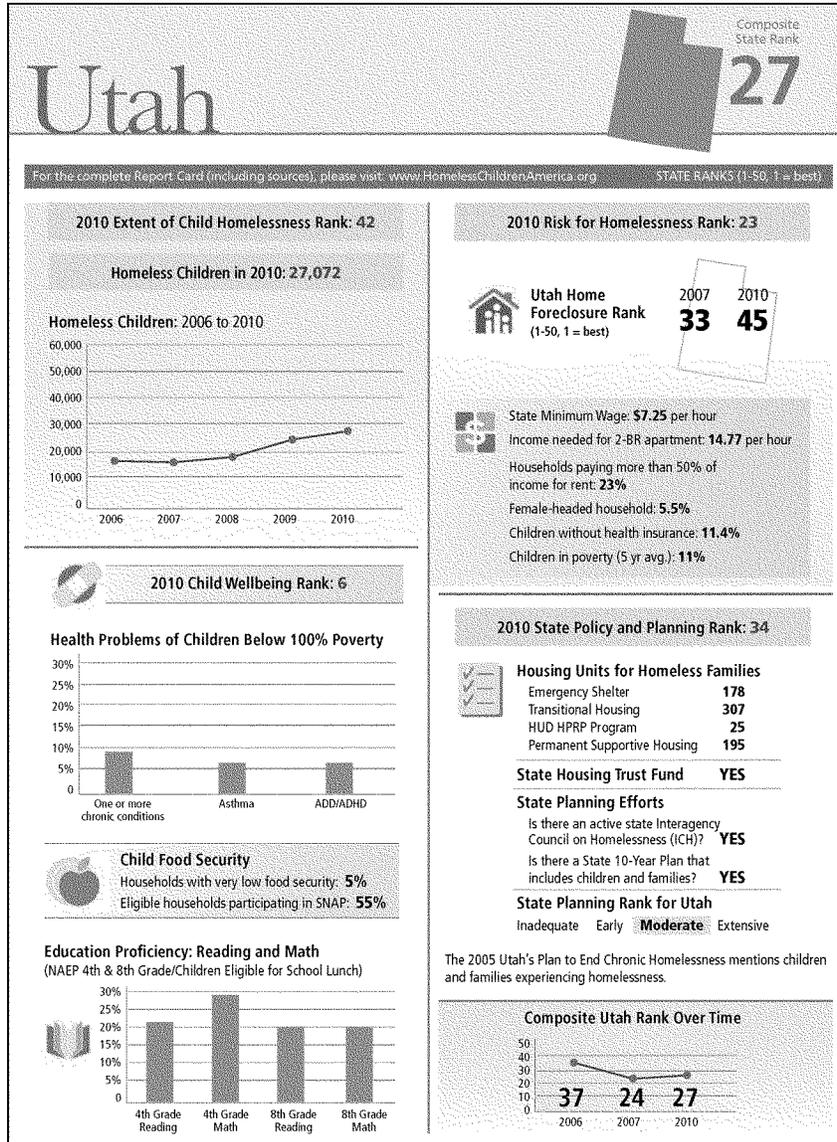


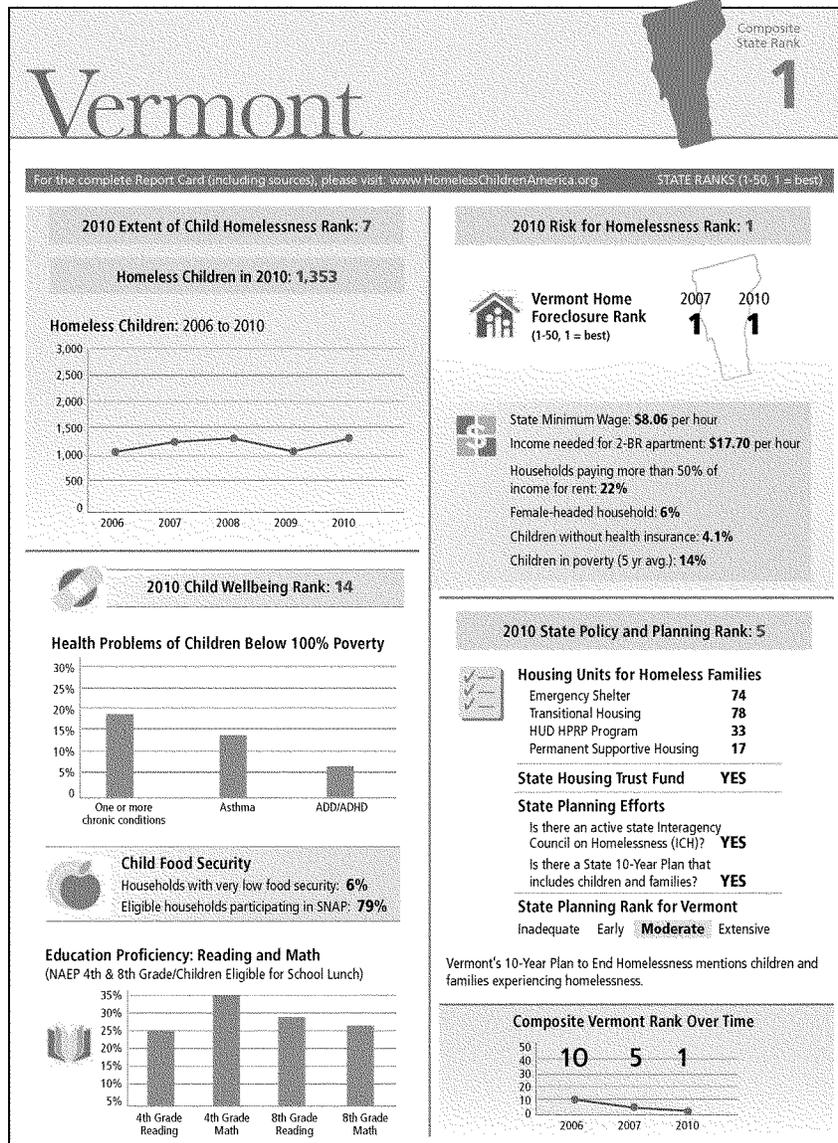


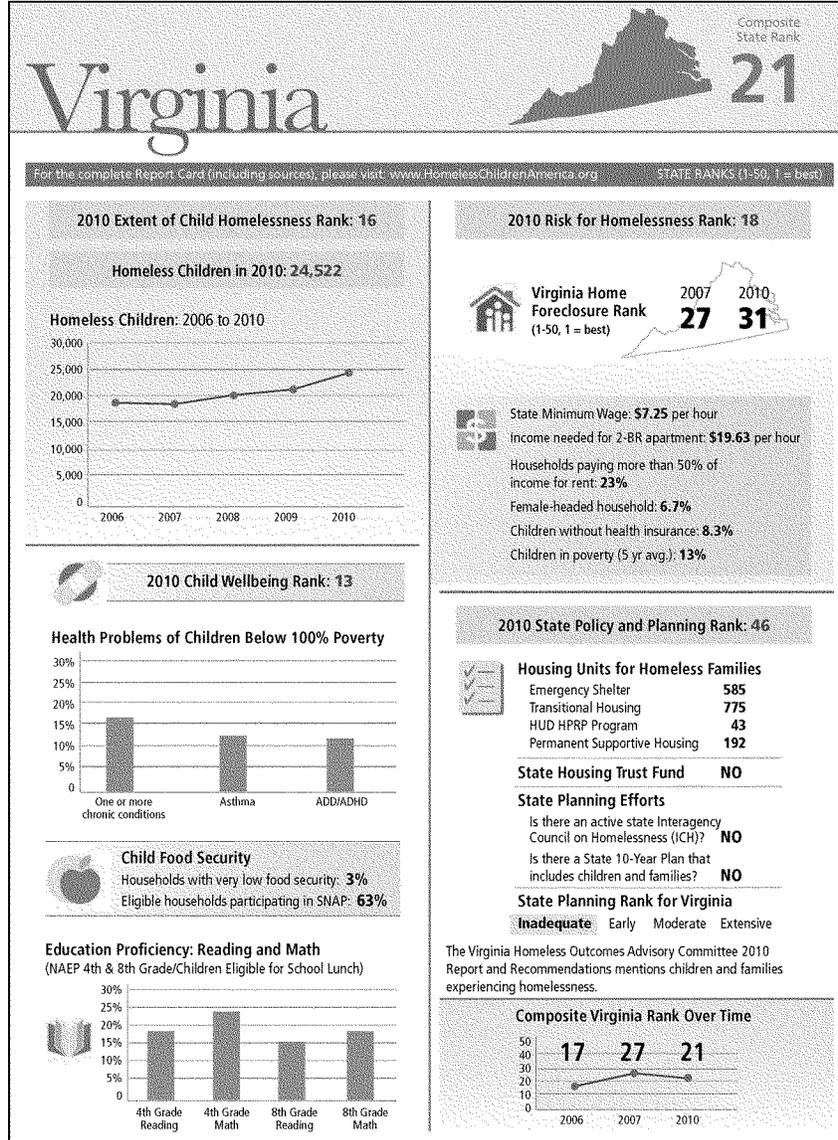


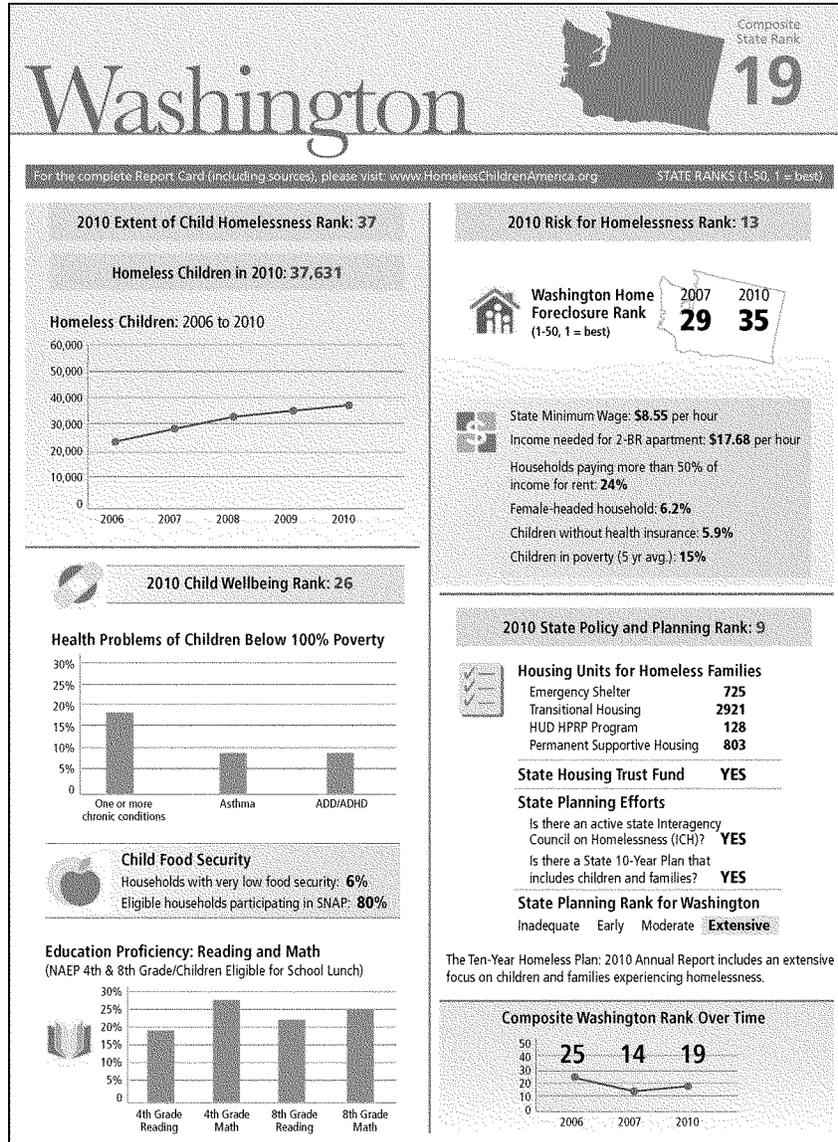


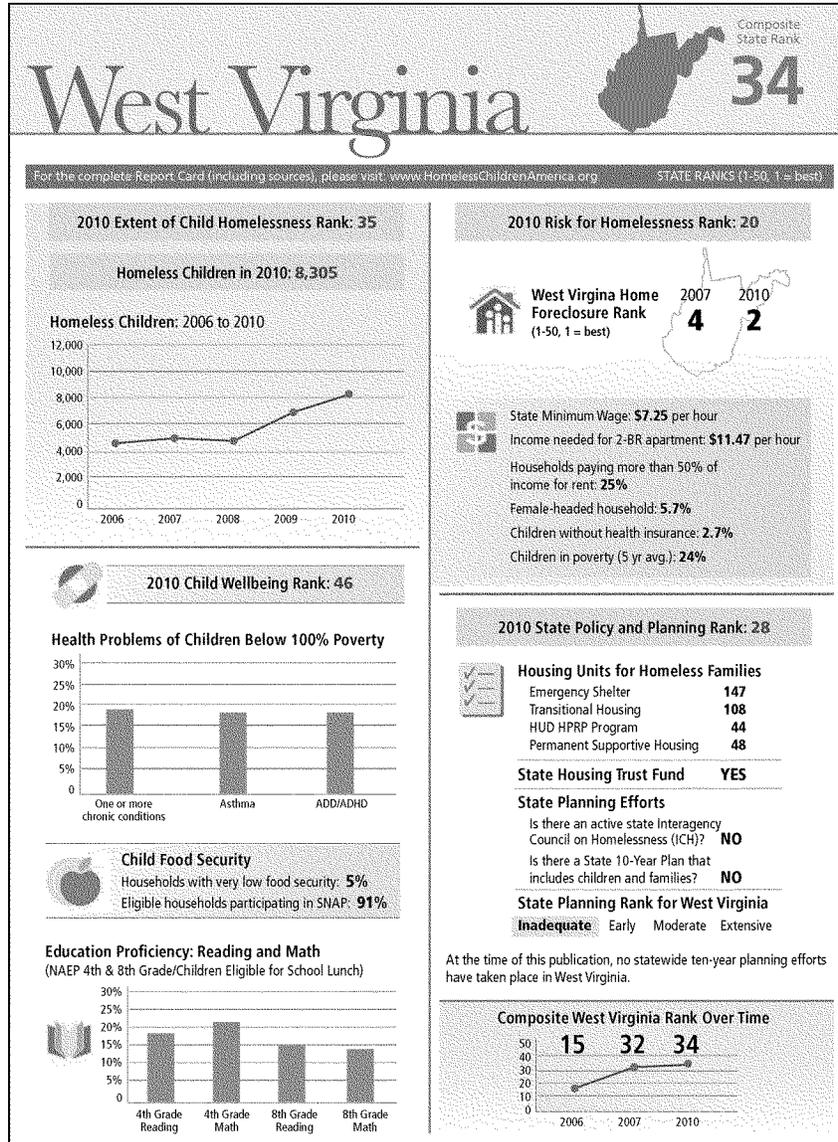


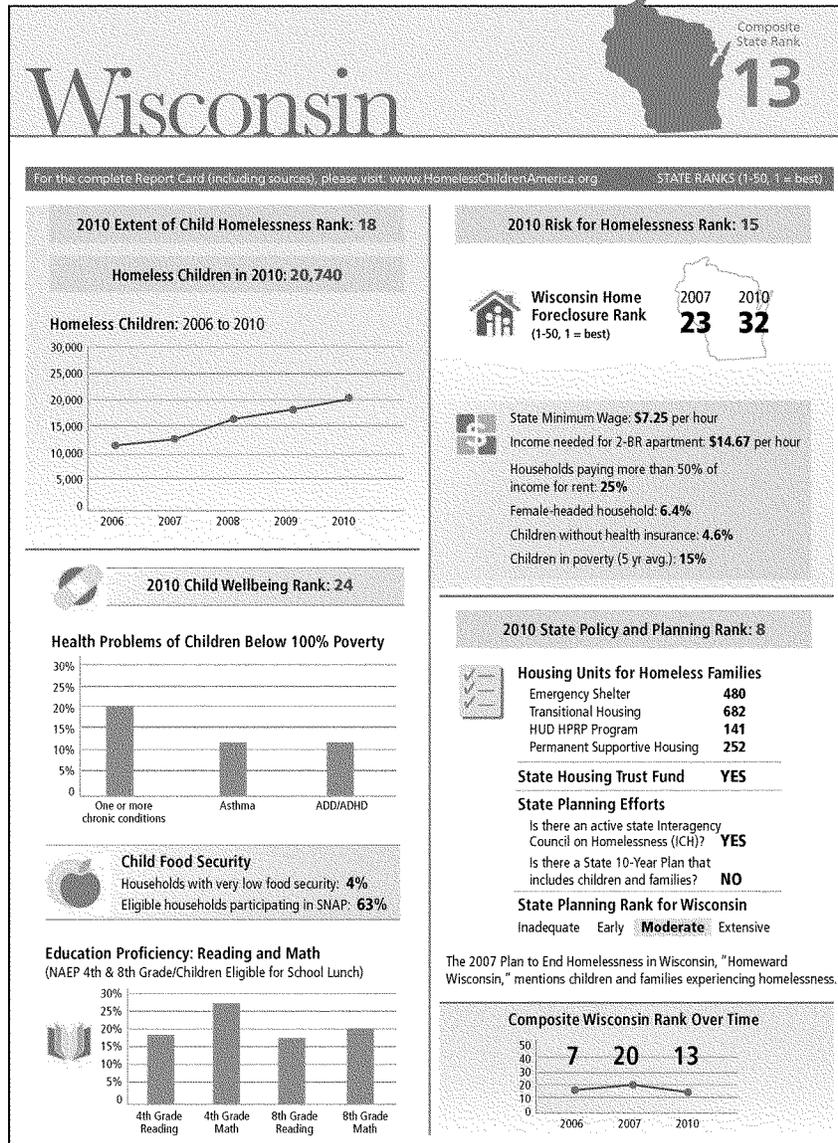


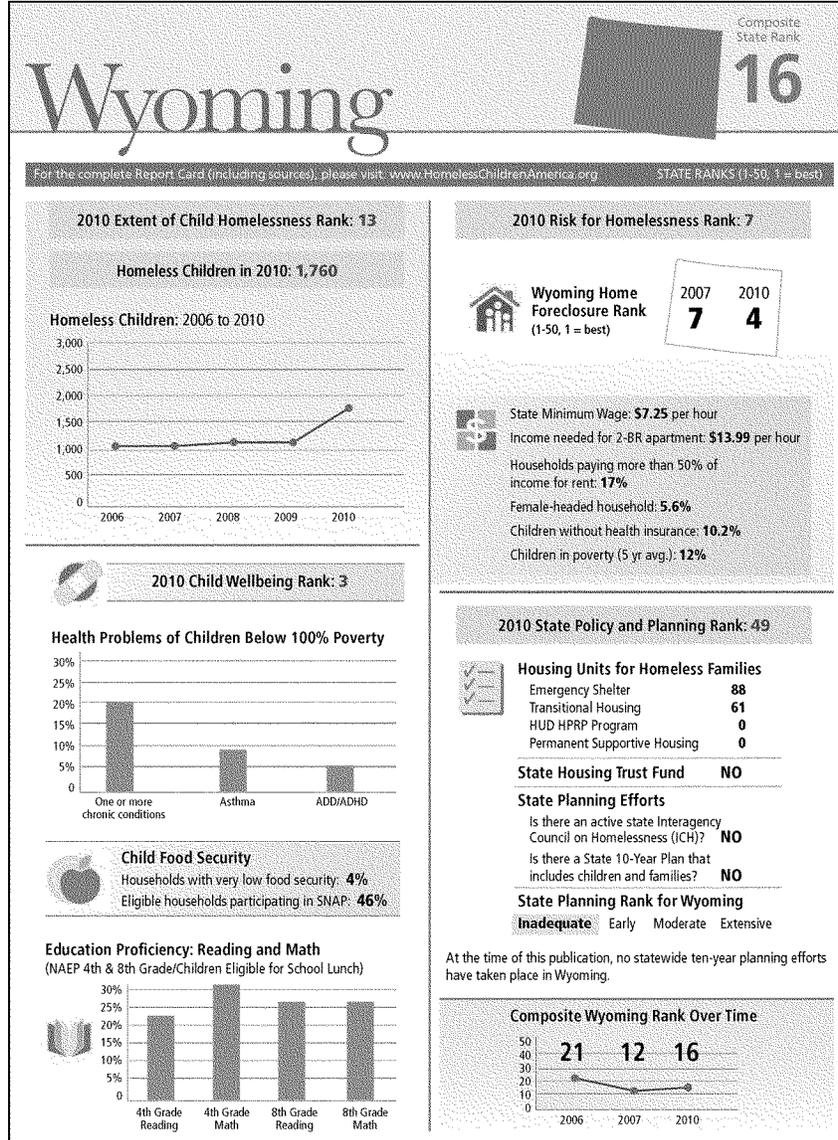












## V. Call to Action

### Introduction

Ending child and family homelessness in the U.S. is urgent. We can end this tragic problem if national, state, and local political leaders, service providers, advocates, and the business and philanthropic communities make coordinated and strategic efforts. We must create an efficient, integrated, fully-funded, and high quality system of housing and services for children and their families. The Campaign to End Child Homelessness at The National Center on Family Homelessness works with federal policymakers in Washington, D.C. and in states across the country to address this overwhelming social problem.

The Campaign to End Child Homelessness has created a comprehensive federal policy agenda for 2011-2012. The implementation of the Campaign's policy recommendations during the 112th Congress and Obama Administration would go far in putting the federal government on track to accomplish its goal of ending family homelessness in 10 years as stated in *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness*. To view our federal policy agenda and learn about federal policies impacting homeless families, please go to: [www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org/media/139.pdf](http://www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org/media/139.pdf)

### A. Current Policy Context

Discussion of budgets, federal deficits, and debt ceilings have dominated the U.S. Congress and the Administration as each side works to advance its priorities and spending choices. During a time when the federal government should be increasing funding for homeless programs to keep pace with the increased numbers of homeless children and families, funding for many programs has been held level or cut.

Homelessness is not a problem that proves less costly to taxpayers when access to services is reduced. The costs of homelessness are significant. National studies indicate that people experiencing homelessness access costly emergency medical care far more often than cost-effective preventive care and are more likely to suffer long-term instability and health issues that interfere with economic security (Culhane et al., 2002; Larimer et al. 2009). The loss of stable housing also results in diminished productivity through decreased access to education, employment, and income. Investing in housing and services ensures that homeless children and families are able to take their best step forward, even in these precarious economic times. Despite this period of fiscal constraint and severe budget cuts, it is critical that we work together to prevent further funding cuts that harm homeless children and families.

Halfway into the current fiscal year, the U.S. House and U.S. Senate passed the final FY 2011 spending bill for discretionary programs (those programs that are funded annually). The bill was signed into law on April 15, 2011 and was estimated to cut \$38.5 billion in spending for the remainder of the year—the largest ever reduction in annual spending. Some significant cuts were made to housing and community development programs as well as to job training and energy assistance (Coalition on Human Needs, 2011).

The subsequent Budget Control Act of 2011 enacted immediate spending cuts and created the Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction to further trim the federal budget by the end of the year (Heniff, Rybicki, & Mahan, 2011). The Budget Control Act caps and cuts spending on appropriations for housing and community development, education and training, public health, early childhood education, and more (Coalition on Human Needs, 2011). The Joint Select Committee on Deficit Reduction failed to make deficit reduction recommendations by the November 23, 2011 deadline. This will trigger automatic funding cuts.

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, one of the most cost-effective ways to stimulate economic growth and to create or preserve jobs is to target financial assistance programs such as SNAP-Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (formerly the Food Stamp program), unemployment benefits, and rental assistance to hard-pressed families who are likely to use support immediately to pay for essentials such as food, transportation, medical care, and housing (Sand, 2009).

#### **States Are Experiencing the Same Pressures**

Federal policy influences state policy and vice versa. In the spring of 2011, the Campaign to End Child Homelessness developed a National Policy Survey to learn more about the effects of federal government programs on state and local stakeholders working to end child and family homelessness. The respondents included a combination of direct service providers, nonprofit staff, and state and local government workers. The survey sought to discover more about how some federal regulations, policies, and programs are applied at the local level.

State governments are faring poorly during the current economic recession. As a result, program and funding cuts are hindering progress towards ending child and family homelessness. The survey found that state and federal concerns were similar and included: lack of affordable housing and the need to increase access to supportive services such as food, child care, transportation, and education. Survey respondents felt that the federal policy change that most positively impacted states was the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's (HUD) Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program (HPRP). Over the past few years, HUD has shifted focus to Housing First and rapid re-housing programs. To read our Federal Policy Survey and learn more, please go to: [www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org](http://www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org)

#### **HEARTH Act**

The May 2009 HEARTH Act reauthorized the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance programs and broadened the HUD definition of homelessness. According to the final rule, which goes into effect on January 4, 2012, HUD will now define youth as up to age 25. HUD has been working to develop regulations to implement the law that substantially expands homelessness prevention activities and offers new incentives that emphasize rapid re-housing, especially for homeless families. HUD officially published the interim regulations for the new Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) program on December 5, 2011.

The National Center urges HUD, and the federal government generally, to adopt the broader definition of homelessness in the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act, 2001). This broader definition includes all children, youth, and their families identified as homeless by school districts, and is already used by the U.S. Department of Education, Head Start programs, Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs, and early intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

### **2010 Federal Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness**

The federal government has created various coordinating bodies to collaborate on policies related to specific issues including the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH). USICH is an independent agency within the federal executive branch and is composed of 19 Cabinet secretaries and agency heads. It was created to coordinate the federal response to homelessness and to develop a national partnership at every level of government, including the private sector, to reduce and end homelessness in America.

In June 2010, the USICH released *Opening Doors: Federal Strategic Plan to Prevent and End Homelessness* ([www.usich.gov/opening\\_doors/](http://www.usich.gov/opening_doors/)) with a goal of ending child and family homelessness nationwide in 10 years. Acknowledging the need for adequate funding, political will, and private sector support, the Plan calls on the federal government to:

- Increase leadership, collaboration, and civic engagement.
- Increase access to decent, affordable housing.
- Increase economic security.
- Improve health, well-being, and family cohesiveness.
- Retool the homeless crisis response system.

If the recommendations in the federal plan are fully implemented, they can help secure the future of countless vulnerable Americans. With leadership from the USICH, many states have formed their own interagency councils. Some have engaged in 10-year planning processes that chart a course to end family homelessness in their states. Others have examined the definition of homelessness, making determinations about who is considered “homeless” and eligible for targeted resources.

### **B. Recommendations**

Increasing the availability of decent, affordable housing is essential for ending homelessness. Housing promotes health, prevents the onset and exacerbation of illness, improves educational outcomes, reduces stress, and provides a safe environment in which children can grow and thrive. As HUD increasingly focuses on rapid re-housing as a solution to homelessness, it is critical to remember that housing alone is not sufficient. Housing must be aligned with critical services and supports if families are to remain stably housed in the community. Housing and services must both be part of any effective solution.

#### **1. Housing**

Any solution to end child and family homelessness must target the inadequate supply of safe, affordable housing as well as access to supports and services. Congress and the Administration must increase funding for the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act grant programs. With an increase in funding, HUD could effectively implement the changes mandated in the HEARTH Act of 2009.

Increasing numbers of families experiencing homelessness and the multiple challenges associated with obtaining subsidized housing indicate a need to generate a more extensive stock of affordable housing in communities nationwide. Creating housing trust funds that support safe, decent, affordable housing is a critical strategy for addressing this issue. Starting

30 years ago, the housing trust fund movement began with the belief that the health of a community relied on its ability to create affordable housing for its citizens. Housing trust funds are established by ordinance or legislation on a state, county, or city level, and target low-income households. They rely on public revenue sources (e.g., real estate transfer taxes, interest from state-held funds, document recording fees) that vary depending on the community's resources (Brooks, 2007).

Most housing trust funds are used to fund new construction, rehabilitation, preservation, acquisition, permanent supportive housing, and services for special populations. Many also use these funds for transitional housing and emergency rental assistance (Brooks, 2007). The Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008 established a National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF), creating our nation's first new production program specifically targeted to extremely low-income households since the inception of the Section 8 program in 1974. The National Housing Trust Fund is needed to help address the severe shortage of rental homes that are affordable for the lowest income families.

Unfortunately, due to the recent housing market crash and subsequent Congressional efforts to re-configure, and in some cases, dismantle Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac, the National Housing Trust Fund has yet to be capitalized. We are working to ensure that a dedicated source of revenue is created for affordable housing activities that the market will not provide on its own and to use this revenue to fund the National Housing Trust Fund. The initial capitalization of the National Housing Trust Fund should be funded at \$1 billion to begin to help address the severe shortage of rental housing affordable for the lowest income families.

HUD is committed to implementing Housing First and rapid re-housing practices broadly; while this is important, we also must ensure that services are connected to these programs. The federal government must work to increase collaboration among the federal agencies and programs, including the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS), HUD, Veteran's Affairs, and the U.S. Department of Education (DOE).

One way to increase integration is through the Housing and Services for Homeless Persons Demonstration project. This project would connect housing vouchers with HHS, mainstream programs (e.g., TANF, Medicaid) for low-income people, and DOE programs for homeless children. This will help to break down barriers to better provide housing and services to homeless families. Unfortunately, only 10,000 of these vouchers were proposed in the President's FY11 budget and none were actually funded in FY11. Given the backlog and waitlists for programs like Section 8 vouchers, we need many more affordable housing options.

Please see Appendix B: Housing for a detailed overview of the current context.

## **2. Services and Supports**

### **All Families Need Support**

All families need various kinds of support at one time or another. Think of the various supports you have needed for your own family—child care, transportation, medical and other health care, and educational services. Any strategy to end child homelessness must include critical supports that may change over time as family member's needs shift. As families move from homelessness into housing, services and supports facilitate this transition, help maintain housing over the long-term, and ultimately lead to self-sufficiency.

The typical or “average” homeless family—comprising approximately 80% of all homeless families—needs some support that may wax and wane over time, may be episodic in nature, and vary in intensity with life circumstances, transitions, and stressors. A small number of families—perhaps 10%—will need only transitional supports. In contrast, another 10% may need ongoing, intense supports and services to maintain their housing. In sum, an estimated 90% of families experiencing homelessness need some infusion of supports and services, with 10% needing continuing, intensive support. This is no different than families in higher socioeconomic groups who use their greater assets and social capital to buffer stress and maintain robust support networks and services (Bassuk, Volk, & Olivet, 2010).

#### **Addressing the Trauma of Homelessness**

Homelessness is traumatic. For many families, the stress of homelessness is compounded by past traumatic experiences, including catastrophic illness, abrupt separations, physical or sexual abuse, and intimate partner violence (Bassuk, 2010). Traumatic stress impacts every aspect of a person’s life, including their ability to maintain housing and employment and achieve educational success, capacity to form sustaining relationships, and physical and mental health (Bassuk, Volk, & Olivet, 2010). Services and supports that protect children and their families from the damaging consequences of these traumatic experiences are critical in ending family homelessness.

Homeless children need supports and services specifically targeted to their unique needs. They often live in unpredictable, chaotic circumstances—and do not know where their next meal will come from or where they will sleep the next night (The National Center on Family Homelessness, 2009). They are young and have experienced serious disruptions in their interpersonal relationships. They have witnessed violence in their families and on the streets; they are frightened, anxious, and depressed. This constant stress puts them at risk for developing significant medical and mental health issues (Bassuk et al., 1997; Bassuk & Guarino, 2010; Buckner, Beardslee, & Bassuk, 2004). These challenges must be addressed, children’s needs assessed, and service responses developed to mitigate the impact of these experiences.

#### **Training the Homelessness Workforce**

Critical services for homeless families and children cannot be effectively implemented without a comprehensive effort to address the needs of the homeless service delivery workforce and expand the capacity of community-based programs. Service providers are overworked, underpaid, isolated from others working in the field, and have few opportunities for training or career development. As a result, homeless service delivery is often limited and does not reflect state-of-the-art knowledge and practice (Mullen & Leginski, 2010). Providers and community-based programs should be supported to use promising and evidence-based practices by:

- Developing training for new and experienced workers that requires basic knowledge of poverty, homelessness, the needs of the family unit, and child development.
- Offering training and technical assistance focused on best practices (both knowledge and skills).
- Providing training opportunities both onsite and online to accommodate to the difficult schedules and demands placed on service providers.

- Fostering information exchange and networking among providers.
- Creating professional standards and competencies for the homelessness workforce.
- Developing career ladders and credentialing for the workforce.

#### **Implementing Basic Principles of Care**

Based on our understanding of the service and support needs of homeless families and children and our experiences in the field, The National Center recommends a set of basic practices that we believe should be implemented in every program that serves homeless children and families. Programs for homeless children and families should strive to:

- Rapidly re-house families.
- Respond to families' immediate needs.
- Link housing with services and supports.
- Assess families and create individualized housing and service plans.
- Support family units to stay together.
- Deliver high quality services using evidence-based practices.
- Provide trauma-informed care.
- Be recovery-oriented and culturally competent.
- Address the unique needs of the children.
- Ensure a basic standard of care by training the workforce.
- Monitor progress and outcomes.

#### **Providing Vital Services**

Along with housing, homeless families require various services and supports to stabilize their lives. Our research and clinical experience indicates that the following services areas are critical and align with legislation that is currently pending:

##### **a. Child Care: Improve CCDF for Homeless Children**

Child care is a significant expense for all working families and can become a barrier to maintaining a steady job. In every region of the country, infant child care consumes a larger portion of a family budget than food (National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 2008). The Child Care Development Fund (CCDF) is the primary source of funding for child care for low-income and homeless families. CCDF vouchers supplement a family's income by subsidizing child care expenses, enabling parents to maintain jobs and be economically stable (Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, 2004). This important federal program needs to be fully funded.

Even with adequate CCDF funding, homeless children will still have difficulty accessing child care due to lack of awareness and identification of homeless children; stringent enrollment requirements (e.g., immunization forms, health records, birth certificates, proof of guardianship); unaffordable co-payments; and other challenges to maintaining continuity of care. Once enrolled, homeless children are susceptible to losing child care benefits if temporary housing is found in a different geographic area. These barriers need to be

eliminated to maximize a family's access to child care supports. Legislative action is necessary to ensure that young homeless children are identified, enrolled, and maintained in CCDF to ensure their families continue to receive the child care support for which they are eligible. The McKinney-Vento Homelessness Assistance Act has established protections for homeless children in public schools (pre-K to 12). Similar protections should be available through CCDF.

**b. Education: Strengthen EHCY Program (Education for Homeless Children and Youth)**

Federal law mandates that states provide children with a free, appropriate public education. The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires that schools remove barriers to education for homeless children so that they may attend and succeed in school. Currently, Congress is working on the reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) that will continue many federal education programs, including the McKinney-Vento Act's Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program. During the reauthorization process, The National Center is working with others to address strategies for identifying homeless children and youth, school selection, enrollment, transportation, needs of pre-school homeless children, needs of unaccompanied homeless youth, and access to academic and extra-curricular activities (National Association for the Education of Young Children, 2011). Progress on these issues will greatly strengthen educational protections and services for homeless children and youth. Congress should move forward with current reauthorization legislation before the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee and bring similar legislation before the House Education and Workforce Committee.

**c. Domestic Violence: Protect Survivors From Eviction**

Domestic violence is consistently identified as a primary cause of homelessness for women and children in the United States (Bassuk et al., 1996). While some survivors can access the safety and confidentiality afforded by domestic violence shelters, others are forced to leave safe housing and become at-risk for homelessness. We must ensure that survivors do not face eviction when they have removed their batterers from their homes and feel it is safe to live by themselves, but lack the economic resources to support independent housing. Many federal domestic violence programs are authorized through the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) that is currently under reauthorization. We urge policymakers to extend VAWA housing protections to other federal housing programs so that domestic violence survivors and their families are not unjustly evicted and become homeless. There must also be a stronger focus on connecting survivors with permanent housing.

**d. Employment and Training: Focus on Homeless Youth and Families**

Undoubtedly, the most pressing economic and policy issue across America is job creation. While job creation benefits the overall economy, we must ensure that federal plans to increase employment and training include homeless youth and families. The Workforce Investment Act (WIA) currently up for reauthorization in Congress includes many of the U.S. Department of Labor employment and training programs. We urge that WIA state grantees be required to provide homeless youth and parents with job training services designed to help them improve job skills, maximize earning potential, and place them in jobs that pay a

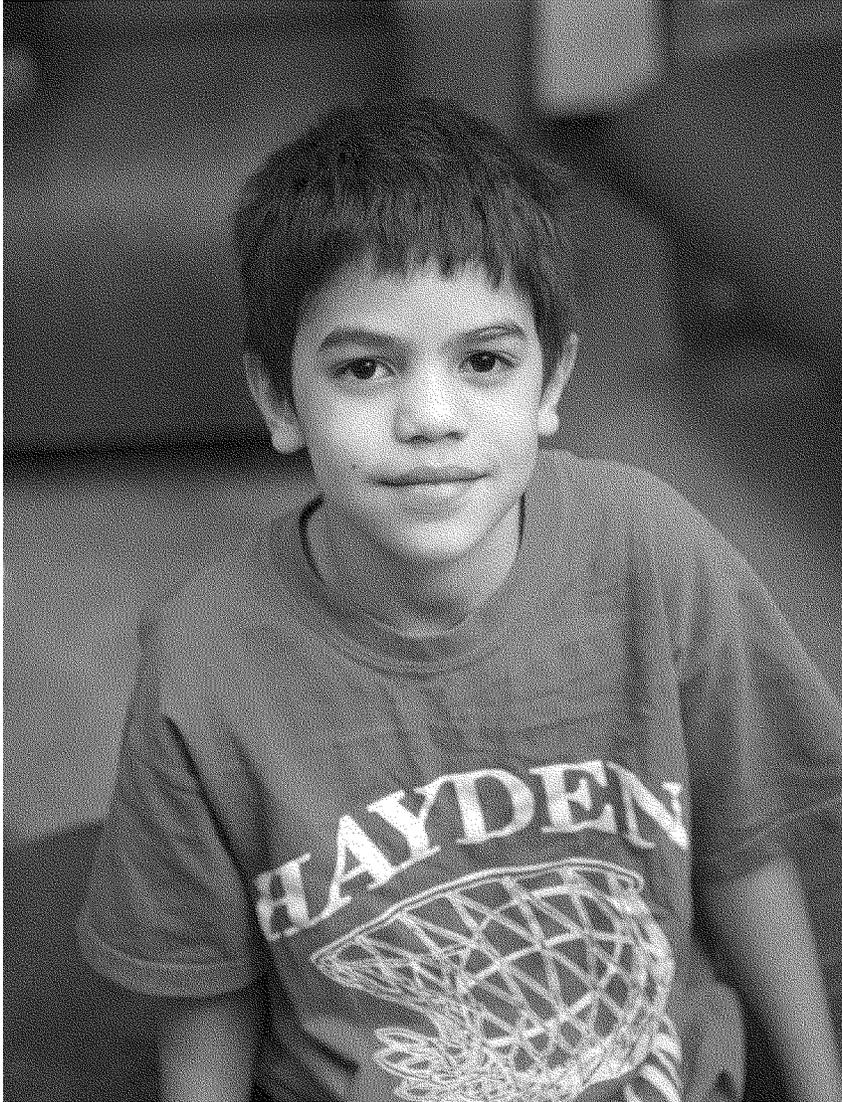
livable wage. To increase effectiveness, WIA employment programs should be coordinated with homeless assistance, social service, veterans' service, youth, and housing programs. The federal government should also invest in a comprehensive effort to upgrade the skills of the homeless service delivery workforce with training on how best to provide for children, youth, and families.

### **3. Data Collection**

Comprehensive information about at-risk and homeless children is essential for ensuring that policy and planning efforts are responsive to their needs. Currently, national data sets are very limited. We must ensure that all future data collection efforts involving children and their parents include questions about residential status and stability; and well-being (e.g., health, traumatic stress, education, safety).

### **C. Conclusion**

Child and family homelessness is a growing social problem that will only prove more costly to taxpayers if it is left unattended. Persistent homelessness leads to poor health, unemployment, and adverse educational outcomes that carry large economic and societal costs. Housing is essential to the solution, but it must be combined with critical services that support each family member and the family as a unit. By making the necessary investments in preventing and addressing family homelessness now, we can end this national tragedy before it becomes a permanent and expensive feature of our national landscape. At The National Center on Family Homelessness, we are working to mobilize the public and political will for decisive action. Please join us by visiting [www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org](http://www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org) to download a copy of this report and learn more.



## Appendix A: Methodology

### Introduction

To determine the status of children experiencing homelessness and develop composite ranks for the states for *America's Youngest Outcasts 2010*, we used various national data sets in the following four domains: (1) Extent of Child Homelessness (adjusted for population size); (2) Child Well-Being; (3) Risk for Child Homelessness; and (4) State Policy and Planning Efforts. The ranks are based on 20 variables from approximately a dozen sources that are described below. We determined the composite state rank by scoring factors within each domain (see below) and then determining an overall score.

Assessing the status of homeless children in each domain was a very challenging undertaking. Most national data sets have no specific measures of homelessness, residential status, or housing stability, nor variables about the numbers, characteristics, and needs of homeless children. To adjust for the limitations in existing data sets, we used various proxy measures that are described in detail below. For example, since the U.S. Census provides data about the rates of poverty nationwide, we assumed that most homeless children live in poverty and used 33% to 50% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Many consider the current measure for the FPL an underestimate of the realities of living in poverty. If new poverty thresholds were created to reflect current realities about a family's expenses, adjusted for regional variations in costs of living, and changed to include a realistic assessment of a family's resources, it is estimated that millions more people would be considered to be living in poverty by government standards. In November 2011, the U.S. Census released a Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM). The SPM does not replace the official measure and is not used to determine program eligibility or funding distribution. It provides additional information about economic trends and conditions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011). See page 105.

The timeframes of various data sources relating to the status of homeless children are not consistent, presenting another challenge. National data sets are not always available on an annual basis. We used the most recent comprehensive datasets for our first Report Card and for *America's Youngest Outcasts 2010*. For example, the 2010 composite state rank consists of McKinney-Vento Education data from 2010<sup>1</sup>, National Assessment of Educational Progress data from 2011, and the National Survey of Children's Health data from 2007. For the 2007 ranks, we used the most recent data available for, or prior to, the 2006-2007 school year.

*America's Youngest Outcasts 2010* assumes that for most states, the sizable gap between homeless children's needs and available resources has not changed dramatically in the last five years, and may have worsened. The combination of natural disasters, the economic downturn, and underreported data ensures we are being conservative in our reporting. The use of data from adjacent years and sources should not have a significant impact on the results.

<sup>1</sup> Each school year, Local Education Agencies identify and count the numbers of homeless children in their schools as mandated by the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. These numbers are reported annually by school year (e.g., data reported from 2005-2006 are from the fall and spring semester of a single school year). To simplify our presentation of data in this report, we use 2005 for the 2005-06 school year, 2007 for the 2006-07 school year, 2000 for the 2007-08 school year, 2009 for the 2008-09 school year, and 2010 for the 2009-10 school year.

### Extent Domain

The Extent Domain reports the numbers of homeless children in each state.

#### Data Sources

- McKinney-Vento Educational Data.
- Children's Defense Fund (2007).
- U.S. Census Age and Sex Composition Census Brief (2010).

#### Variable(s)

- Numbers of children identified as homeless and enrolled in local school districts in the state over the course of an academic year.
- Numbers of children under the age of 18.

These data are homeless specific. The federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title X, Part C, of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001 requires that all State Education Agencies and/or Local Education Agencies (LEAs, more commonly referred to as school districts) collect and submit information to the U.S. Department of Education about the numbers of homeless children who were *identified as homeless and enrolled* in all local school districts in the state over the course of an academic year (National Center for Homeless Education, 2011) using the following definition:

Children and youth are homeless if they are (No Child Left Behind Act of 2001):

- Living in emergency or transitional shelters.
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations.
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings.
- Using 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.
- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason (sometimes referred to as doubled-up).
- Awaiting foster care placement.
- Abandoned in hospitals.
- Migratory children who qualify as homeless because they are living in circumstances described above.

This definition, used throughout the report, accurately reflects the reality of family homelessness by defining homeless children and youth as "individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence." The McKinney-Vento data are currently the only system that is comprehensively assessing the numbers of homeless children.

In writing this report, we examined data collected by the U.S. Department of Education (DOE) from years 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, and 2010<sup>2</sup>. To rank and compare the states based

<sup>2</sup> See Footnote #1.

on the extent of child homelessness in these years, we used data from these school years as well as the "Extent" ranks reported in the earlier version of *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness* for 2006.

The DOE data do not include children under the age of six who are not enrolled in public school programs. Based on previous research that estimated 42% of the total number of homeless children are under the age of six, the U.S. DOE count of school-aged homeless children represents 58% of the total number of homeless children (Burt et al., 1999). From this, we used a ratio to calculate an estimate of the total number of homeless children in each state that includes an estimate of the number of homeless children under the age of six (number of school age homeless children  $\times 100 / 58 =$  total number of homeless children). To estimate the number of homeless children under the age of six, we subtracted the number of school age homeless children from the total number of homeless children.

To control for states with varying population sizes, we divided the total number of homeless children in each state by the total number of children under the age of 18 in each state as reported by the U.S. Census to calculate the percent of children who are homeless in each state. We then ranked the states from 1 to 50 based on the percent of children who are homeless (1=lowest, 50=highest). It is important to note that all states have children who are homeless; those states with the better rankings just have a smaller percentage of homeless children compared to their total number of children. In cases where there were ties between states in the percent of homeless children, the state with the lower raw number of homeless children was assigned the better rank.

In addition to determining the numbers of homeless children in each state adjusted for population size, we also used McKinney-Vento data to calculate the numbers of homeless children compared to the general population of children under 18 years of age for 2006, 2007, and 2010. Again, research indicates that 42% of the nation's homeless children are pre-schoolers, aged 0 to 5 years (Burt et al., 1999). This means the McKinney-Vento count of school-aged homeless children represents 58% of the total number of homeless children in the U.S. From this, we calculate 100% of U.S. homeless children in 2010:  $(933,572 \times 100 / 58 = 1,609,607)$ :

- 2010 total U.S. homeless children = 1,609,607 (933,572 school-age + 676,035 pre-school).

According to the U.S. Census, there are 74,181,467 children under 18 years of age in 2010. The finding that one in 45 children were homeless in 2010 is calculated by dividing the total number of homeless children in the U.S. in 2010 (1,609,607) by the total number of children under 18 in 2010 (74,181,522):

- $1,609,607 / 74,181,467 = .022 = 2.2$  in 100 = 1 in 45 (45.4) in 2010.

This same process is used for our 2007 findings, using McKinney-Vento school data for that year adjusted to include homeless children under age 6 and 2006 U.S. Census data on children under 18 for that period. We calculated 100% of U.S. homeless children in 2007:  $(673,458 \times 100 / 58 = 1,161,134)$ :

- 2007 total U.S. homeless children = 1,161,134 (673,458 school-age + 487,676 pre-school).

According to the U.S. Census, there were 73,901,733 children under 18 years of age during

that period. The finding that one in 63 children was homeless in 2007 is calculated by dividing the total number of homeless children in the U.S. in 2007 (1,161,134) by the total number of children under 18 in 2007 (73,901,733):

- $1,161,134 / 73,901,733 = .016 = 1.6 \text{ in } 100 = 1 \text{ in } 63 \text{ (62.5) in } 2007.$

In our first edition of *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness*, using 2006 data, we used the same calculation but rounded down the percentage of homeless children from 2.1 to 2.0 when making the estimate of one in 50 children for that report. The approach for 2007 and 2010 provides a more precise estimate.

#### Limitations

We used DOE data on homeless children and youth because public schools are the only universal institutions existing in all communities that are legally responsible for identifying and serving homeless children. However, the data have various limitations. DOE data report only children who are enrolled in school and identified by school personnel. Therefore, this report does not include homeless and unaccompanied children and youth who are not in school or who are in school, but whose homeless status is unknown to school personnel.

In this report, we used the ranks for "extent" as reported in the earlier version of *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness* for school year 2006. During that year, an estimated 77% of LEAs submitted data about homeless children to DOE (National Center for Homeless Education, 2011). The number of homeless children in 2006 in Louisiana, Alabama, Mississippi, Arkansas, Georgia, and Texas was unusually high that year because of Hurricanes Katrina and Rita. The number of homeless children in New York State was thought by staff at the New York State Education Department to be higher than reported, due to under-reporting by the New York City Department of Education.

We also used McKinney-Vento data from 2007 and 2010. During 2007, an estimated 78% of LEAs submitted data about homeless children to DOE (National Center for Homeless Education, 2008). During 2010, an estimated 87% of LEAs submitted data (National Center for Homeless Education, 2011).

California, which generally accounts for more than 25% of the national total of homeless children, changed its procedure for collecting 2010 McKinney-Vento data and reported challenges to implementing its new data collection process. As explained by Leanne Wheeler of the Title I Policy and Program Guidance Improvement and Accountability Division of the California Department of Education: "Many local educational agencies (LEAs) and homeless liaisons are still learning about the new system and the collection/input of their homeless students. We are continuously trying to work with our LEAs and homeless liaisons to better identify and report these students." The number reported by California for 2010 decreased from the previous year by 162,822 children (dropping from 496,953 in 2009 to 334,131 in 2010) at a time when numbers increased in every region of the nation, particularly in the larger states. The accurate number of homeless children in California in 2010 will likely remain unknown.

All school districts are required to identify homeless children who are enrolled in local school districts. Many states are successfully identifying and serving homeless children; this is very important and challenging work, especially given that the resources available are not enough

to respond to the need. We applaud the efforts of states that effectively identify and serve homeless students. LEAs throughout the country are of widely varying size, resources, capacities, and circumstances. In some districts, continued lack of awareness of homelessness and its definition among school personnel leads to the under-reporting of homeless children. In addition, lack of program capacity and funding to carry out the requirements affects the outreach and identification efforts of many school districts. Finally, DOE data collection requirements are relatively new; thus, not all schools report complete data sets to their districts and not all districts report complete data sets to their states for transmission to the federal government. Therefore, it is likely that DOE numbers are an undercount in many states and in some more so than others.

Our estimates for the total numbers of homeless children in each state and the numbers of homeless children under age six are approximations based on the number of school-age children reported by DOE. However, given current data sets, it is the best data available nationally. It is important to include these children since they make up almost half of the population of homeless children and are in a very important period in their development.

Children in rural areas are among the most hidden of homeless children and may not be fully represented in this report, contributing further to an undercount. Rural areas remain home to an estimated 9% of homeless people (Post, 2002). More sobering, the rate of homelessness in some rural areas may be greater than ten times that of large cities (Lawrence, 1995). In addition, rural conditions can help to obscure homelessness. Funding for homeless assistance programs is less available in rural areas, limiting access to services, transportation, and affordable housing (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2010; Aron & Fitchen, 1996).

### Well-Being Domain

The Well-Being Domain examines characteristics associated with general child well-being and is comprised of the following three sub-domains: food security, health, and education. To construct the score for the Well-Being Domain, each variable within the sub-domains was ranked on a scale of 1 to 50. The variable scores were then added together and ranked to create the sub-domain score. The Well-Being Domain score was created by adding together each of the three sub-domain scores and ranking these from 1 to 50. Scores within the Well-Being Domain display more variation than other domains, specifically between 2006 and 2007.

Many states jumped significantly on the Wellbeing rank from 2006-2007—most likely due to methodological issues. For the Education factor, the earlier report used both McKinney-Vento and National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) data. For the 2010 report, only NAEP data were used. Additionally, the Health factor variables changed. In the earlier report, we used four variables from the National Center for Health Statistics National Survey of Children's Health. The variables were: overall health, asthma, traumatic stress, and emotional disturbance. In the 2010 report, the traumatic stress variable was not used and the wording of the overall health, asthma, and emotional disturbance questions changed. These changes are discussed in more detail below.

### a. Food Security

#### Data Source

- U.S. Department of Agriculture, Household Food Security in the United States Annual Reports.

Each year, USDA surveys 50,000 households to assess food security by using a supplement to the Current Population Survey. If households are screened as being food secure, they are not asked specific questions about food security. If they are screened as being food insecure, the full food security survey is administered.

#### Variable(s)

- Percentage of households with very low food security.

USDA provides the percentage of households with very low food security. We divided this percentage to generate how many households out of 100 have very low food security. Assuming that very low food security rates disproportionately affect families that experience homelessness, the Report Card uses these percentages of households identified as having very low food security.

Food security is defined as "assured access for every person to enough nutritious food to sustain an active and healthy life including food availability (adequate food supply); food access (people can get to food); and appropriate food use (the absorption of essential nutrients)" (Bread for the World Institute, 2006). Food insecurity is defined as "having limited access to adequate food due to financial and other resources." In short, families experiencing food insecurity do not know where their next meal is coming from. The USDA further specifies a "very low food security category," defined as households that experience food insecurity with hunger, and report "multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake" (Coleman-Jensen, Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2011). Food security survey questions asked of adult respondents inquire about:

- Will food run out before there is money to buy more?
- Inability to afford the cost of a balanced meal?
- Unable to afford enough food and remaining hungry?
- Losing weight because there is not enough money for food?
- Unable to eat for a whole day because there was not enough money for food?

In 2005, the national average for very low food security (having experienced hunger) was 3.9% (Cooper & Weill, 2007). In 2010, this average rose to 5.6% (Coleman-Jensen, Nord, Andrews, & Carlson, 2011).

#### Limitations

The annual Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement is conducted by sampling and screening residential addresses. If families are residing in shelters, hotels/motels, or are doubled up with families or friends, they are not included in the sampling frame. The very low food security rates are reported as direct percentages and are not specific to families that are experiencing homelessness. It is likely that the actual rate of very low food security among the

population of homeless children is much higher than the overall rate of very low food security. A possible source of reporting bias is a household respondent's willingness to disclose their level of food insecurity. In the case of households that have children, it is possible that parents might not be willing to disclose food insecurity that affects their children for fear of stigma, embarrassment, or other consequences (e.g., fear of losing children to child welfare systems).

## **b. Health**

### **Data Source**

- National Center of Health Statistics, National Survey of Children's Health.

The National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH), sponsored by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was conducted in either English or Spanish. It assessed children's health across eight domains: demographics, physical and mental health status, health insurance, health care utilization and access to health care, medical home (e.g., ongoing primary care), family functioning, parents' health, and neighborhood characteristics (Blumberg, et al., 2003). A total of 91,642 child level interviews were conducted in 2011 (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2011). Telephone numbers were randomly sampled, (with one child under 18 years randomly selected as the interview subject). The respondent was an adult in the household who had the most knowledge about the child's health. Over 95% of the time, the respondent was a child's parent or guardian.

### **Variables**

- How many children have one or more current chronic conditions that their parents rate as moderate or severe?
- How many children currently have asthma?
- How many children currently have ADD/ADHD?

### **Homelessness Proxy**

- 0-99% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Within the NSCH, there are no data on homelessness but there are data on the Federal Poverty Level. The U.S. Census Bureau is responsible for calculating poverty thresholds each year used to determine the number of Americans living in poverty. See page 105. HHS creates the Guidelines as a simplified version of these thresholds and uses it for administrative purposes such as calculating eligibility for various federal programs (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2011).

### **Limitations**

Data are only available for 2007. Therefore, the 2007 values were used to calculate the well-being ranks for both 2007 and 2011. The phrasing of all questions from 2003 to 2007 has changed:

- Overall Health: 2003 survey asked: How many children/youth (ages 0-17) currently have health conditions described as moderate or severe by their parents?; 2007 survey asked: How many children have one or more current chronic conditions that their parents rate as moderate or severe?

- Asthma: 2003 survey asked: How many children/youth (ages 0-17) experienced one or more asthma-related health issues during the past 12 months?; 2007 survey asked: How many children currently have asthma?
- Emotional disturbances: 2003 survey asked: How many children/youth (ages 3-17) have moderate or severe difficulties in the areas of emotions, concentration, behavior, or being able to get along with other people?; 2007 survey asked: How many children currently have ADD/ADHD and take medication for this condition? We included both those children taking medication and those children who are currently diagnosed but not currently taking medication.
- Additionally, the 2006 ranks included a measure of traumatic stress that is no longer included in the survey and there is no substitute question. Therefore, we have omitted this variable. The 2003 question read: When you have a serious disagreement with your household members, how often do you end up hitting or throwing things?

To enhance the representativeness of the NSCH sample, results were weighted to adjust for various potential biases such as exclusion of households without telephones. Based on evidence that households with no telephone service may be similar to households that have experienced service interruptions, researchers used data from previous census and population surveys to identify the number of households who experienced service interruption, and extrapolated the number of households without telephones (Blumberg et al., 2003). Increased weight was assigned to households with interrupted telephone service. While this adjustment may increase the representativeness of the sample for families who are housed but struggling financially to pay utilities, it does not consider families who may be living in shelters, cars, or on the streets, or who are doubled-up.

### c. Education

#### Data Source

- National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP).

The NAEP is conducted periodically among students in grades 4, 8, and 12 to gauge the state, regional, and national academic performance of selected subjects. NAEP testing is also conducted to determine long-term trends by assessing samples of students at ages 9, 13, or 17 years. Academic areas assessed include mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, and U.S. history (NAEP, 2011). Each state uses the same tests each year, allowing for a common metric across states and continuous documentation of student progress. Possible scores include the following (NAEP, 2011):

- “Below Basic”—students who do not achieve even partial mastery score.
- “Basic”—partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills fundamental for proficient work. This is not considered a satisfactory level.
- “Proficient”—progress at the level necessary for grade promotion or graduation.
- “Advanced”—superior performance at a higher level than what is necessary for grade promotion or graduation.

National assessments include a representative probability sample of schools and students, and a selected private school sample of about 700 schools with up to 60 students per school

(National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). NAEP state assessments include mathematics, reading, science, and writing, and include a representative state sample of schools and students. An average state sample includes 2,500 students across 100 public schools. Schools with similar characteristics such as physical location, extent of minority enrollment, state-based achievement scores, and median income are stratified within each state to improve reliability (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011). NAEP aims to assess as many randomly selected students as possible. NAEP identifies students who have disabilities or are English language learners and may require special accommodations to participate (National Center for Education Statistics, 2011).

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires that states ensure that homeless children have access to a free, appropriate public education and that school districts provide data to the federal government. McKinney-Vento educational data are available for some states but DOE requires only those school districts receiving McKinney-Vento sub-grants to submit data on the numbers of homeless children who took state assessments in the previous academic year, and the number of homeless children who met or exceeded state proficiency in reading and math. This requirement was first put into place by DOE in 2003. Since only 5% of school districts receive McKinney-Vento sub-grants, the data do not represent all children experiencing homelessness and were not used to generate ranks for this report card. In addition, testing data only reflect a "snapshot" of children who were in attendance on the day the test was administered. Since the overall number of homeless children reported for the year is an annual number, it is not possible to compare the number of homeless children taking a test to the overall number of students identified as homeless over the course of a year.

While some states collect and report proficiency levels for the McKinney-Vento educational data, these data are not comparable because states develop their own assessments and gauge proficiency by their own standards. There is no standardized test used for McKinney-Vento educational data. We used National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) scores to generate proficiency rates.

#### **Variables**

- Children scoring proficient or higher in 4th grade reading.
- Children scoring proficient or higher in 8th grade reading.
- Children scoring proficient or higher in 4th grade math.
- Children scoring proficient or higher in 8th grade math.

#### **Homelessness Proxy**

- National School Lunch Program (NSLP) eligibility.

While there are no residential status questions, NAEP collects information about eligibility for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National School Lunch Program (NSLP). NSLP provides reduced priced meals to children between 130%-185% of the FPL and free meals to students below 130% of the FPL (U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2011). Students who meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness are automatically enrolled into the NSLP without an application (United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, 2011). Therefore, students eligible for the NSLP represent a conservative estimate of children who are homeless.

### Limitations

While the NSLP provides an adequate proxy for children who are homeless, the lack of data sets specifically related to homeless children limit the precision of the academic proficiency measurement. Data from the school lunch program likely overestimate proficiency. Factors may impact whether or not homeless children, or a representative sample of NSLP eligible children, were assessed. For example, high mobility rates mean that homeless children may not have been in school on testing day; these children may also have been absent for other reasons not related to homelessness.

### Risk for Child Homelessness Domain

The Risk for Child Homelessness Domain uses various structural determinants of homelessness at the state level. Family homelessness is used as a proxy for child homelessness because the Report Card is based on children who are members of homeless families and does not include unaccompanied youth.

Often when thinking about predictors of homelessness, we focus on factors related to individual vulnerability, such as the recent birth of a child or parental hospitalization for a mental health or substance use problem. However, individual factors only tell us who is more likely to be affected by various structural factors that contribute to losing one's home. Structural factors describe the "why" of homelessness, not the "who." Therefore, we have developed this domain to focus on the structural determinants of family homelessness and have included factors within sub-domains of poverty, household structure, housing market factors, and generosity of benefits. The impact of unique state or regional characteristics and events (e.g., natural disasters, local context) is not directly captured.

Variables within each sub-domain were ranked and states were scored according to quintile (1 point for the top fifth; up to 5 points for the bottom fifth). All ranks within each sub-domain were averaged to compute an overall sub-domain score between 1 and 5 then all four sub-domain scores were added together to create an overall score from 4 to 20. Scores were assigned based on quintile to help smooth out some of the random variation in measurement. When quintile scores were assigned, total index scores were calculated by taking the average score within each sub-domain. The four sub-domain scores were then added together to create an overall index score for each state. Higher scores indicate the presence of greater risk for homelessness (max score = 20).

A linear index has various limitations. First, there are data limitations. For some desired data elements, we could not find or calculate state level estimates. We also could not find all the data for a given year. With different years of data, it is difficult to determine which events are causes and which are outcomes. Second, our scoring strategy may not fully account for the correlation among covariates. As a result, some factors, such as poverty, may be weighted more heavily than other elements.

#### a. Poverty

##### Data Source

- U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey.

**Variable**

- Population at less than 50% of the Federal Poverty Level.

Poverty is represented by a single variable—the rate of extreme poverty (the percentage of households with incomes at 50% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or lower). See page 105. Of all the state descriptors that we considered, extreme poverty was by far the strongest predictor of family homelessness.

**Limitations**

As discussed in the Policy and Planning section, questions remain about whether or not the Federal Poverty Level accurately reflects the current economic environment, is set at an appropriate level, and whether it is a reliable measure.

**a. Household Structure**

The household structure sub-domain is comprised of two variables: female-headed households and teen births. These two variables are included because they focus on families who are especially vulnerable to an economic catastrophe. The majority of homeless females are headed by women alone. In general, most female-headed households do not become homeless. However, these households are more vulnerable to events such as the loss of a job or the serious illness of a child. Single mothers are often only one catastrophe away from homelessness since they are solely responsible for wage earning, child care, and homemaking. For women with children who have a limited education and job skills, the options for survival are low-paying service-sector jobs with inflexible hours and inadequate benefits. Similarly, areas with high teen birth rates include many children with parents who are lacking the education and incomes of older parents and are more likely to become homeless.

**1. Female Headed Households****Data Source**

- U.S. Census.

**Variable(s)**

- Percentage of households with female householder, no husband present, with own children under 18 years.

**Limitations**

The major limitation of the female-headed households variable is that the data used in the report card are not broken down by poverty. If we used data based on female-headed households at or below 50% of poverty this would better capture those families experiencing homelessness. Another limitation is that census data are only available every ten years. It is possible that the 2010 census data were a more accurate representation of 2007 than the 2000 census data that were used.

**2. Teen Birth Rates****Data Source**

- Center for Disease Control.

**Variable(s)**

- Teen birth rate per 1,000.

**Limitations**

Similar to female-headed households, we were unable to control for teen birth rates for women under 50% of poverty.

**b. Risk Factors: Housing Market**

The housing market domain represents the supply side of the equation: How much housing is available for families at the low end of the economic ladder?

**1. Extreme Housing Need****Data Source**

- U.S. Census.
- National Low Income Housing Council, U.S. Census Current Population Survey.

**Variable(s)**

- Percentage of renter households that lack complete plumbing (used only in 2007 rank). *Calculated by dividing the total number of renter households that lack complete plumbing by the total number of renter households.*
- Percentage of households that are severely housing burdened (paying 50% or more of income in rent) (used only in 2010 rank). *Calculated by dividing the total number of renter households that are severely housing burdened by the total number of renter households.*

Extreme housing need is defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as paying 50% or more of income for rent or living in substandard housing (Steffen et al., 2011). To capture this, we utilized data on "severely housing burdened" individuals that was defined as paying 50% or more of income in rent and the percentage of renter households that lack complete plumbing. Extreme housing need is a strong predictor of family homelessness because it includes the group that may be one expense away from eviction or is living in substandard housing.

**Limitations**

Due to the unavailability of the same variable at both data points, we used the percentage of renter households with incomplete plumbing from the 2000 census as our measure for the 2007 rank and we used the percentage of households paying 50% or more of their income in rent from 2009 as our measure for the 2010 rank. The 2009 data may more accurately represent 2007 than the 2000 data. While the report card includes renter households that lack adequate plumbing, in rural communities there may be a high percentage of owner households that lack adequate plumbing and are at risk for homelessness. Furthermore, only 3% of households with worst case housing needs are accounted for by substandard housing alone (Steffen et al., 2011). The household data do not focus on families; a household can be an individual or adults without children.

**2. Home Foreclosures****Data Source**

- RealtyTrac.

**Variable(s)**

- State rank by households in foreclosure (1=best; 50 = worst).

Foreclosure rates are an indicator of diminished housing stock. In many locales, foreclosures lead to the eviction of vulnerable tenants and are associated with rising rates of homelessness.

**Limitations**

Typically, when we talk about “households” we are speaking about family units, or groups of people who are living together. In the case of foreclosure data a “household” is a dwelling. While foreclosure rates are indicators of housing availability and potential homelessness, these rates do not capture the precarious housing situations of families who are living on the streets, in shelters, or those who move from one doubled-up situation to another. Also, it is unclear whether foreclosure rates are a reflection of housing situations or the mortgage crisis. Many homes currently under foreclosure were purchased as investment properties and were not occupied. Because the RealtyTrac data refer to a household as a dwelling and not a person or group of people, these numbers likely over represent the impact of the foreclosure crisis in certain states, such as Florida, where the majority of homes under foreclosure were likely to be vacation homes or investment properties and were not occupied. No foreclosure data focus specifically on dwellings that were used for rental properties

**c. Generosity of Benefits**

The final risk factor, generosity of benefits, describes the income side of the affordable housing equation. When rent far exceeds income, people cannot afford to maintain their housing. For those with extremely low incomes, public benefits are essential for keeping this equation balanced. This domain is made up of four variables: use of federal child care vouchers, ratio of TANF benefit to a state's Fair Market Rent (FMR), rate of children who lack insurance, and participation in SNAP. Each of these variables represent resources that help buffer the impact of poverty. Child care vouchers enable people to work. SNAP helps cover the cost of food so that wages can be dedicated to other essentials such as rent. Although children tend to have relatively low health care expenditures, without routine care, a small problem can become an emergency, leading to missed work and costly expenditures. Finally, the ratio of TANF benefit to the Fair Market Rent is an indicator of whether public benefits are sufficient to pay rent.

**1. Ratio of TANF to Fair Market Rent****Data Source**

- Urban Institute (TANF Awards).
- National Low Income Housing Coalition (Fair Market Rent).

**Variable(s)**

- Percentage of TANF necessary to pay fair market rent. *Calculated as FMR for a two bedroom apartment/TANF maximum allotment for a family of three.*

In three states (California, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin), there are two different possible TANF maximum allotments. In California and Massachusetts the difference in rate is for exempt and non-exempt participants. In Wisconsin the difference is between W-2 Transition

and Community Service Jobs. For these states, we averaged the two amounts and used this amount for the state maximum allotment.

#### Limitations

Averaging the two possible amounts for California, Massachusetts, and Wisconsin may not accurately capture the maximum TANF allotment. For California and Massachusetts, non-exempt means that someone in the household must be working; therefore, the TANF amount does not accurately represent the total income for the household. Fair market rent varies widely from community to community; FMR in Boston is much higher than FMR in Western Massachusetts. Therefore, the state level FMR is not a perfect measure for the cost of living throughout the state.

### 2. Use of Federal Child Care Vouchers

#### Data Source

- Children's Defense Fund (2007) (number of children).
- U.S. Census Age and Sex Composition Census Brief (2010) (number of children).
- U.S. Census American Community Survey 5 Year Estimates (percentage of children in poverty).
- U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration of Children and Families (number of child care vouchers).

#### Variable(s)

- Percentage of children in poverty served by Federal child care vouchers. *Calculated as average monthly number of child care vouchers / (total number of children \* % children under 18 years below poverty level in last 12 months)*

#### Homelessness Proxy

No additional controls

#### Limitations

The percentage of children in poverty was a 5-year estimate of 2005-2009. There may have been variation for 2007 and 2010. Federal Child Care Voucher data are reported as a monthly average. We were unable to determine how many unduplicated children received a child care voucher at some point during the year. The Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) is a federal program that provides child care assistance to low-income families (Child Care Bureau, Administration for Children and Families, 2004). Child care assistance is granted by the CCDF to states and each state determines its own eligibility guidelines. This does not allow us to determine how many vouchers actually went to children who are homeless or children who are below 50% of the FPL.

### 3. Participation in SNAP

#### Data Source

- U.S. Department of Agriculture.

#### Variable(s)

- Estimates of SNAP Participation Rates.

**Limitations:**

Participation in SNAP is reported by the U.S. Department of Agriculture as a number derived from a regression analysis. SNAP is available for individuals and households that meet certain resource and income tests. There are additional requirements regarding employment status and for those who are elderly, disabled, or immigrants. We were unable to determine SNAP participation for families with children, or, more specifically, families who are homeless or below 50 percent of the FPL, separate from individuals and other households; the participation rates include all those who are eligible.

**4. Percentage of Children Who Lack Insurance****Data Source**

- U.S. Census.

**Variable(s)**

- Percentage of children who lack insurance.

**Limitations**

We were unable to determine the percentage of children who are homeless or below 50% of FPL that lack insurance. The available data were for all children. This measure does not capture the percentage of children who are underinsured. Even with insurance, sometimes co-pays and deductibles are so high that families with insurance are still unable to bring their children to the doctor.

**State Policy and Planning Efforts Domain**

The State Policy and Planning Domain examines current policies and activities using four factors. These factors include housing, income, health, and planning. To construct the score for this domain, data were collected for each sub-domain to determine a score (see below for more detailed information). Each state was then ranked on a scale of 1 to 50 based on their scores in each factor. The overall rank was created by adding each state's rank for the housing, income, and health factors plus the planning factor score, and then ranking the states based on the total number from 1 to 50 (1=best, 50=worst). If there were ties between states, the state with the lower percent of homeless children was assigned the better rank.

**Limitations**

The first version of *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness* included an education policy factor. The 2010 version does not include an education policy factor for 2007 and 2010.

**a. Housing****Data Sources**

- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development's 2007 and 2010. Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Housing Inventory Chart.
- Center for Community Change's Housing Trust Fund Project.

The HUD reports are based on data collected during the federal fiscal year (October 1-September 30).

**Variables**

- Number of Emergency Shelter Family Units (HUD).
- Transitional Housing Family Units (HUD).
- Permanent Supportive Housing Family Units (HUD).
- Homeless Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing (HPRP) Units (HUD, 2010 only).
- Existence of State Housing Trust Funds (Center for Community Change).

Based on the sources described above, we reported the number of family units in each state. We summed these numbers to determine total family units or capacity in each state. We calculated an estimate of the number of homeless families in the state by dividing the total number of homeless children (using data from the Extent domain) by two because the average homeless family is comprised of two children (Burt & Aron, 2000). We then calculated the total capacity as a percentage of need (total number of homeless families/total number of family units). To determine the Housing score, each state was ranked based on total capacity as a percentage of need and received bonus points for existing state housing trust funds. The Housing score was then used to rank the states from 1-50 (1=best, 50=worst). If there were ties between states, the state with the lower percent of homeless children was assigned the better ranking.

**Limitations**

HUD's Continuum of Care data are the most complete data set available nationally to determine the numbers of family units, but do not include units that are not a part of the Continuum of Care. For example, if a local community group runs an emergency shelter, but is not part of the Continuum of Care, it is not reported in this data set. We did not include data on the existence of county or locally-based Housing Trust Funds. Additionally, in the current economic climate, state-based Housing Trust Funds are likely to be experiencing financial difficulty since they are often based on real estate transfer taxes. Despite these limitations, state Housing Trust Funds are an important part of creating and maintaining affordable housing stock. For the 2007 data, we used the same data reported in the first version of *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness* because it was based on information collected through 2007.

**b. Income****Data Sources**

- Center for American Progress.
- National Low-Income Housing Coalition Out of Reach Report.
- The Hatcher Group Tax Credits for Working Families Online Resource Center.
- Personal communication between Kelley Gossett, Director of Policy and Planning at Horizons for Homeless Children, and Christina Murphy, Director of the Campaign to End Child Homelessness at The National Center on Family Homelessness.

**Variables**

- State Minimum Wage (Center for American Progress, 2010 minimum wage from

National Low Income Housing Coalition).

- Housing Wage for a two-bedroom at fair market rent (National Low Income Housing Coalition).
- State Earned Income Tax Credit (Hatcher Group).
- Prioritization of Homeless Families when Distributing Child Care Vouchers (Personal Communication).

We compared the minimum wage to the housing wage for a two-bedroom unit at fair market rent (FMR) through a simple calculation:  $[(\text{Minimum wage} / \text{Housing wage}) \times 100]$  to find the percent earned compared to what is needed to afford a two-bedroom unit at FMR in each state. For example, if the minimum wage is \$5.00 and the housing wage for a two-bedroom at fair market rent is \$10.00, then a worker is only earning 50 percent of what he/she needs to cover rent each month.

We chose to use the FMR for a two-bedroom unit based on the assumption that it is the smallest and therefore least expensive housing option that would be viable for a family experiencing homelessness. We then ranked each of the states based on the percent earned compared to what is needed to afford a two-bedroom at FMR.

We collected information about the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) for each state, including whether or not the state EITC is refundable. A refundable EITC is most helpful to low-income families. States that have an EITC received one round of bonus points; states whose EITCs are refundable received another round of bonus points. For the 2007 data, we gave additional bonus points to the one state that gave priority to homeless families in distributing child care vouchers—Massachusetts (also the only state to receive these bonus points in the earlier version of *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness*).

No states received these bonus points in the 2010 data. All bonus points earned were added to the rank of each state to compute the overall Income score. The Income score was then used to rank the states from 1-50 (1=best, 50=worst). If there were ties between states, the state with the lower percent of homeless children was assigned the better ranking.

#### Limitations

Data on minimum wages represent an estimate of what a homeless family might earn. No data are available describing the income of homeless families. The federal minimum wage increased in July 2007 from \$5.15/hour to \$5.85/hour; in July 2008 to \$6.55/hour; and in July 2009 to \$7.25/hour (United States Department of Labor, 2011). For the 2007 data, we used the minimum wage before it was increased (\$5.15/hour). State Earned Income Tax Credits, while important, do not provide families with ongoing income support. Rather, families are more likely to receive one lump sum payment. The amount varies by state and may not be enough to make a substantial difference in the family's economic situation. Furthermore, although the State EITCs do lift families out of poverty, it is important to factor in how the Federal Poverty Level is calculated. Many consider the current measure for the Federal Poverty Level inadequate (Cathuen & Fass, 2008).

The FPL is based on research from the 1960s that showed that families spent one-third of their income on food. As a result, the FPL was set by multiplying food costs by three. This

measure has not been updated to reflect the current costs of food: an average family now spends only one-seventh of their income on food. In addition, other costs such as housing, child care, health care, and transportation have become increasingly more expensive for families.

A family's pre-tax cash income is assessed and compared to the poverty threshold for their family size. If a family's income is below the threshold, they are thought to be living in poverty. This measure does not take into account earnings lost to income taxes, debt, hardships related to substandard housing, or financial assets.

The U.S. Census Bureau uses a standard poverty threshold, which is updated for inflation each year. However, this threshold does not vary by state and thus does not account for regional variations in cost of living. In November 2011, the U.S. Census released a Supplemental Poverty Measure (SPM) that will be released along with the official measure each year. The SPM does not replace the official measure, and is not used to determine program eligibility or funding distribution. It is an additional statistic that provides further understanding of economic trends and conditions. The SPM is based on the following (U.S. Census Bureau, 2011):

- Measurements of all related individuals living at the same address, including coresident and unrelated children cared for by the family as well as cohabitators and their children.
- The 33rd percentile of expenditures on food, clothing, shelter, and utilities (FCSU) of consumer units with two children multiplied by 1.2.
- Geographic adjustments for differences in housing costs and a scale for family size and composition.
- Updates based on a five year moving average of expenditures on FCSU; and the sum of cash income plus in-kind benefits that families can use to meet their FCSU needs, minus taxes (or plus tax credits), minus work expenses, and minus out-of-pocket medical expenses.

### **c. Health**

#### **Data Sources**

- U.S. Census Bureau.

#### **Variables**

- Health Insurance Coverage Status and Type of Coverage by State—Children Under 18: 1999 to 2010 (percentage of children who are not covered).

We used U.S. Census Bureau data (Health Insurance Coverage Status and Type of Coverage by State—Children Under 18: 1999 to 2010) to report the percentage of children who are not covered. We then ranked each state based on this figure (1=best, 50=worst). In the cases where there were ties between states, the state with the lower percent of homeless children was assigned the better ranking.

#### **Limitations**

The data reported are not specifically for children who are homeless, although it is highly likely that homeless children are included in these data sets. In addition, because of a lack of data, we do not address access to physical, mental, and dental health providers.

#### d. Planning

##### Data Sources

- U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) Fact Sheets: "Active State and Territory Interagency Councils on Homelessness" and "Ten Year Plan Update."
- Existing Ten Year Plans, reports, and other relevant documents from each state.

##### Variables

- Active Interagency Council on Homelessness.
- Ten Year Plan.
- Ten Year Plan Mentions Children and Families.
- Ten Year Plan Focuses on Children and Families.
- Stage of Planning for Ten Year Plan.

Many states have created Interagency Councils on Homelessness (ICH) and engaged in planning efforts to end homelessness within ten years. For each state, we reviewed the status of the ICH. We tried to determine whether it is active or not (in existence) and the Ten Year planning efforts (in existence). We also called and left messages for ICH representatives or other key informants to ensure that we had the most accurate information. We spoke with about 30% of the states we attempted to contact. In addition to using information collected by the USICH, we conducted internet searches using key search terms such as the state name plus "interagency council," "homeless," "homelessness," "ten-year plan," etc. We examined existing Ten Year Plans, state reports on homelessness, policy academy documents, and Interagency Council reports that we found online for each state. We documented any mention of children and families in the plans and reports. We then classified each state's planning efforts in the following categories:

- *Extensive Planning* indicates that the state has an active Interagency Council on Homelessness and has created a comprehensive Ten Year Plan to end homelessness that includes an extensive focus on children and families.
- *Moderate Planning* indicates that the state has an active Interagency Council on Homelessness and has created a Ten Year Plan to end homelessness, or a similar statewide plan/report that includes some mention of children and families. Or, moderate planning indicates that the state has an inactive Interagency Council on Homelessness, but has created a Ten Year Plan to end homelessness, or a similar statewide plan/report, that includes a strong focus on children and families.
- *Early Stages of Planning* indicates that the state has recently established an Interagency Council on Homelessness, and therefore has not created a Ten Year Plan to end homelessness or is now in the process of creating a Ten Year Plan to end homelessness.
- *Inadequate Planning* indicates a state does not have an active Interagency Council on Homelessness or a Ten Year Plan; has an active Interagency Council but no Ten Year Plan; has drafted a Plan that has not been adopted; or has a Ten Year Plan but the Plan does not mention children or families.

Each state received points based on whether they received a classification of Extensive, Moderate, Early, or Inadequate—all states that received the same classification received the same number of points. Within the Inadequate classification, we assigned two different sets of points: 1. States that have no Interagency Council and no Ten Year Plan, and 2. All the other Inadequate states.

#### Limitations

Our examination of planning efforts was limited to written materials that we could find online that were produced by the USICH and by states on their Ten Year planning and Interagency Council work. We did not conduct key informant interviews. In addition, our focus was on planning initiated by state agencies, state legislatures, and/or the governor's office. It does not include the important work being done by community-based organizations around the country, unless these organizations were also involved in state-initiated Ten Year planning or Interagency Council efforts. For the 2007 data, we used the same classifications, points, and rankings as those that appeared in the earlier version of *America's Youngest Outcasts: State Report Card on Child Homelessness* because it was based on information collected through 2008. For the 2010 data, because state planning activities have advanced beyond our initial classifications, we slightly modified the definitions to include all current activities.

#### Composite Rank for Each State

This report captures the complexity of child homelessness. Although each state has been assigned an overall rank, this single number represents a composite of the four domains described above and multiple factors within the domains. To arrive at the composite rank (1=best, 50=worst), each state was ranked on:

- Extent of Child Homelessness (percent of homeless children out of all children in the state).
- Child Well-Being (hunger, health, and education).
- Risk Factors for Child Homelessness (factors related to generosity of benefits, housing market factors, household structure, and extreme poverty).
- State Policy and Planning Efforts (policies related to health, income, and housing, as well as levels of planning to end child and family homelessness).

State ranks on extent of child homelessness, child well-being, risk for child homelessness, and state policy and planning efforts were then summed. The composite rank was based on the sum of these four domain rankings. In cases where there were ties between states, the state with the lower percent of homeless children was assigned the better ranking.

#### Limitations

The limitations of individual data sources have been discussed earlier. The use of a scoring and ranking mechanism based on the selected domains and factors provides a profile that has various limitations.

#### District of Columbia

The District of Columbia was not included in the first version of *America's Youngest Outcasts*. In the 2010 report, we include a one-page description of the status of homeless children in the District with information from all four domains for 2007 and 2010.

## Appendix B: Housing

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At the most basic level, homelessness occurs when a family cannot afford to pay for appropriate<sup>1</sup> housing. Homelessness, though, does not just refer to the lack of a home. It implies disconnection from relationships, routines, possessions, and community. To ensure that a family will find and maintain decent, affordable, appropriate housing, various supports and services must be in place. As noted throughout our Report Card, housing is essential but it is not sufficient by itself to address child and family homelessness. Both housing and services must be part of any effective solution. This appendix focuses on the housing part of the equation. It reviews the state of housing resources, programs, and policies, and how they have affected the availability of affordable housing and assistance in paying for it over the past 5 to 10 years.

### A. The Affordability Gap

Every year, the National Low Income Housing Coalition (NLIHC) publishes “Out of Reach,” a state-by-state analysis of the gap between the cost of housing and wages.<sup>2</sup> Based on the principle that housing-related costs should consume no more than 30% of a household’s gross income, “Out of Reach” calculates the hourly wage that a full-time worker needs in order to afford Fair Market Rent (FMR), including utilities. Based on the national average 2-bedroom (BR) FMR of \$960/month, the so-called Housing Wage is \$18.46/hour (\$38,400/year). Clearly, the Housing Wage is higher in more expensive housing markets and for families needing larger units.

Most renters earn significantly less than the Housing Wage for an “average” 2-bedroom apartment:

- Nationally, the average renter earns about \$13.52/hour (73% of the national Housing Wage).
- Someone working full time at the federal minimum wage (\$7.25/hour) earns 39% of the Housing Wage.
- A working family grossing 50% of the area median income (AMI) — that is, at the high end of the “very low income” category — is earning 86% of the Housing Wage.
- A working family grossing 30% of the AMI (the high end of the “extremely low income” category) is earning only 52% of the Housing Wage.

If a renter family earning less than the Housing Wage isn’t lucky enough to have subsidized housing or to live in a below-market-rent apartment, they are paying more than 30% of their income for housing.

- Of the 6.75 million very low income (VLI) families counted by the 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) — more than 2/3 of whom reported earned income — approximately one quarter reported having housing assistance, half reported being “severely rent-burdened” (paying over half of their income to cover rent/utilities), and

the remaining fourth reported being “moderately rent-burdened” (paying 30-50% of their income for housing costs).

- Of the 3.9 million extremely low income (ELI) families counted in the 2009 ACS — more than half of whom reported earned income — approximately one-third reported having housing assistance, two-thirds reported being severely rent-burdened, and one-sixth reported being moderately rent-burdened (presumably in subsidized situations where rent and utilities combined to exceed the FMR).<sup>3,4</sup>

Overall, according to the 2009 ACS, 52% of all U.S. renters paid more than 30% of their income for housing — up from 40% a decade ago, and up from 25% in 1960 — and 26% of all renters paid more than 50% of their income for housing — the definition of “severely rent-burdened” — as compared with 19.7% in 2000, and 11.9% in 1960.<sup>5</sup>

Approximately 28% of very low-income (VLI) renters (~ 2 million households) and 51% of extremely low-income (ELI) renters (~ 5.1 million households) paid more than 50% of their incomes for housing in 2009.<sup>6</sup> These 7.1 million severely rent-burdened households with incomes under 50% of AMI represent an increase by 20% above 2007 levels, and an increase by 42% above 2001 levels, reflecting a nationwide problem fueled by declining incomes, steady erosion of an already inadequate supply of affordable housing, and an ongoing deficit of rental assistance.<sup>7,8,9</sup>

These statistics would be a lot worse without the mitigating effect of the housing assistance received by one-in-three extremely low-income households and one-in-four very low-income households in 2009. One has to look no farther than the statistics describing the prevalence of severe rent burden among unassisted households—50% of unassisted renters with “very low” incomes and 75% of unassisted renters with “extremely low” incomes<sup>10</sup> —to appreciate the importance of the approximately 6 million units of assisted housing—1.2 million units of public housing, 2.1 million households using tenant-held subsidies, 1.4 million privately owned HUD-assisted units, and an estimated 1.3 million otherwise-subsidized units (e.g., Low Income Housing Tax Credit, USDA Section 521 and related programs, inclusionary zoning, etc.)—that comprise one-sixth of the rental housing stock.<sup>11,12</sup>

Intuitively, the lower a family’s income, the more likely they are to be rent-burdened in the absence of housing assistance, the less money they can set aside to cover other essential costs—food, clothing, health care, child care, transportation—and the greater their vulnerability to a budget/housing crisis—and homelessness—in the event of an unplanned expense (e.g., car repair, prescription drug) or dip in income (e.g., an unpaid sick leave, seasonal drop in hours).

Indeed, ten of the fourteen states with rates of homelessness greater than the national average also had levels of housing cost burden greater than the national average.<sup>13</sup> With the percentage of rent-burdened households increasing, it is no surprise that HUD AHAR reports showed a substantial (28.5%) increase in the annual number of family households seeking shelters or transitional housing, from 130,968 households in 2007 to 168,227 households in 2010.<sup>14</sup>

Doubled-up households are not counted at all in the AHAR or in other HUD homelessness statistics. According to the aforementioned NAEH report, the Census counted over six million doubled-up households nationwide in 2009, a 12% increase above 2008 levels. In the course of a year, one of every ten of those doubled up households can be expected to experience homelessness.<sup>15</sup>

### B. The Supply Gap

As described in a report by Harvard's Joint Center on Housing Studies (JCHS), reduced federal support for the development of affordable rental housing, the increasing difficulty of sustaining housing offered at below market rates, and the lack of project-based subsidies to stabilize rental income have all contributed to a growing shortfall in affordable rental housing.<sup>16</sup> A 10% drop in the median income of renter households from \$35,400 (2000) to \$31,980 (2009)—below pre-1980 levels—only increased pressure on the supply of affordable housing during the past decade.<sup>17</sup>

The 2009 American Community Survey (ACS) describes an increased need for affordable housing, accompanied by shrinkage in the affordable housing stock during the “boom” years when units were upgraded to serve higher income tenants, converted to condos, or demolished due to deterioration or to make way for more lucrative development. While the number of ELI renter households increased from 9.4 million (2003) to 10.4 million (2009), the number of units affordable to ELI households decreased from 7.3 million (2003) to 6.6 million (2009), widening the gap between supply and demand at the bottom end of the affordability scale. While the number of VLI renter households increased from 16.3 million (2003) to 18 million (2009), the number of units affordable to VLI households decreased from 19.9 million (2003) to 17.9 million (2009), creating a new gap between supply and demand.<sup>18</sup>

Competition for affordable rentals with higher income households exacerbates the scarcity of affordable units. Higher income renters occupy 42% of all the units affordable to the extremely low income (ELI) renters and 36% of the units affordable to very low income (VLI) renters. As a result, the vacancy rate for the most affordable units is only 4.3% nationally.<sup>19</sup> Factoring in this competition and the unavailability of units with habitability problems, the 2011 JCHS study describes a shortage of 6.8 million units affordable to ELI households (up from 5.6 million in 2003), and a shortage of 6.4 million units affordable to VLI households (up from 4.3 million in 2003).<sup>20</sup>

In the wake of the recession, low-income families with children have had an especially difficult time finding and holding onto affordable units, with nearly two-thirds paying more than half their incomes for housing in 2009.<sup>21</sup> Overall, the number of families with children paying more than 50% of income for housing increased by about 15% from 3.1 million in 2007 to 3.6 million in 2009.<sup>22</sup> The increasing difficulty covering rent was undoubtedly reflected in the 30% increase in families using homeless shelters from 130,968 families (2007) to 168,227 families (2009).<sup>23, 24</sup>

Against this backdrop of increasing need, the following sections discuss the “supply side” of affordable housing: public housing, privately owned HUD-assisted affordable housing, privately owned affordable housing developed with the help of Low Income Housing Tax Credits, privately owned unassisted affordable housing, and housing assistance programs.

### C. Loss of Public Housing

There are currently approximately 1.2 million units of federally funded public housing, reflecting a loss of about 165,000 units since the mid-1990s, and annual losses of approximately 10,000 units, primarily as a result of demolition or sale for redevelopment.<sup>25, 26</sup> Advocates point to under-funding of capital and operating budgets that contributes to irreversible decline

and eventual loss. The “Capital Needs in the Public Housing Program” a Congressionally mandated HUD study estimated a “backlog” of \$25.6 billion in overdue repairs, accessibility improvements for disabled residents, lead abatement, and water and energy conservation measures in public housing, in addition to \$3.4 billion in annual maintenance costs. That backlog will continue to grow in FY 2012, given the \$1.9 billion appropriated for capital improvements. On the positive side, the FY 2012 HUD budget funds a Rental Assistance Demonstration (RAD) program testing the feasibility of converting up to 60,000 units of public housing to Section 8 project-based units (local housing authorities would retain ownership of the units), an initiative intended to help stabilize the level of funding support, and make it easier to borrow private funds for rehabilitation.<sup>28</sup>

Public housing tenants in units lost to demolition or sale, or habitability issues are typically offered the choice between receiving a “Tenant Protection Voucher” (essentially a portable Section 8 voucher) and the opportunity to relocate to another public housing unit.<sup>29</sup> Through 2005, HUD funded and authorized local housing authorities to issue tenant protection vouchers for every public housing unit approved for demolition or disposition that was not being replaced by another public housing unit. In 2007, in response to a HUD decision to limit the number of tenant protection vouchers to occupied units, Congress directed HUD to issue tenant protection vouchers (subject to the availability of funds) for all units that were occupied within the prior 24 months, if the units were no longer available because of demolition, disposition or conversion. Notwithstanding these policies, an October 2010 Congressional Budget Office memo indicated that 40% to 50% of the public housing units lost in the past 15 years were not “replaced” by subsidies.<sup>30</sup>

#### D. Loss of Affordable Units in Privately Owned, Government Assisted Housing

The majority of the 700,000 government-assisted affordable units lost over the past 15 years were in privately owned multi-family buildings developed from the mid-1960s to the early 1980s. Under the Section 221(d)(3) and Section 236 programs, developers received low or no-interest loans and/or discounted mortgage insurance, and in exchange, made a commitment to maintain the affordability of their housing for the duration of their typically 40-year mortgage. Units developed with the help of project-based Section 8 subsidies (introduced in the mid-1970s) typically contracted to maintain affordability for 20 years. In addition to serving as the primary source of federal assistance for many projects, some Section 8 project-based subsidies were allocated<sup>31</sup> to assist financially troubled Section 221(d)(3) and Section 236 units where below-market rents were proving inadequate to support operating costs. In sum, these funding sources facilitated the creation of 1.5 million units.<sup>32, 33, 34</sup>

The National Low Income Housing Coalition estimates that another 450,000 of these units are currently at risk “because of owners opting out, maturity of the assisted mortgages, or failure of the property under HUD’s standards.”<sup>35</sup>

Depending on the nature of the government assistance that leveraged affordable rents, an owner can shed the affordability commitment by (a) allowing their below-market-rate mortgage to expire/mature; (b) pre-paying their below-market-rate mortgage; or (c) “opting out” of their project-based section 8 contract and its affordability restrictions. In addition to further depleting the stock of affordable housing, these actions could put incumbent tenants at risk of displacement.

Recognizing the importance of providing an option for tenants who wished to remain in their now more expensive unit, Congress passed legislation in 1996 requiring HUD to offer so-called “Enhanced Vouchers” to tenants in units whose affordability expired due to owner prepayment of the subsidized mortgage. Legislation in 1999 extended the availability of Enhanced Vouchers to tenants in units whose affordability expired when the owner “opted out” (i.e., failed to renew) an expiring project-based Section 8 contract. These Enhanced Vouchers provided tenants “with a right to remain in their unit after conversion to market rents, thus creating an obligation for the owner to accept the voucher.” So long as the rent remained ‘reasonable,’ the voucher covered the difference between rent and the tenant’s 30%-of-income payment—even if the rent exceeded the FMR and the local housing authority’s ordinary payment standard. If a tenant opted to move, however, the voucher would lose its “enhanced” properties, and become an ordinary Housing Choice Voucher.<sup>36</sup>

The FY 2012 HUD budget will, for the first time, afford that same access to Enhanced Vouchers to the thousands of tenants in buildings whose subsidized mortgages will expire in the next few years.<sup>37</sup>

A HUD-funded study by Abt Associates<sup>38</sup> found that the majority of developments that opted out or went into foreclosure were the buildings with the family-sized units (vs. smaller units for elders or persons with disabilities), the units offered at below-market rents, in buildings owned by for-profit entities, located in neighborhoods that could support higher rents.

#### E. A Bright Spot: The Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC)

As described in the JCHS study, “net additions to the assisted housing stock have declined continuously since the late-1970s peak of roughly 300,000 units a year. Growth in the number of assisted units fell to about 150,000 per year by the mid-1990s, and then to about 75,000 annually over the last five years, consisting almost entirely of LIHTC units.” The authors describe the LIHTC program as “nearly alone in replenishing the affordable stock, supporting both new construction and substantial rehabilitation of existing properties including older assisted developments.”<sup>39</sup> Since its inception in 1987, the LIHTC program has helped develop over 1.9 million affordable units, approximately two-thirds of which included two or more bedrooms.<sup>40</sup> LIHTC affordability protections generally last 30 years, and are often used in conjunction with HUD HOME funds or project-based Section 8s to deepen the subsidy and ensure greater affordability.

The recent Economic Recession had a chilling effect on the availability of LIHTC funding, as the corporate profits that are typically offset by tax credits, like the LIHTC, dipped. As investor demand for new tax credits waned, and as the value of those tax credits fell, new LIHTC-assisted development slowed to a trickle. Two federal Stimulus-funded gap-financing programs helped a few “shovel-ready” tax credit projects obtain the additional financing needed to begin construction.

As the economy has improved (in terms of profits, if not jobs), the tax credit market has picked up, and the LIHTC is again helping to finance affordable housing development.<sup>41</sup> The program is not without its detractors, however, and is especially vulnerable should Congress’ efforts at tax reform focus on eliminating tax expenditures like the LIHTC.<sup>42, 43</sup>

### F. Unfulfilled Potential: National Housing Trust Fund

After over a decade of trying, advocates for affordable housing finally succeeded in establishing a National Housing Trust Fund when, in July 2008, the Housing and Economic Recovery Act was signed into law by President Bush. The housing trust fund will, once capitalized, “provide grants to states [and other entities] to increase and preserve the supply of rental housing for extremely low- and very low-income families, and to increase homeownership for extremely low- and very low-income families.” Under the law, 80% of Trust Fund resources will support development and operation of rental housing, 10% will support the development of homeownership housing, and 10% will pay for planning and administration costs incurred by grantees. At least 75% of funds must benefit ELI families, and all remaining funds must benefit VLI households. All HTF-assisted units will be required to have a minimum affordability period of 30 years.<sup>44</sup> In the current political and economic climate, there is no agreement on the source of funding for the Trust Fund.<sup>45</sup>

### G. Unassisted Affordable Housing: A Dwindling, Decentralized Resource

The JCHS study of Rental Housing describes the primary importance and uncertain future of private, unassisted affordable housing:

“As important as federal assistance is in providing affordable housing, the majority of the nation’s low-cost rental stock is unassisted. Among the inventory renting for less than \$400 a month (roughly what a family of two living near the federal poverty line or what one full-time, minimum-wage worker could afford), 2.1 million units were assisted and 3.0 million were unassisted in 2009. The supply of unsubsidized units renting for \$400–600 per month is even larger, numbering 7.1 million [vs. 1.2 million assisted units].”<sup>46</sup>

Three-quarters of unassisted units renting for less than \$400 in 2009 were in 1- to 4-family structures, as were 58% of unassisted units renting for \$400-599. Typically, these buildings (and buildings with 5-9 units) are owned by individuals, rather than by organizations with greater access to resources. For the most part, these are the unassisted affordable units—in small structures, owned by individuals, with below-market-rate rents—that are being lost:

“More than one in ten single-family detached homes, which made up over a quarter of the low-rent housing stock in 1999, were permanently removed by 2009. Loss rates for multifamily properties with 2–4 units, accounting for a quarter of the 1999 low-cost stock, were even higher at 15.1 percent. Low-cost rentals in buildings with 5 or more units fared much better, with permanent loss rates of 7 percent.” “The difference in loss rates for older vs. newer multifamily properties was especially large, with rates for multifamily units built before 1960 (about 10 percent) more than six times those for units built between 1980 and 1999. Likewise, more than 15 percent of low-cost units built before 1940 were permanently lost by 2009, compared with just 6.4 percent of units built in 1980–99.”<sup>47</sup>

Smaller and older rental buildings are especially at risk, because as housing ages, a higher proportion of rental income must be invested in maintaining and replacing aging systems. The lower the rent levels, the less adequate the income stream to pay for these costs. Not surprisingly, “the loss rate for [units renting at below \$400] was nearly twice the rate of loss

for units renting at \$400–799 and four times the rate of loss for units renting for more than \$800.<sup>48</sup>

The mismatch between affordable rents and the cost of operating and maintaining rental housing also explains the slow progress in adding to the affordable rental stock, and the fact that “apart from new LIHTC units, recent multi-family construction has focused primarily on the high end of the market.”<sup>49</sup> The authors of the JCHS Rental Housing study peg the average construction cost per unit for new multifamily structures (including land and miscellaneous development costs) at about \$110,000. In expensive housing markets, land and construction costs can be two or three times that level. Family-sized housing will clearly be more expensive than smaller units for individuals. Housing industry standards suggest that monthly rent be approximately 1% of property value in order to provide acceptable returns and ensure adequate resources for maintenance. The median rent of \$1,067 reported in the Census Bureau’s 2009 Survey of Market Absorption is consistent with that standard. A household with the median renter income of about \$31,000 in 2009 would therefore have to pay more than 40 percent of that income to meet that asking rent. Including tenant-paid utilities, the total housing cost burden would be about 50 percent.<sup>50</sup> An extremely low income household (30% of AMI or about \$15,600) or a household earning the equivalent of a full-time job at the minimum wage (\$14,500) would have to contribute upwards of 85% of their income towards rent to reach the targeted 1% of property value mark. This, without a subsidy to make up the difference, an affordable rent generates insufficient revenues to cover basic costs.

These unsubsidized units are more than just an important complement to public and privately operated subsidized housing programs. They may be the only source of affordable housing for people with incomes over 50% or 60% of the area median income (the typical thresholds for the Section 8<sup>51</sup> and LIHTC<sup>52</sup> programs, respectively); they may be the only housing available to renters who have been evicted from public or subsidized housing; and they may be the only option for people who live in communities that lack a stock of government assisted housing. The JCHS study authors conclude that, “while policymakers are rightly concerned about preserving the nation’s assisted housing stock, they should focus more attention on the privately owned unsubsidized stock that supplies three times as many low-cost units but is threatened by high permanent loss rates. For example, federal tax provisions could be altered to encourage preservation of existing housing. More generous deductions and depreciation schedules for repairs and system replacements could increase investment in the stock and help restore dilapidated buildings to occupancy.”<sup>53</sup>

#### H. Impact of the Foreclosure Crisis

Although much of the public attention on the foreclosure crisis has been directed at the plight of single homeowners, increases in the foreclosure rates, have resulted in the displacement of renters who live in foreclosed properties, as well as homeowners. The authors of the JCHS study of *“The State of the Nation’s Housing: 2011”* note that the estimated 3.5 million homes lost to foreclosure between 2008 and 2010 “displaced millions of renters.” As of March 2011, there were another nearly 2.2 million homes “in the [foreclosure] pipeline, with 67% of owners having made no payments in more than a year, and 31% having made no payments in two years.” Another 2 million mortgages were 90 days or more delinquent, but not yet in the foreclosure process.<sup>54</sup>

The National Low Income Housing Coalition reports that more than 20% of properties facing foreclosure nationwide are rentals. Because rental properties often house multiple families, renters make up roughly 40% of the families facing eviction, with very low-income families and minority communities bearing the brunt of rental foreclosures:

“Nearly [60 percent of] foreclosed properties in high-poverty, non-white neighborhoods are multi-unit, as compared to [7 percent] in low poverty, white neighborhoods. Not only are properties in these neighborhoods more likely to be foreclosed upon, but each foreclosure is likely to affect more families. The impact of foreclosure is truly concentrated in these communities.”<sup>55</sup>

In May 2009, Congress passed the “Helping Families Save Their Homes Act” to require a minimum of 90 days of notice to tenants facing eviction from foreclosed properties. The legislation provided renters whose landlords had lost their properties to foreclosure the right to stay in their rental home through the term of their lease, or if the property is sold to someone who will occupy the home, for 90 days after the foreclosure. These protections will expire at the end of 2012.<sup>56</sup>

The Obama Administration has implemented a variety of strategies under the Making Home Affordable initiative, including programs targeting owners with loans owned or guaranteed by Fannie Mae, Freddie Mac, or one of the Federal Home Loan Banks; programs for owners with privately owned or guaranteed loans; programs for “underwater” owners; programs specifically targeting unemployed owners, programs for owners who have managed to stay current on payments; and programs for owners who are already delinquent.<sup>57</sup> In 2010, more than 500,000 troubled loans were permanently modified under the Housing Affordable Modification Program (HAMP), and another 1.2 million private-sector modifications were completed. But these efforts only began to address need, and many owners continue to face barriers to refinancing: low income and unemployed/under-employed owners cannot meet required payment-to-income ratios,<sup>58</sup> and owners with underwater mortgages lack the equity to meet required debt-to-value ratios. As this Report Card goes to publication, the foreclosure crisis remains an unresolved threat to affordable housing.

### I. The Central Importance of Housing Subsidies

Some 2.1 million very low and extremely low-income households receive monthly tenant-based rental assistance (TBRA) under the Section 8/Housing Choice Voucher program. Approximately 40% of these households are single parent families with children. For every household using a rent subsidy, there are three eligible households without housing assistance.<sup>59</sup> The unmet need is evidenced by the extremely long waiting lists maintained by housing authorities across the country. As rents rise and incomes stagnate, the costs of serving the existing 2.1 million voucher households will increase. Increasing costs compounded by a small decrease in the Housing Voucher line item in the FY 2012 HUD budget will combine to jeopardize the renewal of some 12,000 to 24,000 existing subsidies.<sup>60</sup>

For renters, these subsidies make the difference between housing stability and an unsustainable rent burden that preempts a family’s ability to adequately address its other basic needs. For property owners, the subsidies make it possible to offer affordable housing at FMR that is sufficient to cover operating and maintenance costs—especially important given the aging condition (median age = 33 years) of much of the affordable rental stock.

Changes in the voucher renewal funding formula by Congress and HUD during the period 2003-06—and a series of funding shortfalls—caused a drop in voucher utilization rates, from 98% in 2003-04 to 93% in 2008, and the removal from use of about 150,000 vouchers during that period. In the same way that airlines overbook flights in anticipation of cancellations, housing authorities had historically over-issued subsidies knowing that some would be returned unused. The new policies increased the financial risk to housing authorities that pursued that practice, and reduced annual renewal funding, based upon the number of unused vouchers. These policies were reversed in 2007, and many of the vouchers that were taken out of use during the period of funding instability have been reactivated.<sup>61, 62</sup> However, according to the Center for Budget and Policy Priorities, voucher utilization rates have continued to fall, reaching 91% in 2010. In other words, tens of thousands of additional households could be afforded housing assistance within the current allocations to housing authorities.<sup>63</sup>

Current Section 8 reform legislation that would allow for fuller utilization of subsidy allocations (i.e., more subsidies with the same level of funding) has been stuck in Congress amidst disagreement about other programmatic “fixes” including provisions relating to the “minimum rent” paid by tenants; the percentage of subsidies that can be project-based (to create more permanently affordable housing); permission for Housing Authorities to overlook misdemeanor records of prospective subsidy-holders; and authorization of “enhanced subsidies” for tenants remaining in privately owned, federally assisted apartments whose subsidized mortgages (and affordability obligations) have expired.<sup>64</sup>

#### J. HUD-Veterans Affairs Supportive Housing (HUD-VASH) Subsidies

According to HUD Secretary Shaun Donovan, “... veterans are 50% more likely than the average American to become homeless,” in part, because of the physical, emotional, and hidden injuries and traumas that they suffered during their military service. Legislation passed at the end of 2007 inaugurated the HUD-VASH program, bringing together HUD (rental assistance vouchers) and the Department of Veteran’s Affairs (VA) (case management and clinical services) to create thousands of new units of affordable supportive housing for homeless and vulnerable veterans.<sup>65, 66, 67, 68</sup>

Although rollout of the program got off to a slow and challenging start<sup>69</sup>, initial obstacles have largely been addressed, and 30,000 subsidies managed by some 300 Local Housing Authorities have been funded and are being mobilized to end the homelessness of the veterans (and veterans’ families) they were intended to help.<sup>70</sup> The \$75 million in the FY 2012 HUD budget for an additional 10,000 HUD-VASH subsidies represents the largest commitment for new housing resources in that budget.

#### K. Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing Program

One of the most important federal initiatives to address homelessness during the past few years was the creation of the Homelessness Prevention and Rapid Re-Housing program (HPRP), a \$1.5 billion component of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009 (ARRA)<sup>71</sup>. HPRP grants were distributed to 535 jurisdictions, funding locally-determined combinations of rental, relocation and/or utility assistance, case management, and other authorized services (e.g. legal assistance, credit repair) in order to prevent individuals and families from becoming

homeless and to rapidly re-house those who had become homeless.<sup>72</sup> Although, there were increases in homelessness from 2009 to 2010, without HPRP, the recession would have had far more dire consequences. First year program reports indicate that HPRP assistance—that will come to a close in 2012—helped prevent or end the homelessness of over 300,000 very low income individual and family households, including over 300,000 children.<sup>73</sup>

HUD's Year 1 Summary describes a very successful program, indicating that 88% of all program participants exited to permanent housing, including 94% of all persons whose exit destinations were known. Nearly two-thirds of households that were homeless at program enrollment exited into permanent housing, with over 90% of these exits occurring within six months of enrollment. Just over half of the households that entered the program at risk of losing their housing exited the program with a more stable housing situation, with over 90% of those exits also occurring within six months of entry.<sup>74</sup>

The HPRP initiative set a number of important precedents: (a) it represented a substantial first-time federal commitment to homelessness prevention (approximately 75% of the funds used, typically to help address arrearages); (b) it affirmed “rapid re-housing” as a key strategy for ending homelessness; and (c) it supported major improvements in the quality of data collection and reporting, building on the framework of HUD's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS).

As jurisdictions wind down their HPRP implementations (many communities have already run out of resources and ended their programs), they have faced challenging questions about how to assist households that remain at risk of homelessness or that face that risk for the first time, as unemployment and foreclosure rates remain dangerously high.<sup>75</sup> Pursuant to 2009 passage of the HEARTH Act re-authorizing the McKinney Vento program, HUD recently introduced interim regulations for the new Emergency Solutions Grants (ESG) program, creating permanent, albeit very scaled-down versions of the HPRP prevention and rapid re-housing components, with narrower eligibility guidelines (prevention clients must have incomes under 30% of AMI, instead of 50% of AMI). Although first-year funding for the new ESG program is 56% above funding for the previous year's Emergency Shelter Grants program, the added \$90 million is only a fraction of the \$1.5 billion that sustained HPRP assistance for the 2-3 years that jurisdictions stretched their funding.<sup>76</sup>

#### L. Assessing US Housing Policy

In many important ways, our country has demonstrated a commitment to addressing homelessness. A revitalized United States Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) issued the first-ever federal strategic plan to end homelessness in 2010 which, in addition to reiterating federal commitments to end chronic homelessness, articulates commitments to prevent and end veteran homelessness by 2015, and to prevent and end homelessness for families, youth, and children by 2020.<sup>77</sup> Passage of the HEARTH Act in 2009 codified the nation's commitment to addressing homelessness via a continuum of interventions, including new permanent funding for homelessness prevention and rapid re-housing, and continuation and possible expansion of supportive housing and services that have been funded through various McKinney-Vento programs.<sup>78</sup> Tremendous public and private effort has been mobilized, including an unprecedented \$1.5 billion investment in preventing and addressing homelessness in the wake of a devastating economic recession.

Unfortunately, the economic forces and housing affordability problems that combine to create and exacerbate the risk of homelessness remain, the erosion of the affordable housing stock continues, and funding for housing subsidies and new affordable housing development is still far from adequate to meet need. The official counts of homeless men, women, and children across the country are staggering, and show no immediate prospect of significant decrease; there are many other households whose homelessness falls below the official radar.

To the extent that a Report Card is expected to summarize its findings as a single grade, that grade would have to be an "Incomplete" despite the considerable effort described herein. The question is, do we have the political will to earn a "passing" grade or, perhaps one that is even higher? Given all the lives at stake, failure is not an acceptable option.

## Endnotes

- <sup>1</sup> The term "appropriate" here means "habitable" as defined by HUD, that is, safe, not overcrowded, with adequate plumbing, electricity, ventilation, lighting, etc. From a tenant's perspective, the "appropriateness" of housing also depends upon accessibility to employment, school, social supports, child care, medical care, shopping, etc.
- <sup>2</sup> [www.nlhc.org/oor/oor2011/oor2011pub.pdf](http://www.nlhc.org/oor/oor2011/oor2011pub.pdf)
- <sup>3</sup> [http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/worstcase\\_HsgNeeds09.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/worstcase_HsgNeeds09.pdf) - tables A-6A and A-6B.
- <sup>4</sup> [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11\\_americas\\_rental\\_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf) - Three out of four tenants pay for their own heat and/or utilities. HUD Fair Market Rents are calculated to include the "average" cost of heat and utilities, but actual costs incurred by the tenant may, of course, be "above average", putting the total cost of the tenancy over the 30%-of-income threshold. Similarly, families living in housing where rents exceed HUD's FMRs by a "reasonable" amount may be allowed by the local housing authority to supplement their 30%-of-income payment to cover the difference between actual rent and the FMR.
- <sup>5</sup> Harvard University, Joint Center for Housing Studies, America's Rental Housing 2011 [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11\\_americas\\_rental\\_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf)
- <sup>6</sup> [http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/worstcase\\_HsgNeeds09.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/publications/pdf/worstcase_HsgNeeds09.pdf)
- <sup>7</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>8</sup> South Dakota Senator Tim Johnson in his preface to the 2011 edition of "Out of Reach" [www.nlhc.org/oor/oor2011/oor2011pub.pdf](http://www.nlhc.org/oor/oor2011/oor2011pub.pdf)
- <sup>9</sup> [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11\\_americas\\_rental\\_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf)
- <sup>10</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>11</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>12</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/files/4-13-11hous-us.pdf>
- <sup>13</sup> [www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/3668](http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/3668)
- <sup>14</sup> The 2007 AHAR, covering 10/1/06-9/30/07, is at [www.hudhre.info/documents/3rdHomelessAssessmentReport.pdf](http://www.hudhre.info/documents/3rdHomelessAssessmentReport.pdf) and the 2010 AHAR covering 10/1/09-9/30/10, is at [www.hudhre.info/documents/2010HomelessAssessmentReport.pdf](http://www.hudhre.info/documents/2010HomelessAssessmentReport.pdf)
- <sup>15</sup> "The State of Homelessness in America 2011" [www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/3668](http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/3668)
- <sup>16</sup> [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11\\_americas\\_rental\\_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf)
- <sup>17</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>18</sup> [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11\\_americas\\_rental\\_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf)
- <sup>19</sup> [www.nlhc.org/oor/oor2011/oor2011pub.pdf](http://www.nlhc.org/oor/oor2011/oor2011pub.pdf)
- <sup>20</sup> *op cit*; Housing is considered "affordable" if rent consumes no more than 30% of income. By convention, housing affordable to an ELI (VLI) household charges a rent that is affordable at the 30% (50%) of AMI income ceiling for ELI (VLI) households. Since most households in each category have incomes below the income ceiling for their respective category, "affordable" housing included in these statistics would actually consume more than 30% of their income. Affordable housing is considered "available" if it is vacant or occupied by a household within the targeted income range, and "unavailable" if it is occupied by higher income households.
- <sup>21</sup> <http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/markets/son2011/index.htm>
- <sup>22</sup> [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11\\_americas\\_rental\\_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf)
- <sup>23</sup> *op cit*
- <sup>24</sup> Annual Homeless Assessment Reports covering the federal fiscal years 10/1/06-9/30/07 ([www.hudhre.info/documents/3rdHomelessAssessmentReport.pdf](http://www.hudhre.info/documents/3rdHomelessAssessmentReport.pdf)) and 10/1/09-9/30/10 ([www.hudhre.info/documents/2010HomelessAssessmentReport.pdf](http://www.hudhre.info/documents/2010HomelessAssessmentReport.pdf)), respectively.
- <sup>25</sup> <http://www.nlhc.org/doc/Public-Housing.pdf>
- <sup>26</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/files/4-13-11hous-us.pdf>
- <sup>27</sup> <http://www.housingfinance.com/news/ahf/062911-ahf-Public-Housing-Faces-26-Billion-in-Capital-Repairs.htm>
- <sup>28</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/files/11-18-11-IPmemoIHUApprops.pdf> See also <http://www.cbpp.org/files/3-25-11hous-us.pdf>
- <sup>29</sup> <http://www.nlhp.org/resourcecenter?aid=37>
- <sup>30</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/files/3-25-11hous-us.pdf>
- <sup>31</sup> Under the Loan Management Set Aside program <http://www.hud.gov/offices/adm/hudclips/handbooks/hshg/4350.2/index.cfm>
- <sup>32</sup> [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11\\_americas\\_rental\\_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf)
- <sup>33</sup> [http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/opting\\_in.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/opting_in.pdf)
- <sup>34</sup> <http://www.nlhc.org/online/issues/94/bratt.html>
- <sup>35</sup> <http://www.nlhc.org/doc/Assisted-Housing-Preservation.pdf>

- <sup>30</sup> <http://www.nhlp.org/resourcecenter?id=114>
- <sup>31</sup> <http://www.chapa.org/news/conference-committee-report-4y12-hud-budget-november-16-2011>
- <sup>32</sup> [http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/oping\\_in.pdf](http://www.huduser.org/Publications/pdf/oping_in.pdf)
- <sup>33</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>34</sup> HUD's "National Low Income Housing Tax credit (LIHTC) database: Projects Placed in Service through 2009" <http://www.huduser.org/datasets/lihtc/topical9509.pdf> Table 2 in the report notes that data for 2008 and 2009 is incomplete.
- <sup>35</sup> <http://www.nytimes.com/2011/01/26/realestate/commercial/26credits.html>
- <sup>36</sup> [http://www.novoco.com/hottopics/resource\\_files/back-in-black\\_coburn\\_071811.pdf](http://www.novoco.com/hottopics/resource_files/back-in-black_coburn_071811.pdf)
- <sup>37</sup> [http://taxcreditcoalition.org/wp-content/files\\_flutter/1313773283CoburnRebuttalPiece-IndustrySignOn.pdf](http://taxcreditcoalition.org/wp-content/files_flutter/1313773283CoburnRebuttalPiece-IndustrySignOn.pdf)
- <sup>38</sup> <http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpi/affordablehousing/programs/home/btf.cfm>
- <sup>39</sup> [http://www.endhomelessness.org/files/2462\\_file\\_2011\\_Policy\\_Guide\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.endhomelessness.org/files/2462_file_2011_Policy_Guide_FINAL.pdf)
- <sup>40</sup> [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11\\_americas\\_rental\\_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf)
- <sup>41</sup> [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11\\_americas\\_rental\\_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf)
- <sup>42</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>43</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>44</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>45</sup> [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact\\_sheet](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/about/fact_sheet)
- <sup>46</sup> [http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpi/affordablehousing/training/web/lihtc/complying\\_together.cfm](http://www.hud.gov/offices/cpi/affordablehousing/training/web/lihtc/complying_together.cfm)
- <sup>47</sup> [http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11\\_americas\\_rental\\_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/rental/rh11_americas_rental_housing/AmericasRentalHousing-2011.pdf)
- <sup>48</sup> [www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/markets/son2011/index.htm](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/markets/son2011/index.htm)
- <sup>49</sup> [www.lihtc.org/doc/renters-in-foreclosure.pdf](http://www.lihtc.org/doc/renters-in-foreclosure.pdf)
- <sup>50</sup> *Ibid*
- <sup>51</sup> <http://www.makinghomeaffordable.gov/pages/default.aspx>
- <sup>52</sup> [www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/markets/son2011/index.htm](http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/markets/son2011/index.htm)
- <sup>53</sup> <http://www.jchs.harvard.edu/publications/markets/son2011/index.htm>
- <sup>54</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/files/5-15-09hous.pdf>
- <sup>55</sup> [www.cbpp.org/cvs/index.cfm?c=view&id=2691](http://www.cbpp.org/cvs/index.cfm?c=view&id=2691)
- <sup>56</sup> <http://www.cbpp.org/files/10-18-11-voicherpolicy methodology.pdf>
- <sup>57</sup> [www.cbpp.org/files/SEVRA-SESA-current%20law%20comparison.pdf](http://www.cbpp.org/files/SEVRA-SESA-current%20law%20comparison.pdf)
- <sup>58</sup> [http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program\\_offices/public\\_indian\\_housing/programs/hcv/vash](http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/public_indian_housing/programs/hcv/vash)
- <sup>59</sup> <http://www.va.gov/opa/pressrel/pressrelease.cfm?id=2117>
- <sup>60</sup> <http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewHudVashProgram>
- <sup>61</sup> <http://www.va.gov/HOMELESS/HUD-VASH.asp>
- <sup>62</sup> [http://www.cpha.org/vash\\_survey\\_summary](http://www.cpha.org/vash_survey_summary)
- <sup>63</sup> <http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/documents/huddoc?id=va-09232010.ppt>
- <sup>64</sup> [www.hudhre.info/hprp/index.cfm?do=viewHPRPissuances](http://www.hudhre.info/hprp/index.cfm?do=viewHPRPissuances)
- <sup>65</sup> Intended as gap-filling assistance in a temporary economic emergency HPRP offered only limited one-time financial assistance with arrangements for households living in public or subsidized housing, given that they were already receiving longer-term housing assistance, based on their longer-term economic needs. There was an assumption built into the HPRP program that apart from one-time crises that might precipitate a non-payment-of-rent threat of eviction, such households were adequately protected from the risk of homelessness. In fact, some households in subsidized housing appear to lack the income to reliably cover their minimum rent or to address their families' other basic needs while sustaining the requisite 30%-of-income payments for housing. These impoverished households are perennially at risk of homelessness, and, in at least one study, constituted half of a summary process (eviction) court caseload. Once such households are evicted from public or subsidized housing for non-payment of rent, they may not be able to access other subsidized housing until outstanding debts are repaid, potentially posing a daunting barrier to re-housing. Because the minimum rent and/or 30%-of-income payment obligation for extremely low income households is a very small amount, the cost of assisting such households in covering their currently-required contribution to rent would be relatively small. In the interest of averting the human and economic costs of homelessness, it may be worth exploring alternatives to the current assistance formulas. Professor Michael Stone and other researchers have advocated an alternative approach to assistance, basing the tenant share of affordable housing costs on "Residual Income." (see <http://content.knowledgenet.org/bp2/cache/documents/1860/186043.pdf>)
- <sup>66</sup> [www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRP\\_Year1Summary.pdf](http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRP_Year1Summary.pdf)
- <sup>67</sup> [http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRP\\_Year1Summary.pdf](http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRP_Year1Summary.pdf)
- <sup>68</sup> [http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRP\\_RampingDownWebinar\\_Slides.pdf](http://www.hudhre.info/documents/HPRP_RampingDownWebinar_Slides.pdf)
- <sup>69</sup> <http://www.hudhre.info/index.cfm?do=viewResource&ResourceID=4517>
- <sup>70</sup> [www.usich.gov/opening\\_doors/](http://www.usich.gov/opening_doors/)
- <sup>71</sup> [http://www.endhomelessness.org/files/2098\\_file\\_HEARTH\\_Act\\_Summary\\_FINAL\\_6\\_8\\_09.pdf](http://www.endhomelessness.org/files/2098_file_HEARTH_Act_Summary_FINAL_6_8_09.pdf)

## Appendix C: References

## A. Report Narrative

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December 9, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
 Chairman, Subcommittee on Insurance,  
 Housing and Community Opportunity  
 Committee on Financial Services  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
 Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Insurance,  
 Housing and Community Opportunity  
 Committee on Financial Services  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

The National Coalition for the Homeless supports the Homeless Children and Youth Act (H.R. 32).

The National Coalition for the Homeless (NCH), founded in 1982, is a national network of people who are currently experiencing or who have experienced homelessness, activists and advocates, community-based and faith-based service providers, and others committed to a single mission. That mission, our common bond, is to end homelessness. We are committed to creating the systemic and attitudinal changes necessary to prevent and end homelessness. At the same time, we work to meet the immediate needs of people who are currently experiencing homelessness or who are at risk of doing so. We take as our first principle of practice that people who are currently experiencing homelessness or have formerly experienced homelessness must be actively involved in all of our work.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011 (H.R. 32) proposes to amend the definition of "homeless" in Title IV of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, applicable to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other federal programs that rely upon the Title IV definition, to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by personnel administering four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act makes important improvements to current statute, and would prompt HUD to make necessary changes to a final rule it promulgated to interpret the McKinney-Vento Title IV definition of "homeless." Most significant, H.R. 32 would remove impediments to eligibility for HUD and other federal programs using the Title IV definition for those homeless children, youth, and families currently excluded from them due to their homeless living arrangement being excluded from the Title IV definition. In addition, H.R. 32 would significantly reduce the onslaught of paperwork requirements headed in the direction of homeless people, which will only exacerbate their difficulty in obtaining emergency assistance and rapidly transitioning to housing, as envisioned by Congress in the HEARTH Act of 2009.

National Coalition for the Homeless  
Letter in Support of the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011 (H.R. 32)  
December 9, 2011

Page 2

While this is by no means a criticism of H.R. 32 as introduced, we do recommend that as the measure advances, the bill should be amended to include as eligible certifying officials those personnel administering all federal programs determined by HUD in its definition final rule as having definitions of homelessness under which unaccompanied youth and families with children and youth could qualify as homeless.

Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez, the Homeless Children and Youth Act offers a common-sense approach that moves federal law closer to the aspiration of a single definition of homelessness that includes all of the living arrangements experienced by those without permanent homes, and in doing so, includes within its scope all people experiencing homelessness. For this reason, the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011 has our enthusiastic support. We urge Congress to pass this measure most quickly.

Sincerely,



Neil Donovan  
Executive Director



NATIONAL CENTER FOR HOUSING & CHILD WELFARE

December 9, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act aims to capitalize on the ability of community members such as teachers, other school staff, and youth outreach workers to identify and rapidly respond to homelessness among their neighbors. H.R. 32 is an important complement, indeed a correction, if you will, to HUD's recently issued guidance which seeks to fund added layers of record-keeping and surveillance within homeless services. HUD's overly-bureaucratic approach is not a good use of public funds and it comes with extraordinary safety concerns for children as well.

The requirement that households produce evidence of multiple moves in order to gain access to housing services presents significant risks and delays. Consider the domestic violence victim placed in the unenviable position of attempting to verify a stay with her abuser; or young children lingering in doubled-up homes with strangers while their parents make their case to the local housing or shelter provider; or a homeless young man who has been sexually exploited in order to borrow a couch or a bed for the night being made to provide proof of such horrors. The personal toll of these delays is incalculable.

One must also take into account the considerable costs associated with re-verifying such things. Why must HUD continue to argue for an extra layer of staff to complete this process when a community member has already ascertained that the family is homeless?

Furthermore, while it is true that many families and individuals who doubled-up, move frequently, it is not always possible for a case manager to verify this or for a family or individual to provide proof. As you can imagine, it is nearly



NATIONAL CENTER FOR HOUSING & CHILD WELFARE

impossible for a social worker to verify the extent to which a family or individual is homeless. Simply put, being doubled-up for lack of other options is homeless enough for a HUD-funded agency to intervene. This thoughtful amendment will move HUD toward a less expensive, more efficient process that encourages housing stability, community participation, and protects vulnerable children and youth from harm.

For these reasons, we strongly support H.R. 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ruth White'.

Ruth White, MSSA  
Executive Director



December 9, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act simplifies the process for accessing HUD homeless services for homeless children, youth, and families while maintaining the integrity of the program itself. The recently released HUD definition of homelessness on the other hand requires extensive documentation of residency and instability – criteria that will be burdensome or impossible to meet for many experiencing homelessness. Ensuring that those in need receive eligible services is imperative to return families to self-sufficiency.

Homeless service providers working in communities are most qualified to make these determinations. Affording these providers the flexibility needed to serve and house the most vulnerable rather than those with proper documentation will better target our increasingly scarce resources at a time when homelessness is increasing. While we hope that this flexible approach will be extended at some point to all those experiencing homelessness, including single adults, this current effort will improve service provision in communities throughout the country and aid in the struggle to prevent and end family homelessness.

In closing, we emphasize our strong support for H.R. 32 and thank you for your leadership.

Sincerely,

John Lozier, MSSW  
Executive Director



*A coalition of leading national nonprofit agencies committed to helping individuals, families and communities thrive.*

December 8, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. I write on behalf of the National Human Services Assembly, an association of America's leading national nonprofit human service providers. Now in its 4th decade, our National Collaboration for Youth is the longest-standing coalition of national organizations committed to advocating with and on behalf of youth and, in particular, in research-driven positive youth development.

This Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011 amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

As addressed in our recently published brief *Improving Federal Collaboration for Homeless Children and Youth*, HUD's narrow definition of homelessness to people living on the street or in emergency/transitional shelter unfairly penalizes many homeless children, youth, and families. H.R. 32 creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. It stands in contrast to the agency's recently released regulations on this definition, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance. The simplicity of the Act is modeled on successfully implemented provisions of the Child Nutrition Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

For these reasons, we strongly support H.R. 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,  
Hayling Price  
Policy Director  
National Human Services Assembly

NATIONAL LAW CENTER  
ON HOMELESSNESS & POVERTY

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December 12, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

For more than a decade, our organization has recognized the disconnect between the HUD and Education definitions of homelessness. Each year it results in hundreds of thousands of children, youth, and families considered to be homeless by the Departments of Education and Health & Human Services, but not by HUD, being ineligible to receive long-term housing, job training, mental health and substance abuse treatment, and other HUD assistance. In order to remedy this disconnect, we have worked closely with Chairman Biggert, as well as with Rep. Geoff Davis, a former Subcommittee member.

As a result of that collective effort, the HEARTH Act of 2009 amended HUD's definition of homelessness, to potentially include a significant number of the people trapped in this Kafka-like situation where one government agency tells them that they are homeless and another says they are not. HEARTH was not all that we wanted, but it represented a meaningful first step.

Unfortunately, the HEARTH "solution," as implemented by HUD, will not work. The HEARTH Act passed in May of 2009, with regulations directing HUD to implement the new definition of homelessness by November of that same year. HUD failed to meet the deadline and indeed still has not implemented the law. We are told that new regulations will finally go into effect on January 4, 2012. This means that over more than 30 months, HUD has not made one child or youth newly eligible for homeless assistance, despite a clear directive from Congress that the agency should begin to do so in November, 2009. This track record of delay does not generate confidence in HUD's willingness to work in good faith and provide assistance for many of our most vulnerable families.

In addition, when we reviewed HUD's draft regulation, we were deeply concerned with the agency's approach to implementing the HEARTH Act. In every case where the statute could have been interpreted broadly or narrowly HUD viewed it narrowly. In every case where a term needed to be clarified, HUD clarified it narrowly. And in every case where HUD could have required more or less burdensome documentation from families living in motels, families who have lost their housing and are living with others, families fleeing domestic violence, and youth living on their own, HUD chose to impose a higher burden of proof in establishing eligibility for homeless assistance.

We and many other advocates provided comments to HUD featuring specific changes to the proposed rule. Regrettably, the agency declined to accept them. This was not an abstract choice – it was a deliberate decision to improperly narrow the intent of Congress and to limit the number of children, youth, and families eligible to receive help from HUD's homeless assistance programs. As a result, it is clear that HUD cannot be trusted to set up a fair and reasonable system under which people living doubled up and in motels can qualify for help. Consequently, the decision must be removed from the agency's hands.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act would do just that. The bill creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. It also provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

For these reasons, we strongly support H.R. 32. We look forward to working with you to move this important legislation forward. If you or your staff have any questions, feel free to contact me at (202) 638-2535 x210 or [jrosen@nlchp.org](mailto:jrosen@nlchp.org).

Sincerely,

*Jeremy N. Rosen*  
Jeremy N. Rosen  
Policy Director



**NATIONAL LOW INCOME  
HOUSING COALITION**

December 14, 2011

*Sheila Crowley, President*

*Board of Directors  
George Moses, Chair  
Pittsburgh, PA*

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Albuquerque, NM*

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Cambridge, MA*

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*Tara Rollins  
Salt Lake City, UT*

*Morpha Weatherspoon  
Clarksville, TN*

*Paul Weech  
Washington, DC*

*Leonard Williams  
Buffalo, NY*

*Founded in 1974 by  
Cushing N. Dolbear*

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
Chair

Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity  
Committee on Financial Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
Ranking Member

Subcommittee on Insurance, Housing and Community Opportunity  
Committee on Financial Services  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chair Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez,

I write to thank for holding a hearing on the very serious issue of homelessness among children and youth. This hearing could not be timelier given the troubling increases in housing instability and deep poverty due to the recession.

NLIHC appreciates the introduction of H.R. 32, the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. The issues included in the bill are important to consider and we thank the Chair for introducing such a well-intentioned bill. However, NLIHC does not think the time is right to consider such legislation, given that the HEARTH Act was just enacted in 2009 and HUD is in the midst of implementing its various provisions. This hearing brings with it the opportunity to consider a variety of actions that impact homelessness prevention and the provision of affordable housing, including FY12 funding decisions and their impact on homelessness.

The National Center on Family Homelessness recently reported that 1.6 million American children were homeless at some point in 2010, an approximately 38% increase from 2007. This increase is a consequence of the recession, as deep poverty and the absolute shortage of housing affordable to people with the lowest incomes are the central drivers of homelessness. Despite this disturbing trend, Congress has not taken the important and needed steps to address this root cause of family homelessness. Instead, core programs that serve households at risk of homelessness, including the children in these households, have been underfunded. The problem is only expected to grow more severe with the anticipated round of sequestration cuts in 2013.

*Dedicated solely to achieving socially just public policy that assures people with the lowest incomes in the United States have affordable and decent homes.*

There has been no time in recent memory when the core federal programs that help the poorest Americans have been under such threat. As a result of the recently enacted FY12 HUD spending bill, 12,000 to 24,000 vouchers will not be renewed next year due to insufficient funding. The public housing capital fund was cut 8% compared to FY11. We cannot cut programs like these that serve the nation's lowest income households and still maintain we are doing all we can do to address homelessness in the United States. Indeed, funding for homeless assistance programs is funded at a level 20% below what the President requested for FY12.

While there are a number of policy interventions that can mitigate the effects of homelessness on children, the fact remains that children, families, and society will all be better off if we can intervene to prevent homelessness from the outset. This can be done by assuring that sufficient resources are provided to ensure that all households have access to housing that is affordable to them.

One way to assure access to affordable housing for these households is through the capitalization of the National Housing Trust Fund (NHTF). As you know, the NHTF was created by the Housing and Economic Recovery Act of 2008. The bill directed the government sponsored enterprises (GSEs) Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac to make contributions to the NHTF. Soon after the bill was enacted, the financial crisis hit and the GSEs were taken into conservatorship by their federal regulator, who suspended any payments to the NHTF. We urge Congress to take action to capitalize the NHTF through another dedicated funding source. Doing so is the strongest action Congress can take to prevent and end homelessness among children, youth, and families.

I commend the Subcommittee for holding a hearing to draw attention to this issue of national importance. It is critical that Congress take action now to assure that children who are currently instability house gain access to permanent and affordable housing.

Sincerely,



Sheila Crowley  
President & CEO



740 8<sup>th</sup> St SE  
 Washington, DC 20003  
 info@nn4youth.org

December 9, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
 Chairman, Subcommittee on Insurance,  
 Housing and Community Opportunity  
 Committee on Financial Services  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
 Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Insurance,  
 Housing and Community Opportunity  
 Committee on Financial Services  
 U.S. House of Representatives  
 Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

The National Network for Youth writes in enthusiastic support of the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011.

The National Network for Youth has been championing the needs of runaway, homeless, and other disconnected youth for over 35 years. Our members are community-based, faith-based, and public organizations along with their neighborhood youth, adults, associations, and regional and state networks of youth workers. The National Network for Youth is committed to ensuring that opportunities for growth and development be available to our neighborhood youth everywhere. The youth we work with face greater odds due to abuse, neglect, exploitation, lack of resources, pregnancy and parenting, community prejudice, differing abilities, barriers to learning, and other life challenges. Many of the youth our members support are experiencing a runaway crisis or a homelessness episode.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act (H.R. 32) proposes to amend the definition of "homeless" in Title IV of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, applicable to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) and other federal programs that rely upon the Title IV definition, to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by personnel administering four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHYA) programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act builds on progress made by Congress in the Homeless Emergency Assistance and Rapid Transition to Housing Act (HEARTH ACT) of 2009 to improve access to HUD homeless assistance programs for homeless children, youth, and families. That legislation included as a new eligibility category for HUD homeless assistance programs those children, youth, and families considered homeless under other federal statutory definitions of the term "homeless." Unfortunately, Congress undermined its own expansion intent by attaching additional limiting criteria to these other federal definitions. Making matters worse, HUD has imposed additional impediments in its recently-promulgated rule elaborating the HEARTH statutory definition of "homeless."

Take for example, the manner in which some homeless youth are deemed eligible under H.R. 32 compared to the HEARTH Act and final HEARTH rule. Under the Homeless Child and Youth Act, any youth considered homeless under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act would also be considered homeless under the McKinney-Vento Title IV definition, provided that youth obtained a certification from a Runaway and Homeless Youth Act

National Network for Youth  
Re: Homeless Children and Youth Act  
December 8, 2011

Page 2

provider, a McKinney-Vento school district liaison, or a representative of the other two education programs identified in the bill.

Under the HEARTH definition and final rule, these very same youth, in addition to obtaining a provider certification, also would need to present evidence of other factors being met before they could be considered homeless under the HUD definition, including not having had permanent housing any time during the 60 days prior to applying for homeless assistance; and having have experienced two or more moves during the 60 days prior to applying for HUD homeless assistance. On top of it, the definition rule establishes a laborious set of written documentation of these conditions. These additional requirements will be near-impossible for an unaccompanied homeless youth to meet – and to what end?

The Homeless Children and Youth Act is a common-sense response to prior missed opportunities to fully include homeless children, youth and families in the McKinney-Vento Title IV definition of “homeless.” H.R. 32 establishes a streamlined and efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless assistance services. It will improve interoperability between federal homeless programs, homeless assistance providers within local communities, and even between homeless assistance projects within multi-service homeless assistance agencies. And in so doing, the Homeless Children and Youth Act will ensure that there is no wrong door for any homeless child, youth, or family in this nation to enter for receiving the resources and supports necessary for ending their homeless condition.

The National Network for Youth urges Congress to swiftly pass the Homeless Children and Youth Act (H.R. 32).

Sincerely,



Deborah Shore  
Chair, Board of Directors





NATIONAL NETWORK  
TO END DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE

2001 S STREET, NW  
SUITE 400  
WASHINGTON, DC 20009

[www.nnedv.org](http://www.nnedv.org)

NNEADV

December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

The National Network to End Domestic Violence, on behalf of the 56 state and territory domestic violence coalitions, their approximately 2,000 member local domestic violence programs, and the millions of victims and families they serve, gives its support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. It reduces the unnecessary and unsafe burden created by the requirement for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. As you know, domestic violence, sexual assault, dating violence and stalking often lead to housing instability and homelessness for victims and their children. Although the HEARTH Act does clarify that victims fleeing such situations are considered homeless, the HUD interpretation of these situations is rather limited. Additionally, not all victims identify as domestic or sexual violence victims to housing providers. In such cases and where the family has received support from the aforementioned federal programs, H.R. 32 would help families in crisis access the services they need.

For these reasons, we strongly support H.R. 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of homeless families and victims of domestic violence.

Sincerely,

President  
National Network to End Domestic Violence



School Social Work Association of America  
3001 Veazey Terrace, NW • Suite 825  
Washington, DC 20008

December 8, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

On behalf of the School Social Work Association of America (SSWAA), I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

School social workers are in a unique position to understand the conflicts within current law and the importance of passing H.R. 32. School social workers often serve as the school district's homeless liaison under McKinney-Vento. More important, a regular part of the job of all school social workers is to connect homeless families with services that ensure their children have a safe living environment and receive a good education.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. This process is in contrast to HUD's recently released regulations on the definition of homelessness, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance. The simplicity of the Homeless Children and Youth Act is modeled on successfully implemented provisions of the Child Nutrition Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

SSWAA strongly supports HR 32. We look forward to working with you to achieve these goals. Please feel free to contact Director of Government Relations Myrna Mandlawitz ([mrmassociates@verizon.net](mailto:mrmassociates@verizon.net)) for any assistance. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Frederick Streeck".

Frederick Streeck, MSW, ACSW  
Executive Director



December 13, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

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The Homeless Children and Youth Act provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

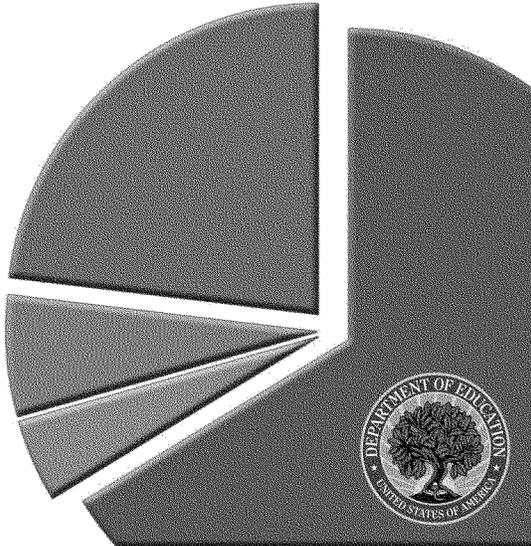
Kristin Rucinski  
The Road Home  
Interim Executive Director

## Education for Homeless Children and Youth Program Data Collection Summary

*From the School Year 2009-10 Federally Required State Data Collection for the McKinney-Vento Education Assistance Improvements Act of 2001 and Comparison of the SY 2007-08, SY 2008-09, and SY 2009-10 Data Collections*

National Center for Homeless Education  
June 2011

NCHE publications are supported through a contract with the U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education, Student Achievement and Accountability Programs.  
For more information, visit <http://www.ed.gov/programs/homeless/index.html>.  
This publication is available for downloading at [www.servo.org/nche/fist/sc\\_data.php](http://www.servo.org/nche/fist/sc_data.php).



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## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The U.S. Department of Education's (ED) Office of Elementary and Secondary Education (OESE) requires all State Educational Agencies (SEAs) and Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) to submit information regarding child and youth homelessness. This information enables the office, under the Education for Homeless Children and Youth (EHCY) Program, to determine the extent to which States ensure that children and youth experiencing homelessness have access to a free, appropriate public education under Title VII, Subtitle B, of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. The purpose of the EHCY Program is to improve educational outcomes for children and youth in homeless situations. This program is designed to ensure that all homeless children and youth have equal access to public education and that SEAs and LEAs review and revise policies and regulations to remove barriers to enrollment, attendance, and academic achievement.

The Department requires all States to report data on program performance and revise and recertify any data identified as incomplete or inconsistent. Data reflect information obtained principally from LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants; however, some information regarding all LEAs in the State is also required.

There is some variation in the number of LEAs reporting data and receiving subgrants across the three years represented in this report. Furthermore, as for the number of LEAs with subgrants, SY 2009-10 was the implementation year of the additional McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth funds authorized by the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. Also, the data reporting guidelines were clarified over this period, which resulted in the counting of all LEAs participating in consortia or served by a regional grantee as LEAs with subgrants. The reported increase in the number of homeless children and youth enrolled in or served by LEAs with subgrants can be attributed to the increase in the number of LEAs with subgrants reporting data in addition to actual increases of numbers of homeless children and youth enrolled by these LEAs in many States.

States submit McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth data to ED using two methods during two periods. Most of the data are programmed and submitted in the Fall via the ED*Facts* data collection system, which populates tables in the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR). The CSPR also has questions or tables requiring manual entry or comment before certification and submission via ED's Data Exchange Network (EDEN). After the data are reviewed by the program offices, there is a revision period prior to recertification of the data in the Spring. The data summarized in this report include a three-year comparison from SY 2007-08 through SY 2009-10. The results of the data are summarized below by CSPR question:

- **Number of LEAs with and without McKinney-Vento subgrants (1.9.0)**

In SY 2009-10, LEAs that received McKinney-Vento subgrants (3,046) represented 19% of the total number of LEAs reported (15,906). There was a 76% increase between SY 2008-09 and SY 2009-10 in the number of LEAs receiving subgrants (1,729) and a 123% increase in the number of LEAs receiving subgrants over the three-year period SY 2007-08 through SY 2009-10.

Those LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants reported 80% (748,538) of the total number of homeless students enrolled (939,903). LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants that reported data (2,866) only comprise 21% of all LEAs who submitted data (13,887).

- **Number of homeless students enrolled in LEAs with and without McKinney-Vento subgrants (1.9.1.1)**

The McKinney-Vento definition of enrolled students includes those students attending classes and participating fully in school activities. For data collection purposes, an enrolled student includes any child for whom a current enrollment record exists.

**939,903** homeless students were reported enrolled by LEAs with and without subgrants in SY 2009-10, a 2 percent decrease from SY 2008-09 (956,914) and an 18% increase over the three-year period SY 2007-08 (794,617) to SY 2009-10.

- **Primary nighttime residence by category in LEAs with and without McKinney-Vento subgrants (1.9.1.2)**

The primary nighttime residence for the purpose of data reporting is the student's nighttime residence when he/she was determined eligible for McKinney-Vento services. The primary nighttime residence categories are sheltered, unsheltered, hotels/motels, and doubled-up. The number of students whose primary nighttime residence was categorized as sheltered or doubled-up increased and the number of students whose primary nighttime residence was categorized as unsheltered or hotels/motels decreased between SY 2008-09 and SY 2009-10. The number of students whose primary residence is classified as "doubled-up" has been the most frequently reported category for the past three years and has increased 33% over that three-year period.

- **Homeless students served in LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants (1.9.2.1)**

The definition of "served" for the purposes of data collection for the McKinney-Vento program includes homeless children who have been served in any way through McKinney-Vento subgrant-funded staff or activities. It is possible for a child to be served in a district, but not enrolled in that district. Over **852,000** students were reported served by McKinney-Vento subgrantees in 2009-10, a 38% increase from SY 2008-09 (617,027) and an 81% increase for the three-year period SY 2007-08 (472,309) to SY 2009-10.

- **Subpopulations of homeless students served in LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants (1.9.2.2)**

ED data systems categorize subpopulations of homeless students as unaccompanied youth, migratory children and youth, children with disabilities (IDEA), and children with limited English proficiency (LEP).<sup>1</sup> Each category showed significant increases in the number served in SY 2009-10. All categories also showed significant increases in the number served over the three-year period SY 2007-08 to SY 2009-10.

- **Educational support services offered in LEAs served by McKinney-Vento subgrantees (1.9.2.3)**

This question addresses the number of subgranted LEAs offering each of a number of support services to homeless students. As the total number of LEAs receiving subgrants has increased over the three-year period, so has the number of LEAs reporting the provision of these services for homeless students.

- **Barriers to the education of homeless students in LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants (1.9.2.4)**

<sup>1</sup>The CSPP uses the term "Limited English Proficient" (LEP) to describe English Learners (ELs).

This question addresses the number of subgranted LEAs who have experienced each of the following barriers to the education of homeless children and youth: eligibility for homeless services, school selection, transportation, school records, immunizations, other medical records, and miscellaneous barriers. Transportation is the barrier reported most by LEAs receiving subgrants and has been for the past six years.

- **Academic performance of homeless students served in LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants (1.9.2.5.1 and 1.9.2.5.2)**

The Department collects data on the number and percentage of homeless students in LEAs receiving subgrants who are assessed in both reading and mathematics and on the proficiency levels of those assessed.

- Reading: The number of homeless students in grades 3-8 taking the state reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (235,917) increased 41% from the number of homeless students taking the reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (167,017). This number also represents an increase of 53% from the number of homeless students taking the reading test in SY 2007-08 (153,643).
- Of the number of homeless students in grades 3-8 taking the state reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (235,917), 53% (125,184) met or exceeded proficiency standards in reading. This is a three percentage point increase from the 50% (83,926) of homeless students who were found to meet or exceed proficiency standards in reading in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (167,017).
- Mathematics: The number of homeless students in grades 3-8 taking the state mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (235,829) increased 42% from the number of homeless students taking the mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (166,104). This number also represents an increase of 53% from the number of homeless students taking the mathematics test in SY 2007-08 (153,860).
- Of the number of homeless students in grades 3-8 taking the state mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (235,829), 52% (122,941) met or exceeded proficiency standards in mathematics. This is a two percentage point increase from the 50% (83,104) of homeless students who were found to meet or exceed proficiency standards in mathematics in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (166,104).

### CSPR DATA COLLECTION SUMMARY

The online portal for the CSPR opened for manual entry and certification on November 8, 2010, and closed on December 17, 2010. The portal reopened for corrections and recertification on February 28, 2011, and closed on March 16, 2011. All fifty States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the Bureau of Indian Education (BIE) submitted SY 2009-10 data.

Following is an analysis of the data submitted for SY 2009-10, including comparisons with data submitted for SY 2007-08 and SY 2008-09.

#### LEAS WITH AND WITHOUT MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS (1.9.0)

The total number of LEAs with and without subgrants reported by the fifty States,<sup>2</sup> the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and the BIE in SY 2009-10 was **15,906**, a three percent increase from SY 2008-09 (15,460). Of these LEAs, 13,887 submitted data (87%), a 2 percent increase from the number of LEAs submitting data in SY 2008-09 (13,561). Nineteen percent (3,046) of these LEAs had McKinney-Vento subgrants. Of all subgranted LEAs, 2,866 submitted data for SY 2009-10 (94%), a 72% increase from the number of subgrantees submitting data in SY 2008-09 (1,668) and a 111% increase from the number of subgrantees submitting data in SY 2007-08 (1,356). The increase in the number of subgrantees submitting data over this period can be attributed in part to the availability of funds for additional McKinney-Vento Education for Homeless Children and Youth subgrant awards through the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009, and in part to a clarification in the data collection guidance first issued in SY 2007-08 to report all LEAs in regional consortia, or those served by a regional LEA subgrantee, as LEAs with subgrants.

Forty-one States<sup>3</sup> (77%) had all LEAs, with and without subgrants, submitting data. Twelve States (23%) did not have all LEAs in their State submit data, either those LEAs with subgrants, LEAs without subgrants, or a combination of both. Some States are continuing to transition to new electronic data reporting systems and are working toward future collection of data from all LEAs.

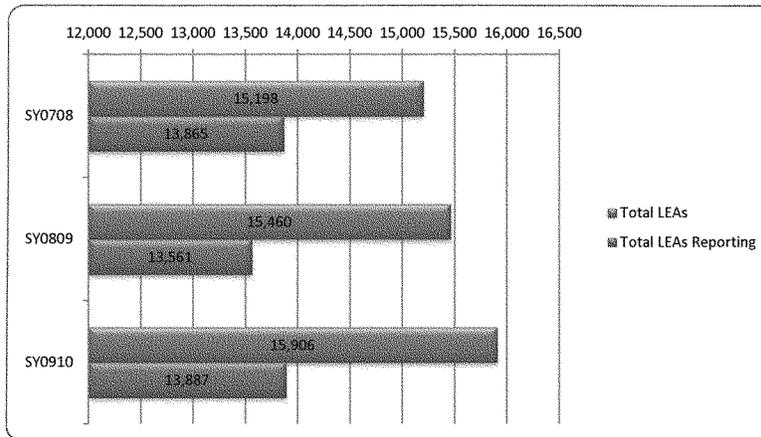
<sup>2</sup> The term "State" is used to refer to all reporting entities, including the fifty States, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico, and BIE. This report has submissions from fifty-three (53) States.

<sup>3</sup> Pennsylvania does not report data in LEAs without subgrants as subgrant funds are applied to all LEAs in the State. Hawaii and Puerto Rico each reported only one LEA. This LEA receives subgrant funds. Illinois reported no LEAs that receive subgrants.

**Table 1**  
*Total LEAs With and Without McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.0), Three-Year Comparison*

	SY0708	SY0708 Percent of Total LEAs	SY0809	SY0809 Percent of Total LEAs	SY0910	SY0910 Percent of Total LEAs	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 Year)
LEAs With Subgrants	1,364	9	1,729	11	3,046	19	27	76	123
LEAs With Subgrants Reporting	1,356	9	1,668	11	2,866	18	23	72	111
LEAs Without Subgrants	13,834	91	13,731	89	12,860	81	-1	-6	-7
LEAs Without Subgrants Reporting	12,509	82	11,893	77	11,021	69	-5	-7	-12
<b>Total LEAs</b>	<b>15,198</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15,460</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>15,906</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Total LEAs Reporting</b>	<b>13,865</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>13,561</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>13,887</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0.2</b>

**Figure 1**  
*Total LEAs With and Without McKinney-Vento Subgrants Reporting (CSPR 1.9.0), Three-Year Comparison*



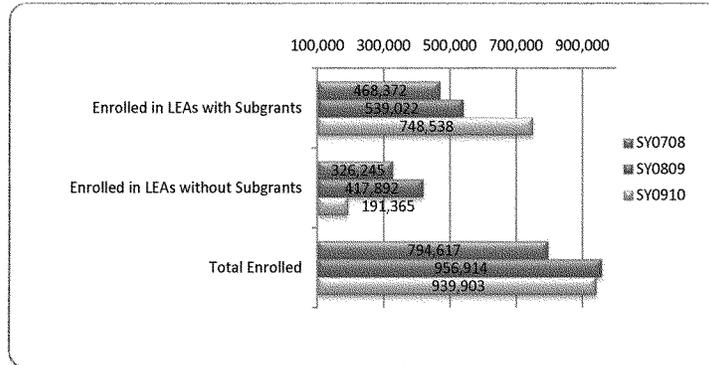
**HOMELESS STUDENTS ENROLLED IN LEAS WITH AND WITHOUT MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS (1.9.1.1)**

Homeless children and youth are defined as “enrolled” if they are attending classes and participating fully in school activities. A total of **939,903** homeless students were reported enrolled in all LEAs in the SY 2009-10 CSPR data collection, a two percent decrease from the SY 2008-09 total of 956,914. Nationally, 42 States (79%) reported increases in the total number of homeless children and youth enrolled in LEAs with and without subgrants in SY 2009-10. Eleven States (21%) reported a decrease in the number of homeless children and youth enrolled in SY 2009-10 from the number enrolled in SY 2008-09.

**Table 2**  
**Total Enrolled in LEAs With and Without McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.1.1),**  
**Three-Year Comparison**

	SY0708	SY0708 Percent of Total Enrolled	SY0809	SY0809 Percent of Total Enrolled	SY0910	SY0910 Percent of Total Enrolled	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 Year)
Enrolled in LEAs with Subgrants	468,372	59	539,022	56	748,538	80	15	39	60
Enrolled in LEAs without Subgrants	326,245	41	417,892	44	191,365	20	28	-54	-41
<b>Total Enrolled</b>	<b>794,617</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>956,914</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>939,903</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>20</b>	<b>-2</b>	<b>18</b>

**Figure 2**  
**Total Enrolled in LEAs With and Without McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.1.1),**  
**Three-Year Comparison**



The following table portrays the three-year comparison of the total number of homeless students enrolled by State and includes each State's percentage of the total number of homeless students enrolled nationally.

**Table 3**  
**Total Enrolled in LEAs With and Without McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.1.1),**  
**Three-Year Comparison by State**

	Total Enrolled SY0708	Percent of Total Enrolled SY0708	Total Enrolled SY0809	Percent of Total Enrolled SY0809	Total Enrolled SY0910	Percent of Total Enrolled SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910*	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 Year)
Total Enrolled All States in LEAs with and Without Subgrants	794,617	100	956,914	100	939,903	100	20	-2	18
Total Enrolled by State									
ALABAMA	11,687	1.5	12,859	1.3	16,287	1.7	10	27	39
ALASKA	2,963	0.4	3,401	0.4	4,218	0.4	15	24	42
ARIZONA	21,380	2.7	25,336	2.6	30,815	3.3	19	22	44
ARKANSAS	5,917	0.7	6,344	0.7	8,107	0.9	7	28	37
BUREAU OF INDIAN EDUCATION	626	0.1	2,088	0.2	1,867	0.2	234	-11	198
CALIFORNIA	224,249	28.2	288,233	30.1	193,796	20.6	29	-33	-14
COLORADO	12,302	1.5	15,834	1.7	18,408	2.0	29	16	50
CONNECTICUT	2,017	0.3	2,387	0.2	2,716	0.3	18	14	35
DELAWARE	1,982	0.2	2,598	0.3	2,843	0.3	31	9	43
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	1,005	0.1	950	0.1	2,499	0.3	-5	163	149
FLORIDA	33,993	4.3	40,967	4.3	48,695	5.2	21	19	43

	Total Enrolled SY0708	Percent of Total Enrolled SY0708	Total Enrolled SY0809	Percent of Total Enrolled SY0809	Total Enrolled SY0910	Percent of Total Enrolled SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910*	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 Year)
GEORGIA	15,700	2.0	24,079	2.5	26,428	2.8	53	10	68
HAWAII	925	0.1	1,739	0.2	2,966	0.3	88	71	221
IDAHO	2,125	0.3	2,710	0.3	4,342	0.5	28	60	104
ILLINOIS	26,238	3.3	26,688	2.8	33,367	3.6	2	25	27
INDIANA	8,480	1.1	10,364	1.1	12,248	1.3	22	18	44
IOWA	5,918	0.7	6,824	0.7	6,631	0.7	15	-3	12
KANSAS	4,890	0.6	6,700	0.7	8,452	0.9	37	26	73
KENTUCKY	17,735	2.2	22,626	2.4	23,104	2.5	28	2	30
LOUISIANA	29,234	3.7	25,362	2.7	25,223	2.7	-13	-1	-14
MAINE	1,379	0.2	1,300	0.1	1,158	0.1	-6	-11	-16
MARYLAND	8,813	1.1	10,676	1.1	13,158	1.4	21	23	49
MASSACHUSETTS	12,449	1.6	12,269	1.3	13,090	1.4	-1	7	5
MICHIGAN	18,435	2.3	18,706	2.0	22,189	2.4	1	19	20
MINNESOTA	8,163	1.0	7,590	0.8	9,221	1.0	-7	21	13
MISSISSIPPI	9,926	1.2	8,525	0.9	7,499	0.8	-14	-12	-24
MISSOURI	11,977	1.5	14,350	1.5	16,654	1.8	20	16	39
MONTANA	887	0.1	1,308	0.1	1,445	0.2	47	10	63
NEBRASKA	1,530	0.2	1,752	0.2	2,188	0.2	15	25	43
NEVADA	6,647	0.8	8,670	0.9	8,841	0.9	30	2	33
NEW HAMPSHIRE	2,087	0.3	2,130	0.2	2,573	0.3	2	21	23
NEW JERSEY	6,033	0.8	7,890	0.8	6,250	0.7	31	-21	4
NEW MEXICO	6,152	0.8	8,380	0.9	9,432	1.0	36	13	53
NEW YORK	71,218	9.0	76,117	8.0	82,409	8.8	7	8	16
NORTH CAROLINA	16,937	2.1	18,693	2.0	21,019	2.2	10	12	24
NORTH DAKOTA	686	0.1	1,149	0.1	836	0.1	67	-27	22
OHIO	14,483	1.8	16,059	1.7	19,113	2.0	11	19	32
OKLAHOMA	9,179	1.2	12,139	1.3	15,910	1.7	32	31	73
OREGON	15,839	2.0	18,051	1.9	19,954	2.1	14	11	26
PENNSYLVANIA	11,756	1.5	12,438	1.3	18,204	1.9	6	46	55
PUERTO RICO	4,336	0.5	4,064	0.4	4,464	0.5	-6	10	3
RHODE ISLAND	746	0.1	1,099	0.1	996	0.1	47	-9	34
SOUTH CAROLINA	7,413	0.9	8,738	0.9	10,820	1.2	18	24	46
SOUTH DAKOTA	1,430	0.2	1,794	0.2	1,512	0.2	25	-16	6
TENNESSEE	8,031	1.0	9,836	1.0	11,458	1.2	22	16	43
TEXAS	53,242	6.7	80,940	8.5	76,095	8.1	52	-6	43
UTAH	11,270	1.4	14,016	1.5	15,702	1.7	24	12	39
VERMONT	789	0.1	662	0.1	785	0.1	-16	19	-1

	Total Enrolled SY0708	Percent of Total Enrolled SY0708	Total Enrolled SY0809	Percent of Total Enrolled SY0809	Total Enrolled SY0910	Percent of Total Enrolled SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910*	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 Year)
VIRGINIA	11,776	1.5	12,768	1.3	14,223	1.5	8	11	21
WASHINGTON	18,670	2.3	20,780	2.2	21,826	2.3	11	5	17
WEST VIRGINIA	2,909	0.4	4,257	0.4	4,817	0.5	46	13	66
WISCONSIN	9,331	1.2	10,955	1.1	12,029	1.3	17	10	29
WYOMING	732	0.1	724	0.1	1,021	0.1	-1	41	39
<b>TOTAL ENROLLED ALL STATES</b>	794,617	100	956,914	100	939,903	100	20	-2	18

\* States marked in blue in SY 2009-10 had an increase in enrollment of 20% or more.

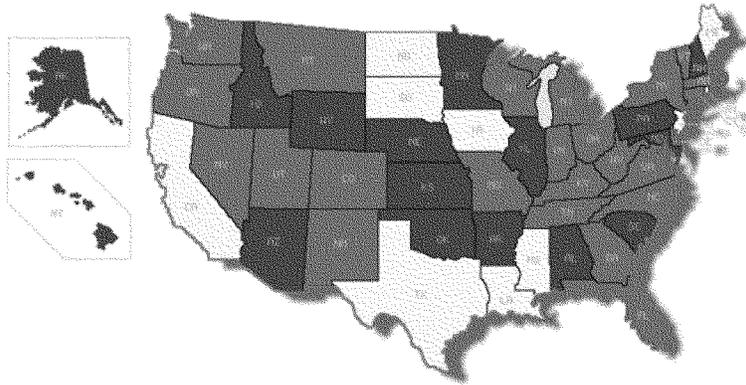
States marked in yellow in SY 2009-10 had an increase in enrollment of 19% or less.

States marked in teal showed a decrease in enrollment between SY 2008-09 and SY 2009-10.

States highlighted in light blue constitute the largest percentages of the total national enrollment.

**Figure 3**  
***SY0910 Increase/Decrease in Homeless Students Enrolled (CSPR 1.9.1.1)***

- = 20% or more increase
- = 19% or less increase
- = Decrease



The total number of homeless students enrolled nationally in reporting LEAs with and without subgrants decreased 2 percent between SY 2008-09 and SY 2009-10. A number of States (portrayed in the above map) reported increases in total enrollment of 20% or more. States that reported a 20% or more increase in the number of homeless students enrolled in all LEAs in SY 2009-10 from the number reported in SY 2008-09 were: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, District of Columbia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Kansas, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Hampshire, Oklahoma, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Wyoming. States showing a decrease in the number of homeless students enrolled in all LEAs between SY 2008-09 and SY 2009-10 were: Bureau of Indian Education, California, Iowa, Louisiana, Maine, Mississippi, New Jersey, North Dakota, Rhode Island, South Dakota, and Texas.

Possible factors to which these increases and decreases could be attributed include:

- Economic downturn (for example, students becoming homeless due to foreclosure)
- Natural disasters
- Changes in data collection as States align their data collection processes with the requirements of EDFacts and the CSPR

The four States comprising the largest percentages of the total national enrollment of homeless students in LEAs with and without McKinney-Vento subgrants in SY 2009-10 were, in order, California (21%), New York (9 percent), Texas (8 percent), and Florida (5 percent). The combined number of students in these four States (400,995) was 43% of the total enrolled (939,903).

California has accounted for the largest number of homeless students each year over the three-year period; however, the state aggregate from all LEAs submitting data showed a decrease of 94,437 homeless students enrolled between SY 2008-09 and SY 2009-10. California explained the decrease in the Comments section for CSPP Question 1.9.1.1 as, "the main cause for this decrease is the data reporting procedures and sources to collect homeless data has fully transitioned to a new data system. CDE is currently working to improve the data quality in the homeless data collected in this system." Excluding California from the national total, homeless student enrollment increased 11% among all other States.

**Table 4**  
**Total Enrolled in LEAs With and Without McKinney-Vento Subgrants by State SY 2009-10 (CSPP 1.9.1.1), States with Largest Percent of Enrollment**

	National	California	New York	Texas	Florida	Total State
Total # Enrolled SY0910	939,903	193,796	82,409	76,095	48,695	400,995
Percent of Total Enrolled	100	21	9	8	5	43

**Age 3-5 Not Kindergarten (1.9.1.1) – Homeless Preschool Children**

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act includes homeless children in public preschool programs as follows:

"Each State Educational Agency shall ensure that each child of a homeless individual and each homeless youth have equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths."<sup>4</sup> Guidance issued from ED elaborates further to state "children and youth and their families receive educational services for which they are eligible, including Head Start, Even Start, and preschool programs administered by the LEA."<sup>5</sup>

Homeless children who are enrolled in public preschool programs have been categorized in the CSPP as *Age 3-5 Not Kindergarten* for the purpose of data collection since SY 2006-07. Following is a three-year comparison of data submitted for this category.

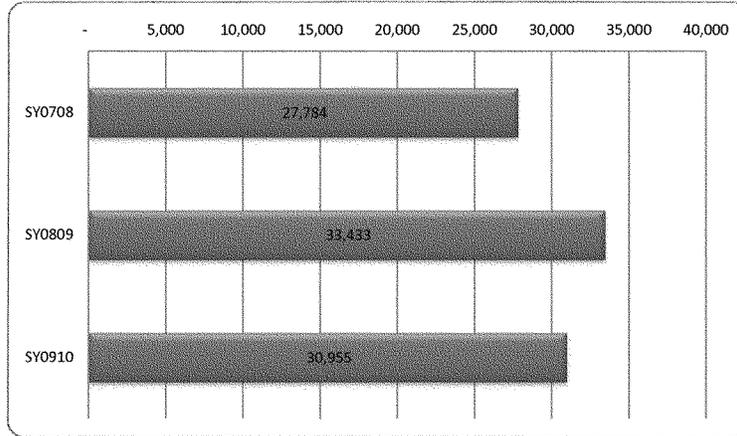
**Table 5**  
**Age 3-5 Not Kindergarten, Total Enrolled in LEAs With and Without McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPP 1.9.1.1), Three-Year Comparison**

Age 3-5 Not Kindergarten ENROLLED	SY0708 Enrolled	SY0809 Enrolled	SY0910 Enrolled	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 Year)
Total All States	27,784	33,433	30,995	20	-7	11

<sup>4</sup> Subtitle B of title VII of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (42 U.S.C. 11431 et seq., section 721)

<sup>5</sup> Children And Youth Program, Title VII-B Of The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, As Amended By The No Child Left Behind Act Of 2001, Non-Regulatory Guidance, United States Department Of Education Washington, DC July 2004.

**Figure 4**  
**Age 3-5 Not Kindergarten, Total Enrolled in LEAs With and Without McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.1.1), Three-Year Comparison**



**PRIMARY NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH ENROLLED IN LEAS WITH AND WITHOUT MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS (1.9.1.2)**

Primary nighttime residence is defined as the type of residence (e.g., shelter, hotel, doubled-up in the home of a relative or friend) where a homeless child or unaccompanied youth is staying at the time of enrollment or the type of residence where a currently enrolled child or youth is staying when he or she is identified as homeless.<sup>6</sup> It is the responsibility of the local liaison to record the type of primary nighttime residence at the time of identification.

As the primary nighttime residence at the time of enrollment is the basis for identifying homeless children and youth, the data counts regarding residence should correspond with data counts recorded for number of homeless children and youth enrolled in LEAs with and without subgrants. For each child recorded, one type of residence for this child should be recorded; therefore, totals for number enrolled should equal totals for primary residence. The CSPR requires this alignment between the data submitted for total enrolled in LEAs with and without subgrants and the data submitted for number of homeless children categorized by primary nighttime residence.

Forty-seven States (89%) met the CSPR requirement that the primary nighttime residence total equal the total enrolled, while six States (11%) did not meet the requirement. Many LEAs collect the primary nighttime residence data manually and the SEA does not receive the data electronically, thus the potential exists for missing data and mismatched totals.

**Table 6**  
*Primary Nighttime Residence by Category in All LEAs Reporting Data (CSPR 1.9.1.2),  
Percent of Total and Three-Year Comparison*

	SY0708	Percent of SY0708 Total Primary Nighttime Residence Reported	SY0809	Percent of SY0809 Total Primary Nighttime Residence Reported	SY0910	Percent of SY0910 Total Primary Nighttime Residence Reported
<b>Shelters</b>	164,982	21	211,152	23.1	179,863	19
<b>Doubled Up</b>	502,082	65	606,764	66.3	668,024	71
<b>Unsheltered</b>	50,445	7	39,678	4.3	40,701	4
<b>Hotels/Motels</b>	56,323	7	57,579	6.3	47,243	5
<b>Total</b>	773,832	100	915,173	100	935,831	100*

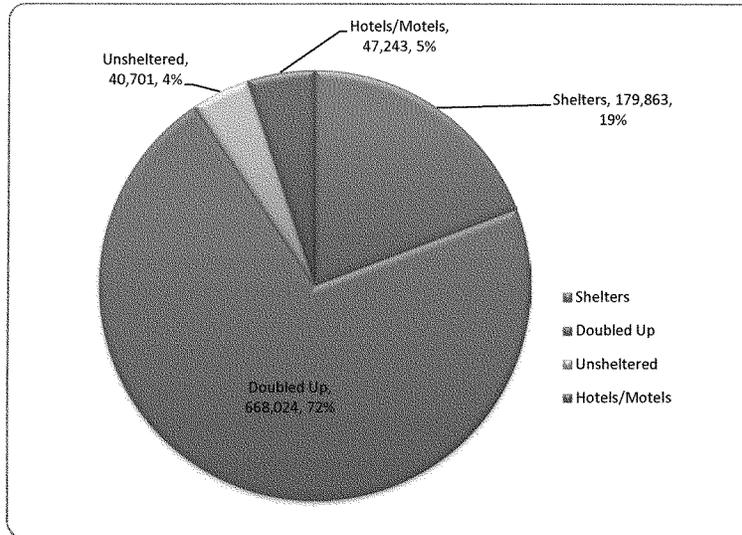
\*Results of rounding of fractions may not appear in the chart.

<sup>6</sup> See Appendix B for detailed definitions of primary nighttime residence categories.

**Table 7**  
**Primary Nighttime Residence by Category in All LEAs Reporting Data (CSPR 1.9.1.2),**  
**Three-Year Comparison**

	SY0708	SY0809	SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 Year)
Shelters	164,982	211,152	179,863	28	-15	9
Doubled Up	502,082	606,764	668,024	21	10	33
Unsheltered	50,445	39,678	40,701	-21	3	-19
Hotels/Motels	56,323	57,579	47,243	2	-18	-16
<b>Total</b>	<b>773,832</b>	<b>915,173</b>	<b>935,831</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>21</b>

**Figure 5**  
**Primary Nighttime Residence by Category, SY 2009-10 (CSPR 1.9.1.2), LEAs With and Without McKinney-Vento Subgrants**



**HOMELESS STUDENTS SERVED IN LEAS WITH MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS (1.9.2.1)**

The definition of students served in the CSPR includes homeless children who have been served in any way through McKinney-Vento funds. Services include both direct services, as outlined in the McKinney-Vento Act (Sec. 723), and indirect services, such as those provided by a staff member whose position is supported through McKinney-Vento funds. Also included are 3 through 5 year olds who are preschool age served by the subgrant program, regardless of whether or not they are enrolled in a preschool program operated by an LEA, or in a preschool program where the LEA is a partner administratively or financially or has any accountability in serving the children. It is important to note that the number of homeless students enrolled in an LEA with a subgrant might:

- Equal the number served, if indirect services can be linked to McKinney-Vento funds;
- Be more than the number served if subgrant funds support only specific activities like transportation, shelter tutoring programs, or preschool programs; or
- Be less than the number served if subgrant funds support activities such as identifying children as homeless who subsequently attend school in another LEA or referring or assisting preschool-aged children to attend non-LEA preschool programs.

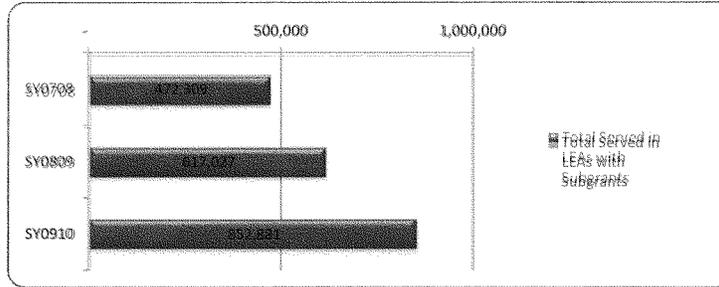
In SY 2009-10, 852,881 homeless children and youth were reported served in LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants according to the above definition. This amount is a 38% increase from students reported as served in the 2008-09 school year (617,027).

Thirty-five States (66%) reported that the number of homeless students served in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 was at least 20% higher than the number reported in SY 2008-09. These States were: Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Bureau of Indian Education, California, Colorado, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Missouri, Montana, Nebraska, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, Oregon, Tennessee, Texas, Vermont, Virginia, Washington, Wisconsin, and Wyoming. States showing a decrease in the number of homeless students served in LEAs with subgrants between SY 2009-10 and SY 2008-09 were: Connecticut, Iowa, Maine, Michigan, New York, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, South Dakota, and Utah.

**Table 8**  
**Total Served in LEAs With McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.2.1), Three-Year Comparison and Comparison to Total Enrolled in LEAs with Subgrants**

	Total Served SY0708	Percent of Total Enrolled Served in LEAs with Subgrants SY0708	Total Served SY0809	Percent of Total Enrolled in Served in LEAs with Subgrants SY0708	Total Served SY0910	Percent of Total Enrolled Served in LEAs with Subgrants SY0708	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 Year)
Served in LEAs with Subgrants	472,309	101	617,027	114	852,881	114	31	38	81
Total Enrolled in LEAs with Subgrants	468,972	100	539,022	100	748,538	100	15	39	60

**Figure 6**  
**Total Served in LEAs with McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.2.1), Three-Year Comparison**



**Table 9**  
**Total Served in LEAs With McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.2.1), Three-Year Comparison by State**

State	Total Served in LEAs with Subgrants SY0708	Percent of Total Served SY0708	Total Served in LEAs with Subgrants SY0809	Percent of Total Served SY0809	Total Served in LEAs with Subgrants SY0910	Percent of Total Served SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 Year)
Alabama	9,464	2	9,467	1.5	13,308	1.6	0	41	41
Alaska	2,278	0.5	2,808	0.5	3,497	0.4	23	25	54
Arizona	4,793	1.0	5,864	1.0	27,172	3.2	22	363	467
Arkansas	899	0.2	1,260	0.2	1,540	0.2	40	22	71
Bureau of Indian Education	536	0.1	0	0.0	1,536	0.2			187
California	139,955	29.6	185,921	30.1	301,275	35.3	33	62	115
Colorado	9,897	2.1	12,560	2.0	15,288	1.8	27	22	54
Connecticut	973	0.2	2,150	0.3	1,758	0.2	121	-18	81
Delaware	1,667	0.4	1,863	0.3	1,899	0.2	12	2	14
District of Columbia	0	0.0	0	0.0	2,499	0.3			
Florida	30,627	6.5	35,842	5.8	47,233	5.5	17	32	54
Georgia	11,080	2.3	14,234	2.3	21,513	2.5	28	51	94
Hawaii	925	0.2	1,739	0.3	2,966	0.3	88	71	221
Idaho	1,151	0.2	1,301	0.2	1,974	0.2	13	52	72
Illinois	13,050	2.8	26,460	4.3	33,367	3.9	103	26	156
Indiana	5,509	1.2	5,808	0.9	8,776	1.0	5	51	59

State	Total Served in LEAs with Subgrants SY0708	Percent of Total Served SY0708	Total Served in LEAs with Subgrants SY0809	Percent of Total Served SY0809	Total Served in LEAs with Subgrants SY0910	Percent of Total Served SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 Year)
Iowa	1,650	0.3	3,270	0.5	2,942	0.3	98	-10	78
Kansas	2,421	0.5	3,469	0.6	6,622	0.8	43	91	174
Kentucky	14,532	3.1	13,791	2.2	20,761	2.4	-5	51	43
Louisiana	16,248	3.4	15,929	2.6	22,705	2.7	-2	43	40
Maine	302	0.1	545	0.1	421	0.0	80	-23	39
Maryland	6,228	1.3	9,175	1.5	10,970	1.3	47	20	76
Massachusetts	9,254	2.0	7,195	1.2	9,734	1.1	-22	35	5
Michigan	15,682	3.3	16,973	2.8	9,724	1.1	8	-43	-38
Minnesota	6,950	1.5	7,331	1.2	8,760	1.0	5	19	26
Mississippi	4,541	1.0	4,608	0.7	6,156	0.7	1	34	36
Missouri	1,814	0.4	4,934	0.8	11,802	1.4	172	139	551
Montana	558	0.1	887	0.1	1,308	0.2	59	47	134
Nebraska	1,409	0.3	1,507	0.2	1,920	0.2	7	27	36
Nevada	6,422	1.4	8,099	1.3	8,815	1.0	26	9	37
New Hampshire	610	0.1	768	0.1	1,561	0.2	26	103	156
New Jersey	1,335	0.3	781	0.1	1,012	0.1	-41	30	-24
New Mexico	6,204	1.3	7,975	1.3	8,723	1.0	29	9	41
New York	22,506	4.8	34,788	5.6	28,658	3.4	55	-18	27
North Carolina	5,850	1.2	18,815	3.0	12,130	1.4	222	-36	107
North Dakota	306	0.1	356	0.1	354	0.0	16	-1	16
Ohio	11,024	2.3	13,291	2.2	18,120	2.1	21	36	64
Oklahoma	4,112	0.9	7,488	1.2	9,373	1.1	82	25	128
Oregon	9,096	1.9	10,061	1.6	23,158	2.7	11	130	155
Pennsylvania	12,799	2.7	20,288	3.3	19,457	2.3	59	-4	52
Puerto Rico	3,400	0.7	4,051	0.7	4,094	0.5	19	1	20
Rhode Island	369	0.1	425	0.1	464	0.1	15	9	26
South Carolina	4,359	0.9	5,231	0.8	5,880	0.7	20	12	35
South Dakota	1,219	0.3	1,812	0.3	1,154	0.1	49	-36	-5
Tennessee	6,387	1.4	7,766	1.3	9,351	1.1	22	20	46
Texas	32,176	6.8	38,540	6.2	49,309	5.8	20	28	53
Utah	8,182	1.7	11,903	1.9	9,381	1.1	45	-21	15
Vermont	210	0.0	178	0.0	260	0.0	-15	46	24
Virginia	7,658	1.6	9,481	1.5	11,940	1.4	24	26	56
Washington	5,844	1.2	7,982	1.3	18,062	2.1	37	126	209
West Virginia	1,232	0.3	2,414	0.4	2,875	0.3	96	19	133
Wisconsin	6,246	1.3	7,210	1.2	8,705	1.0	15	21	39
Wyoming	370	0.1	433	0.1	619	0.1	17	43	67
Total	472,309	100.0	617,027	100	852,881	100	31	38	81

**SUBPOPULATIONS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS REPORTED SERVED IN LEAS WITH MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS (1.9.2.2)**

The next two tables and Figure 7 report the subpopulations of students served by McKinney-Vento subgrantees and the kinds of services they receive. There were significant increases in all subpopulations between SY 2008-09 and SY 2009-10. The number of unaccompanied youth as reported in SY 2009-10 increased 23% over what was reported in SY 2008-09; migratory children and youth increased 37%; children with disabilities increased 44%; and children with limited English proficiency increased 38%.

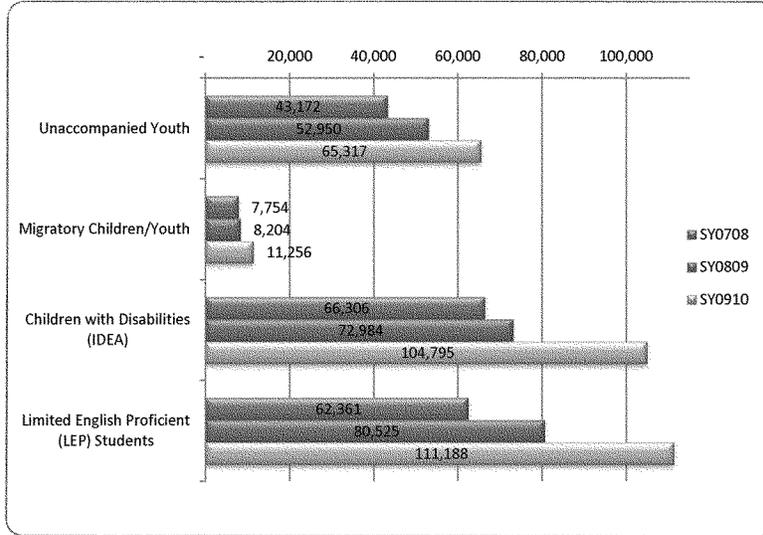
Over the three-year period SY 2007-08 through SY 2009-10, marked increases were also shown in the number of homeless students reported in each of the subpopulations: unaccompanied youth (51%), homeless migratory children and youth (45%), children with disabilities (58%), and children with limited English proficiency (78%).

**Table 10**  
*Subpopulations of Homeless Students Served in LEAs With McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.2.2), Three-Year Comparison*

	SY0708	SY0809	SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0809	Percent Change Between SY0809 and SY0910	Percent Change Between SY0708 and SY0910 (3 year)
<b>Unaccompanied Youth</b>	43,172	52,950	65,317	23	23	51
<b>Migratory Children/Youth</b>	7,754	8,204	11,526	6	37	45
<b>Children with Disabilities (IDEA)</b>	66,306	72,984	104,795	10	44	58
<b>Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students</b>	62,361	80,525	111,188	29	38	78

*Note: The subpopulations categories are not mutually exclusive. Homeless student counts may be duplicated. It is possible for homeless students to be counted in more than one subpopulation, i.e., an unaccompanied youth may simultaneously be a migrant LEP student who receives special education services.*

**Figure 7**  
**Subpopulations of Homeless Students Served in LEAs with McKinney-Vento Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.2.2), Three-Year Comparison**



**Table 11**  
**Subpopulations of Homeless Students Served in LEAs with McKinney-Vento Subgrants Percent of Total Served (CSPR 1.9.2.2), Three-Year Comparison**

School Year	Total Served in LEAs with Subgrants	Unaccompanied Youth	Percent of Total Served	Migratory Children/Youth	Percent of Total Served	Children with Disabilities (IDEA)	Percent of Total Served	Limited English Proficient (LEP) Students	Percent of Total Served
SY0708	472,309	43,172	9	7,754	2	66,306	14	62,361	13
SY0809	617,027	52,950	9	8,204	1	72,984	12	80,525	13
SY0910	852,881	65,317	8	11,256	1	104,795	12	111,188	13

**EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED BY LEAS WITH MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS  
(1.9.2.3)**

The following table illustrates how many of the LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants in States that reported data provided various educational support services to homeless children and youth. The number of LEAs providing each service in SY 2009-10 is remarkably consistent across services, with over 70% of all LEAs with subgrants providing 14 of the 18 indicated services. Over 80% of these LEAs are providing staff development and awareness, transportation, inter-organizational coordination, clothing, school supplies, and referral services.

**Table 12**  
*Number of LEAs with McKinney-Vento Subgrants Providing Educational Support Services (CSPR 1.9.2.3), Three-Year Comparison*

Educational Support Services Provided for Homeless Children and Youth (1.9.2.3)	SY0708	Percent of Total Subgrants Reporting	SY0809	Percent of Total Subgrants Reporting	SY0910	Percent of Total Subgrants Reporting
<b>Total LEAs with Subgrants Reporting</b>	1,356	100	1,668	100	2,866	100
<b>Educational Support Services</b>						
Tutoring or other instructional support	862	64	1,050	63	2,228	78
Expedited evaluations	510	38	676	41	1,510	53
Staff professional development and awareness	915	67	1,211	73	2,295	80
Referrals for medical, dental and other health services	830	61	1,133	68	2,182	76
Transportation	974	72	1,183	71	2,405	84
Early childhood programs	535	39	613	37	1,632	57
Assistance with participation in school programs	902	67	1,164	70	2,230	78
Before, after-school, mentoring, summer programs	852	63	1,038	62	2,067	72
Obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment	766	56	983	59	2,033	71
Parent education related to rights and resources for children	888	65	1,150	69	2,223	78
Coordination between schools and agencies	806	59	971	58	2,381	83
Counseling	710	52	853	51	2,010	70
Addressing needs relating to domestic violence	816	60	885	53	1,768	62
Clothing to meet a school requirement	885	65	1,097	66	2,455	86
School supplies	975	72	1,262	76	2,761	96
Referral to other programs and services	811	60	1,168	70	2,304	80
Emergency assistance related to school attendance	920	68	902	54	2,057	72
Other services	332	24	869	52	477	17

**BARRIERS TO THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH (1.9.2.4)**

For the purposes of federal data collection, a barrier is defined as a situation in which difficulties or conflicts have arisen related to the enrollment, attendance, and provision of services for homeless students, and have required the intervention of the local liaison or other homeless education staff to resolve. The most common barrier to the education of homeless children and youth reported by LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants for SY 2009-10 was transportation to and from the school of origin. Transportation was the barrier listed most frequently by 1,761 LEAs (61%) with McKinney-Vento subgrants. It has been the barrier most frequently listed by LEAs with subgrants for the past six school years.

The following table illustrates how many of the LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants reported by States who actually submitted data reported these barriers to the education of homeless children and youth.

**Table 13**  
*Number of LEAs with McKinney-Vento Subgrants Reporting Barriers to the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (CSPR 1.9.2.4), Three-Year Comparison*

Barriers to the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (1.9.2.4)	SY0708	Percent of Total Subgrants Reporting	SY0809	Percent of Total Subgrants Reporting	SY0910	Percent of Total Subgrants Reporting
<b>Total LEAs with Subgrants Reporting</b>	1,356	100	1,668	100	2,866	100
<b>Barriers</b>						
Eligibility for Homeless Services	411	30	378	23	1,399	49
School Selection	373	28	449	27	1,275	44
Transportation	683	50	847	51	1,761	61
School Records	372	27	406	24	1,346	47
Immunizations	340	25	266	16	1,275	44
Other Medical Records	194	14	159	10	182	6
Other Barriers	334	25	507	30	1,276	45

\*One State submitted the number of students instead of the number of subgrants for this question in SY 2008-09. This State's responses have been omitted from the totals for each category for SY 2008-09.

**ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTH IN LEAs WITH MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS (CSPR 1.9.2.5.1: READING; AND 1.9.2.5.2: MATHEMATICS)**

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act requires testing of academic progress in grades 3-8 and once in high school. The following information pertains to LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants only. Since testing is not required in public pre-kindergarten programs through Grade 2, or in ungraded settings, collection of academic achievement data for homeless children and youth is neither required nor reported for those categories. High mobility of homeless children and youth, either moving out of the district after being identified or absent during the testing time, can cause the number of students assessed in LEAs with subgrants to be unequal to the number reported served in LEAs with subgrants.

**Data Collection Results: Grades 3-8**

**READING**

The number of homeless students in grades 3-8 taking the state reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (235,917) was reported as having increased 41% from the number of homeless students taking the reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (167,017).

The number of homeless students in grades 3-8 taking the state reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (235,917) increased 53% from the number of homeless students taking the reading test in SY 2007-08 (153,643).

Of the number of homeless students in grades 3-8 taking the state reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (235,917), 53% (125,184) met or exceeded state proficiency standards in reading. This is a three percentage point increase from the 50% of homeless students who were found to meet or exceed state proficiency standards in reading in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (83,926 of 167,017).

**MATHEMATICS**

The number of homeless students in grades 3-8 taking the state mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (235,829) increased 42% from the number of homeless students taking the mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (166,104).

The number of homeless students in grades 3-8 taking the state mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (235,829) increased 53% from the number of homeless students taking the mathematics test in SY 2007-08 (153,860).

Of the number of homeless students in grades 3-8 taking the state mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (235,829), 52% (122,941) met or exceeded state proficiency standards in mathematics. This is a two percentage point increase from the 50% of homeless students who were found to meet or exceed state proficiency standards in mathematics in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (83,104 of 166,104).

**Data Collection Results: High School****READING**

The number of homeless students in high school taking the state reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (30,439) decreased 2 percent from the number of homeless high school students taking the reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (30,936).

The number of homeless students in high school taking the state reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (30,439) decreased 14% from the number of homeless high school students taking the reading test in SY 2007-08 (35,502).

Of the number of homeless students in high school taking the state reading test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (30,439), 48% (14,479) met or exceeded state proficiency standards in reading. This is a three percentage point increase from the 45% of homeless high school students who were found to meet or exceed state proficiency standards in reading in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (14,036 of 30,936).

**MATHEMATICS**

The number of homeless students in high school taking the state mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (32,185) increased 10 percent from the number of homeless high school students taking the mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (29,341).

The number of homeless students in high school taking the mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (32,185) decreased 9 percent from the number of homeless high school students taking the state mathematics test in SY 2007-08 (35,403).

Of the number of homeless students in high school taking the state mathematics test in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2009-10 (32,185), 38% (12,375) met or exceeded state proficiency standards in mathematics.

There is no percentage point increase or decrease from the 38% of homeless high school students who were found to meet or exceed state proficiency standards in mathematics in LEAs with subgrants in SY 2008-09 (11,189 of 29,341).

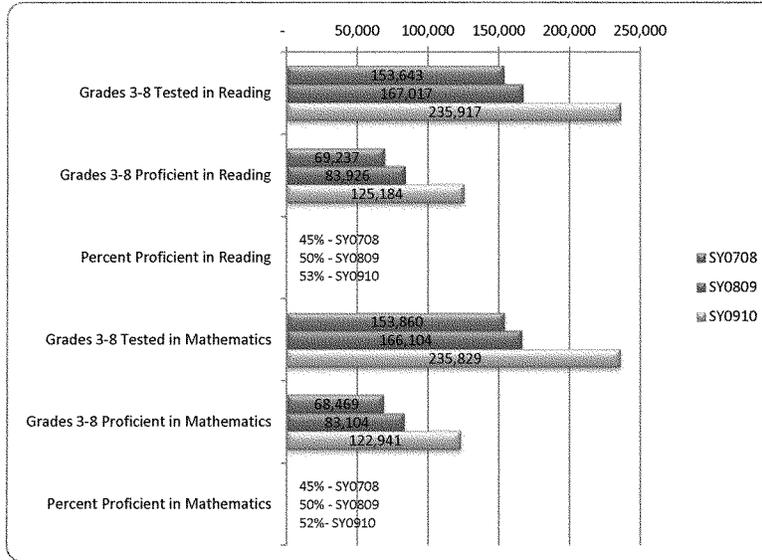
**Table 14**  
**Academic Progress of Homeless Children and Youth in LEAs with McKinney-Vento Subgrants**  
**(CSPR 1.9.2.5.1 and 1.9.2.5.2), Three-Year Comparison**

Academic Progress of Homeless Children and Youth SY 2009-10 <sup>ab</sup>						
	Number Taking Reading Assessment Test	Number Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Reading	Percent Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Reading	Number Taking Mathematics Assessment Test	Number Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Mathematics	Percent Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Mathematics
Grade 3	45,456	23,843	52	45,436	27,120	60
Grade 4	43,169	24,011	56	43,205	25,066	58
Grade 5	40,316	22,181	55	40,303	22,270	55
Grade 6	38,000	19,977	53	37,941	17,993	47
Grade 7	35,243	18,005	51	35,321	16,015	45
Grade 8	33,733	17,167	51	33,623	14,477	43
Total Grades 3-8	235,917	125,184	53	235,829	122,941	52
High School	30,439	14,479	48	32,185	12,375	38
Total Grades 3-12	266,356	139,663	52	268,014	135,316	50
Academic Progress of Homeless Children and Youth SY 2008-09						
	Number Taking Reading Assessment Test	Number Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Reading	Percent Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Reading	Number Taking Mathematics Assessment Test	Number Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Mathematics	Percent Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Mathematics
Grade 3	31,583	15,826	50	31,541	18,343	58
Grade 4	30,372	15,990	53	30,479	17,212	56
Grade 5	28,799	14,895	52	28,508	14,990	53
Grade 6	26,425	13,293	50	26,342	11,732	45
Grade 7	25,529	12,221	48	25,104	10,983	44
Grade 8	24,309	11,701	48	24,130	9,844	41
Total Grades 3-8	167,017	83,926	50	166,104	83,104	50
High School	30,936	14,036	45	29,341	11,189	38
Total Grades 3-12	197,953	97,962	49	195,445	94,293	48
Academic Progress of Homeless Children and Youth SY 2007-08						
	Number Taking Reading Assessment Test	Number Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Reading	Percent Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Reading	Number Taking Mathematics Assessment Test	Number Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Mathematics	Percent Meeting or Exceeding State Proficiency in Mathematics
Grade 3	30,732	13,625	44	30,841	15,288	50
Grade 4	27,443	13,300	48	27,540	14,235	52
Grade 5	25,835	12,151	47	25,870	12,191	47
Grade 6	23,886	10,650	45	24,035	9,703	40
Grade 7	23,280	10,083	43	23,181	8,859	38
Grade 8	22,467	9,428	42	22,393	8,193	37
Total Grades 3-8	153,643	69,237	45	153,860	68,469	45
High School	35,502	12,546	35	35,403	10,146	29
Total Grades 3-12	189,145	81,873	43	189,263	78,615	42

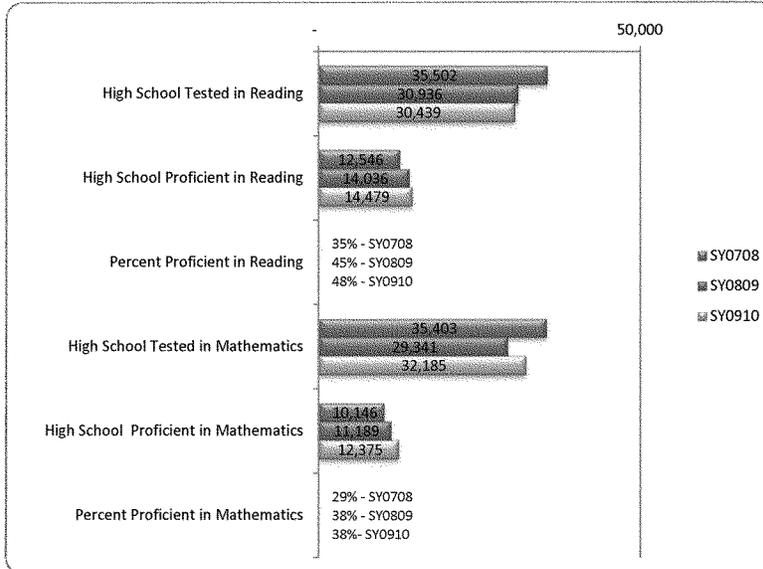
<sup>a</sup>In SY 2009-10, 748,538 homeless students were reported to be enrolled in LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants. Academic progress data was not submitted by LEAs with subgrants in one State. This State, Wyoming, comprised .1 percent (1,021) of all students enrolled in LEAs with subgrants.

<sup>b</sup>In SY 2009-10, Nevada and South Carolina submitted data in the Comments section. This data was added manually in each appropriate grade for the purposes of this report.

**Figure 8**  
**Academic Progress in Reading and Mathematics, Grades 3-8, LEAs with McKinney-Vento**  
**Subgrants (CSPR 1.9.2.5.1 and 1.9.2.5.2), Three-Year Comparison**



**Figure 9**  
**Academic Progress in Reading and Mathematics, High School, LEAs with McKinney-Vento**  
**Subgrants**  
**(CSPR 1.9.2.5.1 and 1.9.2.5.2), Three-Year Comparison**



## APPENDIX A: SAMPLE CSPR DATA COLLECTION FORM

(USED FOR SY0910)

### 1.9 EDUCATION FOR HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS PROGRAM

This section collects data on homeless children and youths and the McKinney-Vento grant program.

In the table below, provide the following information about the number of LEAs in the State who reported data on homeless children and youths and the McKinney-Vento program. The totals will be automatically calculated.

	#	# LEAs Reporting Data
LEAs without subgrants		
LEAs with subgrants		
<b>Total</b>	(Auto calculated)	(Auto calculated)

#### 1.9.1 ALL LEAs (WITH AND WITHOUT MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS)

The following questions collect data on homeless children and youths in the State.

##### 1.9.1.1 HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

In the table below, provide the number of homeless children and youths by grade level enrolled in public school at any time during the regular school year. The totals will be automatically calculated:

Age/Grade	# of Homeless Children/Youths Enrolled in Public School in LEAs <u>Without</u> Subgrants	# of Homeless Children/Youths Enrolled in Public School in LEAs <u>With</u> Subgrants
Age 3 through 5 (not Kindergarten)		
K		
1		
2		
3		
4		

Age/Grade	# of Homeless Children/Youths Enrolled in Public School in LEAs Without Subgrants	# of Homeless Children/Youths Enrolled in Public School in LEAs With Subgrants
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
Ungraded		
<b>Total</b>	(Auto calculated)	(Auto calculated)

#### 1.9.1.2 PRIMARY NIGHTTIME RESIDENCE OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS

In the table below, provide the number of homeless children and youths by primary nighttime residence enrolled in public school at any time during the regular school year. The primary nighttime residence should be the student's nighttime residence when he/she was identified as homeless. The totals will be automatically calculated.

	# of Homeless Children/Youths - LEAs Without Subgrants	# of Homeless Children/Youths - LEAs With Subgrants
Shelters, transitional housing, awaiting foster care		
Doubled-up (e.g., living with another family)		
Unsheltered (e.g., cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailer, or abandoned buildings)		
Hotels/Motels		
<b>Total</b>	(Auto calculated)	(Auto calculated)

### 1.9.2 LEAs WITH MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS

The following sections collect data on LEAs with McKinney-Vento subgrants.

#### 1.9.2.1 HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS SERVED BY MCKINNEY-VENTO SUBGRANTS

In the table below, provide the number of homeless children and youths by grade level who were served by McKinney-Vento subgrants during the regular school year. The total will be automatically calculated.

Age/Grade	# Homeless Children/Youths Served by Subgrants
Age 3 through 5 (not Kindergarten)	
K	
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	
6	
7	
8	
9	
10	
11	
12	
Ungraded	
<b>Total</b>	(Auto calculated)

### 1.9.2.2 SUBGROUPS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS SERVED

In the table below, please provide the following information about the homeless students served during the regular school year.

	# Homeless Students Served
Unaccompanied youth	
Migratory children/youth	
Children with disabilities ( <i>IDEA</i> )	
Limited English proficient students	

### 1.9.2.3 EDUCATIONAL SUPPORT SERVICES PROVIDED BY SUBGRANTEES

In the table below, provide the number of subgrantee programs that provided the following educational support services with McKinney-Vento funds.

	# McKinney-Vento Subgrantees That Offer
Tutoring or other instructional support	
Expedited evaluations	
Staff professional development and awareness	
Referrals for medical, dental, and other health services	
Transportation	
Early childhood programs	
Assistance with participation in school programs	
Before-, after-school, mentoring, summer programs	
Obtaining or transferring records necessary for enrollment	
Parent education related to rights and resources for children	
Coordination between schools and agencies	

<b>Counseling</b>	
<b>Addressing needs related to domestic violence</b>	
<b>Clothing to meet a school requirement</b>	
<b>School supplies</b>	
<b>Referral to other programs and services</b>	
<b>Emergency assistance related to school attendance</b>	
<b>Other (optional – in comment box below)</b>	
<b>Other (optional – in comment box below)</b>	
<b>Other (optional – in comment box below)</b>	

The response is limited to 8,000 characters.

**1.9.2.4 BARRIERS TO THE EDUCATION OF HOMELESS CHILDREN AND YOUTHS**

In the table below, provide the number of subgrantees that reported the following barriers to the enrollment and success of homeless children and youths.

	<b># Subgrantees Reporting</b>
<b>Eligibility for homeless services</b>	
<b>School selection</b>	
<b>Transportation</b>	
<b>School records</b>	
<b>Immunizations</b>	
<b>Other medical records</b>	
<b>Other barriers – in comment box below</b>	

The response is limited to 8,000 characters.

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### 1.9.2.5 ACADEMIC PROGRESS OF HOMELESS STUDENTS

The following questions collect data on the academic achievement of homeless children and youths served by McKinney-Vento subgrants.

#### 1.9.2.5.1 READING ASSESSMENT

In the table below, provide the number of homeless children and youths served who were tested on the state reading/language arts assessment and the number of those tested who scored at or above proficient. Provide data for grades 9 through 12 only for those grades tested for *ESEA*.

Grade	# Homeless Children/Youth Who Received a Valid Score and for Whom a Proficiency Level Was Assigned	# Homeless Children/Youth Scoring at or above Proficient
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
High School		

#### 1.9.2.5.2 MATHEMATICS ASSESSMENT

In the table below, provide the number of homeless children and youths served who were tested on the state mathematics assessment and the number of those tested who scored at or above proficient. Provide data for grades 9 through 12 only for those grades tested for *ESEA*.

Grade	# Homeless Children/Youth Who Received a Valid Score and for Whom a Proficiency Level Was Assigned	# Homeless Children/Youth Scoring at or above Proficient

3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
High School		

**APPENDIX B: Primary Nighttime Residence Category  
Definition  
CSPR Question 1.9.1.2**

	# of Homeless Children/Youths - LEAs <u>Without</u> Subgrants	# of Homeless Children/Youths - LEAs <u>With</u> Subgrants
Shelters, transitional housing, awaiting foster care		
Doubled-up (e.g., living with another family)		
Unsheltered (e.g., cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailer, or abandoned buildings)		
Hotels/Motels		
<b>Total</b>	(Auto calculated)	(Auto calculated)

The definition of "Primary Nighttime Residence" is the type of residence (e.g. shelter, hotel, doubled-up in the home of a relative or friend) where a homeless child or unaccompanied youth was staying at the time of enrollment or the type of residence where a currently enrolled child or youth was staying when he or she was identified as homeless.

**Shelters** are defined as supervised publicly or privately operated facilities designed to provide temporary living accommodations.

**Transitional Housing** is temporary accommodation for homeless individuals and families, as a step to permanent housing. Residents of transitional housing continue to be considered homeless until they move into permanent housing.

**Awaiting Foster Care:** Children who are awaiting foster care placement are considered homeless and eligible for McKinney-Vento services. (See Section 725(2)(B)(i) of the McKinney-Vento Act.) Children who are already in foster care, on the other hand, are not considered homeless. LEA liaisons should confer and coordinate with local child welfare providers to determine what "awaiting foster care placement" means in the context of their state and local policies.

**Doubled-Up:** The McKinney-Vento Act defines this term as "sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason" [725(2)(B)]. This classification particularly requires a case-by-case determination, keeping in mind the determining factor is whether the accommodation is a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence."

**Unsheltered** includes cars, parks, campgrounds, temporary trailers, abandoned buildings and substandard housing. Substandard housing may be determined by local building codes, community norms, and/or a case-by-case determination as to whether the accommodation is a "fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence."

[www.womenagainstabuse.org](http://www.womenagainstabuse.org)



December 7, 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
Chair, Financial Services Subcommittee on Housing and Community Opportunity  
United States House of Representatives  
2113 Rayburn Building  
Washington, DC 20515-1313

VIA EMAIL: [nicole.austin@mail.house.gov](mailto:nicole.austin@mail.house.gov)

Dear Chairwoman Biggert:

I urge you to move forward on HR 32, the Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011.

This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by personnel funded by other federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

As a provider agency working with homeless children and youth, HR 32 would allow us to use one definition of homelessness rather than several definitions. Service providers who make these determinations on a daily basis would be permitted to assess the full range of homeless solutions to better serve children and youth.

I thank you for your leadership to recognize all individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness.

Sincerely,

Elise Scioscia  
Strategic Initiatives Assistant  
Women Against Abuse

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Legal Center  
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Philadelphia Domestic Violence Hotline 1-866-SAFE-014



WESTERN REGIONAL ADVOCACY PROJECT

TEL: 415.621.2533 / EMAIL: WRAP@WRAPHOME.ORG / WEB: WWW.WRAPHOME.ORG  
2940 16TH STREET, SUITE 200-2, SAN FRANCISCO, CA 94103

12 December 2011

The Honorable Judy Biggert  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

The Honorable Luis Gutierrez  
U.S. House of Representatives  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Chairman Biggert and Ranking Member Gutierrez:

I am writing in support of H.R. 32, The Homeless Children and Youth Act of 2011. This legislation amends the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) definition of homelessness to include children, youth, and their families who are verified as homeless by federal program personnel from four federal programs: school district homeless liaisons designated under the education subtitle of the McKinney-Vento Act; Head Start programs; Runaway and Homeless Youth Act programs; and Early Intervention programs under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, Part C.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act creates a streamlined, efficient referral process for homeless children and youth to access HUD homeless services. It stands in contrast to HUD's recently released regulations on the definition of homelessness, which impose requirements for multiple moves and long periods of homelessness, as well as extensive documentation and recordkeeping, before a family or youth receives HUD homeless assistance. The simplicity of the Homeless Children and Youth Act is modeled on successfully implemented provisions of the Child Nutrition Act and the College Cost Reduction and Access Act.

The Homeless Children and Youth Act provides communities with the flexibility to serve and house families, children, and youth who are extremely vulnerable and in need of assistance. People in local communities are the best equipped to assess specific homeless situations to know which homeless families and youth are most in need of housing and services. Service providers make these determinations on a daily basis, and should be permitted to assess the full range of homeless situations.

For these reasons, we strongly support HR 32. Thank you for your leadership on behalf of all homeless children and youth.

Sincerely,

Paul Boden

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