



Homelessness and Education in Florida: Impacts on Children and Youth

Written by
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and Miami Homes for All

Study made possible by
JPMORGAN CHASE & CO.

Foreword

Florida continues to be a destination for people seeking a life full of opportunity. We have one of the highest population growth rates in the nation and hundreds of thousands of new residents are moving here in search of economic opportunities.

Unfortunately, economic prosperity is hard to reach for many. In recent years, and following the economic downturn, we saw an alarming increase in people experiencing homelessness due to the lack of affordable housing options. Most worrisome of all, the rising numbers include families with children.

Safe, stable housing lays a foundation for children's success in school. The number of Florida schoolchildren without permanent housing has more than doubled in the last eight years. Nearly 73,000 children and youth are doubling up with others or staying in hotels and motels, shelters, transitional housing, or unsheltered locations.

We found that those without permanent housing have higher rates of absenteeism and school suspensions – and many are failing to pass basic language arts, math and science tests.

This is unacceptable. We need to shine a light on this issue and work collectively to develop solutions that will give every child in this state the opportunity to succeed in school.

JPMorgan Chase is committed to driving inclusive economic growth in communities around the world. This starts with housing, education and jobs. Removing barriers and creating pathways to opportunity is a large part of our goal. That is why we commissioned this study.

The more information we have on this issue, the better prepared we are to help children and youth access stable housing so that they can succeed in school and live a prosperous life. The data contained in this study will help inform strategies and policies that can be implemented to create lasting solutions.

Both in private and public life, I have seen the power generated by leaders coming together to tackle difficult issues. With the help of the powerful coalition of civic and elected officials, nonprofit organizations, the private sector, and experts in housing, education and community development, we will make Florida a destination where everyone has a place to call home and every child has access to resources needed to become our next generation of leaders.



Hon. Mel Martinez

**Chairman of the Southeast U.S. and Latin America for JPMorgan Chase & Co.;
former U.S. Senator from Florida, and 12th Secretary of Housing and Urban Development**

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Revised December 2017



Executive Summary

In the 2015-16 school year, 72,601 schoolchildren in Florida were identified as homeless. Under the federal McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, students identified as homeless include those who are temporarily doubled up with others or who are staying in hotels and motels, shelters, transitional housing, and unsheltered locations.

This report explores the impacts of housing instability on children's education in Florida by focusing on these students' experiences. Findings are based on student data provided by the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) and phone interviews with school district staff serving as McKinney-Vento homeless education liaisons from 29 counties throughout Florida.

Overview of Homelessness among Florida's students

The number of Florida's schoolchildren identified as "homeless" grew from 33,889 in the 2007-08 school year to 72,601 in 2015-16. The increase reflects both the influence of the recent recession and foreclosure crisis and a concerted effort by school districts to train teachers, counselors, and other staff to identify students lacking permanent housing.

Most of Florida's students who were identified as homeless in 2015-16 (74 percent) were doubled up with family and friends. Eleven percent of homeless students were staying in hotels and motel rooms. A similar share (10 percent) were living in shelters and transitional housing, although these resources were very scarce in rural areas. Nearly 2,000 students were living in places not designed for human accommodation, including cars, parks, and campgrounds.

School district liaisons cited the lack of housing that low-income families could afford as a root cause of students' housing instability. Liaisons also cited complex economic and health circumstances that prevent parents from providing safe and stable housing. Chief among these were unemployment and underemployment stemming from low wages, lack of education and employment skills, and lack of reliable transportation.

In 2015-16, approximately one in ten homeless students was an unaccompanied youth (not in the custody of a parent or legal guardian). These youth are particularly vulnerable to victimization and exploitation, and they are at increased risk of developing physical and mental health problems. Few counties in Florida have shelters that can accommodate unaccompanied homeless youth.

Student Homelessness and Educational Outcomes

FDOE provided data on attendance, academic, and disciplinary indicators for three groups of students: those identified as homeless under the McKinney-Vento Act; students who were housed but were receiving free or reduced price lunch, a proxy for low-income status (“housed/free-reduced lunch”); and housed students eligible for full price lunch (“housed/full price lunch”). Across a series of measures, homeless students struggled compared to their housed peers.

First, absenteeism was more common among students identified as homeless. These students missed 15 days of school on average in 2015-16, compared to 11 days for housed/free-reduced lunch students and eight days for housed/full price lunch students. Eight percent of homeless students were identified as habitually truant (at least 15 unexcused absences within a 90-day period), compared to three percent of housed/free-reduced lunch students and two percent of housed/full price lunch students.

Second, homeless students were much less likely to demonstrate proficiency in academic subjects. Passing rates for Florida’s English Language Arts, math, and science tests were much lower for students identified as homeless than for housed students (see figure below).

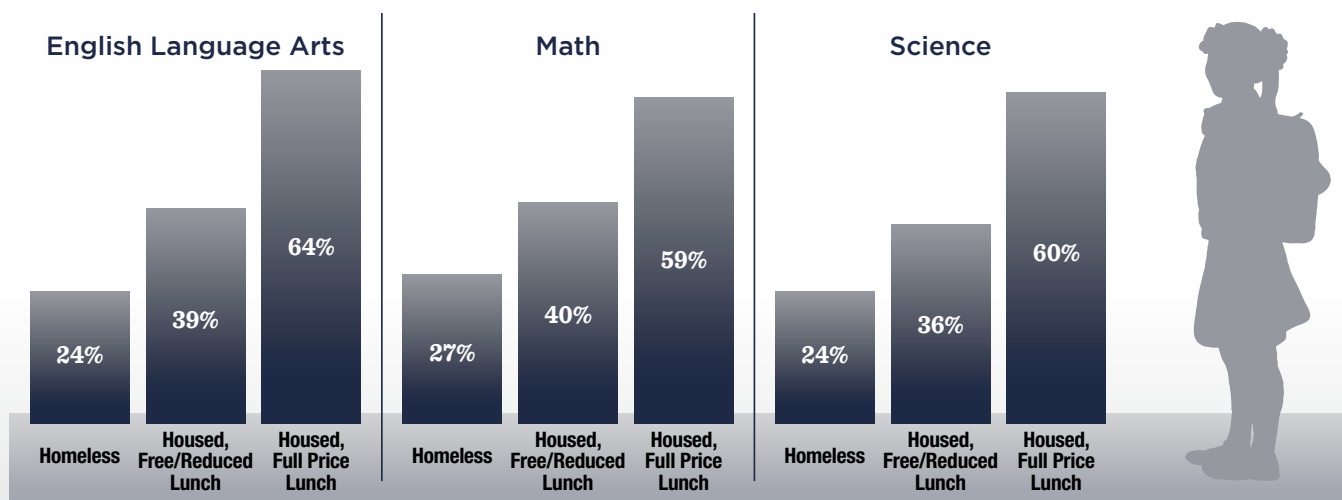
Third, homeless students were more likely to be subject to disciplinary action. In 2015-16, 16 percent of homeless students were suspended at least once, compared to 11 percent of housed/free-reduced lunch students and six percent of housed/full price lunch students.

The academic performance gaps between homeless students and their peers would likely be more significant without the wide array of services that schools provide under the McKinney-Vento Act. These services include:

- Immediate enrollment for students who have moved or have a gap in school registration due to homelessness.
- Transportation back to the school of origin if it is determined to be in the student’s best interest. School districts transport students to out-of-zone schools in a variety of ways, including extending bus routes or adding stops, providing transit passes to older students, buying gas cards for parents, or, when other options are not feasible, hiring private van services.
- Providing basic items students need to attend school, including hygiene kits, clothing, school supplies, and food.
- Providing financial assistance for extracurricular activities, field trips, and graduation costs to ensure that students can participate fully with their classes.

The school district liaisons report working closely with local organizations to refer homeless students and their families to available housing and services. Despite these strong connections, however, the liaisons report a lack of sufficient local housing and shelter resources to meet the housing needs of youth and families in their schools.

Students Passing FSA/SSA as Percentage of Grade-Eligible Students, 2015-16 School Year



Source: Florida Department of Education.

Policy Recommendations

The bulk of the policy recommendations focus on increasing the supply of safe rental housing that “extremely low-income families” (ELI) can afford. These are families whose income does not exceed 30 percent of the area median income (AMI). Increasing this housing supply will require maintaining and increasing funding for existing federal, state, and local housing programs, as well as developing new public-private partnerships. Recommendations include the following:

- Congress and the administration should restore and maintain the main federal programs that support housing in local communities, including the Housing Choice Voucher program, the Public Housing Capital Fund, the Community Development Block Grant, and the HOME Investment Partnerships Program.
- The Florida Legislature should appropriate all funds generated by the Sadowski Housing Trust Fund for housing programs each year.
- Local governments should set aside a portion of the Housing Trust Fund dollars they receive through the State Housing Incentives Partnership (SHIP) to assist ELI households through housing development and rental assistance.
- Florida must preserve its supply of housing with federal project-based rental assistance. Florida Housing Finance Corporation and local governments should incentivize or require set-asides of multifamily housing funds for preservation of these developments.
- The private sector and local governments should create loan funds and other types of dedicated housing trust funds in Florida communities, with a portion of funding targeted toward housing that ELI families can afford.

A second set of recommendations calls for assisting families with temporary financial support and other bridges to permanent housing. This includes implementing guidelines for local homelessness systems from recent reports by Barbara Poppe and Associates and the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness (*The Path Forward* and *The Current State of Family Homelessness in Central Florida*) and the Florida Housing Coalition (*Homeward Bound*). Their recommendations include developing local *coordinated entry systems*, through which households experiencing homelessness are quickly matched with services and providers appropriate to their needs; providing *rapid rehousing services* such as housing search counseling and financial assistance with deposits and rent; and providing *permanent supportive housing* for families facing chronic homelessness.

Our report recommends additional ways to expand these types of bridge services to families not involved in formal homelessness systems. These include a recommendation that local governments devote the maximum allowable amount of SHIP funds to eviction prevention, security and utility deposit assistance, and rent subsidies. Another recommendation calls for private philanthropic organizations and local housing trust funds to establish flexible funds to assist families with these expenses.

A third set of recommendations responds to liaisons’ concerns about issues outside of families’ immediate housing instability. First, the report encourages local foundations and charities to donate to schools’ assistance programs for students lacking permanent housing. These funds can be used to augment the limited federal funds available for basic needs such as clothing and food, and “extras” such as afterschool activities. Second, many county liaisons cited parents’ underemployment and lack of education and work skills as a root cause of families’ housing instability. The report describes a model program in Washington state that coordinates workforce and rapid rehousing services so that parents can begin working immediately to improve their earnings.

A final set of recommendations addresses alternative housing options for unaccompanied youth. Because of the legal limitations associated with housing minors, most recommendations address students who have reached age 18, but for whom independent housing would not be developmentally appropriate:

- Increase the number of youth-specific emergency shelter programs and allow for flexible time periods for shelter stay.
- Develop “Host Home” programs for unaccompanied youth, where youth age 18 and older are placed with a volunteer host family.
- Adopt successful transitional housing models for youth aging out of foster care to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

For minor youth, the report recommends increasing access to crisis shelter using federal Runaway and Homeless Youth Act program funding and state funds for juvenile justice respite programs. Federally funded Basic Center Programs provide up to 21 days of shelter to youth under 18 years old, while Transitional Living Programs for Older Homeless Youth provide long-term residential services for young people ages 16 to 22.

I. Introduction

Safe, stable housing lays a foundation for children's education and success, but permanent housing is out of reach for an increasing number of Florida's children, youth and families. Using the definition of "homeless children and youths" established by the federal McKinney-Vento Act, the Florida Department of Education (FDOE) reported that 33,889 children experiencing homelessness enrolled in Florida's schools for the 2007-08 school year. By 2015-16, that number had increased to 72,601 homeless students. This report explores the impacts of housing instability on the education of children and youth in Florida by focusing on these students.

The McKinney-Vento Act and the federal Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 entitles students experiencing homelessness to rights and supports to minimize disruption of their education, including immediate enrollment in school, transportation back to their school of origin in most cases, and services such as tutoring. The McKinney-Vento Act uses an expansive definition to identify "homeless" students who are eligible for these additional services. Most are doubled up temporarily with family and friends. Others are staying in hotels and motel rooms because they lack permanent housing. Still others live in shelters, transitional housing, and unsheltered locations such as cars and campgrounds. The majority of homeless-identified students share these living arrangements with their families. However, almost one in ten students identified as homeless in the 2015-16 school year was an unaccompanied youth—that is, not in the custody of a parent or legal guardian.

To facilitate the provision of McKinney-Vento services, every state must gather data on students' nighttime living situations, demographics, academic performance, and attendance. This report bases its conclusions on FDOE's statewide data on homeless students for the 2007-08, 2010-11, and 2015-16 school years, as well as detailed student data for the 2015-16 school year at the county school district level. 2015-16 school year information represents the most recent period for which data were available at the time of the analysis.

The McKinney-Vento Act also requires that all local school districts appoint a staff member as a homeless education liaison. The liaison is responsible for ensuring that students who are experiencing homelessness are identified, able to enroll in school, and receive the services to which they are entitled under federal law. The student data from FDOE was supplemented with phone interviews with liaisons from 29 county school districts located throughout the state. The liaisons provided invaluable information about the living situations of students and their families, the services provided to students

by schools and the communities, and their on-the-ground views of the supports that children, youth, and families need in order to become permanently housed.

The report is organized into three main sections. The first section provides an overview of housing instability and homelessness among students in Florida. The second section focuses on the school experiences of students who are experiencing homelessness and compares school performance, attendance, and disciplinary indicators of homeless students to that of their housed peers. This section also describes the services and supports that schools and communities provide for students identified as homeless, including federally mandated services and informal, privately funded supports. The third section provides policy recommendations and best practices for ensuring that children, youth, and families have access to safe, permanent housing that families can afford. The appendix provides metropolitan and county-level statistics on students experiencing homelessness in Florida.



II. Overview of Homelessness among Florida's Students

The number of Florida's schoolchildren identified as "homeless" under the McKinney-Vento Act more than doubled in the past decade.

Florida's economy entered into recession in March 2007, months before the rest of the country.¹ After the economy entered its recovery, though, many families in Florida continued to struggle to find housing they could afford.

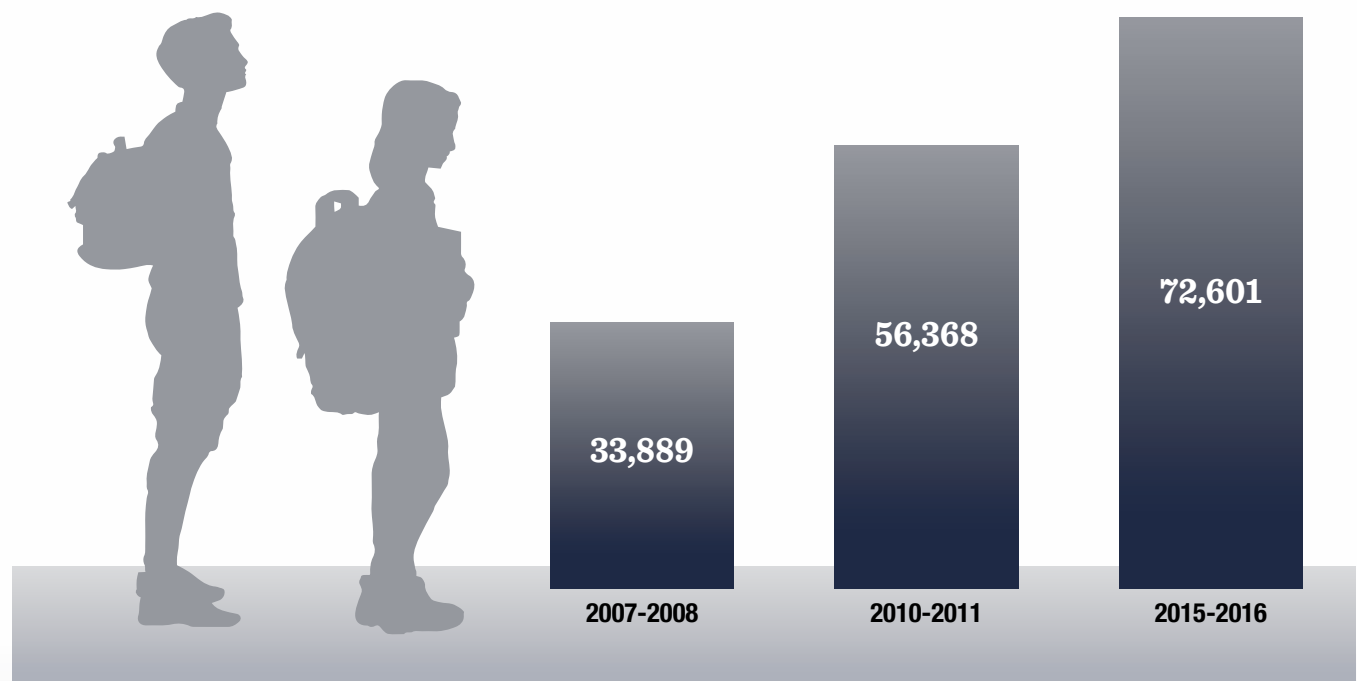
Statistics suggest that poverty affects an increasing number of children. The total number of K-12 students in Florida schools grew just three percent between 2007 and 2015. Yet the number of school-age children in Florida living below the poverty line rose more than 37 percent in the same period, from 16 percent to 22 percent.²

The 2015-16 figure of 72,601 homeless students reflects 114 percent growth in K-12 students identified as

homeless since 2007-08. While this growth reflects families' increasing struggles to find housing they can afford, it also reflects a positive development: school districts are making a concerted effort to train teachers, counselors, and front line staff, such as bus drivers and cafeteria workers, to identify students facing housing instability and homelessness. Many districts have rebranded the programs that serve homeless students as services for "families in transition" to lessen stigma and encourage students to come forward to receive the help to which they are entitled.

Central Florida led the state in increased efforts to identify homeless students. Orange County identified 6,842 students in 2015-16, the highest in the state and an increase of 286 percent since 2007-08. Nearby Osceola County identified 3,554 students in 2015-16, while Seminole County's count was 1,898 students, both approximately doubling of the 2007-08 figures of students identified as homeless.

Figure 1. Florida Students Identified as Homeless Under McKinney-Vento by School Year

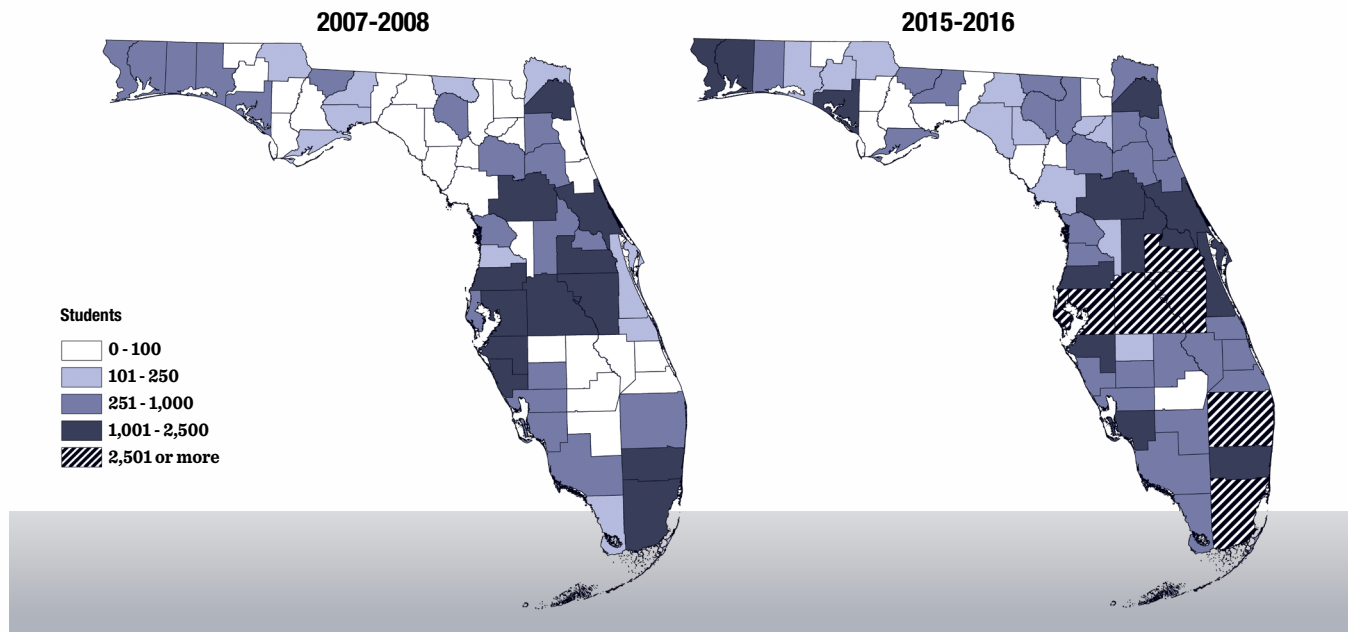


Source: Florida Department of Education.

1 Stephen O. Morrell, *The Current Recession in Florida: Comparative Information and Data on the Worst Economic Downturn Since the 1930s* (Tallahassee: Center for Competitive Florida, August 2009).

2 U.S. Census Bureau, *2007 and 2015 American Community Survey*.

Figure 2. Homeless Students by County



Source: Florida Department of Education.

In 2015-16, twenty counties identified more than 1,000 homeless students. As Figure 2 shows, these counties were located throughout the state. The appendix provides additional metropolitan- and county-level data.

Students of all ages experience homelessness, but young children are often easier to identify.

In most grades, homeless students make up about two percent of the total student body. Identification rates of homeless students are highest for kindergartners, with 7,411 kindergartners (3.4 percent) identified as homeless in 2015-16. Kindergarten is generally the year that parents enroll students in school, and the easiest time to verify the student's nighttime residence. The percentage of students identified as homeless falls slightly as the grade level increases, until grade 12, when there is an increase in the number of students identified as homeless. In 2015-16, the percentage of high school seniors identified as homeless was slightly higher than the percentage of high school juniors.

Several school district liaisons suggested that housing instability and homelessness are easier to uncover among young children because younger students tend to be more open to talking about themselves and less concerned with the social stigma associated with poverty. In addition, elementary age children spend more time with a single teacher during the day, better enabling teachers to learn

about their home situations. The liaisons noted that middle and high school students are more aware of the stigma surrounding poverty and so are more likely to hide their housing instability or homelessness.

Middle and high school students are also more concerned than elementary school students that reporting their housing status will lead to notification of child protective services, potentially leading to state involvement and students being separated from their parents. The liaisons suggested that fear of child welfare systems involvement may also explain the higher rate of self-identification among homeless 12th graders than 11th graders: having reached the age of majority, students are less fearful that reporting housing instability will lead to the family's involvement with child protective services. A number of services provided under McKinney-Vento are of particular use to high school seniors. For example, they may be more likely to take advantage of transportation back to school of origin so that they can graduate with their class or seek assistance in completing financial aid forms for college. Most McKinney-Vento homeless education programs provide funding to cover senior-only fees such as costs associated with graduation, and several help seniors with college searches.

Most homeless students are doubled up with family and friends. Others live in hotels and motels, shelters and transitional housing, and places not designed for human accommodation such as cars, parks, and campgrounds.

Most students identified as homeless under McKinney-Vento in Florida are doubled up: temporarily living with friends or family members because of “loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason.”³ In 2007-08, 61 percent of students identified as homeless were doubled up with others. The share of “doubled-up” students rose to 74 percent in the 2010-11 and 2015-16 school years.

Doubling up is not the same as finding a stable roommate or extended family living arrangement. Families and youth who are doubled up with others often cycle through temporary stays with relatives and friends. The homes may be overcrowded, and the students and their families often lack privacy, independence, and quiet space.⁴ By one definition, an estimated 123,678 households with children with incomes below 125 percent of the federal poverty line in Florida are doubled up with extended family and friends, and a quarter of these live in overcrowded conditions.⁵

Other students identified as homeless under McKinney-Vento are living temporarily with their families in hotels and motels. Students living in hotels and motels made up 11 percent of homeless identified students in the 2015-16 school year. This arrangement is particularly common in the Orlando metropolitan area. In 2015-16, approximately 25 percent of students identified as homeless in Orange and Osceola Counties were living in a hotel or motel. In Seminole County, 15 percent of homeless students were in that unstable housing situation. Sumter, Lee, and Jackson Counties also reported more than 15 percent of homeless students living in hotels. These hotels and motels are typically older, “mom and pop” businesses along old state and federal highways that allow long-term stays.

Hotels give families a place to stay where they don’t need to come up with the heavy initial cost of renting, typically a first and last month’s rent payment plus utility and damage deposits. However, in the long run, hotel stays are more expensive than renting, making it more difficult for families to make the move to permanent housing. Families that could be paying \$700-1,000 to rent a stable apartment instead are devoting that same amount to crowd into a single

hotel room, with no opportunity to save for rental entry costs (see Figure 3).

Figure 3. Sample Rental Entry Costs



Many families who could otherwise afford rent are stuck in hotels because of apartment start-up costs. A \$700/month apartment might require \$2,300 in advance for first and last month’s rent, security deposit, and utility deposit.

The number of students living in shelters and transitional housing declined slightly over time, from 8,899 in 2007-08 to 7,242 in 2015-16. Homeless students who were living in shelters or transitional housing made up about 10 percent of students identified under McKinney-Vento in 2015-16. Most of the counties with higher proportions of students in shelters were located along the coasts in the southern half of the state (Martin County at 44 percent, Indian River at 29 percent, Sarasota County at 24 percent, and Monroe and Broward Counties at 23 percent; Citrus and Leon Counties in the northern half of the state have similar proportions). At the other end of the spectrum, many small counties report no students living in shelters, as these resources are scarce in rural areas.

Nearly 2,000 students in Florida live in places not designed for human accommodation, such as cars, parks, and campgrounds. While the percentage is small (under three percent), unsafe conditions in such places put these students at risk of physical harm. Rural county liaisons in particular report instances of families living in campgrounds, cars and RVs because shelters and hotels are not available. One county liaison recalled buying heaters and sleeping bags for families without shelter in the winter.

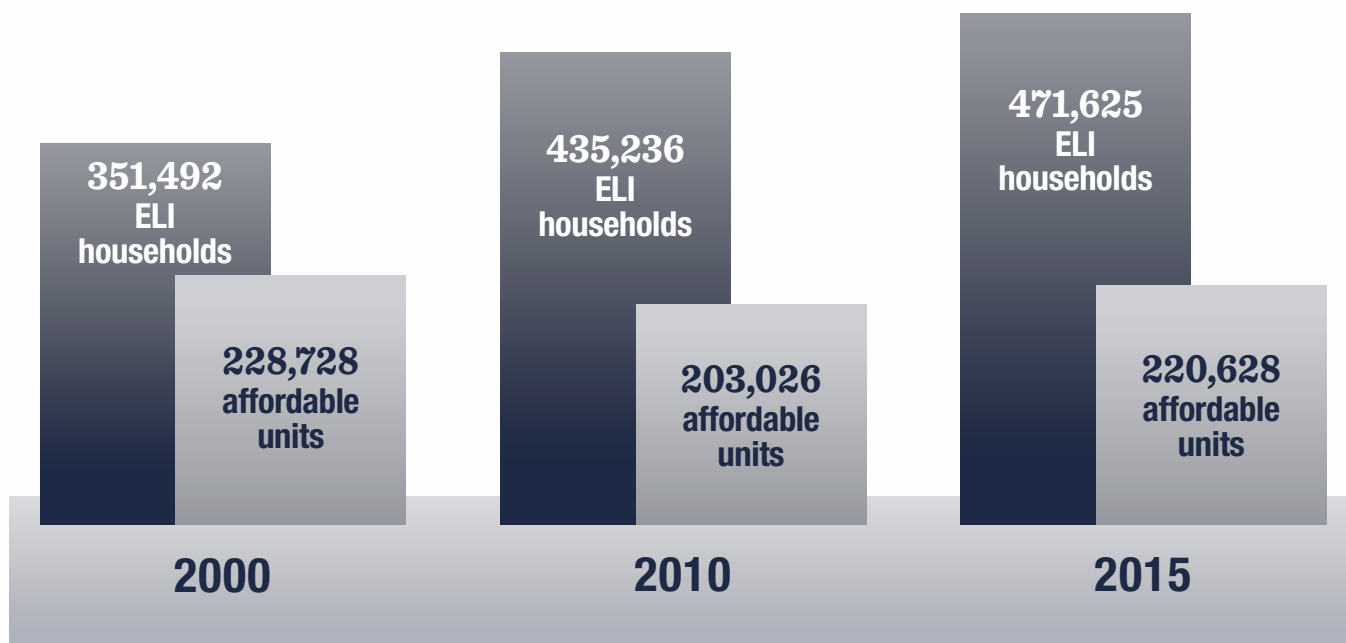
The appendix provides metropolitan and county-level statistics on place of nighttime residence for Florida students.

3 From Subtitle VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act per Title IX, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act. See the National Center for Homeless Education for the full definition of student homelessness at <http://nche.ed.gov/legis/mv-def.php>.

4 Kimberly Skobba and Edward Goetz, “Doubling Up and The Erosion of Social Capital Among Very Low Income Households,” *International Journal of Housing Policy* 15, no. 2 (2015): 127-147.

5 Shimberg Center analysis of U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample (PUMS). Based on definition of doubled-up household modified from National Alliance to End Homelessness, *Economy Bytes: Doubled Up in the United States* (Washington, D.C.: May 18, 2010). Uses Census definition of overcrowding; i.e. more than one person per room in the home.

Figure 4. Extremely Low-Income Renter Households vs. ELI-Affordable Units



Between 2000 and 2015, Florida added 120,133 extremely low-income households, but had a net loss of 8,100 rental units affordable to these households

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 1990 and 2000 Census and 2015 1-Year American Community Survey.

Florida's affordable housing gap is a root cause of student homelessness.

McKinney-Vento homeless liaisons throughout the state overwhelmingly agreed: the lack of housing that families can afford is a central cause of homelessness. District staff from urban counties, rural counties, and everywhere in between listed an increase in the local housing supply as the most effective way to ensure that students and their families become permanently housed.

Families are considered to be “extremely low income” (ELI) if their income does not exceed 30 percent of the area median income (AMI), adjusted for their region of the state and family size. In many rural Florida counties, for example, a family of four is considered ELI if it has an income below \$14,500; in Palm Beach and Broward Counties, the ELI limits would be \$22,000-23,000 per year. At these income levels, ELI families can afford no more than \$350-575 per month in rent and utility costs. ELI families without access to the limited supply of housing at these rents are vulnerable to housing instability. The smallest financial disruption—an unexpected car repair, a reduction in hours at work—can leave them behind on rent and at risk of losing their homes.

The gap between Florida's ELI households and the housing stock they can afford has continued to widen since the state's housing market began to boom in the early 2000s. Over the 2000-2015 period, the state added over 120,000 ELI households, but the supply of

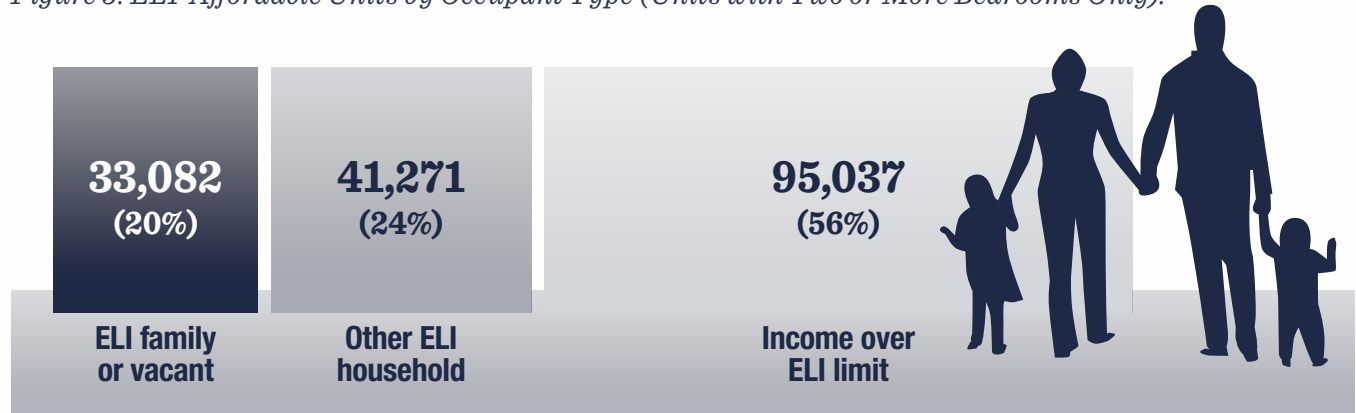
units affordable to them stayed largely flat (see Figure 4). This supply includes a mix of public housing units, privately owned subsidized units, and modest market-rate rental apartments and homes.

Competition is particularly tough for the limited supply of affordable units big enough to accommodate a family. Of Florida's nearly 2.3 million rental units with two or more bedrooms, just 169,390 are affordable to ELI households. As Figure 5 shows, even of the affordable units, only one-fifth are available to ELI families; that is, they are either vacant or already occupied by an ELI family with children. Renters with incomes above the ELI limit occupy 56 percent, and ELI households without children occupy 24 percent.

The shortage of housing for ELI families stems from a gap between wages for lower-paying jobs and housing costs. At Florida's minimum wage of \$8.10, a full time worker could afford to pay \$421 per month for rent and utilities, but a typical two-bedroom apartment in the state costs \$1,075. A minimum wage worker would need to work 102 hours per week to earn enough to afford an apartment with that rent.⁶ However, many workers are actually underemployed: they work fewer than 40 hours per week. Several county liaisons noted that many of the parents they meet are underemployed, working in part-time food service or tourism-related jobs with variable hours. Nationwide, the average fast food worker works just 24 hours per week, and the average hotel worker

6 National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Out of Reach 2017: Florida* (Washington, D.C.: 2017).

Figure 5. ELI-Affordable Units by Occupant Type (Units with Two or More Bedrooms Only).



Extremely low-income families compete with other households for the limited supply of rental units that are both affordable and large enough to accommodate a family. Of the ELI-affordable rental units with two or more bedrooms in Florida, only one out of five is available to an ELI family with children; that is, it is either occupied by an ELI family or vacant. The rest are occupied by ELI households without children or by households with incomes above the ELI level.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2015 1-Year American Community Survey.

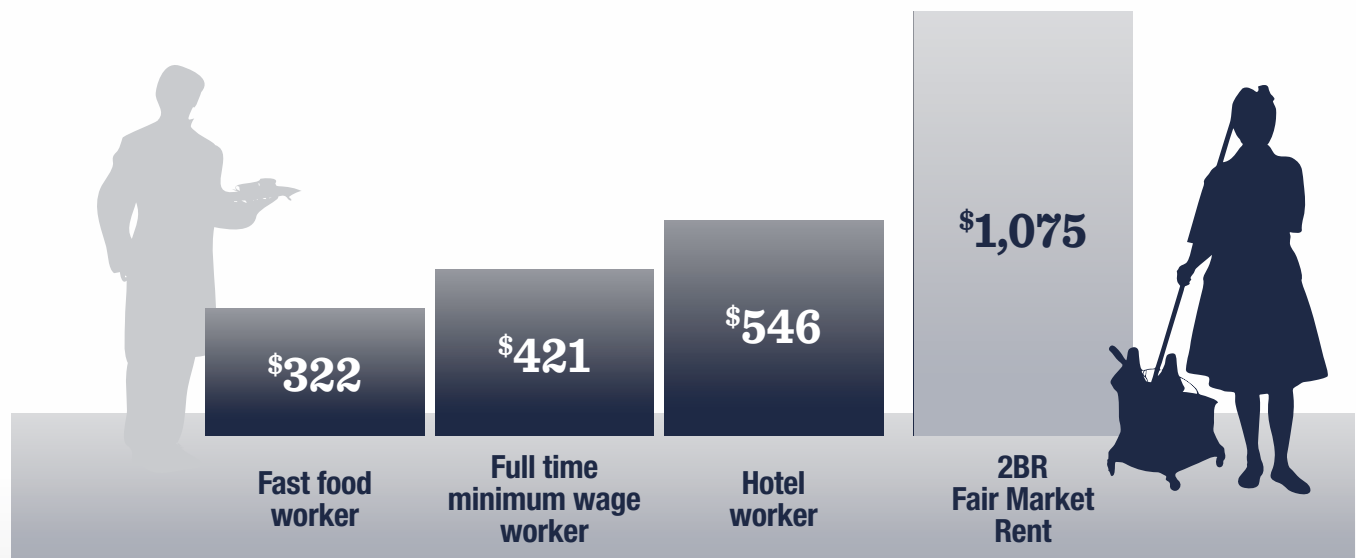
works 30 hours per week. As Figure 6 shows, both low wages and limited work hours widen the gap between rents and wages.

Complex economic and health factors contribute to student and family homelessness.

Beyond the lack of affordable housing, county liaisons cited various circumstances that prevent parents from providing safe and stable homes for their children. Chief among these struggles is

unemployment and underemployment. In counties without public transit, lack of access to affordable and reliable transportation to work is also a barrier to stable employment. The liaisons also noted a challenge common to Florida: families move to the state from other parts of the country expecting to find work. Without a job already in place, families move in with relatives or into a hotel. The longer parents of homeless students are out of work, however, the harder it is for them to save money for permanent housing.

Figure 6. What can Florida's workers afford to pay in rent? (Compared to market rent for a two-bedroom apartment)



Rents that typical fast food workers, hotel employees, and other low-wage workers can afford are far below Florida's market rents. Data assumptions: Affordable rent level set at 30 percent of household income. Assumes fast food workers and hotel employees are part-time, average wage workers based on U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, December 2016 Current Employment Survey ("limited-service restaurant workers" work an average of 24 hours/week with average wage of \$10.33/hour; hotel and motel workers work an average of 30 hours/week with average wage \$14.11/hour). Minimum wage workers are assumed to work 40 hours/week at Florida's minimum wage, \$8.10/hour.

Source: Statewide two-bedroom Fair Market Rent from National Low-Income Housing Coalition, Out of Reach 2017.

Additionally, parents may have personal finance or health-related issues that prevent them from attaining stable housing. Liaisons cited eviction histories and poor credit scores as factors that can prevent families from finding a landlord who will rent to them. Many liaisons noted parents' health problems or disabilities as causes contributing to homelessness; some liaisons pointed to an increase in substance abuse and addiction.

These economic and health-related barriers would make it difficult for families to maintain stable housing in any case, but in tight rental housing markets, landlords are especially unlikely to accept tenants with inconsistent rent, credit, or work histories.

Unaccompanied homeless youth face unique challenges.

Almost one in ten homeless students in Florida in 2015-16 (6,982 students) were unaccompanied youth; that is they were not in the custody of a parent or legal guardian. Nationally, preliminary data from the U.S. Department of Education for 2015-16 indicate that the number of unaccompanied homeless youth enrolled in public schools was over 111,000.⁷ Florida's unaccompanied homeless students include young people who: 1) were asked to leave home by a parent; 2) left home with the consent of a parent; 3) have no formal custody papers or arrangements while their parents are in jail, the hospital, or a rehabilitation center; or 4) ran away from home.⁸ In a 2016 study conducted by the Administration for Children and Families, homeless youth participants reported, on average, first becoming homeless at age 15.⁹

National statistics show that youth of color and LGBTQ youth are disproportionately represented in the unaccompanied population.¹⁰ Youth of color experience homelessness at the high rates that are reflective of the overall national homeless population, within which 42 percent of individuals experiencing homelessness are African-American and 20 percent are Latino, even though each group represents only about 12 percent of the general population.¹¹ Between 30 and 40 percent of unaccompanied youth experiencing homelessness identify as LGBTQ, while LGBTQ youth only make up 7 percent of the general youth population.¹²



Up to 36 percent of youth who age out of foster care experience homelessness.¹³ Unaccompanied homeless youth are especially vulnerable to victimization, sexual exploitation, and engaging in illegal behaviors to survive, and they are at an increased risk of developing mental health issues and contracting sexually transmitted diseases.¹⁴ A recent study of runaway and homeless youth found that nearly 44 percent had stayed in jail, prison, or a juvenile detention center and that nearly 62 percent had been arrested at some point in their lives.¹⁵

7 U.S. Department of Education, *Preliminary School Year 2015-2016 Data on Homeless Children and Youth* (Washington, D.C.: June 2016).

8 National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, *Education of Homeless Children and Youth: The Guide to Their Rights* (June 2011), p. 8.

9 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Family and Youth Services Bureau Street Outreach Program: Data Collection Study Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: April 2016).

10 U.S. Department of Education, *Supporting the Success of Homeless Children and Youths: A Fact Sheet and Tips for Teachers, Principals, School Leaders, Counselors, and Other School Staff* (Washington, D.C.: July 27, 2016).

11 National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, *Racial Discrimination in Housing and Homelessness in the United States: A Report to the U.N. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination* (July 3, 2014).

12 Chapin Hall, *Predictors of Homelessness During the Transition from Foster Care to Adulthood*. (Chicago: 2016).

13 R. White, "Introduction," *Child Welfare*, 83, no. 5 (September/October 2004): 389-392.

14 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Report to Congress on the Runaway and Homeless Youth Programs Fiscal Years 2010 and 2011* (Washington, D.C.: 2013).

15 U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, *Family and Youth Services Bureau Street Outreach Program: Data Collection Study Final Report* (Washington, D.C.: April 2016).

Unaccompanied homeless students are particularly hard for school districts to identify. As a result, the reported figures of unaccompanied homeless youth are generally understood to be an undercount. Many unaccompanied youth are “couch surfing” between temporary living situations and avoid self-identifying or accessing supportive services for fear of being placed into foster care or returned to an abusive home.¹⁶

In 2016, Florida reported the second highest number of unaccompanied youth under 18 years old in the U.S.¹⁷ These minor unaccompanied homeless youth are at an increased risk of harm and victimization while unstably housed. Unaccompanied homeless minors possess even fewer legal options for survival due to their “disability of non-age.”¹⁸ That is, minor age youth may not be able to access healthcare without parental consent, obtain a State ID, or enter into basic contracts, including lease agreements, even if that minor youth were financially positioned to

enter into such an agreement. Florida law provides for a minor homeless youth (16 years or older) to be certified as an unaccompanied homeless youth and petition a circuit court to remove the disabilities of non-age.¹⁹ Nonetheless, unaccompanied homeless youth, especially minor youth, are still developing physically, emotionally, and psychologically, and are generally unprepared to navigate the adult homelessness system.

Under McKinney-Vento, the school liaisons provide extra assistance to unaccompanied youth to complete the types of tasks that parents would typically do, such as filling out paperwork and proving residency for enrollment, obtaining medical and immunization records, and verifying students’ independence so they can qualify for college financial aid.²⁰ **Several liaisons in Florida noted that their counties had no facilities for homeless youth, and that adult and family shelter system could not accommodate older students without their families.**

16 Erin Ingram, John Bridgeland, Bruce Reed, and Matthew Atwell, *Hidden in Plain Sight: Homeless Students in America's Public Schools* (2016).

17 2016 HUD Annual Homeless Assessment Report

18 Florida Statute 743.015

19 Florida Statute 743.067. The removal of “disabilities of non-age” have the effect of giving a minor the status of an adult for purposes of all criminal and civil laws of the state.

20 National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, *Education of Homeless Children and Youth*, p.8.



III. Student Homelessness and Educational Outcomes

Research has shown that a lack of stable housing in and of itself can affect children's school experience. This is especially true for children whose housing instability or homelessness causes them to change schools frequently. School attendance and truancy records are particularly affected.²¹ The type of homelessness may also be important; in one study in Lexington, Kentucky, students in shelters were particularly likely to miss school, while attendance of doubled-up students was closer to that of housed low-income students.²² Overcrowded conditions common in doubled-up living arrangements can also make it difficult for students to learn. In one study of families in Los Angeles, as the number of people per room in the home increased, children's math and reading test scores went down and their behavioral problems increased.²³

Other studies have shown that the impact of poverty on a child's ability to learn is compounded by myriad life stressors including housing instability, parental stress, traumatic life events, and frequent school

changes. Researchers have attempted to isolate the factor of homelessness, apart from other poverty-related stressors, to determine the relationship between housing status and academic performance. Some studies have found that housing status on its own cannot be confirmed to be the singular determinant of poor school performance because the stressors associated with poverty are too embedded and inextricably linked with the experience of homelessness.²⁴

Florida's homeless students struggle academically in comparison to students with stable housing, including housed low-income students.

Florida student data illustrate the cumulative disadvantage that homeless students face. Statewide and within each school district, we are able to compare three groups of students: those identified as homeless under McKinney-Vento, housed students receiving free or reduced price lunch through the National School Lunch Program ("housed/free-reduced lunch"), and housed students receiving full price lunch ("housed/full price lunch"). Most of the students receiving free and reduced lunch are from low-income families, so including them as a comparison group allows us to isolate some of the influence of housing instability versus income.²⁵

Across a series of measures, students identified as homeless scored at the lowest end of the spectrum; housed/free-reduced lunch students performed better but still below the student body as a whole; and housed/full price lunch students showed the best outcomes. All data cited refer to the 2015-16 school year.



21 Joseph Nolan, Tarah Cole, Jacqueline Wroughton, Kimberly Clayton-Code, and Holly Riffe, "Assessment of Risk Factors for Truancy of Children in Grades K-12 using Survival Analysis," *Journal of at-Risk Issues* 17, no. 2 (2013): 23-30; Jelena Obradović, Jeffrey D. Long, J. J. Cutuli, Chi-Keung Chan, Elizabeth Hinz, David Heistad, and Ann S. Masten, "Academic Achievement of Homeless and Highly Mobile Children in an Urban School District: Longitudinal Evidence on Risk, Growth, and Resilience," *Development and Psychopathology* 21, no. 2 (2009): 493-518. John W. Fantuzzo, Whitney A. LeBoeuf, Chin-Chih Chen, Heather L. Rouse, and Dennis P. Culhane, "The Unique and Combined Effects of Homelessness and School Mobility on the Educational Outcomes of Young Children," *Educational Researcher* 41, no. 9 (2012): 393-402 found that several performance indicators were similar for homeless and housed low-income students, but that homeless students had more difficulty staying on task and with absenteeism.

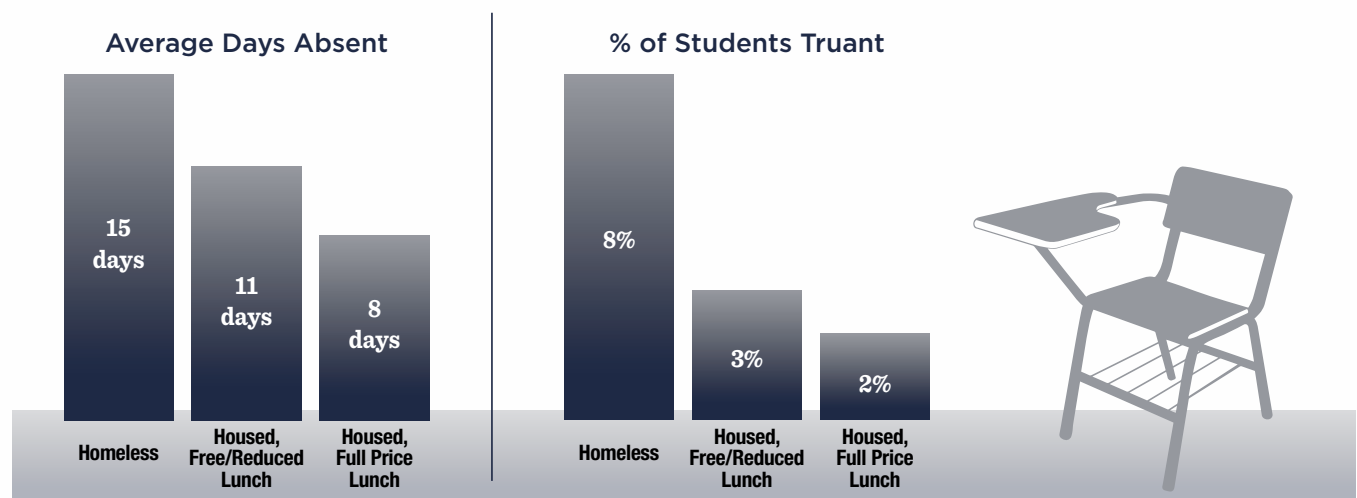
22 Stacy Deck, "School Outcomes for Homeless Children: Differences Among Sheltered, Doubled-Up, and Poor, Housed Children," *Journal of Children and Poverty* 23, no. 1 (2017): 57-77.

23 Claudia D. Solari and Robert D. Mare, "Housing Crowding Effects on Children's Wellbeing," *Social Science Research* 41, No. 2 (2012), 464-476.

24 Kerri J. Tobin, "Homeless Students and Academic Achievement," *Urban Education* 51, no.2 (2016): 197-220. Diana Bowman, Christina Dukes, and Jan Moore, *Summary of the State of Research on the Relationship between Homelessness and Academic Achievement among School-Aged Children and Youth* (Greensboro, North Carolina: National Center for Homeless Education, 2012). Peter M. Miller, "A Critical Analysis of the Research on Student Homelessness," *Review of Educational Research* 81, no. 3 (2011): 308-337. Tobin, "Homeless Students" and Miller, "A Critical Analysis" found similar results for homeless and housed low-income students on many indicators but found negative effects from homelessness on attendance and rates of isolation, respectively.

25 Not all free/reduced-price lunch recipients are below the poverty line. In 2010, the U.S. Department of Agriculture broadened eligibility requirements. The program now includes students at or below 185 percent of the poverty threshold; children in foster care, Head Start and Migrant Education Programs, and eligible for services under the Runaway and Homeless Youth Act; and all students in higher-poverty schools where the district provides free meals to the entire student body under the community eligibility provision, regardless of means testing.

Figure 7. Absenteeism and Truancy, 2015-16 School Year



Source: Florida Department of Education

Absenteeism

As in the national studies cited above, Florida's homeless students struggle with absenteeism. On average, homeless students missed 15 days of school in the 2015-16 school year—three full weeks of class. In contrast, housed/free-reduced lunch students missed 11 days on average, and housed/full price lunch students missed eight days. These results held throughout the state. In every county except Dixie, homeless students had poorer attendance rates than the housed/full price lunch students. With the exception of some small North Florida counties, these students also had poor attendance rates compared to housed/free-reduced lunch students.

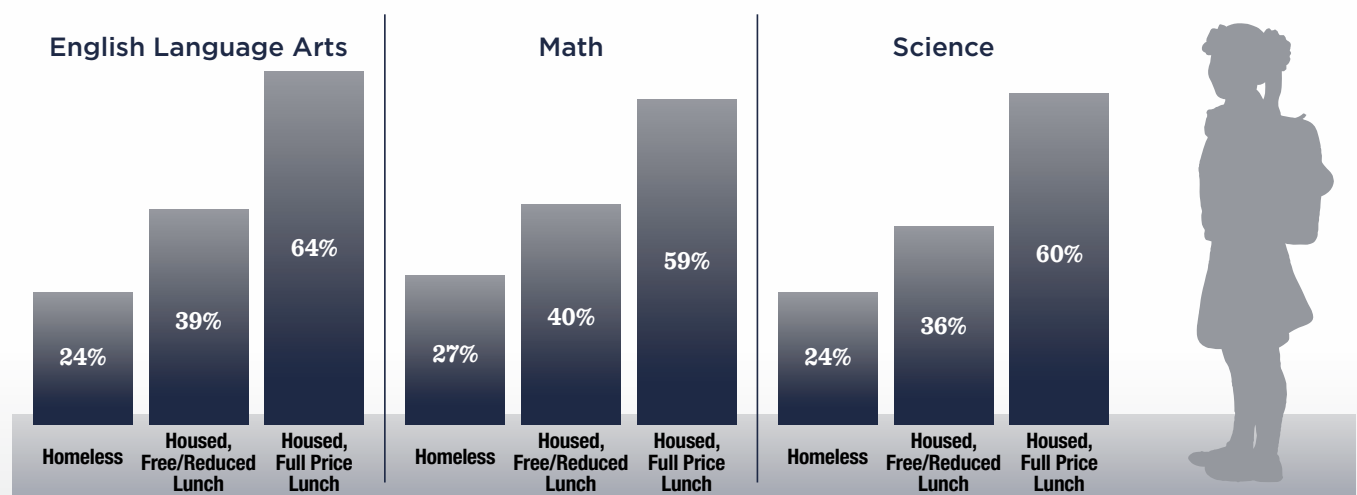
Similarly, a larger percentage of homeless students

were identified as habitually truant. The state considers students to be truant if they have at least 15 unexcused absences within a 90-day period. While truancy is rare in general, rates among homeless students were much higher than for others. Statewide, eight percent of homeless students were absent often enough to be classified as truant in 2015-16. This was substantially higher than the truancy rate for housed/free-reduced lunch students (three percent) and housed/full price lunch students (two percent).

Math, science, and English proficiency

In the 2015-16 school year, students were given the Florida Standards Assessments (FSA) in math and English Language Arts. Science proficiency was

Figure 8. Students Passing FSA/SSA as Percentage of Grade-Eligible Students, 2015-16 School Year



Because of data availability, percentages refer to the number of students passing the test as a percentage of total students in the relevant grades, rather than as a percentage of students taking the test. Since some students did not take the tests, the percentages for all groups are lower than the actual passing rates of test takers.

Source: Florida Department of Education.

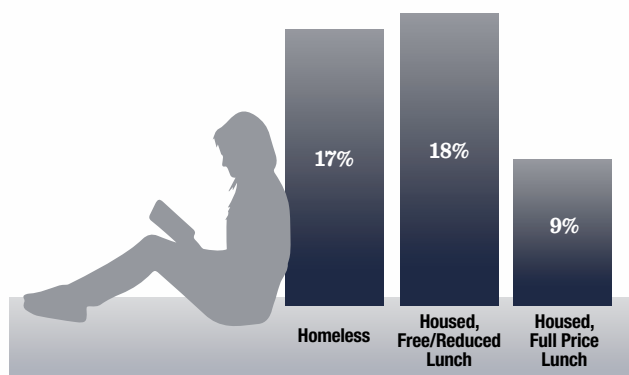
measured by the Statewide Science Assessment (SSA). A passing score is 3 or above. Results suggest that homeless students and housed/free-reduced lunch students suffer academic disadvantage compared to housed/full price lunch students.

Percentages of grade-eligible students passing the tests were as follows:

- English Language Arts (taken by 3rd-10th grade students): 24 percent of homeless students, 39 percent of housed/free-reduced lunch students, and 64 percent of housed/full price lunch students.
- Math (taken by 3rd-8th grade students): 27 percent of homeless students, 40 percent of poor housed students, and 59 percent of housed/full price lunch students.
- Science (taken by 5th graders and 8th graders): 24 percent of homeless students, 36 percent of housed/free-reduced lunch students, and 60 percent of housed/full price lunch students.

In short, the test passing rates reflect the spectrum of risk described above. In the core academic subject areas of English Language Arts, math, and science, homeless students lag behind housed/free-reduced lunch students and far behind housed students who do not qualify for free or reduced price lunch.

Figure 9. Students Identified with Reading Intervention Needs, 2015-16 School Year



Source: Florida Department of Education.

Reading interventions

Florida students with identified deficiencies in reading are entitled to additional reading interventions, such as extra instruction in small groups or independent reading practice.²⁶ We received data for middle and high school students (grades 6-12) identified with reading intervention needs.

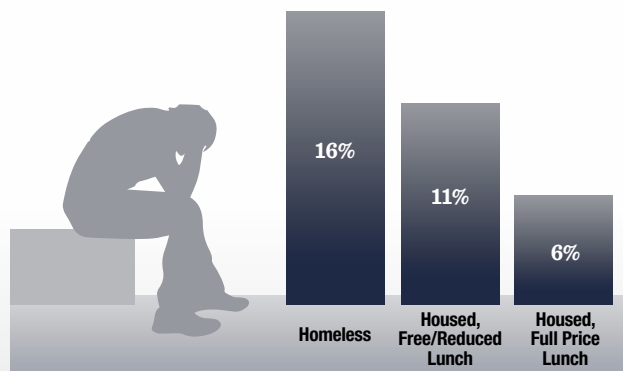
Homeless students were more likely than the general middle and high school student body to be identified as needing reading intervention, but the disparities were not as clear-cut as the English Language Arts test scores would suggest. At the state level in 2015-16, 17 percent of homeless students were identified with reading intervention needs, compared to nine percent of all housed/full price lunch students. However, the share of housed/free-reduced lunch students was actually slightly *higher*, at 18 percent, even though their English Language Arts passing rates were higher on average. It may be that some homeless students who struggle with reading are falling through the cracks, and school districts need to make an additional effort to ensure these students are assessed and receive extra help at the same rate as other students.

Nevertheless, a number of individual school districts identified reading remediation and intervention needs among large shares of their homeless students—typically those with high proportions of the general student body also needing intervention. For example, Hillsborough and Broward Counties identified approximately a third of their grade 6-12 students as in need of reading interventions, with over half of homeless students requiring intervention. Duval and Leon Counties identified a quarter of their grade 6-12 student bodies as in need of reading intervention; more than a third of homeless students required reading intervention.

Suspensions and expulsions

Expulsion is a rare but serious event in Florida schools. In the 2015-16 school year, 537 students in the state were expelled. The expulsions were heavily concentrated among students living in poverty. Thirty-eight homeless students and 390 housed/free-reduced lunch students were expelled, compared to 109 housed/full price lunch students. These numbers comprised just a fraction of a percentage point of each student population.

Figure 10. Students Suspended At Least Once, 2015-16 School Year



Source: Florida Department of Education.

²⁶ Fla. Admin. Code R. 6A-6.054.

Suspensions were far more common. Nine percent of all Florida students were suspended at least once during the 2015-16 school year. This included 16 percent of homeless students. The rates for housed/free-reduced lunch and housed/full price lunch students were 11 percent and 6 percent respectively.

The higher incidence of suspension among homeless students is reason for concern. Research has shown that students of color are disproportionately suspended from school, often for relatively minor infractions. Overuse of suspensions leads to loss of instructional time and is linked with school dropouts and entry into the juvenile justice system.²⁷

Florida's schools play a central role in supporting homeless students.

By all of these measures, homeless students struggle compared to their peers. These gaps might be far wider, however, without the additional support that schools provide to students.

The federal McKinney-Vento Act requires states to provide homeless identified students with “equal access to the same free, appropriate public education, including a public preschool education, as provided to other children and youths.” McKinney-Vento homeless education liaisons described the required services provided by the school districts as follows.

Enrollment

Enrollment provisions of McKinney-Vento are designed to prevent the lapses in attendance and frequent school changes that can be devastating to students' academic progress. First, districts must ensure that a student can remain in the school attended before becoming homeless (“school of origin”), or that the student is able to immediately enroll in a new school if it is in the student's best interest. The McKinney-Vento Act requires districts to presume that staying in the school of origin is in the best interest of the student, but parents/guardians and unaccompanied youth themselves can determine otherwise.²⁸ Liaisons say that schools and parents heavily weigh transportation concerns in such determinations and try to avoid long bus rides, especially for younger students.

If students do enroll in a new school, they must be able to do so immediately. Examples of assistance with enrollment include waiving requirements for documents such as proof of residency or health records and waiving application deadlines. Further, students must be able to transfer appropriate full or partial credit from their previous school.

Transportation

School districts are responsible for providing transportation to the school of origin if students' nighttime residence is outside of the original school zone. Transporting homeless students back to the school of origin is a provisional solution to the longer term challenge of providing stability to students. It involves trade-offs. On one hand, transporting students to schools of origin prevents the frequent school changes that negatively impact attendance and performance. On the other, long and complicated routes to school impose time and financial costs on both students and school districts.

Districts use a variety of methods to comply with the transportation requirements of McKinney-Vento. Where possible, the district accommodates homeless students with access to school bus transportation. Districts may add a bus stop to an existing route, or students may ride buses to a nearby school or other meeting point and then change for the longer trip to the original school.

When school bus transportation is not feasible, schools may provide a gas card or mileage reimbursement to the parent for the extra cost of driving a child to school, or provide public transit passes or reimbursement for older students in urban districts. In other cases, however, the districts hire private van or car services to transport students. The use of services outside of busing is particularly costly for districts. One transportation director estimated the cost of private van service at \$70 per day for a route that rarely serves more than 1-2 students, versus a cost of just \$5 per student per day for regular school bus transportation. A liaison for a large South Florida district indicated the transportation department spent approximately \$87,000 in the last school year for transit passes and mileage reimbursement. In one extreme case, a district spent nearly \$2,500 per month in private van service costs to transport a single student with an unusually long commute. These costs were over and above any extra bus stops or routes that were added to serve students traveling to their school of origin.

Florida schools have an advantage over many other states in coordinating transportation: large, countywide school districts. The state's 2.7 million students are served by just 67 county-level districts.²⁹ In most cases, students do not leave their districts, and transportation is coordinated within the district. In a small number of cases, however, students cross county lines to return to their schools of origin. Based on conversations with county liaisons, these

²⁷ Pamela A. Fenning, Sarah Pulaski, Martha Gomez, Morgan Morello, Lynae Maciel, Emily Maroney, Arielle Schmidt, et al., “Call to Action: A Critical Need for Designing Alternatives to Suspension and Expulsion,” *Journal of School Violence* 11, no. 2 (2012): 105-117.

²⁸ Information on McKinney-Vento requirements from Barbara Duffield, Patricia Julianelle, and Michael Santos, *The Most Frequently Asked Questions on the Education Rights of Children and Youth in Homeless Situations* (Minneapolis: National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth, 2016).

²⁹ Two states with similarly sized student bodies offer a contrast. Georgia has 180 districts for 1.7 million students and Illinois has 865 districts for 2 million students. See “Total School Districts, Student Enrollment by State and Metro Area,” *Governing*, <http://www.governing.com/gov-data/education-data/school-district-totals-average-enrollment-statistics-for-states-metro-areas.html>.

transfers are most common across the Orange-Osceola border in Central Florida and in southwest Gulf counties (Sarasota, Charlotte, Lee, and Collier). Cross-county transfers are particularly challenging. They require buses to travel to county lines to swap students, and school bell times and holidays vary across districts.

In-school supports

School districts provide a variety of services to help homeless students with basic needs. Most commonly, these include helping students to enroll in the free breakfast and lunch program, offering tutoring, and providing items such as hygiene kits, school uniforms and other clothes, school supplies, and glasses. Many districts provide financial assistance to help students fully participate in school activities such as extracurricular activities and field trips. Most districts provide special services for graduating seniors, including paying for senior fees and caps and gowns, helping seniors fill out the Free Application for Federal Student Aid form for college, taking students on college tours, and helping students obtain college tuition and fee exemptions.

FDOE administers subgrants to local school districts from the McKinney-Vento program to help fund these services. In the most recent round of funding, 52 of Florida's 67 counties received grants ranging

from \$25,000 to \$125,000. County liaisons stressed that they also rely on private donations from local foundations, congregations, and community organizations. Often these private donations help with students' basic needs, such as uniforms and other clothing for school, food from local pantries, and backpacks with school supplies.

Referrals to housing and services

McKinney-Vento liaisons reported working closely with housing and homelessness organizations in their communities. They routinely refer families to external service providers for homelessness prevention and rapid rehousing services, case management, shelter and transitional housing, basic needs such as food and clothing, and, if available, subsidized housing. Many of the district liaisons work closely with their region's Continuum of Care, the consortium of agencies that coordinates housing and services for homeless families and individuals.

Despite these strong connections, the liaisons report that there simply are not enough local resources for housing, shelter and services to meet the needs of youth and families in their schools. This is particularly a problem in rural communities, where often there is no emergency shelter for youth or families at all.





Affordable housing, short-term assistance, temporary housing options, and employment support for parents are key to ending housing instability.

Liaisons were asked what types of assistance were not currently in place in their communities that would help homeless students and their families become permanently housed. The most common response by far, from representatives of urban, suburban, and rural districts alike, was a need for more housing units that families can afford. Several liaisons from rural counties also noted that they needed a shelter for families—that, in fact, some families would be able to move on to permanent housing if they had a temporary place to stay and save money.

Other responses included:

- Homeless prevention and rapid re-housing services, including an assessment and screening tool for families, emergency assistance with first and last month's rent and security deposit or to get caught up on utilities costs, and temporary housing with case management.

- Services to help parents work, including affordable afterschool care, education for better-paying jobs, and transportation to work.
- Case management and training for parents, particularly life skills and financial management.

Many of the liaisons cited the need for shelter options for unaccompanied homeless youth, who do not have family support but are unlikely to be ready for permanent independent housing. They suggested youth-specific emergency shelters and alternative transitional housing options, such as “host home” arrangements for youth to live temporarily with families while they receive in-depth services.

IV. Policy Recommendations

The bulk of our policy recommendations focus on increasing the supply of rental housing that extremely low-income families can afford. The recommendations also discuss support for students while they are experiencing housing instability, and alternatives for unaccompanied homeless youth for whom independent housing may not be an appropriate option.

The recommendations are intended to address the needs of the broad group of students and families experiencing housing instability. These include families and youth who are eligible for services under state and local homelessness systems as well as a wider array of families and youth who lack permanent housing. This discussion is intended to complement the thoughtful recommendations aimed specifically at improving Florida's homelessness systems from recent reports by Barbara Poppe and Associates, the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness, and the Florida Housing Coalition. Recommendations from these reports related to homeless families and youth are summarized on page 26.

Increasing the affordable housing supply

Building Florida's supply of housing that extremely low-income families can afford will require maintaining and increasing funding for existing federal, state, and local housing programs. As examples from around the country show, Florida also has the potential to develop new sources of support for ELI-affordable family housing.

Recommendation: Congress and the administration must restore and increase funding for the Housing Choice Voucher program in the federal budget.

HUD's Housing Choice Voucher (HCV) program helps very low-income families and elderly and disabled households to afford housing in the private market. Participants receive rent subsidy vouchers to find their own housing, including single-family homes, townhouses, and apartments. Federal rules require local housing agencies to set aside 75 percent of new vouchers for ELI households each year.

In Florida, approximately 101,300 vouchers are in use. Almost half are used by families with children. Renters with vouchers pay \$371 per month for rent and utilities on average, with the voucher making up the difference to the landlord.³⁰

HUD's recent *Family Options Study* showed that families were far more likely to avoid future homelessness and doubling up if they received vouchers, compared to shelters, transitional housing, and other services. Vouchers were also associated with better social outcomes for children, including fewer separations from parents, fewer school changes, and improved school attendance and behavior records.³¹

Waiting lists for vouchers in most communities are years long and closed to new applicants. Congress must increase renewal funding for the voucher programs to ensure that all families currently using vouchers can continue to do so. Additionally, Congress should increase the funding for new vouchers.

30 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, *Florida Fact Sheet: The Housing Choice Voucher Program* (Washington, D.C., 2017); U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Picture of Subsidized Households 2016*, <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/datasets/assthsq.html>.

31 U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, *Family Options Study: 3-Year Impacts of Housing and Services Interventions for Homeless Families* (Washington, D.C.: 2016).



Recommendation: Preserve Florida's supply of public housing by allocating more funding for capital improvements.

Since the 1990s, the number of public housing units nationwide has fallen by more than 250,000. The reduction in public housing stock is mainly due to poor conditions, a lack of maintenance, and inadequate funding resulting in the deterioration of units. Since 2002, funding has dwindled for public housing, creating a nationwide backlog of unmet renovation needs that reached \$26 billion by 2010. Such costs can include plumbing, roofing upgrades, and lead removal.³²

According to the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 29,700 Florida families were living in public housing in 2017. Congress must allocate funding to ensure that the units they occupy remain safe and habitable. This will ensure that those units remain part of the affordable housing stock. Additionally, many public housing units have become unoccupied because they have reached a hazardous and uninhabitable state. If repairs were made to these buildings, they could provide additional stock that may cost less than building new units.

Recommendation: Urge the Florida Legislature to appropriate all Sadowski funds for housing programs each year.

The primary financial resource for housing programs in Florida is the Housing Trust Fund enacted by the William E. Sadowski Act in 1992. The Sadowski fund creates a dedicated source of revenue via a state documentary stamp tax on deeds. Seventy percent of funds are provided to local and county governments through the State Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP) program. Florida Housing Finance Corporation (Florida Housing) administers the other 30 percent. Most of these funds support

affordable multifamily development through the State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL) program and other specialized programs.

The Sadowski funds are not automatically allocated to housing programs. The Florida Legislature must appropriate these funds each year. Since 2003, despite mounting affordable housing needs, the legislature has diverted monies collected for the trust fund into general revenue. For example, for fiscal year 2017-18, anticipated revenue collected under the Sadowski Act was \$291.4 million. The legislature approved \$137 million for housing programs, resulting in a sweep of over \$150 million to non-housing uses.

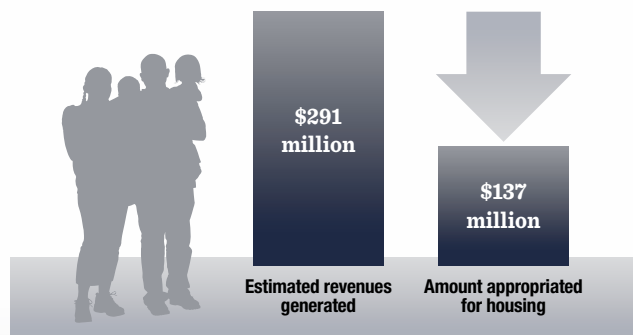
The Florida Legislature must fully appropriate all Sadowski funds for needed housing programs, every year.

Recommendation: Local governments should require a portion of SHIP funding to be used to assist ELI households.

The SHIP program allocates Sadowski funds to every Florida county and 45 cities based on population. The minimum allocation is \$350,000. By statute, a minimum of 65 percent of a local government's total annual distribution of SHIP funds must be spent on eligible homeownership activities, including subsidies for construction, acquisition, and rehabilitation of owner-occupied housing and down payment and closing cost assistance for homebuyers. At least 30 percent of the funds must be reserved for awards to very low income persons (50 percent AMI), and an additional 30 percent of funds must be awarded to low-income persons (80 percent AMI). Twenty percent must serve persons with special needs. The remainder may serve any combination of very low-income, low-income, or moderate income persons (up to 50, 80, and 120 percent of AMI, respectively).

While there is no state requirement for a set-aside for ELI households, local governments are free to enact these requirements themselves. An ELI set-aside would allow local governments to subsidize construction and rehabilitation of rental housing developments that reserve a portion of units for ELI households. It could also be used to provide emergency rental assistance for ELI families facing eviction or to provide rental upfront costs (first month's rent, security deposits, utility deposits, etc.) and temporary rent subsidies to homeless families. Several local governments recently began using SHIP funds for these purposes. This option is explored in more detail below.

Figure 11. Sadowski Housing Trust Fund, Fiscal Year 2017-18



The Sadowski trust fund was expected to generate over \$291 million in fiscal year 2017-18. The Florida Legislature appropriated just \$137M for housing and swept the rest of the funds into general revenue.

Source: Florida Housing Coalition.

32 Meryl Finkel et al, *Capital Needs in the Public Housing Program* (Washington, D.C.: HUD, 2010).

Recommendation: Florida must preserve its supply of housing with federal project-based rental assistance. Florida Housing and local governments should incentivize and/or require set-asides of multifamily housing funds for preservation of developments with rental assistance.

Federal project-based rental assistance (PBRA) also helps ELI families find housing they can afford. Under PBRA programs, HUD and the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) enter into contracts with owners of rental housing developments to provide rent subsidies. As in the voucher program, tenants pay 30 percent of their income for housing. Unlike in the voucher program, the subsidy stays with the unit rather than traveling with individual tenants.

Like Housing Choice Vouchers, the project-based rental assistance units are an irreplaceable resource that provides housing to tens of thousands of ELI households in the state, and they should be fully funded by the federal government. Florida has 63,764 units with project-based rental assistance. In the HUD-assisted units, tenants pay an average of \$244 per month in rent. Three-quarters of residents are extremely low-income, and one-third of households served are families with children.³³ Congress must fully fund project-based rental assistance instead of “short funding” – that is, funding the project-based rental assistance program at less than the amount necessary to fully fund all contracts. Without full funding, the ability of the federal government to honor its contractual obligations will be compromised, endangering the program’s long-term success.

Even with a fully funded program, many of Florida’s affordable units with project-based rental assistance are at risk. First, affordability restrictions are time-limited. When restrictions expire, owners of developments in strong real estate markets can convert them to market-rate housing or other uses. Second, many 1970s and 1980s-era assisted housing properties are at risk of physical deterioration and financial default without additional capital investment. Often these two types of risk go together: the oldest developments are also the closest to their subsidy expiration dates. The Shimberg Center’s *2016 Rental Market Study* finds that 16,675 units in Florida with rental assistance from HUD and the U.S. Department of Agriculture are at risk of loss due to expiring subsidies in the next decade.

Preservation financing can be used to provide incentives to owners to remain in subsidy programs, to help a mission-driven owner acquire housing developments and maintain affordability restrictions, and to rehabilitate aging facilities. Because the federal government funds very little new housing with project-based rental assistance, the ELI housing

lost when properties fail or are converted to market-rate cannot be replaced. Preservation of existing PBRA housing is a cost-effective way to keep federal resources for ELI housing in the state.

For the past several years, Florida Housing has set aside varying amounts of SAIL and Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) funding for preservation of existing affordable multifamily housing developments. These set-asides should be continued and increased to the maximum degree feasible to ensure that the state’s limited supply of housing that ELI families can afford is not lost.

Additionally, local governments should ensure that their affordable housing plans allow for the use of SHIP funds to support preservation of PBRA housing, and should prioritize the use of SHIP funding for gap financing for local preservation projects when they arise. For cities and counties with an ELI set-aside for SHIP funds, preservation of PBRA-assisted housing would be a natural fit.

Recommendation: Florida Housing Finance Corporation should maintain at least a 50-year affordability term for developments funded through the Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC).

The LIHTC program is governed by the U.S. Department of the Treasury and administered by state housing finance agencies, including Florida Housing. Under LIHTC, successful applicants are provided with a reduction in federal tax liability in exchange for the development or rehabilitation of rental units to be occupied by low income households. Since 1987, Florida has used LIHTC funds to create over 178,000 rental units for low-income households.

While federal law requires that LIHTC developments maintain income and rent restrictions for at least 30 years, Florida Housing requires a 50-year affordability period for tax credits allocated by competition. We recommend that Florida Housing maintain the 50-year affordability term to minimize future displacement of low-income tenants.

Recommendation: The federal government should allow averaging of income limits in LIHTC projects to allow them to serve ELI families more feasibly.

Federal LIHTC rules require that at least 20 percent of housing units in each development be set aside for households earning 50 percent of area median income, **or** 40 percent of the units must be set aside for households earning 60 percent of AMI. The current LIHTC statute does not allow the set-aside units to serve households above 60 percent of AMI. LIHTC reforms under consideration would allow some set-aside units to serve households up to 80 percent of AMI in exchange for restricting some

33 HUD, *Picture of Subsidized Households 2016*.

units to serve ELI households, as long as the rent and income limits for the building average out to 60 percent of AMI. In this way, units with higher rents can cross-subsidize units with rents limited to the ELI-affordable level.

Recommendation: Congress should maintain funding for the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) and Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME). These programs provide flexible dollars that local communities can use to increase the supply of ELI-affordable housing.

The CDBG program was established in 1974 and is one of the longest continuously run programs at HUD. The CDBG program provides flexible funds that cities and counties can use to ensure decent, affordable housing; to provide services to the most vulnerable; and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses. States distribute CDBG funds to smaller localities. Funding for the program has declined in real terms since its inception. It is critical that HUD continue to fund this program so that communities can continue to use these flexible funds for housing and poverty reduction.³⁴

HOME is a HUD program that provides funding to states and localities for the creation of affordable housing. Eligible activities include home purchase or rehabilitation financing assistance to individuals, construction or rehabilitation of housing for rent or ownership, or “other reasonable and necessary expenses related to the development of non-luxury housing.” These might include site acquisition or improvement, demolition of dilapidated housing, and payment of relocation expenses. Additionally, HOME funds can be used to provide tenant-based rental assistance contracts of up to two years if such activity is consistent with the local consolidated plan. Funding for HOME has fallen precipitously over the years. Congress must restore this funding to help states and local governments increase the supply of housing that families can afford.³⁵

Recommendation: The private sector and local governments should create housing loan funds in Florida communities, with a portion of funding targeted toward housing that ELI families can afford.

Local loan funds combine dollars from a variety of sources to offer low-interest financing to developers looking to preserve or create affordable housing. Often, these funds are initiated by private sector foundations and financial institutions. In some cases, the loan funds remain wholly private entities. In others, they pool private and public funds. Loan

funds provide a unique opportunity to leverage dwindling government funds with private investment and to implement a strong public-private partnership. Examples of local loan funds include the following:

- The **Home Funders Collaborative** in Boston, Massachusetts formed in 2003 to finance rental housing. Several private funders pooled capital in the form of program related investments and grants for an initial total of \$16 million.³⁶ The funds are loaned at very low interest rates for a range of predevelopment and development costs. Developers must set aside at least 20 percent of the project’s units for ELI households. A total of 4,147 affordable housing units, of which 1,224 were for ELI households, were completed as of March 2016.
- The **Denver Transit Oriented Development Fund** was formed to acquire land near transportation hubs and ensure that these areas have rental units that working families can afford. The fund was initially seeded with \$15 million by Enterprise Community Partners, \$2.5 million by the City of Denver, and \$1.5 million from the Urban Land Conservancy – a non-profit organization formed by local business leaders that also administers the fund. As of 2016, the fund has financed nine housing developments, including three with ELI-affordable units.
- The **New York City Acquisition Fund** uses capital investments from foundations, city government, and banks to provide early stage capital for acquisition of privately owned land and buildings to create or preserve affordable housing. To date, the fund has invested \$347 million in New York City for the preservation and creation of an estimated 10,626 housing units.
- The **Los Angeles New Generation Fund** is a revolving loan program that provides acquisition and predevelopment capital for affordable housing projects. Investors include the City of Los Angeles, Enterprise Community Partners, and the Los Angeles Housing and Community Investment Department. Since its inception, the fund has loaned more than \$110 million to 21 developments and has created or preserved 2,077 units.

Similarly, the **Florida Community Loan Fund (FCLF)**, as one example of a committed community development financial institution (CDFI), provides a statewide source of flexible lending for community development projects throughout the state. Sources of loan funds include financial institutions, the New Markets Tax Credit and other government funds,

34 Brett Theodos, Christina Plerhoples Stacy, and Helen Ho, *Taking Stock of the Community Development Block Grant*, (Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute, 2017).

35 National Low Income Housing Coalition, *Coalition Letter to Congress Urging Increased Funding for the Home Program*, (Washington, D.C.: April 2015).

36 Program related investments are loans or other types of financing other than grants provided by foundations. They are intended to advance the foundation’s charitable purpose; they may also generate a financial return. From the Foundation Center’s *Grantspace Knowledge Base*, <http://grantspace.org/tools/knowledge-base/Grantmakers/pris>.

and investments from religious organizations and foundations. Affordable housing is one of several types of community development activities eligible for loan funds. As of December 2016, FCLF's borrowers have received financing for 4,529 housing units.

Recommendation: Local governments should use existing or new housing trust funds to support ELI housing.

Local and state housing trust funds draw on consistent, dedicated sources of public funding to support affordable housing preservation and production. Like loan funds, many trust funds engage in low-interest lending for housing development and preservation. However, trust funds may also provide grants for housing development, rent subsidies, and funding for services and assistance to individuals.

Florida's **Sadowski fund** is an example of this type of fund at the state level, with a dedicated source of funding from the documentary stamp tax paid on all real estate transactions. At the local level, Miami-Dade County recently amended its **Affordable Housing Trust Fund**. This is the first time the County has allocated carryover funds from general revenue for affordable housing. The County seeded the fund with the goal of leveraging additional private investment. Miami-Dade's fund is made up of two parts: a revolving loan fund, which will supply low-interest financing, and a fund that potentially will be used more flexibly to provide grants or long-term rent subsidies.³⁷

In other parts of the country, trust funds have been capitalized by a variety of specialized public funding sources.

- **Chicago's Low Income Housing Trust Fund** receives funds generated by developer fees paid in lieu of developing on-site affordable housing units and for receiving density bonuses, as well as a portion of state funding from a real estate transaction recording fee similar to Florida's documentary stamp tax. Chicago's trust fund provides loans and grants to developers to finance the creation of housing units ELI households can afford. It also provides ongoing, project-based rent subsidies to landlords of existing properties. As with federal rental assistance, ELI tenants pay 30 percent of their income for rent, and the subsidy makes up the difference of the rent to the landlord. The subsidized units can make up no more than one-third of units in the building to encourage mixed-income housing. Half of the resources are reserved for the lowest-income households: those with incomes at or below 15 percent of the area median.

- **Kentucky's Housing Trust Fund (KHTF)** receives funding from a document recording fee, the state housing finance agency, unclaimed state lottery winnings, and the Governor's Kentucky Derby Breakfast. The fund serves households up to 60 percent AMI with a preference for ELI households. Since its inception, the KHTF has created more than 3,900 rental units.

Given their flexibility of uses, trust funds can also provide an opportunity to set aside resources for ELI families. Florida has already implemented this through its State Apartment Incentive Loan Program. Most developments receiving SAIL funding in the last decade include set-asides of ELI-affordable units, project-based rental assistance from HUD, or both.

Providing a bridge to permanent housing

Housing instability is a self-reinforcing cycle. Once a family has an eviction on record, it becomes more difficult and expensive to rent a new apartment. Other families cannot save the money for upfront moving costs and deposits, even if they could pay the rent, because they are paying nightly hotel charges.

Temporary financial support can help families take advantage of the affordable stock that does exist, and ensure that episodic housing affordability problems do not turn into long-term homelessness. A number of types of assistance can be helpful:

- Emergency payments for rent and to become current on utility costs can help prevent eviction and utility shut-offs, keeping families in their current housing.
- Grants or loans for costs such as moving expenses, first and last months' rent, security deposits, and utility deposits can help families who can afford monthly rent but have trouble saving for upfront costs.
- Temporary rent subsidies provide families with stable housing while they seek employment or benefits that will allow them to afford rent payments over the long term.

Federal homelessness policy is moving away from reliance on shelters and transitional housing toward a Housing First approach that emphasizes the quickest possible placement into permanent housing. The recommendations from the *Path Forward*, *Current State of Family Homelessness*, and *Homeward Bound* reports described in the box on page 26 calls for these changes in local homelessness systems. We echo these recommendations and further recommend that other public and private funding sources be used to expand these solutions to the broader population of families facing housing instability, as follows.

³⁷ Miami-Dade County also has levied a documentary stamp surtax for affordable housing since 1984, but these funds are not reserved for ELI-affordable housing.

Recommendation: Local governments should devote the maximum allowable amount of SHIP funds to eviction prevention, security and utility deposit assistance, and rent subsidies.

Florida statutes now allow up to 25 percent of a county or city's SHIP funds to be used for security and utility deposit assistance, eviction prevention subsidies up to six months' rent, and rent subsidies up to one year. The rent subsidies must be used for very low-income households with at least one adult who is a person with special needs or homeless.³⁸

Some communities in Florida have already started using SHIP for rental assistance. The City of Kissimmee and the City of West Palm Beach are two examples:

- The **City of Kissimmee** has leveraged HUD Community Development Block Grants (CDBG) funding with SHIP funding to provide security and utility deposits alongside rental assistance for up to three months for individuals at risk of homelessness. After only providing rental assistance directly with CDBG funds for a number of years, the City learned the importance of pairing the assistance with social services

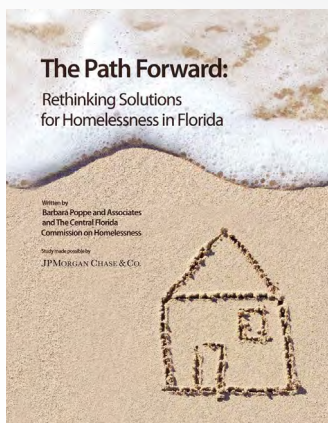
to ensure residents' success at remaining stably housed. Kissimmee was able to use SHIP and CDBG to provide housing support and employment training support to ensure individuals were connected with social services via three primary agencies. In 2016, the City funded a partner agency with a total of \$93,649 to assist 22 households with this funding. Since 2012, the City has served over 120 households.

- The **City of West Palm Beach** dedicates \$50,000 of SHIP funding to assist 25 households with rental assistance. The monies are mostly used for security deposits and first and last month's rent.

Recommendation: Community organizations and local housing trust funds can provide flexible funds to assist families with rent and utility arrearages, security and utility deposits, and temporary rent subsidies.

Community funds and local housing trust funds can provide similar types of assistance to help families remain housed or enter the rental housing market. These funds can provide a flexible form of assistance to a broader set of families facing housing instability, without the homelessness eligibility restrictions

38 Florida Statute 420.9072(7)



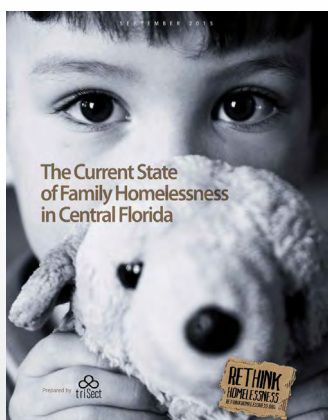
In 2015, Barbara Poppe and Associates and the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness produced *The Path Forward* and *The Current State of Family Homelessness in Central Florida*, sponsored by JP Morgan Chase. That same year, the Florida Housing Coalition published *Homeward Bound* in partnership with the Florida Department of Economic Opportunity and Florida Realtors. Together, these reports provide guidelines for local homelessness systems that serve families and youth:

Communities should implement **coordinated entry** systems, through which each household experiencing homelessness can be quickly matched with the services and providers that best meet its needs.

Rapid Rehousing services can help most families exit homelessness quickly. Services include help with the housing search, financial assistance with rental entry costs such as deposits, and temporary rent subsidies.

Permanent supportive housing is an appropriate solution for families facing chronic homelessness, such as those where the parent has a mental illness or serious health problem. Permanent supportive housing combines affordable rental units with voluntary supportive services.

In some cases, **homeless youth** may be able to reunite with their families. Where that is not possible, housing programs should include services and case management that address adolescents' specific developmental needs.



See Barbara Poppe and Associates and the Central Florida Commission on Homelessness, *The Path Forward: Rethinking Solutions for Homelessness in Florida* and *The Current State of Family Homelessness in Florida*, September 2015; Florida Housing Coalition, *Homeward Bound: 2015 Policy and Resource Guide for Housing Homeless Floridians*, June 11, 2015.

associated with Continuum of Care funding and SHIP rent subsidies. These solutions are also scalable based on the resources of the organization or trust fund.

Addressing education and employment

Based on the student data and liaisons' interview responses, we offer these recommendations to assist children and families with issues outside of their immediate housing instability.

Recommendation: Encourage local foundations and charities to donate flexible funds to schools' assistance programs.

Donations to schools and school district foundations for student services provide another scalable opportunity for philanthropic support. Liaisons emphasized the importance of private donations in providing services. While most local districts receive grants from the federal McKinney-Vento program for services, these funds are limited. School districts rely heavily on private donations both to augment their limited McKinney-Vento resources for basic purchases such as clothing and food, and to provide funds that can be used more flexibly for activities such as extracurricular activities.

Recommendation: Coordinate workforce development services for parents with housing assistance.

Many liaisons cited parents' underemployment and lack of education and work skills as a root cause of families' housing instability. Building Changes, an organization in Washington state, has evaluated efforts there to coordinate workforce and Rapid Rehousing services. Based on the Washington experience, Building Changes recommends that Rapid Rehousing programs make employment an "essential component"; that adults be referred to the workforce development system early in their involvement in Rapid Rehousing; and that housing and workforce development providers form teams to work with individual families. They also recommend that service providers maintain a source of flexible funds to meet working parents' immediate and emergency needs, such as appropriate clothing or short-term child care—a recommendation that mirrors the need for private, flexible funds to assist students with school expenses.³⁹

Developing alternative housing options for unaccompanied homeless youth

Students who are not living with a legal parent or guardian require alternative, developmentally appropriate housing options. Many unaccompanied students are minors (under age 18). These young

people often actively avoid being identified as homeless because of the associated stigma, but also for fear of becoming involved in the child welfare system or being returned to an abusive home or unstable family situation.

Because of the legal limitations associated with housing minors without parental consent, most of the recommendations that follow are targeted towards students who have reached the age of majority, but for whom independent housing would not be developmentally appropriate. The final recommendation addresses the availability of crisis shelter for minor youth—a key need identified by county liaisons.

Recommendation: Increase the number of youth-specific emergency shelter programs and allow for flexible time-periods for shelter stay.

Youth-specific emergency shelter programs and services are limited in Florida communities. A youth shelter is an immediate, but short-term solution that removes a young person from the dangers of sleeping outdoors or in other places not meant for human habitation. Emergency shelters serving the 18 to 24-year-old population should provide assistance with basic needs, as well as intensive individual case management that connects youth to McKinney-Vento services in their schools and other educational supports in the community. The goal of youth shelters should be to stabilize youth through case management and to quickly transition the young person to stable housing through family reunification, transitional housing, or short-term financial assistance to secure independent housing.

While there are few youth shelters in Florida, those that do exist in the state and elsewhere can serve as models for expansion:

- **Covenant House Florida** provides youth shelters in Fort Lauderdale and Orlando. Both programs serve youth under 21 years of age, including parenting youth and their babies. Covenant House counselors work closely with residents to develop a long-term housing plan that might include returning to their families or preparing for independent living. Residents also receive counseling, life skills and employment training, and support in school or G.E.D. classes. Youth residents stay as long as they work on their plan. The average length of stay in the emergency shelter program is under 30 days. "Disconnected youth"—those who are neither working nor in school when they enter the program—often stay for several months.
- **Avenues for Homeless Youth** is a successful youth emergency shelter and transitional housing program in Minneapolis that supports

³⁹ Building Changes, *Coordinating Employment and Housing Services: A Strategy to Impact Family Homelessness* (Seattle: July 22, 2016).

youth between the ages of 16 to 20. The program includes basic needs support, intensive case management services, health care, independent living training, and employment and educational support. Beyond the overnight emergency bed program, the average length of stay among youth residents is 90 to 120 days. The program has intentionally increased the time that residents remain in the housing program in order to improve outcomes. The Avenues for Homeless Youth model has been successful and was recently adopted in Brooklyn to serve homeless youth in that city.

Recommendation: Develop host home programs for unaccompanied homeless youth, particularly in rural communities that lack adequate shelter and transitional housing options for youth.

Host homes are community-based, flexible housing models that provide short-term shelter or transitional housing for youth age 18 and older in the home of a volunteer host family. These are voluntary arrangements rather than formal “placements.” Typically, a community network works with a service provider to recruit hosts, train host families, provide case management to youth, and connect the youth to the local school district’s McKinney-Vento liaison for education support. Conflict mediation and cultural competency training for host families helps to minimize further displacement of the young person that might occur due to poor communication or failure to set boundaries.

National examples of host home programs include the following:

- **Avenues for Homeless Youth** in Minneapolis is also a well-known model for volunteer-based Host Home programs. The Avenues for Homeless Youth-GLBT Host Home program is a small, non-institutional program serving up to 10 youth at a time. The program specifically serves gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender youth, the majority of whom are youth of color. The youth live with their host families for a year on average.
- **Second Story for Homeless Youth** in Fairfax, Virginia provides housing options for youth between the ages of 18 and 24. Second Story for Homeless Youth is especially sensitive to the students who are working towards completing their high school education. In 2016, 100 percent of the high school seniors in the program graduated. The host home program connects youth in need with families and community members who can offer a stable living environment and provide a healthy, consistent living situation. Youth work or attend school at least 30 hours a week and prepare to live independently once they

graduate from the program. All youth receive case management, therapy, and life skills education.

Recommendation: Adopt successful transitional housing models for youth aging out of foster care to meet the needs of youth experiencing homelessness.

Housing options that provide a stable environment for unaccompanied students as they complete their high school education is critical. Transitional housing for a 1-2 year period allows youth age 18 and older to focus on completing school while engaging in supportive services with the aim of transitioning to permanent housing.

For older students who are prepared to exit a transitional living program or to manage rental payments, youth-tailored rapid rehousing with intensive case management is a promising model. A youth tailored rapid re-housing program provides developmentally appropriate services and allows for up to 24 months of rental assistance for private-market unit, with youth paying 30 percent or less of their income. As with any rapid re-housing program, developing relationships with landlords and managing rental payments requires resources.

Examples of successful transitional housing programs for homeless youth and youth aging out of foster care include the following:

- **The Village** in Central Florida is a transitional housing program for homeless and former foster youth ages 18-23. The Village is a program of IMPOWER, a non-profit focused on mental health and child and youth well-being. The program provides both safe, affordable housing with wraparound supports that include development of employment skills, life skills training, and mental health and legal services. Youth receive aftercare services and supports to ensure stability and success after they exit the program.
- **YouthCare**, a community-based agency located in King County, Washington, provides a range of housing options for youth, including transitional housing. **Passages** provides housing for up to two years for youth ages 18-21. Generally, youth must be working towards completing their high school education or G.E.D. **Isis at Ravenna House**, another YouthCare housing program, serves LGBTQ youth in the same age group. In addition to working towards educational goals, youth residents are required to seek employment and prepare to pay a percentage of their earnings towards program fees.

Recommendation: Collaborate across youth housing programs and mainstream systems to provide comprehensive services to unaccompanied youth.

Coordination with mainstream systems such as child welfare, the juvenile justice system, workforce, education, and benefits programs will strengthen community-based efforts to end unaccompanied youth homelessness. Youth who have been involved in the child welfare system experience homelessness at higher rates than their peers. Transition planning and increased collaboration between the youth homelessness system and child welfare systems can prevent homelessness among students who are aging out of the foster care system. McKinney-Vento liaisons should work closely with federally funded adult education programs to ensure that unaccompanied students have access to GED programs and community colleges. Youth housing programs and local McKinney-Vento liaisons should coordinate with workforce development partners to provide job training, alternative education programming, and apprenticeship programs.

Recommendation: Increase access to crisis shelter for minor youth (under 18) through Runaway and Homeless Youth Act (RHY) program funding and state funds for juvenile justice respite programs. Incorporate RHY and youth crisis shelter providers into the Continuum of Care.

Unaccompanied minor youth need age-appropriate crisis shelter in their own communities. The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) provides funding for emergency shelters and longer term transitional living programs that include minor youth. The HHS Runaway and Homeless Youth (RHY) programs include Basic Center Programs, which provide up to 21 days of shelter to youth under 18 years old, and Transitional Living Programs for Older Homeless Youth, which provide long-term residential services for young people ages 16 to 22. These programs include host family homes, group homes, and supervised apartments.

Beyond federal RHY program dollars, the Florida Legislature should continue to fund residential intervention programs that provide shelter to youth with family in crisis. The Children and Families in Need of Services (CINS/FINS) program provides residential services for youth, in addition to case management and family and youth counseling to address conflict and help families to reunify through clinical therapy and counseling. The CINS/FINS program and other respite programs funded by the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice provide essential crisis shelter options for youth at high risk of homelessness due to family or behavioral issues. In 2016, these Florida programs were funded by the state at \$37,205,495.



V. Conclusion

In 2010, the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness released the nation's first plan for ending homelessness. As its first goal, the plan called for ending veteran homelessness by 2015. By the middle of 2017, the U.S. had made great strides toward this goal. Veteran homelessness had dropped by 47 percent. Three states and 50 local communities had effectively ended homelessness among veterans. In Florida, these communities included Fort Myers, Cape Coral, Sanibel Island, and Lee County; Flagler County; Volusia County and Daytona Beach; and Punta Gorda and Charlotte County.⁴⁰

These achievements came about through strong local collaborations across government, non-profits, and the private sector. A key component has been a substantial increase in federal housing vouchers for veterans—even at a time when overall federal resources for housing were stagnant or falling. The vouchers are paired with supportive services for veterans from VA medical centers, and with local outreach to landlords to ensure veterans can find new homes.

The same type of “all hands on deck” effort will be needed to ensure that all families, children, and youth have permanent housing. As the statistics in this report show, the need is urgent. Schools are identifying an increasing number of homeless children and youth, particularly those doubled up with others. Housing costs are out of reach for a growing number of families. Homeless students trail their housed peers across indicators of attendance, academic performance, and disciplinary actions.

What this report also shows is that Florida has a strong infrastructure to build upon to reach this goal. This infrastructure includes existing mechanisms to increase the supply of affordable housing through federal programs, Florida's Sadowski Housing Trust Fund, and local housing agencies; emerging local systems for rapid rehousing and financial support to ensure that families' housing instability does not grow into long-term homelessness; and close

ties between school homelessness liaisons and community housing and service providers. The report also showcases promising local and national models to expand this infrastructure, particularly around public-private housing loan funds and supportive housing options for unaccompanied homeless youth.

Our challenge now is for the public and private sectors to commit to doing **more** with these promising initiatives, just as we have done for our veterans. Florida's children and youth are counting on it.



40 U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness, *Ending Veteran Homelessness and Mayors Challenge to End Veteran Homelessness* (Washington, D.C.: August 2017).

Glossary

Area median income (AMI): The median divides the income distribution into two equal parts: one-half of the cases falling below the median income and one-half above the median. HUD and other agencies use percentages of AMI adjusted by family size and region to calculate income limits for housing assistance programs. For example, many housing programs limit participation to households at 80 percent of AMI or lower.

Community Development Block Grant (CDBG): Federal program providing grant funds to local and state governments to support housing and community development for low- and moderate-income residents.

Continuum of Care: Regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and service programs to address the needs of homeless individuals and families. The Continuum of Care agencies apply for and administer federal funding for homeless service and housing programs. The term is also used to refer to the system of federally-funded programs to address homelessness in a local community.

Extremely Low-Income (ELI): Household with an income below 30 percent of the area median income, adjusted for household size.

Florida Standards Assessments (FSA): Annual exams to measure math and English Language Arts proficiency for Florida students in grades 3 and higher.

Home Investment Partnerships Program (HOME): Federal program providing grants to local and state governments for housing activities including construction and rehabilitation of affordable housing for rent or homeownership, or to provide direct rental assistance to low-income households.

Homeless children and youths: The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act, defines homeless children and youth as (i) children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or a similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative adequate accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; or are abandoned in hospitals; (ii) children and youths who have a primary nighttime residence that is a public or private place not designed for or ordinarily used as a regular sleeping accommodation for human beings; (iii) children and youths who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and (iv) migratory children who qualify as homeless because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

Housing Choice Voucher (HCV): Federal program providing tenants with vouchers to seek rental units on the private market. Tenants with HCV assistance generally pay 30 percent of their incomes for rent and utilities, with the voucher providing the remaining amount of the rent to the landlord. The HCV program is administered by HUD; local public housing authorities provide vouchers to tenants.

HUD: U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development.

Low Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC): Federal tax incentive to increase the availability of affordable rental housing. Owners of rental housing developments receive income tax credits in exchange for limiting tenant rents and incomes. In Florida, LIHTC resources are allocated by the Florida Housing Finance Corporation.

McKinney-Vento Act: Federal law providing funds for homeless programs and protecting the rights of homeless children and youth in public schools.

McKinney-Vento liaison: Staff member from each local school district responsible for coordinating services for homeless children and youth. The liaisons ensure that homeless children and youth are identified, enroll in school, and receive the protections and services necessary to give them a full and equal opportunity to succeed in school.

Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA): Geographic region comprising one or more counties with at least one urbanized area with a population of 50,000 or more at the core and close social and economic ties throughout the area. Florida has 20 MSAs.

Project-Based Rental Assistance (PBRA): HUD program providing rental assistance tied to specific rental housing developments. Residents of units with PBRA generally pay 30 percent of their incomes for rent and utilities, with HUD paying the difference between that amount and a contract rent to the project owner.

Runaway and Homeless Youth Program (RHY): Federal program to assist unaccompanied youth through street outreach, emergency shelters, counseling, and longer-term transitional living and maternity group home programs. Administered by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

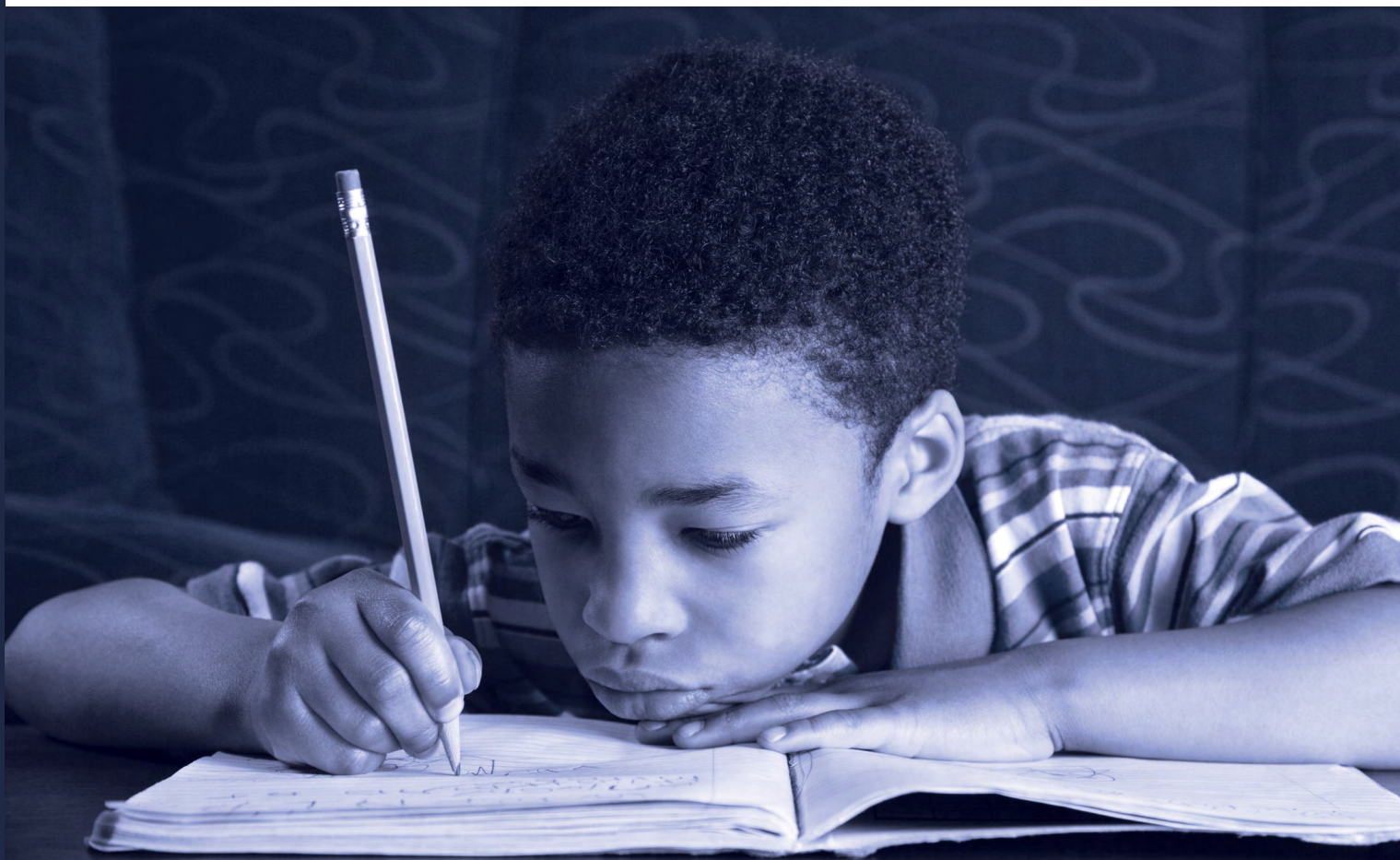
Sadowski Fund: Dedicated source of revenue for affordable housing programs in Florida, established by the 1992 William E. Sadowski Affordable Housing Act. Funded through a portion of documentary stamp taxes on the transfer of real estate.

State Apartment Incentive Loan (SAIL): Florida Housing Finance Corporation program providing low-interest loans on a competitive basis to developers for construction and rehabilitation of affordable rental housing units. Funded by revenues generated by the Sadowski Affordable Housing Act.

State Housing Initiatives Partnership Program (SHIP): Provides funds to county and local governments from revenues generated by the Sadowski Affordable Housing Act. SHIP dollars may be used to fund emergency repairs, new construction, rehabilitation, down payment and closing cost assistance, impact fees, construction and gap financing, mortgage buy-downs, acquisition of property for affordable housing, matching dollars for federal housing grants and programs, and homeownership counseling.

Statewide Science Assessment (SSA): Annual exams to measure science proficiency for Florida students in grades 5 and 8.

Unaccompanied homeless youth: Young people not in the custody of a parent or legal guardian, who were asked to leave home by a parent; left home with the consent of a parent; have no formal custody papers or arrangements while their parents are in jail, the hospital, or a rehabilitation center; or ran away from home.



Appendix. Metropolitan and County Data

Table A1. Students Identified as Homeless Under McKinney-Vento by School Year, Florida Metropolitan Statistical Areas and Counties

	2007-08	2010-11	2015-16
Jacksonville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)			
Baker County	72	248	41
Clay County	694	739	840
Duval County	1,916	1,169	2,256
Nassau County	105	230	445
St. Johns County	84	493	816
Jacksonville MSA Total	2,871	2,879	4,398
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach MSA			
Broward County	1,593	2,099	2,262
Miami-Dade County	2,363	4,355	6,103
Palm Beach County	794	1,432	3,759
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach MSA Total	4,750	7,886	12,124
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford MSA			
Lake County	322	2,969	2,433
Orange County	1,772	3,822	6,853
Osceola County	1,200	1,910	3,562
Seminole County	632	1,735	1,898
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford MSA Total	3,926	10,436	14,746
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater MSA			
Hernando County	156	497	522
Hillsborough County	2,061	3,673	3,316
Pasco County	1,599	2,230	2,092
Pinellas County	962	2,915	3,509
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater MSA Total	4,778	9,315	9,439
Cape Coral-Fort Myers MSA (single county)			
Lee County	839	1,282	1,293
Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach MSA (single county)			
Volusia County	1,706	2,012	2,171
Fort Walton Beach-Crestview-Destin MSA (single county)			
Okaloosa County	451	404	849
Gainesville MSA			
Alachua County	610	594	785
Gilchrist County	—	21	—
Gainesville MSA Total	610	615	785

	2007-08	2010-11	2015-16
Lakeland MSA			
Lake Wales Charter Schools	#N/A	#N/A	275
Polk County	1,662	2,446	3,581
Lakeland MSA Total	1,662	2,446	3,856
Naples-Marco Island MSA (single county)			
Collier County	612	1,407	808
Ocala MSA (single county)			
Marion County	1,069	1,897	2,494
Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville MSA (single county)			
Brevard County	205	1,162	1,973
Palm Coast MSA (single county)			
Flagler County	70	321	509
Panama City-Lynn Haven MSA (single county)			
Bay County	685	1,175	1,506
Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent MSA			
Escambia County	877	1,010	1,869
Santa Rosa County	996	1,464	1,312
Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent MSA Total	1,873	2,474	3,181
Port St. Lucie-Ft. Pierce MSA			
Martin County	42	80	265
St. Lucie County	27	342	718
Port St. Lucie-Ft. Pierce MSA Total	69	422	983
Punta Gorda MSA (single county)			
Charlotte County	365	493	436
Sarasota-Bradenton-Venice MSA			
Manatee County	1,573	1,788	1,581
Sarasota County	1,065	1,228	867
Sarasota-Bradenton-Venice MSA Total	2,638	3,016	2,448
Sebastian-Vero Beach MSA (single county)			
Indian River County	209	310	311
Tallahassee MSA			
Gadsden County	695	533	519
Jefferson County	—	—	—
Leon County	248	762	866
Wakulla County	172	56	54
Tallahassee MSA Total	1,115	1,351	1,439
Central Non-Metropolitan Counties			
Citrus County	469	323	600
Putnam County	525	736	705
Sumter County	47	48	144
Central Non-Metropolitan Counties Total	1,041	1,107	1,449

	2007-08	2010-11	2015-16
Northeast Non-Metropolitan Counties			
Bradford County	—	154	212
Columbia County	89	403	553
Dixie County	15	48	44
Hamilton County	235	326	335
Lafayette County	88	190	199
Levy County	87	182	190
Madison County	43	74	150
Suwannee County	257	315	355
Taylor County	75	88	127
Union County	52	143	116
Northeast Non-Metropolitan Counties Total	941	1,923	2,281
Northwest Non-Metropolitan Counties			
Calhoun County	—	58	99
Franklin County	110	160	268
Gulf County	—	—	16
Holmes County	—	62	94
Jackson County	139	158	140
Liberty County	16	21	47
Walton County	316	114	241
Washington County	—	168	200
Northwest Non-Metropolitan Counties Total	581	741	1,105
South Non-Metropolitan Counties			
Desoto County	255	225	329
Glades County	10	32	63
Hardee County	71	185	192
Hendry County	95	155	424
Highlands County	64	88	461
Monroe County	242	326	387
Okeechobee County	60	273	375
South Non-Metropolitan Counties Total	797	1,284	2,231

Source: Florida Department of Education.

Table A2. Students by Place of Nighttime Residence and Accompaniment Status, Florida Metropolitan Statistical Areas and Counties, 2015-16 School Year

	Nighttime Residence						Accompaniment Status	
	Doubled Up	Hotels/Motels	Shelter/Transitional Housing	Unsheltered	Awaiting Foster Care	Total	With Family	Unaccompanied Youth
Jacksonville Metropolitan Statistical Area (MSA)								
Baker County	40	0	0	—	0	41	41	0
Clay County	656	108	54	15	—	840	724	116
Duval County	1,845	161	192	17	41	2,256	1,940	316
Nassau County	371	14	13	45	—	445	367	78
St. Johns County	581	96	102	25	12	816	627	189
Jacksonville MSA Total	3,493	379	361	102	53	4,398	3,699	699
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach MSA								
Broward County	1,448	233	513	52	16	2,262	1,839	423
Miami-Dade County	4,476	295	1,109	213	10	6,103	5,855	248
Palm Beach County	2,556	281	387	123	412	3,759	3,463	296
Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach MSA Total	8,480	809	2,009	388	438	12,124	11,157	967
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford MSA								
Lake County	1,955	240	104	51	83	2,433	2,315	118
Orange County	4,682	1,643	393	76	59	6,853	6,508	345
Osceola County	2,441	941	73	93	14	3,562	3,489	73
Seminole County	1,438	289	138	22	11	1,898	1,785	113
Orlando-Kissimmee-Sanford MSA Total	10,516	3,113	708	242	167	14,746	14,097	649
Tampa-St. Petersburg-Clearwater MSA								
Hernando County	401	32	70	12	—	522	429	93
Hillsborough County	2,351	424	413	108	20	3,316	3,072	244
Pasco County	1,518	224	232	42	76	2,092	1,770	322
Pinellas County	2,391	480	518	82	38	3,509	3,035	474
Tampa-St. Petersburg Clearwater MSA Total	6,661	1,160	1,233	244	134	9,439	8,306	1,133
Cape Coral-Fort Myers MSA (single county)								
Lee County	839	225	182	43	—	1,293	1,163	130
Deltona-Daytona Beach-Ormond Beach MSA (single county)								
Volusia County	1,667	280	166	46	12	2,171	1,970	201
Fort Walton Beach-Crestview-Destin MSA (single county)								
Okaloosa County	661	62	97	14	15	849	744	105
Gainesville MSA								
Alachua County	563	62	114	34	12	785	651	134
Gilchrist County	—	0	—	0	0	0	0	0
Gainesville MSA Total	563	62	114	34	12	785	651	134

	Nighttime Residence						Accompaniment Status	
	Doubled Up	Hotels/ Motels	Shelter/ Transitional Housing	Unsheltered	Awaiting Foster Care	Total	With Family	Unaccompanied Youth
Lakeland MSA								
Lake Wales Charter Schools	221	22	—	26	—	275	252	23
Polk County	2,674	454	284	169	0	3,581	3,212	369
Lakeland MSA Total	2,895	476	284	195	0	3,856	3,464	392
Naples-Marco Island MSA (single county)								
Collier County	527	66	112	—	95	808	483	325
Ocala MSA (single county)								
Marion County	1,973	269	212	29	11	2,494	2,073	421
Palm Bay-Melbourne-Titusville MSA (single county)								
Brevard County	1,536	188	152	79	18	1,973	1,773	200
Palm Coast MSA (single county)								
Flagler County	424	39	20	18	—	509	451	58
Panama City-Lynn Haven MSA (single county)								
Bay County	1,233	182	48	32	11	1,506	1,366	140
Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent MSA								
Escambia County	1,536	160	170	—	0	1,869	1,795	74
Santa Rosa County	1,210	33	18	33	18	1,312	1,223	89
Pensacola-Ferry Pass-Brent MSA Total	2,746	193	188	33	18	3,181	3,018	163
Port St. Lucie-Ft. Pierce MSA								
Martin County	124	19	116	—	0	265	231	34
St. Lucie County	554	98	44	16	—	718	546	172
Port St. Lucie-Ft. Pierce MSA Total	678	117	160	16	0	983	777	206
Punta Gorda MSA (single county)								
Charlotte County	309	44	60	14	—	436	369	67
Sarasota-Bradenton-Venice MSA								
Manatee County	1,300	123	100	37	21	1,581	1,465	116
Sarasota County	530	79	204	—	50	867	784	83
Sarasota-Bradenton Venice MSA Total	1,830	202	304	37	71	2,448	2,249	199
Sebastian-Vero Beach MSA (single county)								
Indian River County	196	18	91	—	—	311	296	15
Tallahassee MSA								
Gadsden County	481	0	17	0	0	519	507	12
Jefferson County	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	—
Leon County	597	48	200	—	12	866	743	123
Wakulla County	52	—	0	—	0	54	48	—
Tallahassee MSA Total	1,130	48	217	0	12	1,439	1,298	135

	Nighttime Residence						Accompaniment Status	
	Doubled Up	Hotels/ Motels	Shelter/ Transitional Housing	Unsheltered	Awaiting Foster Care	Total	With Family	Unaccompanied Youth
Central Non-Metropolitan Counties								
Citrus County	346	28	174	12	40	600	529	71
Putnam County	570	30	84	21	0	705	571	134
Sumter County	90	26	24	—	0	144	142	—
Central Non-Metropolitan Counties Total	1,006	84	282	33	40	1,449	1,242	205
Northeast Non-Metropolitan Counties								
Bradford County	199	—	0	—	0	212	195	17
Columbia County	412	41	68	15	17	553	533	20
Dixie County	43	0	0	—	0	44	44	0
Hamilton County	303	30	0	—	0	335	310	25
Lafayette County	84	0	0	115	0	199	191	—
Levy County	151	—	23	—	—	190	186	—
Madison County	92	—	0	57	0	150	142	—
Suwannee County	338	—	—	—	—	355	319	36
Taylor County	104	—	—	12	0	127	117	—
Union County	110	0	0	0	—	116	116	0
Northeast Non-Metropolitan Counties Total	1,836	71	91	199	17	2,281	2,153	98
Northwest Non-Metropolitan Counties								
Calhoun County	93	—	0	—	—	99	79	20
Franklin County	233	—	—	30	0	268	212	56
Gulf County	12	—	—	0	0	16	14	—
Holmes County	94	0	0	0	0	94	83	11
Jackson County	98	22	—	12	—	140	126	14
Liberty County	47	0	0	0	0	47	45	—
Walton County	196	13	0	23	—	241	224	17
Washington County	188	—	—	—	—	200	192	—
Northwest Non-Metropolitan Counties Total	961	35	0	65	0	1,105	975	118

	Nighttime Residence						Accompaniment Status	
	Doubled Up	Hotels/ Motels	Shelter/ Transitional Housing	Unsheltered	Awaiting Foster Care	Total	With Family	Unaccompanied Youth
South Non-Metropolitan Counties								
Desoto County	274	—	—	47	—	329	297	32
Glades County	56	0	0	—	0	63	61	—
Hardee County	182	—	—	—	0	192	174	18
Hendry County	389	11	24	0	0	424	393	31
Highlands County	407	15	24	—	—	461	425	36
Monroe County	253	11	88	19	16	387	334	53
Okeechobee County	373	—	0	0	0	375	360	15
South Non-Metropolitan Counties Total	1,934	37	136	66	16	2,231	2,044	185

Source: Florida Department of Education.



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