

Supporting Homeless Youth with Financial Aid

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Gear Up West

HELLO!



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Overview

- Introductions
- National Homeless Youth Context (Numbers & Definitions)
- Washington Specific Numbers
- Barriers Homeless Youth Face with the FAFSA
- FAFSA Determination Process
- Tips & Resources
- Q&A

ABOUT SCHOOLHOUSE CONNECTION

SchoolHouse Connection works to **overcome homelessness through education**. We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.

- [Website](#)
- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarship



Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction McKinney-Vento

What we do...

- Provide grant funding to 37 district and consortium programs
- Provide training
- Provide technical assistance at homelessed@k12.wa.us
- Mediate disputes related to students experiencing homelessness
- Work with state partners: WSSDA, WSAC, WIAA and others
- Work with national partners: NCHE, SchoolHouse Connection and others
- Support district efforts to provide educational success to students

By the Numbers

Nationally 1.5M children and youth experience homelessness

Total Homeless
Students in
Washington

40,186

Total Student
Population in
Washington

1,149,011

% of State
Student
Population
Identified
Homeless

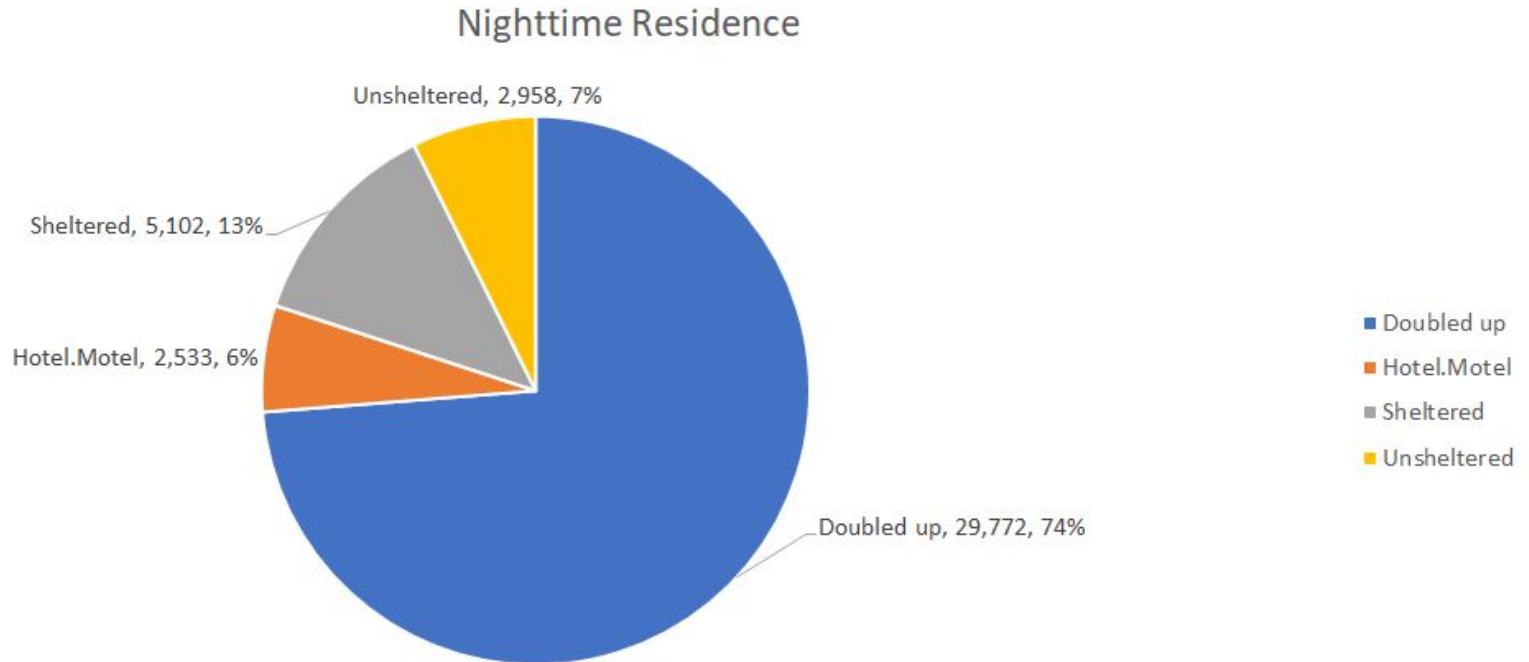
3.4%

Who is Homeless?

Children and youth who lack a fixed, regular and adequate nighttime residence, including children and youth who are...

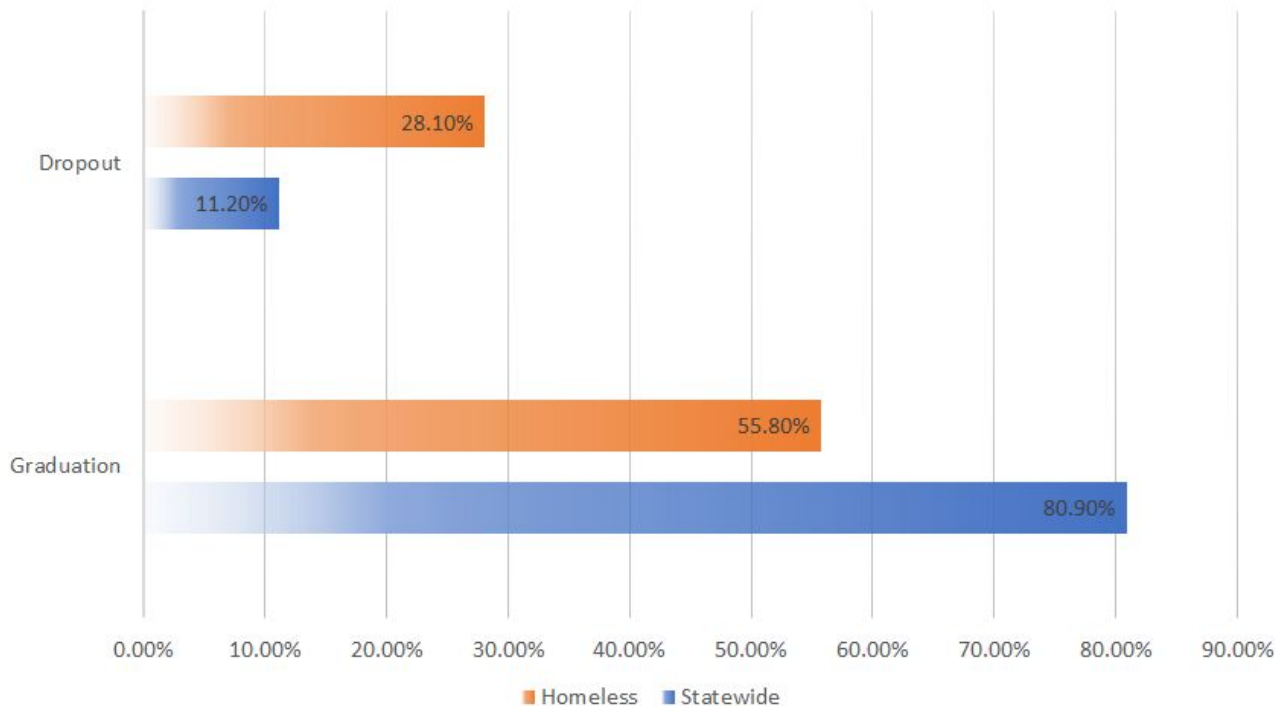
- Sharing the housing of other persons due to loss of housing, economic hardship or a similar reason
- Living in motels, hotels, trailer parks, or camping grounds due to lack of alternative accommodations
- Living in emergency or transitional shelters
- Abandoned in hospitals
- Living in public or private places not ordinarily designed for human beings
- Living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings
- Migratory children who qualify due to their living circumstances

Nighttime Residence (Washington)



Graduation and Dropout Rates (Washington)

4-YEAR ADJUSTED COHORT: CLASS OF 2019



Homeless Youth (Washington)

Grade	Number Homeless	Number Homeless Unaccompanied
9	2,559	470
10	2,395	597
11	2,741	1,017
12	4,034	2,090

GOVERNMENT ACCOUNTABILITY OFFICE REPORT:

Access to Federal Financial Assistance for Homeless and Foster Youth

Annual re-verification of homelessness poses barriers for unaccompanied homeless youth.

Burdensome program rules can hinder the ability of homeless and foster youth to access federal supports.

Key findings of May 2016 report:

Extensive documentation requests can impede access to aid for homeless youth.

Limited academic preparation, family support, and awareness of resources make it harder for homeless and foster youth to pursue college.

Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness During COVID-19

- FAFSA numbers are down compared to last year about 5%, higher rates with low-income students
- Some K-12 liaisons and shelter providers are working remotely (K-12) and/or overwhelmed with need.
- Youth lack devices, minutes, places to charge, and quiet, stable, safe places to learn
- Youth have either lost jobs, or are working in groceries, convenience stores
- Youth are being kicked out of “doubled up” situations, and cannot self-isolate

QUICK REVIEW:

K-12 Federal Requirements - The McKinney-Vento Act

Every local educational agency (LEA) must designate a liaison for homeless students.

LEA liaisons have many legal duties, including:

- Ensuring that unaccompanied youth are informed they qualify as independent students for the FAFSA and CADAA
- assist the youth in obtaining verification of that status.

11432(g)(6)(A)(x)(III); Guidance Q2

QUICK REVIEW:

Higher Education Act & Homelessness

Unaccompanied homeless youth under age 24 are considered independent students.

Youth who are **unaccompanied, at risk of homelessness, and self-supporting** are considered independent students.

At risk of homelessness: “When a student’s housing may cease to be fixed, regular, and adequate, for example, a student who is being evicted and has been unable to find fixed, regular, and adequate housing.”

HIGHER EDUCATION ACT:

Who Can Make a Determination of UHY Status

**School district
liaisons**

**U.S. Department of
Housing and Urban
Development (HUD)
Shelter Director or
Designee**

**Runaway and
Homeless Youth
(RHYA) Shelter
Director or Designee**

**Financial Aid
Administrator**

ANALYSIS OF FAFSA DATA FROM 2013-2014 TO 2018-2019

1. The number of Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) applicants who were determined to be unaccompanied homeless youth increased by 38% over the past six years. Nearly three quarters (73.5%) of this increase occurred between the 2016-2017 and 2018-2019 academic years, after enactment and implementation of amendments to federal K-12 education law to improve homeless youth's access to financial aid.
2. The number of UHY determinations made by local educational agency homeless liaisons and financial aid administrators increased significantly over the past six years (58% and 128% respectively), while the number of determinations made by homeless service providers did not.
3. From 2016-2018, the number of unaccompanied homeless youth FAFSA determinations increased for each entity that is authorized to make determinations, except for financial aid administrators, who made fewer determinations.
4. Determinations made by financial aid administrators continue to comprise a very small portion (7%) of the overall number of UHY FAFSA determinations.
5. There is great variation among states in six-year trends and two-year trends, with most states showing increases, but some states showing negligible changes or even decreases.

Application Cycle	Applicants Determined to be Unaccompanied Homeless Youth <i>Source: U.S. Department of Education, https://nche.ed.gov/ibt/fafsa.php</i>				
	Agency Determined (as self-reported on FAFSA)			School Financial Aid Administrator Determinant	Sum
	High School or School District	HUD Program	Youth or Transitional Program		
2013-2014	18,214	4,430	5,686	1,382	29,712
2014-2015	22,438	4,156	3,872	1,739	32,205
2015-2016	22,435	3,822	3,506	2,185	31,948
2016-2017	23,053	3,571	3,323	2,792	32,739
2017-2018	26,181	3,706	3,448	3,251	36,586
2018-2019	28,929	4,474	4,624	3,123	41,150

The chart above summarizes available data on FAFSA applicants determined to be unaccompanied homeless youth, and the source of the determination. It is important to note that these data are not representative of the entire population of FAFSA applicants experiencing homelessness and should not be construed as the total number of homeless youth, or unaccompanied homeless youth, in college.

DETERMINATIONS AFTER HIGH SCHOOL

- Liaisons **may write subsequent year determinations** for as long as the liaison has access to the information necessary to make such a determination for a particular youth, through age 23.
- If a liaison doesn't have the information that is necessary to make the determination, either because the youth became homeless after high school, or because the liaison is no longer familiar with the youth's circumstances, **the financial aid administrator must make the determination.**

DETERMINATIONS BY FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

1. Financial Aid Administrators (FAAs) are not required to verify the answers to the FAFSA homeless youth questions unless they have conflicting information.

2. It is not conflicting information if an FAA disagrees with an authority's determination that a student is homeless, FAAs must accept the determination.

3. If an institution has no conflicting information, the institution should not request additional documentation in addition to the documentation from the authority.

DETERMINATIONS BY FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

4. If the student claims to be an UHY and cannot answer yes to the UHY questions on the FAFSA, the FAA is required to make a homeless youth determination.

5. FAAs should determine if the student is unaccompanied and homeless (lacks fixed, regular and adequate housing) or at risk of being so without regard for why the student is homeless

6. A documented phone call with, or a written statement from, one of the four legal authorities, is sufficient verification, when needed.

DETERMINATIONS BY FINANCIAL AID ADMINISTRATORS

7. There is no official federal form required.

8. SchoolHouse Connection's [sample letter](#), and [NCHE's FAA determination tool](#), also may be used by financial aid administrators.

9. FAAs can get assistance with making case-by-case homelessness determinations by contacting, among others:

- College access programs (TRIO, GEAR UP, etc.)
- Doctors
- Social Workers
- Mental Health Professionals
- NCHE or State Coordinators for Homeless Education – [nche.edu](https://www.nche.edu)

5 Tips to Help Homeless Youth Fill out the FAFSA

1. Proactively communicate with all students that the FAFSA is available starting on October 1st. Encourage students to fill it out immediately to receive maximum amount of aid.
2. Host office hours in person or virtually for students experiencing homelessness to answer question about the determination process.
3. Conduct training for financial aid administrators regarding independent student determination statuses, and the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness.
4. [Remove barriers](#) (excessive documentation, requiring a notary, etc.) to FAFSA completion with sensitivity to the unique needs of homeless youth.
5. Make students aware of the [recent federal guidance](#) that allows students who do not need to file taxes to verify their income through means other than the Verification of Non-Filing (VNF) and IRS Form W-2. Help them complete acceptable documentation.





FAFSA 101

for Liaisons & Providers

Thursday, October 22, 2020 | 1:00 – 2:00PM ET

Save Your Spot

<https://register.gotowebinar.com/register/8888342457933667595>

RESOURCES

- [Youth Homelessness in Higher Education Overview](#)
- [Tip Sheets for Helping Homeless Youth Succeed in College](#)
- [Higher Education Webinars](#)
- [Youth Connections Resources](#)
 - ▷ [Homeless Definitions](#)
 - ▷ [Financial Aid for Youth Who are Homeless \(or At Risk of Homelessness\) and On Their Own](#)
- [Back to College and Training 2020: An Editable Toolkit for Assisting Youth with Experience in Foster Care or Homelessness](#)
- [Financial Aid Page](#)
 - ▷ [FAFSA & Homeless Youth: Challenges + Recommendations in the COVID-19 Era](#)
 - ▷ [2016 GAO Report](#)

“Don’t Let Homelessness Stop Your Education”

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=-cPu05d2Fz8>



QUESTIONS

THANK YOU!



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