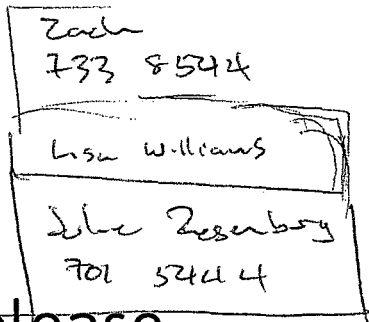


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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

SEPTEMBER 22, 2014

Record Number of Homeless Students in U.S. Schools; Leading Homeless Children’s Advocates Comment

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Housing & Homelessness Poverty & Family Economics

Washington – Public schools in the United States enroll a record number of homeless children and youth, according to U.S. Department of Education (ED) data released today.

The 1,258,182 homeless students enrolled by U.S. preschools and K-12 schools in the 2012-2013 school year is an increase of 8 percent from the previous school year. 34 states and the District of Columbia reported year-to-year increases in the number of homeless students. The number of homeless children in public schools has increased 85 percent since the beginning of the recession.

81 percent of the children included in the ED data are not recognized as homeless by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD), which prioritizes homeless single adults, because they are living temporarily in motels or doubled-up housing. As a result, 1,006,899 homeless children are eligible for educational assistance through local schools, but not HUD services including shelter, short-term housing, and assistance with obtaining permanent housing. The bipartisan Homeless Children and Youth Act introduced in both chambers of Congress would amend the HUD definition of homelessness to include the homeless children identified in ED’s report.

Homeless children face education, health, and safety consequences from their lack of permanent housing:

- Children experiencing homelessness are more likely to be diagnosed with learning disabilities.
- Homeless students transfer schools more often, and are more likely to miss school, and have lower standardized test scores.
- Homelessness is the highest risk factor in determining if a student leaves school before graduation; homeless students are 87 percent more likely than their peers to leave school.

This year, for the first time, ED required all school districts to report whether homeless students were living with their parents, or on their own (unaccompanied homeless youth). School districts reported enrolling 75,940 unaccompanied homeless youth. Studies have found that:

- 40-60 percent of unaccompanied homeless youth were abused physically in their homes, 20-40 percent were abused sexually.
- Over two-thirds of unaccompanied homeless youth report that at least one of their parents abuses drugs or alcohol.
- Unaccompanied homeless youth are more likely to fall victim to sexual exploitation, including trafficking.

The ED data underestimate the number of homeless children in the United States. The data do not include homeless infants and toddlers, young children who are not enrolled in public preschool programs, and homeless children and youth who were not identified by school officials.

In response to the ED data, leading advocates for homeless children released the following statements:

“A record number of homeless students means a record number of our children being exposed to sexual trafficking, abuse, hunger, and denial of their basic needs,” said Bruce Lesley, President of the First Focus Campaign for Children. “The new data means that a record number of kids in our schools and communities are spending restless nights in bed-bug infested motels and falling more behind in school by the day because they’re too tired and hungry to concentrate. This is a desperate situation, and the first step we must take is to get homeless students the housing assistance they need today by passing the Homeless Children and Youth Act.”

“The data released today confirm what our members see every day – increasing numbers of children and youth struggling to survive without a home,” said Barbara Duffield, Director of Policy and Programs for the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth. “Public schools are the only universal safety net for these children and youth — a place where they can obtain basic services and the education that is necessary to escape poverty as adults. Yet without access to HUD homeless assistance, schools struggle to stabilize the education and the lives of homeless children and youth. The Homeless Children and Youth Act would eliminate the red tape that prevents local agencies from collaborating to create better futures for these vulnerable students.”

“It is shocking and sobering that in a country this wealthy we have so many students who lack a place to live,” said Jeremy Rosen, Director of Advocacy at the National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty. “Unfortunately, current federal homelessness policy makes it harder for children, youth, and families to leave homelessness. Congress should pass the Homeless Children and Youth Act so that we can see these numbers begin to decline.”

“Clearly, the federal government has abandoned its commitment to fill yawning gaps in affordable housing options for low income families – and left America’s public schools to deal with the consequences,” said Ruth White, Executive Director, National Center for Housing and Child Welfare. “These alarming trends could be easily reversed by prudent investments in federal housing programs that help these struggling families make ends meet.”

“With 75,940 unaccompanied homeless youth counted in public schools and less than 7,000 beds for this population, it is clear that we have a long way to go to providing this very vulnerable homeless youth population with the care and resources they need,” said Darla Bardine, Executive Director, National Network for Youth.

The data released by the U.S. Department of Education are available on the website of the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE). NCHE is the U.S. Department of Education’s technical assistance and information provider in the area of homeless education.

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The First Focus Campaign for Children is a 501(c)(4) nonprofit organization affiliated with First Focus, a

bipartisan children's advocacy organization. The Campaign for Children advocates directly for legislative change in Congress to ensure children and families are the priority in federal policy and budget decisions. For more information, visit www.campaignforchildren.org.

NAEHCY is a national grassroots membership association dedicated to ensuring the school enrollment, attendance, and overall success for children and youth whose lives have been disrupted by the lack of safe, permanent and adequate housing. For more information, see www.naehcy.org.

The National Law Center on Homelessness & Poverty (NLCHP) is a 501(c) 3 organization based in Washington, D.C. and founded in 1989 as the legal arm of the national movement to end and prevent homelessness. Through policy advocacy, public education, and impact litigation, NLCHP addresses the root causes of homelessness and seeks to meet both the immediate and long-term needs of homeless and poor people. Through training and support, NLCHP also enhances the capacity of local groups.

The National Center for Housing and Child Welfare (NCHCW) links housing resources and knowledge to child welfare agencies in order to improve family functioning, prevent family homelessness, and reduce the need for out-of-home placement. NCHCW also brings housing resources to child welfare agencies in order to ensure that older youth in foster care have a connection to permanent family as well as a solid plan for stable housing and services to help them be successful as adults.

The National Network for Youth (NN4Y), founded in 1974, is the nation's leading network of homeless and runaway youth programs. The Network champions the needs of runaway, homeless, and other disconnected youth through strengthening the capacity of community-based services, facilitating resource sharing, and educating the public and policy makers. NN4Y members work collaboratively to prevent youth homelessness and the inherent risks of living on the streets, including exploitation, human trafficking, criminal justice involvement, or getting killed on the streets. For more information, visit www.nn44youth.org.

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