



Homeless Children Served by Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention

Fiscal Year 2017

Report to the Legislature

As required by Minnesota Statutes,

section 125A.125

COMMISSIONER:

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Cost of Report Preparation

The total cost for the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to prepare this report was approximately \$136.00. Most of these costs involved staff time in analyzing data from surveys and preparing the written report. Incidental costs include paper, copying and other office supplies.

Estimated costs are provided in accordance with Minnesota Statutes 2015, section 3.197, which requires that at the beginning of a report to the Legislature, the cost of preparing the report must be provided.

Legislative Charge

Minnesota Statutes, section 125A.125, requires the Minnesota Department of Education (MDE) to annually report on the number of homeless children served by the Part C Infant and Toddler Intervention system (Part C). The current report covers the 2015-2016 school year. Data for this report were obtained from the Minnesota Automated Reporting Student System (MARSS) data system.

Introduction

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires state and local education agencies to build awareness of the needs of children and youth who are homeless. Public schools, including charter schools, must provide services that remove barriers to enrollment, attendance and educational success of these children.

According to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act of 2001—Title X, Part C of the No Child Left Behind Act, the term “homeless children and youth” means individuals who lack a fixed, regular, and adequate nighttime residence and includes:

- i. Children and youths who are sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship, or similar reason; are living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to the lack of alternative accommodations; are living in emergency or transitional shelters; are abandoned in hospitals; or are awaiting foster care placement,
- ii. Children and youth 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 youth who are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings,
- iv. Migratory children who qualify as homeless for the purposes of this subtitle because the children are living in circumstances described in clauses (i) through (iii).

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

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

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

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

Analysis

As reported through MARSS, a total of 103 infants and toddlers with disabilities were homeless for the 2014-2015 school year. Ninety-five of the children qualified for services under the developmental delay category; three qualified under speech/language impaired; and five under Autism Spectrum Disorder. Ninety-four children had English reported as their primary language, five were reported as Spanish speaking, two were reported as speaking Yoruba (Nigeria), one was reported as speaking Kurdish and one was reported as speaking Somali. Forty-five children were identified as white, 37 as black, 11 as Hispanic, nine as American Indian and one as Asian. Sixty-one children resided within the Twin Cities metropolitan area and 42 in greater Minnesota, representing a 177 percent increase in the Twin Cities metropolitan area compared to a 425 percent increase for Greater Minnesota. Overall, there was a 243 percent increase in the number of infants and toddlers with disabilities reported as homeless from the previous school year.

Since the 2012-2013 school year, the Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) team from MDE has emphasized with local school district leaders the importance of understanding the definition of homelessness and accurately reporting children, especially infants and toddlers, as homeless through the MARSS system. It is highly likely that these efforts are significant contributing factors to the reported increase, as opposed to a dramatic increase in the homeless population or an increase in the number of infants and toddlers with disabilities who are homeless, particularly between the 2014-2015 and 2015-2016 school years.

Figure 1

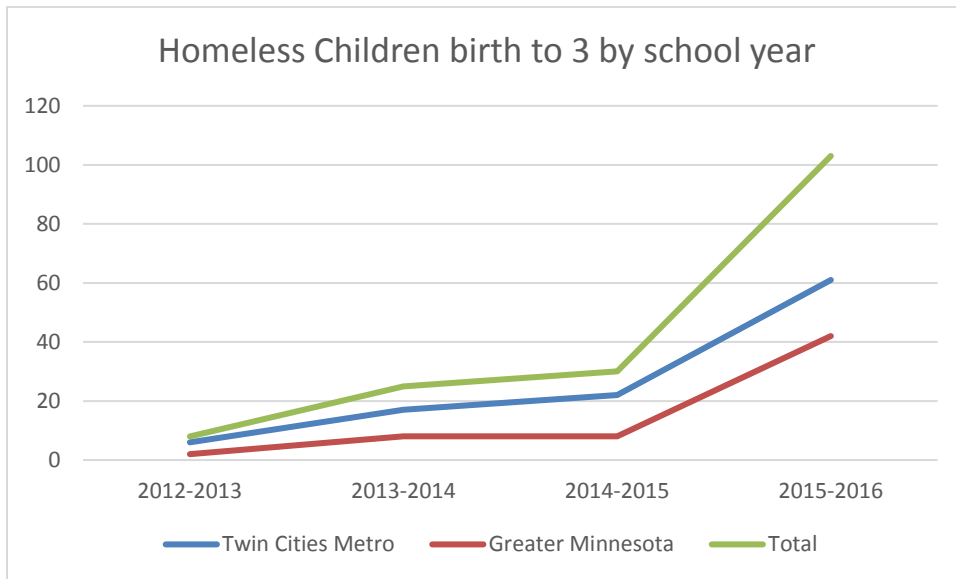


Figure 1 shows in the increase in the number of homeless infants and toddlers with disabilities reported by school districts broken out by the Twin Cities metro area and greater Minnesota. It shows the number of children who have received Part C services since MDE began focusing the child-find, public awareness and outreach efforts of the Interagency Early Intervention Committees on the homeless population.

It is possible that infants and toddlers with disabilities who are homeless continue to be under-identified through child-find efforts (i.e., effective outreach is difficult), but are also still likely to be under-reported as homeless within the MARSS system.

How MDE Continues to Address this Issue

Efforts of the ECSE team to communicate the urgency of homelessness began in the summer of 2013 with the annual retreat of the Governor’s Interagency Coordinating Council (ICC). The focus of this retreat was underserved populations within the early intervention system. Roberto Reyes, MDE’s Homeless and Neglected/Delinquent Programs state coordinator, presented the issue of and rules on serving homeless children, including infants and toddlers, within the education system. The presentation and discussion that followed revealed an obvious gap and lack of understanding among the various stakeholder groups represented by the ICC members related to homeless infants and toddlers and the relationship with the Part C system. Roberto Reyes now serves on the ICC as the state homelessness representative.

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

By answering these critical questions, IEICs will get a sense of their effectiveness connecting infants and toddlers who are homeless (and for whom there are developmental concerns or disabilities) to infant toddler intervention and preschool special education services.

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

A Help Me Grow Implementation Coordinator was hired in January 2017 to lead the implementation efforts of the expanded system. It is hoped that the expansion of Help Me Grow will be beneficial to families experiencing homelessness and other risk factors as the efforts of the current Help Me Grow initiative only direct and connect eligible children to Part C infant and toddler intervention services or preschool special education.

In the fall of 2015 through early 2016, the commissioner of education convened a working group to look at the education access and developmental needs of homeless children, ages 0-4. A careful and thoughtful review of the circumstances and barriers to homeless children's developmental, social/emotional, and academic needs would be beneficial to understanding how a state response could positively impact student outcomes.

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

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

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

Conclusion

Minnesota is aware of the issues related to identifying, serving and reporting on infants and toddlers with disabilities who are homeless and is taking the necessary action to address the

need within the system. By addressing the issues related to homelessness throughout all levels of the Part C service system, including in the broader community, we hope to see all infants and toddlers with disabilities and their families who are homeless identified for early intervention services in a timely manner so they receive the appropriate level and intensity of services to maximize their developmental outcomes.