



Date: January 28, 2020

Source of Report: Committee Letter LD 703 – An Act to Help Maine Students Succeed

Topic: Status of Programs for Homeless and Displaced students

Context

The Joint Standing Committee on Education and Cultural Affairs requested that the Department of Education examine programs that are currently available to Maine’s homeless and displaced students in order to develop LD 703, An Act to Help Maine Students Succeed, into a vehicle for improving services to these students. The Department offers the following summary, covering the areas of staffing, supporting educational stability, consent and education decision making for unaccompanied youth, and supporting children experiencing educational disruption.

Findings

The following are summaries of findings related to staffing, supporting educational stability, issues of guardianship and consent, and high school completion by category.

- 20% of Maine’s homeless students do not live with a parent or legal guardian. Schools are required to enroll these unaccompanied homeless students immediately, regardless of the parent/guardianship situation. Although Maine has enacted laws providing for minor consent and surrogacy for health care, there are no similar provisions in the domain of education.
- Maine has demonstrated leadership in establishing statutory support and an alternative graduation pathway for students experiencing education disruption as a result of homelessness, foster care, interim placements, and mobility. The remedies may be underutilized, and graduation rates for students covered by the law remain significantly behind those of the general student population.
- For the past four years, Maine schools have identified and served between 2,000 and 3,000 homeless students each year. Federal law mandates that every public local educational authority appoint a district homeless liaison to ensure homeless students are identified, enrolled, and fully able to participate in school. With no state or federal funding dedicated to support this position, the liaison role is often assigned to staff with significant additional responsibilities. This practice may limit the likelihood that homeless children are appropriately identified. Furthermore, the logistical and administrative demands of the liaison’s work may exhaust time that could be spent ensuring students are connected to the learning and community resources they need.
- Federal law directs schools to prioritize keeping children in their original school district when they become homeless to provide continuity in their education and social relationships during a period of residential and family instability. The primary

mechanism for ensuring educational stability is to transport students between the place where they temporarily reside and the school that they have been attending. The cost of this transportation is born equally by the district where the student resides and the district where the child attends school. Although the significant cost of transporting students between districts is addressed in the State’s funding formula, fluctuations in community homelessness rates can leave schools without the resources to cover current costs. With a critical shortfall of school bus drivers across the state, the logistics of providing out of district transportation may be even more problematic than the cost.

Background Data on Student Homelessness

State-wide Data Trends for Homelessness

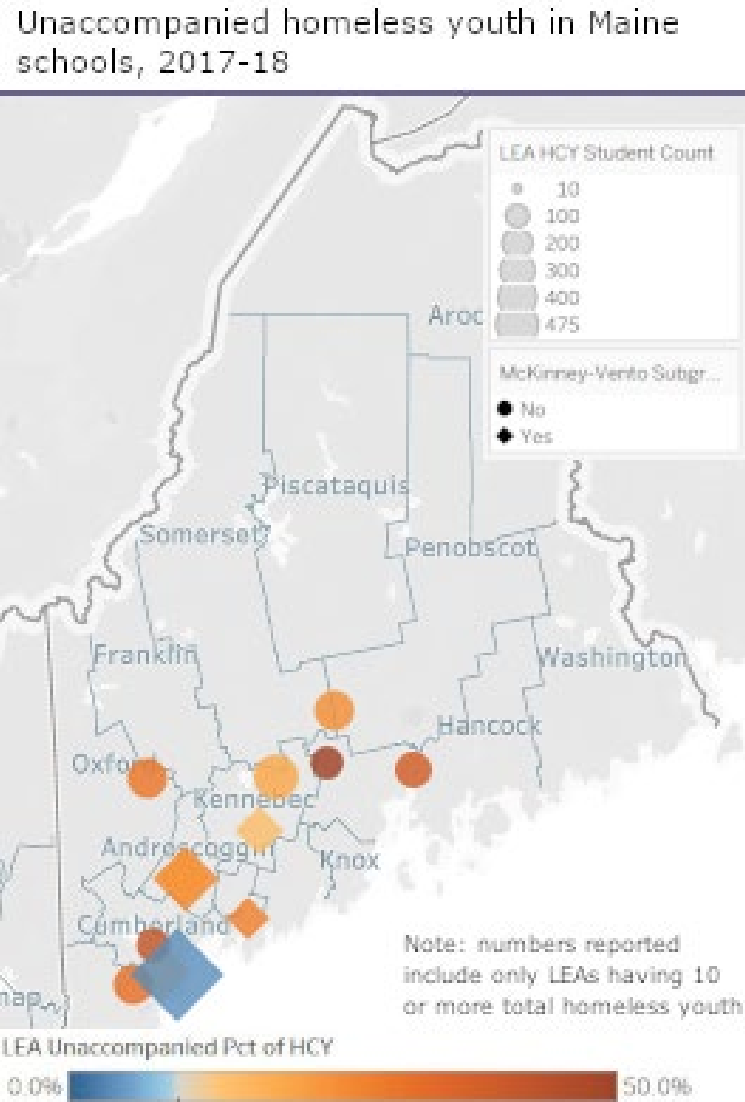
The table below summarizes the overall count of Maine’s homeless student population since the 2013-14 school year.

	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18
Total Homeless	1986	1934	2192	2515	2449
% total enrolled	1.08%	1.06%	1.21%	1.39%	1.36%
Unaccompanied	411 (20.7%)	446 (23.1%)	467 (21.3%)	527 (21.0%)	424 (17.3%)
Pre-K to K	171 (8.6%)	211 (10.9%)	220 (10.2%)	214 (8.5%)	208 (8.5%)
Grades 1 to 6	837 (42.1%)	777 (40.2%)	924 (42.2%)	1077 (42.8%)	1077 (44.0%)
Grades 7 to 12	978 (49.2%)	946 (48.9%)	1048 (47.8%)	1224 (48.7%)	1164 (47.5%)

The Department notes that the identified homeless students constitute slightly more than 1% of Maine’s total student population. The number and proportion of homeless students have increased as Maine’s overall enrollment has declined from 184,106 in 2013-14 to 180,375 in 2017-18. The age/grade distribution of Maine’s homeless students has remained relatively stable, with approximately half in the preschool and elementary grades and half at the middle and high school level.

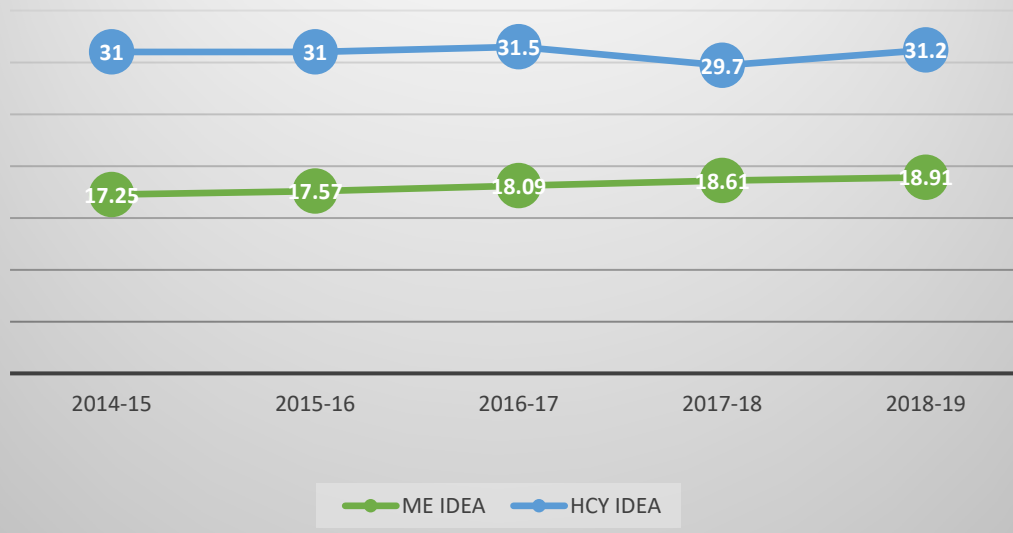
Annually, approximately 1 in 5 of Maine’s identified homeless students do not reside with a parent or legal guardian and are therefore classified as “unaccompanied”. Children and youth at all age levels may be identified as unaccompanied; the classification includes all youth who are living on their own as well as children staying with relatives, friends, or neighbors who are not their guardians.

The map below shows concentrations of unaccompanied homeless youth across the state.



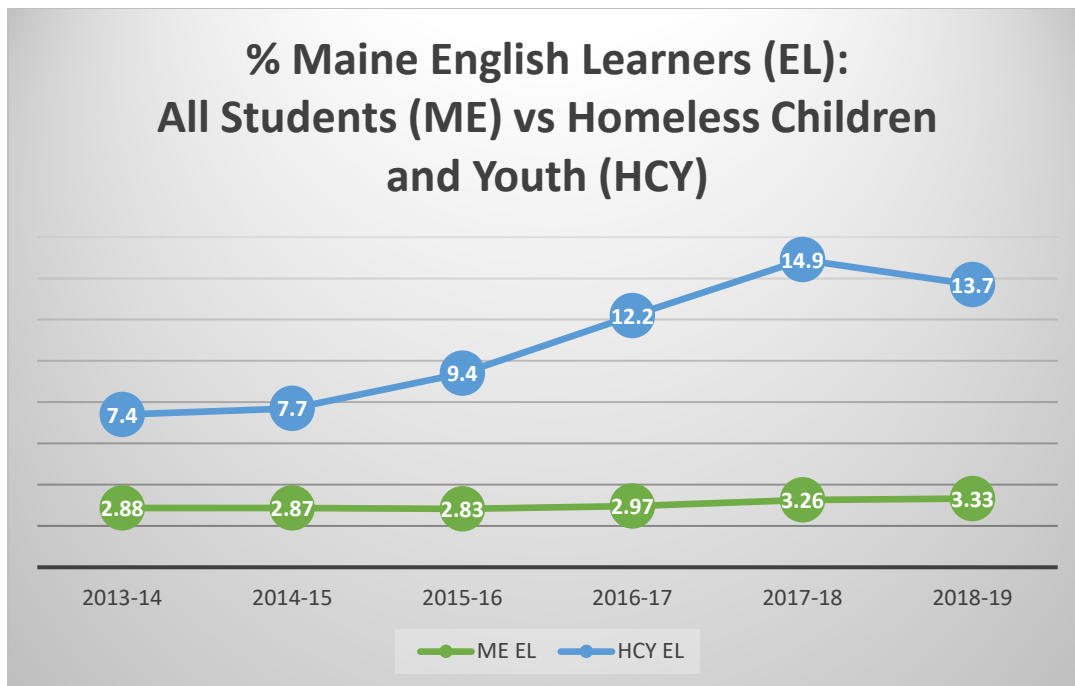
While homelessness itself creates a significant educational challenge for students, students with disabilities and English Learners (ELs) who also experience homelessness are at added risk and require additional resources to support school success. These two subgroups are disproportionately represented in Maine’s homeless student population.

% Maine Students with Disabilities: All (ME) vs Homeless Children and Youth (HCY)



Over a five-year period, the proportion of Maine students served in special education programs has ranged between 17% and 19%. For students identified as homeless, the range was 30% to 32%. The number of homeless students with disabilities in Maine grew from 599 in 2014-15 to an estimated 906 in 2018-19, an increase of 51%. The challenge for schools for arranging special services for children who move frequently can be overwhelming, especially when students' individualized education plans call for specialized personnel or equipment that the new school does not have in place at the time of enrollment.

While the number of Maine's ELs has grown from 5,309 to 6,017 since 2013-14, a 13% increase, the number of homeless ELs during this time shows a 171% increase, from 146 to 396 students statewide. A small school district that starts the year with no ELs enrolled will need to locate staff and implement EL programming mid-year should a homeless or otherwise highly mobile family enroll during the year.



Local Trends in Homelessness

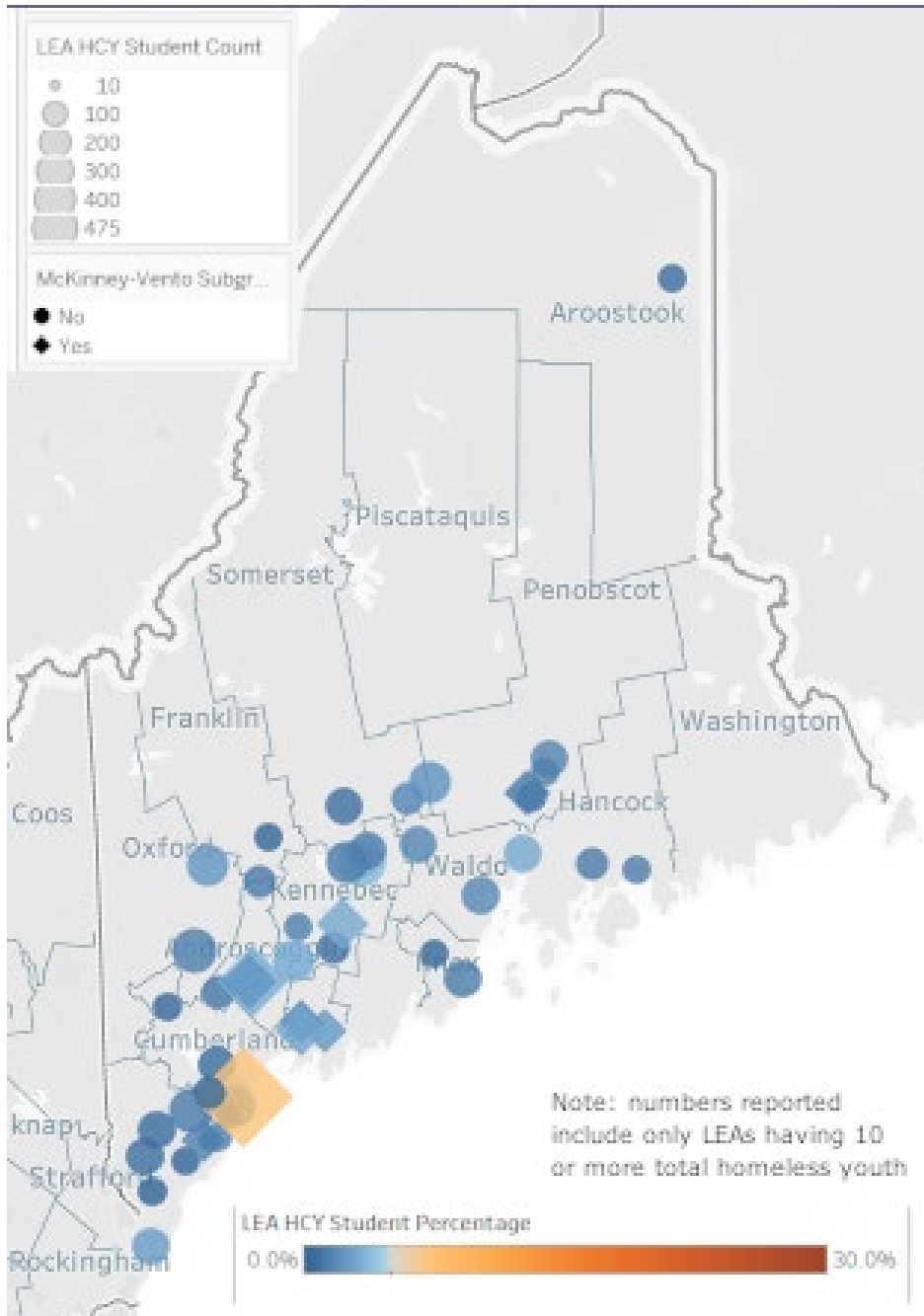
In 2018-19, the ten school administrative units reporting the highest number of homeless students accounted for 50% of the total statewide count.

Ten School Districts with Largest Homeless Student Counts 2018-19 (est.)

School Administrative Unit	Estimated Number of Homeless Students
Portland Public Schools	523
Lewiston School Department	221
Westbrook School Department	120
Brunswick School Department	97
RSU 57 (Waterboro)	97
Bangor School Department	94
Augusta School Department	87
Auburn School Department	85
Waterville School Department	73
Biddeford School Department	66

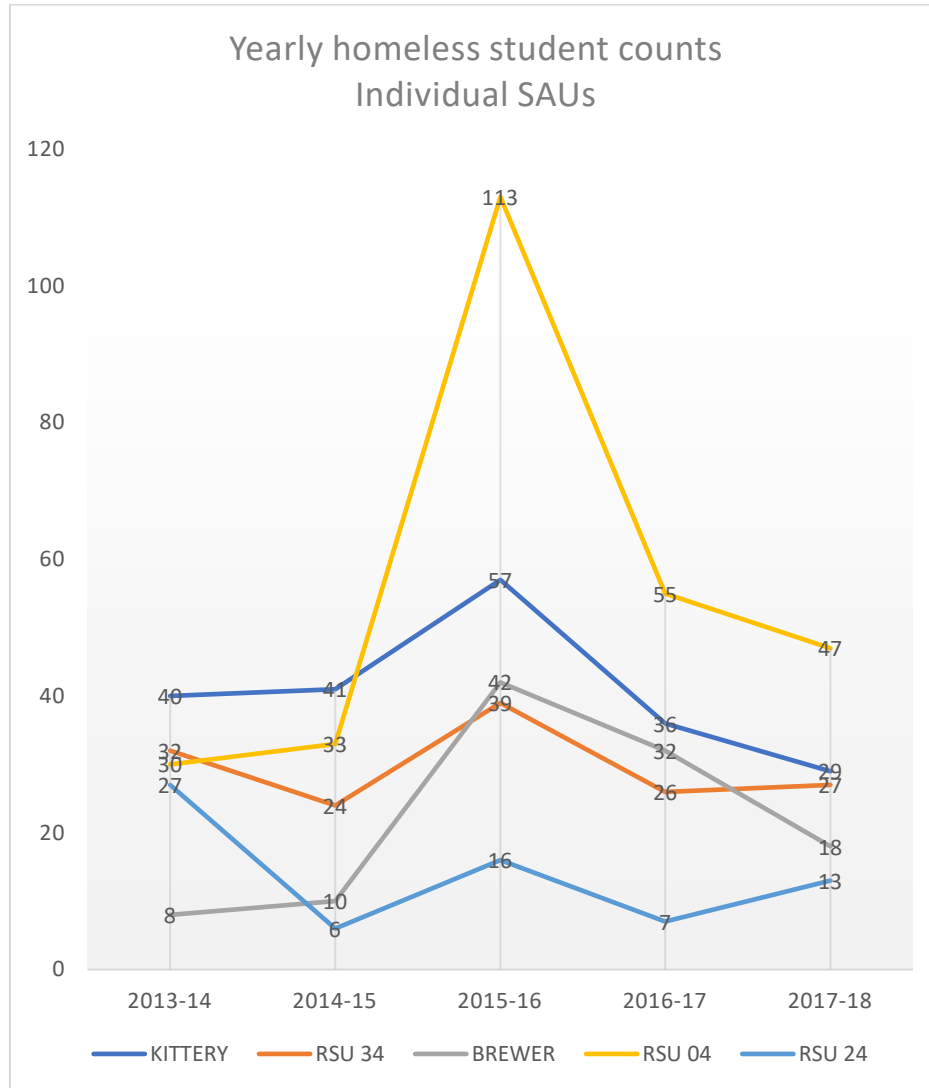
The map below shows the overall distribution of student homelessness in Maine in 2017-18

Maine homeless students 2017-18



Although most homeless children in Maine are doubled up - with family members or friends, communities that support shelters for homeless families, victims of domestic violence, and homeless/runaway youth can bear a disproportionate burden for the education of Maine's homeless youth. It can be difficult to capture the magnitude of this challenge through district homeless enrollments alone. As noted below, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, which requires schools to prioritize maintaining homeless children's enrollment in their original school, also requires the school district where the student temporarily resides to contribute resources toward transporting the student back and forth.

The steady but relatively stable increase in student homelessness can mask community level patterns that make resource and service planning extremely challenging for schools. Gentrification, an influx of New Mainers, and changes in identification/enrollment procedures – among other things – can lead to annual fluctuations that frustrate school resource planning. The graph below shows a sample of annual homeless counts for eight mid-sized school districts (total students = 1000-1500) over a five-year period.



The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act

McKinney-Vento Overview

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento), Subtitle VIIB, reauthorized by Title IX, Part A of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) of 2015 forms the foundation of Maine’s framework for meeting the needs of homeless students. McKinney-Vento provides definitions of homelessness, requires schools to have an education liaison, addresses responsibility for transportation while maintaining a priority on school stability. Furthermore, McKinney-Vento requires the Department to provide the services of a State Homeless

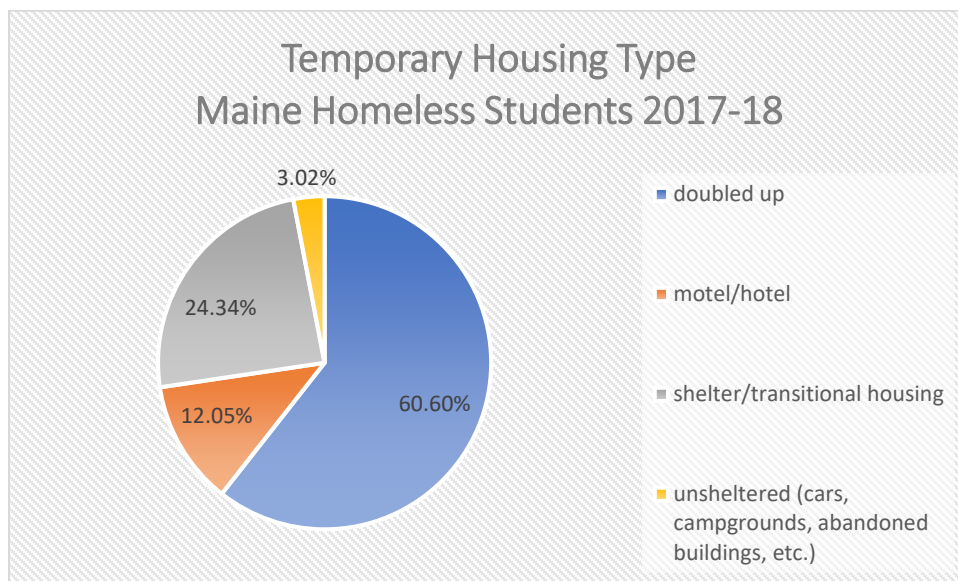
Coordinator and regulates how the Act’s funding may be used – including the Sub-grantee program. Maine Education Rules Chapter 14 establishes guidelines for implementing this federal statute in our state context. The provisions of the Act apply to children from district-affiliated pre-school through the end of grade 12.

Defining Homelessness

The McKinney-Vento Act provides a broader definition of homelessness than is used in the context of housing services. While this creates well known challenges for systems integration, it establishes a welcome imperative for schools to address homelessness in its many forms. In Maine schools and all public schools across the nation, students are considered homeless if they lack a “fixed, regular, and adequate” nighttime residence. This definition specifically includes children and youth who:

- are doubled up, that is, 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;
- 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;
- are living in cars, parks, public spaces, abandoned buildings, substandard housing, bus or train stations, or similar settings; and
- are migratory children living in any of the above circumstances.

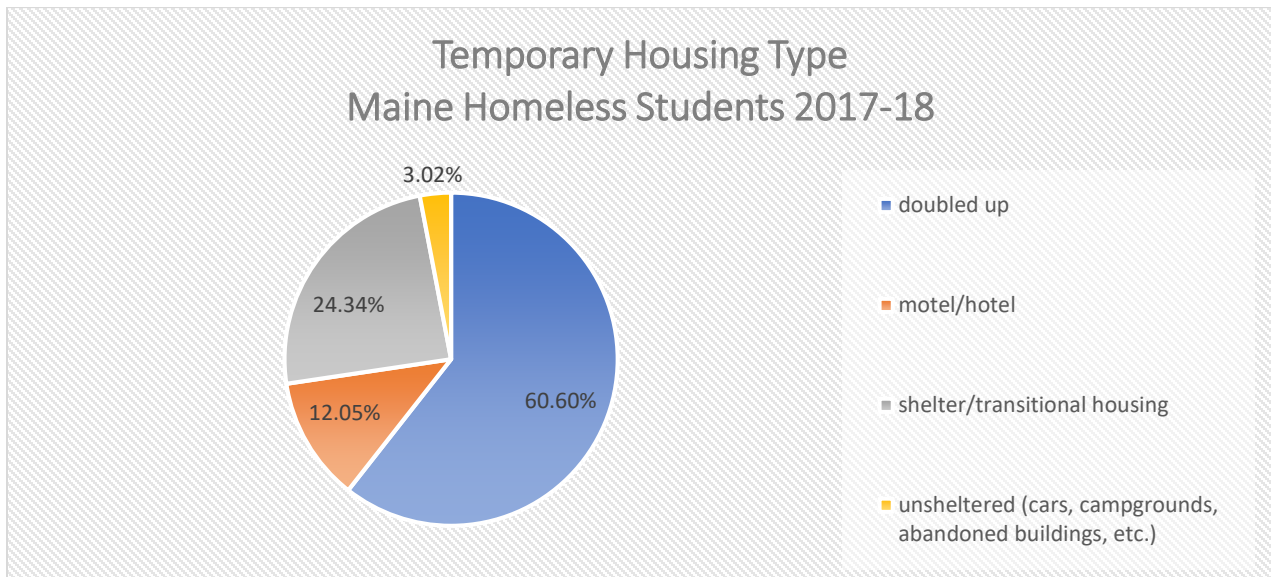
In Maine, approximately 60% of homeless children are doubled up in shared housing, 20-25% are in shelters of transitional housing, 10-15% are living in motels, and 3-5% are unsheltered and staying in cars, temporary trailers, or other similar situations.



Every public-school district is required to designate a staff person to serve as its local homeless education liaison. The key duties of that role include:

1. Ensuring that homeless children and youth are identified, and enrolled in school, and have a full and equal opportunity to participate and succeed in school.
2. Ensuring that other school personnel receive the training and support they need to address the needs of the district's homeless students;
3. Verifying the independent status of unaccompanied youth who are applying for college financial aid;
4. Ensuring that homeless children, youth, and families receive referrals to health, dental, mental health, housing, and other appropriate services;
5. Disseminating public notice of McKinney-Vento rights in locations frequented by parents and youth, in a manner and form understandable to them.

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Maintaining School Stability

McKinney-Vento charges local districts with prioritizing school stability as a way of minimizing the disruption to a student's life when their housing is unstable. Homeless students therefore have a right to remain in their school of origin for the duration of homelessness and until the end of an academic year in which they obtain permanent housing. There are no time restrictions limiting this right. The school of origin also includes the designated receiving school at the next grade level when, for example, a homeless student transitions from middle to high school. The school of origin may be in a Maine school unit other than where the student currently resides. It may also be in another state.

Homeless children also have the right to attend any school that would be available to them based on their temporary place of residence. Although the law directs districts to prioritize school stability and keep students in their school of residence in most cases, it recognizes that there may

be student-centered factors indicating that transferring to the school of residence is a better choice for an individual student.

Districts, therefore, must make a best interest determination about school placement whenever a student is found to be homeless. These decisions must be based on an initial presumption that staying in the school of origin is generally in a child's best interest, consider specific student-centered factors like peer and community relationships, and the availability of needed services, and prioritize the wishes of the family or unaccompanied youth. Should the school's determination differ from the family's stated preference, the school must provide a written explanation of its decision and inform the student or parent of the process for appeal.

Transportation

If the family requests it, schools must provide transportation to the school of origin and continue transportation through the end of the academic year when a student obtains permanent housing. This requirement extends to preschoolers, regardless of whether the school district normally provides transportation for its preschool program. Recent (2018) revisions to the U.S. Dept. of Education's nonregulatory guidance on homeless education note that schools are expected to provide transportation for extracurricular activities if failing to do so would pose a barrier to a student's full participation.

Schools must enroll homeless children immediately, even if they lack documents or have missed application or enrollment deadlines during any period of homelessness. Schools must remove barriers to enrollment, including barriers due to fees, fines, and absences.

Homeless Education Coordinator

At the State level, the Department of Education must designate a statewide homeless education coordinator. In Maine, that position resides in the Office of School and Student Support, which also houses Maine's migrant education program, the State point of contact for students in foster care, and specialists in the areas of school counseling, school health, mental health, social emotional learning, safety, school enrollment, health and physical education, family engagement, and cultural responsiveness.

The State coordinator provides professional development for local liaisons and others, responds to requests for information and assistance for homeless parents, unaccompanied youth, school personnel, and other agencies; reviews and revises state policies to eliminate barriers to the identification, enrollment, participation, and success of homeless students; monitors the implementation of the law in local districts, and ensures that data on homelessness is collected and made publicly available. The coordinator also administers the McKinney-Vento sub-grant program, Maine's sole source of funding for school initiatives that specifically support homeless education. Maine's annual McKinney-Vento allocation is approximately \$300,000, 75% of which is distributed through the sub-grant program. Programs currently supported by these grants are described in a subsequent section.

Funding

All funding specifically for the education of homeless children in Maine is in the form of an annual federal allocation. For fiscal year 2020, the Department received \$301,052 to support the education of homeless students.

By law, a minimum of 75% or approximately \$225,000 of each year's federal award is allocated, through a competitive sub-grant process, to school districts. The remaining 25% is available for state level activities, partially funding the position of state coordinator.

Federal Title IA funds that are allocated to SAUs based on levels of economic disadvantage are broadly available to help meet the needs of these students and, in some cases, may be targeted specifically for the support of homeless children and/or children in foster care. These funds are limited and finite, so specific allocation of Title IA funds for homeless children or children in foster care comes at the expense of a district's broader initiatives for children who are economically disadvantaged. Furthermore, the unpredictability of homeless and foster care student populations from year to year inclines schools to allocate funds more flexibly toward the wider population.

McKinney-Vento Sub-grantee programs

As noted above, 75% of the Maine's federal homeless education allotment is distributed to local school districts through a competitive grant process.

The 8 school districts that are current grantees serve approximately 40% of Maine's homeless students. Schools are required to provide a one-to-one match for grant dollars to ensure that local and other federal resources are fully mobilized toward the support of homeless students.

Overarching Issues

Staffing

The federal government requires state departments of education to maintain state-level staff positions to support homeless students and students in foster care. The consultants fulfilling these roles work together within the department's Office of School and Student Supports and have organized an ad hoc team to address the broader needs of highly mobile students, including migrant students and students in military families as well as students who are homeless. Additionally, every school administrative unit in the state is required to appoint and support a local homeless education liaison and a foster care point of contact. In most SAUs, these responsibilities are carried out by administrators, school counselors, social workers, and special education directors – all positions that have significant responsibilities for other matters within any SAU. The Department consultants conduct annual training for local liaisons and points of contact, and they provide a high level of technical assistance.

In the ten SAUs with the highest numbers of homeless students reported in 2018-19, only one (Lewiston) has a dedicated McKinney-Vento Liaison. In a few of these districts, the liaison responsibilities are carried out by a school social worker. In others, they fall to a principal, assistant superintendent, superintendents, Title I coordinators, and CTE director who typically has additional responsibilities as the attendance and/or dropout prevention coordinator.

Ironically, this situation is no different from that of a number of SAUs that would be expected, based on their overall enrollment and economic profile, to have multiple homeless students each year but in fact do not identify any. In these SAUs, the concern would be that the individual serving as homeless liaison has so many other responsibilities that homeless students are neither being identified nor served.

No state or federal funds are directly allocated for these required local roles. SAUs may use some of their federal title funds to support these positions, but only at the expense of other funding needs. SAUs may also apply for competitive grants funded through the Department's federal homeless education appropriation and direct a portion of any such grant to support of the liaison's position. More typically, recipients use these funds to support outreach and social workers who provide direct support to homeless students and families.

Effectiveness:

Overall, the structure of state and local points of contact supporting programs for homeless students and children in foster care is an effective one. It can, however, be challenging for SAUs to identify students and families that need support when these critical roles held at the local level are combined with other major responsibilities. DOE consultants have recommended that SAU liaisons train building level points of contact to broaden the reach of their work, but these are also responsibilities with no state or federal fiscal support that must be carried out on top of other roles.

Improvement:

The Committee may wish to consider targeting specific funds to subsidize the position of local homeless liaison in proportion to SAU total enrollment and level of economic disadvantage.

Supporting Education Stability

Federal statute and guidance around meeting the needs of homeless students and children in foster care focus on the idea of providing educational stability for children whose living situations are in flux. Within this framework, children and youth maintain the right to continue attending their same school, and SAUs must provide transportation, if needed, in order to make that possible.

Transportation costs connected to this mandate can be significant, and the logistical challenges of providing out of district transportation are daunting. State transportation allocations do take these costs into account but do so using historical data. An SAU experiencing a sudden or steady uptick in homelessness may not have the funds, infrastructure, or personnel to meet present needs.

Effectiveness:

SAU staff are aware of their responsibility to support educational stability for housing-unstable students. The logistical challenge of providing out of district transportation so that students can remain in their schools of origin is significant and will be difficult to overcome given the statewide shortage of school bus drivers. Departments of Education and Health and Human Services staff collaborate to ensure that DHHS resources are available to assist in the transportation of children in foster care whenever possible. SAUs are encouraged to consider regionalized solutions to logistical transportation challenges.

Improvements:

Although SAUs' state transportation funding is based on historic expenses, including the cost of out of district transportation costs for homeless and foster care students, SAUs experiencing

sudden spikes in homelessness (due to immigration influx, natural disaster, acute community housing issue, local economic crisis, etc.), the cost of providing for educational stability in a given year may far exceed reasonably budgeted expenses.

Of all the concerns the Department hears from administrators and liaisons, challenge with transportation is among the most common. Schools absolutely embrace the notion of maximizing educational stability for their homeless students by keeping them in their schools of origin. They address this imperative collaboratively and creatively by reimbursing parents for transportation, having buses meet at district boundaries to transfer students, and utilizing alternative and costly means, like taxi services, when necessary.

The Committee may wish to consider one or more of the following approaches to assist schools in prioritizing educational stability for homeless students:

1. Create a specific funding mechanism to provide relief for SAUs experiencing extraordinary increases in homeless and other highly mobile student populations in a given year;
2. Allow schools to carry over a higher percentage of their year-end residual funds so that they can build reserves to cover such extraordinary increases;
3. Support incentives for school districts to develop regional transportation solutions for the out of district transportation needs of homeless and other highly mobile students.

Issues of Consent for Unaccompanied Youth

As noted earlier, approximately 20% of Maine's homeless students are unaccompanied. Many of whom are either not communicating with their parents or have relationships characterized by extreme conflict.

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires schools to enroll homeless students immediately, regardless of their ability to provide the standard documents schools typically request at the time of enrollment, including parent/guardianship documentation. Unaccompanied homeless youth – those who are not living with a parent or guardian – must also be immediately enrolled. Upon enrollment, schools are faced with the challenge of ensuring that students are fully able to participate in school activities without the ability to obtain parent consent. Schools find themselves in awkward situations over everyday tasks like signing students out early, technology use, and participation in off-campus and extracurricular activities.

For students with disabilities, federal and state law allow the appointment of a surrogate to participate in place of the parent in the development and revision of the students' individual education plans, or IEPs. There is no such mechanism for generalized issues of education consent.

Maine's enrollment eligibility statute (Title 20-A Chapter 213) also provides for an exception to general residency rules for a student who, although not homeless, is living with someone other than a parent or legal guardian. This exception allows superintendents to enroll the student after attempting to contact the parent but is not clear about how to address issues of parental consent when the parent cannot be located.

Effectiveness:

With no state statute in place to address issues of consent in the educational domain, the department is limited in the advice it can offer schools. We can refer administrators to their local legal counsel to develop district mechanisms to waive or assign the right to consent. And we can direct schools to resources on emancipation, power of attorney, temporary guardianship, and other legal tools related to parental rights. These are partial, challenging solutions that frequently prove impracticable.

Improvements:

Maine has adopted and amended an extensive body of statute in Title 22 that, in many circumstances, gives minors the right to consent to their own medical care. During the last legislative session, a provision was added to 22 MRSA §1503 giving school homeless liaisons the authority to verify a minor's independence for the purpose of allowing the minor to consent to care. Title 22 also allows a surrogate to provide consent for care after attempting to contact a minor's parent.

The Committee may wish to create provisions in Title 20-A that appropriately empower unaccompanied youth to assume certain rights of consent in their education and/or allow for adult surrogates to assume those rights.

General Support for Students Experiencing Education Disruption

Despite the priority placed on educational stability, homeless students cannot always remain in their schools of record and, if they do, may still experience frequent absences due to housing instability or family crises. Title 20-A Chapter 211, Subchapter 5 outlines specific provisions for students experiencing educational disruption due to homelessness. These provisions include short term interventions such as making sure that students are provided with assignments and instructional materials so that they can continue their work, and longer-term interventions that include the creation and maintenance of "school work recognition plans" that outline how the student will continue to demonstrate achievement of learning goals. Students who are unable to complete local graduation requirements as a result of housing instability may apply for a Department of Education diploma.

Effectiveness:

SAUs utilize a variety of mechanisms to keep students experiencing educational disruption on track academically, but homeless students' lagging achievement and graduation rates indicate a need for intensified intervention. There is a need to revise the application process for a Department of Education diploma to align with recent changes in state graduation standards and to publicize the availability of this option for students who might not otherwise be able to graduate.

Improvements:

The Department has worked with partners at New Beginnings to review the revisions to 20-A Chapter 211 Subchapter 5 contained in LD 1916: An Act to Increase High School Graduation Rates for Students Experiencing Homelessness or in Foster Care. The Department has suggested amendments in the interest of simplifying its implementation, extending its application to

migrant and immigrant students, and providing higher levels of support and better access to the Department of Education diploma pathway for all covered students. The Committee may wish to entertain these recent suggestions and amend the bill accordingly.

Recommendations

Summarizing from the discussion in the findings section, the Department recommends:

- Creating a funding mechanism to support disproportionate hardship for transportation costs;
- Providing incentives for the establishment of regional systems to overcome logistical and personnel barriers to the transportation of homeless students to and from their schools of origin;
- Establishing provisions for minor consent and/or surrogacy in educational decision making for unaccompanied homeless youth;
- Enacting changes to the statutes on education disruption and the Department of Education diploma to improve access and increase graduation rates.

An ever-growing list of organizations that are currently supporting homeless students is attached to this report.

Contact:

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APPENDIX ONE

Organizations Servicing Homeless Youth and Families in Maine

~ The information provided below is self-reported and available online.

<p>Dept. of Health and Human Services</p>	<p>Pursuant to 22 M.R.S.A. § 4099-E, the Department’s Office of Child and Family Services (OCFS) is responsible for providing a comprehensive program for Youth Experiencing Homelessness. The Department’s OCFS currently supports housing and responds to the needs of Youth experiencing homelessness in Maine through the following services:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Street and Community Outreach Program; 2. Drop-in Program; 3. Shelter for Homeless Youth Services; and 4. Transitional Living Program. <p>Presently we have contracts with several providers for these services and supports. They are as follows:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. In Region 3- Community Care in Bangor presently provides drop and community and street outreach services, Shelter Services via Shaw House and Transitional Living through Mason Place. Also, Penquis CAP provides street and community outreach in then Bangor area. 2. In Region 2- New Beginnings in Lewiston provides Transitional Living, Youth Shelter, Community and Street Outreach as well as drop in services. 3. In Region 1- Preble Street provides Shelter, drop in and Street and community outreach. They also have a transitional living program that is funded through another entity, not OCFS. The Opportunity Alliance provides street and community outreach in the Greater Portland area and Day One provides mental health and substance use treatment in the Greater Portland area as well. <p>DHHS/OCFS is presently in the RFP process for these 4 services as well. We are hoping for a July 1, 2020 contract start date with this process.</p> <p>OCFS is also a partner in the YHDP (Youth Homeless Demonstration Project) and at the table for every meeting and TA site visit.</p>
<p>Greater Portland Family Promise</p>	<p>The mission of Greater Portland Family Promise is to help homeless and low-income families in the Greater Portland area to achieve sustainable independence through a community-based response.</p> <p>Greater Portland Family Promise (GFPF) is a 501-C3 nonprofit organization incorporated in 2016. GFPF is an affiliate of the national Family Promise program, which has over 200 affiliates nationwide. GFPF is the 207th Family Promise Affiliate, and the first to operate in Maine. GFPF launched programming in July of 2017.</p> <p>Since opening, GFPF has served 40 families, comprising 167 individuals. 84% of all families served by GFPF have moved into sustainable independent housing, and all families who have been housed through GFPF have maintained housing.</p>

	<p>GFPF serves families experiencing homelessness by providing shelter, food, case management, and community support while helping families establish sustainable living situations.</p> <p>GFPF works with an interfaith network of congregations in Greater Portland who provide shelter for families in the evenings and overnight. Thirteen of these congregation’s host families on a weekly rotation. Families arrive at the host congregation in the evening, share a meal with volunteers, and engage in evening activities. Each family receives a private place to sleep each night. In this program, families are referred to as guests; volunteers receive Family Promise families with hospitality as if they were guests in their homes.</p> <p>Each day, guests are transported in the GFPF van to the Family Promise Day Center. There, guests shower, do laundry, use computers, and store belongings.</p> <p>All GFPF families receive intensive case management, meeting with the case manager several times weekly to secure housing, health care, employment, childcare, and educational opportunities. When families are prepared to exit the program into sustainable housing, GFPF provides support throughout the move in the form of furniture, household goods, and continued case management. GFPF provides follow-up case management to guests for up to a year after exiting.</p> <p>GFPF focuses on using existing community resources, including volunteer support and community partnerships. GFPF partners with 28 local faith communities and has 800 trained volunteers. Family referrals come through a partnership with the City of Portland Family Shelter, and the GFPF Day Center is provided through a partnership with the YMCA of Southern Maine. GFPF continues to partner with community organizations to provide guest services, including tenant training, financial literacy, and housing opportunities.</p> <p>GFPF serves 3-4 families at a time, or up to 14 individuals. Serving only a few families at a time allows staff and volunteers to provide intensive, wrap-around, 24/7 care to all families served.</p> <p>Families served by GFPF can be of any configuration as long as they have a dependent child. GFPF believes in the importance of keeping families together. Therefore, GFPF is able to serve multigenerational families or families with adult children as one family when they might otherwise be separated and required to stay in single men's or women's shelters. The majority of GFPF families have been referred by the City of Portland Family Shelter. 87% of those served by GFPF have been newly arrived asylum seekers, mostly from African nations.</p>
<p>Housing Resources for Youth</p>	<p>Housing Resources for Youth is comprised of a group of dedicated staff and volunteers from the Southern Midcoast area who are concerned about the increasing number of homeless teens in our area high schools. We are working towards a nationally recognized approach called the Host Home model. The</p>

	<p>Host Home program offers the opportunity for youth to obtain housing in the community they identify as their own.</p> <p>Our program recognizes the importance of youth connection to school, friends, and other natural supports and works to assist youth in nurturing these relationships throughout their stay in a Host Home. The Host Home Model offers a sustainable alternative to youth who find themselves couch surfing or sleeping in their cars.</p> <p>The Host Home program at Housing Resources for Youth matches volunteer families with students who are living on their own or apart from their family. Host homes serve youth who experience homelessness for any variety of reasons, including but not limited, to family conflict, extreme poverty, gender identity and sexual orientation, or abuse. The goal of our Host Home program is to provide a safe place where the student is able to focus on education. Some students in host homes may explore reunification with their family, while others continue in the program while they pursue the usual activities of high school students toward graduation. The Host Home Program is youth driven, and allows homeless youth to choose from a pool of volunteer hosts to stay with for a mutually determined period of time.</p> <p>The Host Home Program is an innovative, grassroots approach to addressing the growing problem of youth homelessness in Midcoast Maine. By pairing area High School students (ages 14-21) with community members who have underutilized spaces in their homes, youth not only obtain access to shelter but are also able to build meaningful connections to caring adults in their community. While staying in a Host Home, youth guests can continue their education, engage in long term life planning safely and more successfully, and just be kids!</p>
<p>Homeless Services of Aroostook</p>	<p>The Sister Mary O'Donnell Emergency Homeless Shelter is a program-based shelter for individuals and families with children. We provide a safe, drug and alcohol free environment for residents, 3 meals a day and case management services. Our Internal Case Manager works with residents to create individualized case plans, connects them with services in the community to meet their needs, and assists with securing employment and safe, affordable housing. We also provide follow-up services for residents for up to a year after they leave the Shelter, or until services are no longer desired.</p> <p>In July 2019, Homeless Services of Aroostook expanded to include Aroostook Bridge, a low-barrier shelter for homeless individuals over 18. Through this program, which does not require an application or background checks for admittance, we are able to help many of those we previously could not in our high-barrier family shelter.</p>
<p>Kennebec Behavioral Health</p>	<p>We have limited programming targeted at Homeless youth. We offer Outreach and Case Management for this specific demographic in both Kennebec and Somerset County. We certainly serve individuals, who are homeless through</p>

	<p>our broad array of services, but as far as targeted programming- just the Outreach and Homeless Case Management service.</p> <p>This program typically works with unaccompanied minors who are literally homeless or “couch surfing.” The individuals don’t have to have Mainecare as we cobble together a bit of funding each year to do street outreach until we are able to secure Mainecare for the individual.</p> <p>We serve many homeless individuals through our Med Clinic, traditional Community Integration or Behavioral Health Home services, school-based programming, outpatient etc.</p>
<p>Knox County Homeless Coalition</p>	<p>Knox County Homeless Coalition was formed in 2014 to reimagine and innovate around how homeless services are provided. We currently serve Knox, Waldo and parts of Lincoln County. Our mission is to break the cycle of poverty and homelessness in the Midcoast through our client-centric, multigenerational approach to homeless services, always delivered with dignity, compassion and respect.</p> <p>We recognize homelessness will never be solved through housing alone. True stability and lasting independence require a holistic approach, providing for basic needs (food, clothing, etc.), building relationships of trust with dedicated case managers, providing transportation, and supporting whole families. In just 6 years we have evolved to address root causes and deliver an innovative suite of programs including a 22-bed family shelter and a comprehensive youth program for homeless youth and those at high-risk of becoming homeless.</p> <p>Our youth program includes a low barrier drop-in center, innovative shelter solutions, comprehensive case management for unaccompanied minors and school and community outreach in the RSU 13, RSU40 and Five Towns CSD. More than 90% of our graduated clients maintain independence. In recognition of her leadership, our executive director was appointed by the governor to lead the Statewide Homeless Council. Our collaborations have resulted in innovative housing initiatives that will provide replicable models for affordable housing in other rural areas.</p> <p>Over the next decade, we are committed to focusing more on prevention and education so we can shift resources away from reactive services. Our bold goal is to reduce if not eliminate the number of people in the Midcoast who experience homelessness in the first place.</p>
<p>Maine Housing</p>	<p>MaineHousing provides grants to emergency shelters and agencies serving people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. This funding is allocated to sub-recipients as the Emergency Shelter and Housing Assistance Program (ESHAP), and is made up of three shares:</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Shelter Operations Share – Available to agencies that have a fixed facility for reimbursement of costs associated with operating the facility, including staff. •Stabilization Share – Available to agencies that provide navigator services, development of housing search and placement activities, assistance with basic needs, and housing search and placement services that follow clients beyond the shelter to ensure housing stability. •Performance Share - Available to agencies as a bonus for outcomes received in regard to a specific set of performance measures. <p>In addition to this funding, MaineHousing provides rental assistance vouchers to be allocated by the shelters on a first come, first served basis to eligible individuals and families, both in the form of time-limited (up to 2 years) subsidy and long-term subsidy (Housing Choice Vouchers). Within the Housing Choice Voucher program MaineHousing also administers special vouchers targeted to youth and veterans experiencing homelessness.</p>
<p>MidMaine Homeless Shelter</p>	<p>Permanent Supported Housing for Young Adults 18 to 24</p> <p>This transformational housing program includes two one– bedroom apartments, 4 efficiencies, and a suite of 6 single rooms with private baths, a common kitchen and shared living room. This new community will include a Young Adult Committee to assist in managing the YES program as well as to plan and schedule community activities.</p> <p>There is also space to provide opportunities for building positive life skills as well as participating in life improving programming such as...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Housing Navigation • Career Development • Rent Smart Classes • Financial Independence Training • Case Management • Prevocational Store • Young Adult Committee
<p>New Beginnings</p>	<p>Each year, New Beginnings provides 700 children, teens, adults with opportunities for the SAFETY, CONNECTION, and GROWTH that all people need to thrive. Whether a young person is facing a night on the streets for the very first time or has been surviving on their own for years, New Beginnings can help. Our mission is to partner with youth to create lasting change, so all youth have a safe place to live and opportunities to grow. Our vision is a world in which all youth are safe and valued in their communities. Since 1980, we have worked with teens, young adults, their families, and other providers to ensure that vulnerable youth in Maine have access to the safe housing, supportive services, and connections to caring relationships that they need to become healthy and stable adults.</p> <p>New Beginnings operates the only youth shelter in Maine licensed to provide 24-hour care. In addition to emergency shelter, our spectrum of programs includes housing, family mediation, mental health, educational support,</p>

	<p>prevention education, case management, and street outreach services – all designed to prevent young people from becoming homeless, support struggling families, and help vulnerable young people successfully transition to adulthood. Our dedicated staff members focus on creating the caring and trusting relationships with young people that are at the heart of our work, and that we know can bring about change. Based in Lewiston, New Beginnings operates sites in Androscoggin, Franklin, and Kennebec counties providing an essential "safety net" – food, clothing, shelter, housing, referrals – for young people ages 12-22 from across Maine who don't have stable family support.</p>
<p>Opportunity Alliance</p>	<p>The Opportunity Alliance’s Homeless Youth Program has been in operation for over 20 years. We are a community-based case management program serving youth and families in York and Cumberland County. We serve youth between the ages of six (6) and twenty-one (21) who are literally or imminently homeless.</p> <p>If a youth is homeless within the context of their family, we serve the entire family. When a youth is older and unaccompanied, we work directly with the youth.</p> <p>Our strength-based case managers first assist with securing basic needs, (food, clothing, shelter) and also link youth and families to community resources and providers. We support children in enrolling in schools and are informed regarding the laws ensuring homeless youth may be educated regardless of the town in which they are residing. Knowledge of local food banks, clothing closets, general assistance offices and libraries is critical. Case managers understand the stress that homelessness can cause and the other potential health risks for those experiencing homelessness and poverty. Connecting people to health care professionals, mental health providers, natural supports and other service providers, in addition to housing resources, is all part of the service offered.</p>
<p>Penquis</p>	<p>The Penquis Youth Homeless Outreach program offers support and assistance to youth 12 to 21 years of age who are homeless or at risk of homelessness in Penobscot, Piscataquis, Knox and Waldo county. This includes youth who are not residing with a parent/guardian and instead may be staying with a friend, boy/girl friend or an extended family member. Program staff meet with the youth to help them access needed resources, increase skill development for greater self-sufficiency, or strengthen family connections for reunification.</p> <p>Services are youth driven and designed to provide the supports and tools that participants feel they need or would like. Individual sessions are scheduled so youth have opportunities to set goals which reflect their own individual needs. Goals often are related to finding stable housing, assistance gaining resources such as SNAP benefits and MaineCare, support in continuing their education and life skills. Program staff provide support, guidance and encouragement as youth are working towards their goals. Staff can meet with youth on a continuous basis until goals are met or youth are no longer in need or interested in services. Referrals can be made by anyone including self-referrals.</p>

Forty-five youth were served in 2019, 94% of those youth were referred by high schools. Schools utilize the program to provide additional supports to youth by welcoming our program and staff into their school to meet with students in need. While schools have resources available to their students, the Youth Homeless Outreach program offers supports from someone outside of the school community. Program staff are available after school hours, are more familiar with mainstream resources and can navigate through the DHHS systems and can support them beyond their academic needs.

Eight of the 45 youth served last year, who were on track to graduate high school, did complete their senior year and receive their diploma. All of the youth enrolled in school during their participation in the program were able to stability and resources to continue with their education.

Other Penquis services available to homeless youth and families

1. Child Care

Service Area: Penobscot & Knox Counties
Clients: Low to moderate income families with children ages 6 weeks to 5 years of age.

Service and Purpose: Provide center-based child care services for approximately 160 children at three Bangor sites, one Rockland location and one Old Town center which enables parents to work or participate in training and/or educational opportunities. Support from this service increases family self-sufficiency.

2. Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP)

Service Area: Penobscot, Piscataquis, Knox, Hancock, Waldo, Somerset & Lincoln Counties
Clients: 90 providers and 1106 children

Service and Purpose: Reimbursement is provided to licensed or regulated child care providers for food served to eligible children ensuring nutritional needs are met. Reimbursement is also available to legal, unregulated providers who have a contract with a child subsidy program.

3. Head Start/Early Head Start (includes In-Kind and KVCAP Partnership)

Service Area: Penobscot, Piscataquis, & Knox Counties

Clients: 309 Preschool Head Start ages 3-5
91 Early Head Start ages 0-3

Service and Purpose: A center-based program serving preschool and infant/toddler children ages 6 wks-5 and their families. Comprehensive services include health, social services, parent involvement, and nutrition and mental health. Early Head Start services are delivered through a center based or through a combination model which blends both center and home-based models. The primary goal is to support social competence for children and families to break the cycle of poverty.

It would be worth noting that Head Start allows us to reserve up to 3% of our funded enrollment for homeless children/families. Unfortunately, those

reserved slots can only be vacant for 30 days before we can offer them to other eligible children/families.

EHS served 7 children from 7 families that experienced homelessness during the year. *2 families acquired housing during this timeframe.

HS served 25 children from 22 families that experienced homelessness during the year. *12 families acquired housing during this timeframe.

4. Maine Families

Service Area: Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties
Clients: Maine Families is a voluntary home-based program for families expecting a baby and parents or primary caregivers of Maine's youngest children.

Service and Purpose: Offered in every county of the state through a well-established network of sites in local community agencies, Maine Families is a proven program that supports families, promotes safe and healthy growth and development for babies and young children and provides key connections to needed services. Our family visitors are well-trained professionals who are up-to-date with the latest early childhood and parenting research and are certified by the national Parents as Teachers model. They use a non-judgmental and compassionate approach that empowers parents with skills, tools, and confidence to nurture the healthy growth of their baby.

*9 Homeless youth were served in ME FAM during the 2019 year.

5. Child and Abuse Prevention Council

Service Area: Penobscot & Piscataquis Counties
Clients: Community members including parents, providers and professionals

Service and Purpose: Educating the community and increasing awareness on child abuse prevention through trainings, parent groups and community events.

6. Penquis Journey House

Service Area: State wide with a focus on Penobscot and Piscataquis Counties
Clients: Homeless pregnant and parenting young women sixteen to twenty one years of age

Service and Purpose: Provides safe and supervised shelter and support services necessary for young women, and their children, to begin a path towards self-sufficiency.

* 11 homeless youth were served for 2019

7. Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC)

Service Area: Penobscot and Piscataquis counties
Clients: Families in need of additional supports

Service and Purpose: Strengths- based, community supports for families designed to reduce instances of child abuse and family involvement with CPS. CPPC helps families to identify their own risks, needs and strengths while increasing protective factors.

	<p>Community Partnerships for Protecting Children (CPPC) is a network of people who live, work, and serve in our communities. We know that life is complex, and that life’s challenges can get in the way of being the best parents we can be. We partner to support families who are experiencing the highest levels of stress, before things get out of control. And when life has already gotten complicated, we are here to walk beside each family member, to help them get back on their feet. Together, we help solve problems so parents can focus on raising safe and thriving children. We know that preventing child abuse is not simply a matter of parents doing a better job, but about creating communities in which doing better is easier.</p> <p>CPPC provides peer support through Parent Partners for families in need of support during critical times in their lives. Our Parent Partners work closely with families involved, or at risk of involvement with DHHS Child Protective Services by providing emotional support, assistance and guidance with family team meetings, help with setting and reaching goals, and accessing community supports and resources.</p> <p>In addition, we have a Community Hub which is a safe, neutral gathering place for neighbors, friends, and families to make connections and build supportive relationships within the community. We also offer workshops on a variety of topics, parenting classes, computer access, assistance with finding resources, support groups, story time for children, and more.</p> <p>Currently, CPPC is serving 22 families one on one with a Parent Partner in Penobscot and Piscataquis counties and has served 105 families through our Community Hub.</p>
<p>Preble Street</p>	<p>Through the Joe Kreisler Teen Shelter and Teen Center drop-in, Preble Street Teen Services operates 24/7, 365 days a year to provide warmth and safety, nutritious meals, clothing, crisis intervention, case management, and overnight shelter to homeless and runaway youth ages 12-20.</p> <p>Preble Street also engages youth with advocacy and legislative efforts, including bringing them to Augusta to provide testimony on issues that affect them.</p>
<p>Rumford Group Homes</p>	<p>We offer children’s and adult case management services and services to help families become and remain permanently housed, including budgeting and rehousing supports. Our goal is to end homelessness by getting at its roots.</p> <p>Rumford Group Homes operates 3 family shelter with a total capacity of 44 beds. Two of the shelters are in Rumford and one is in Norway.</p>
<p>Shaw House</p>	<p>The mission of Shaw House is to engage youth who are homeless, or at-risk of becoming homeless, in achieving stability and a viable plan for the future by providing a safe, stable environment, access to essential services, supportive adult connections, and to advocate for changes that address the needs of homeless youth.</p>

	<p>Organization Overview</p> <p>The Shaw House is the only youth shelter to contract with the state of Maine to serve homeless youth in Penobscot county. In 1991, the Shaw House 16-bed Emergency Shelter was opened to provide a safe place to be during the nighttime hours. In 1994, Shaw House added the Day Program, creating 24/7 access to meals, showers, laundry facilities, and other gateway services.</p> <p>Homeless youth are highly vulnerable to sexual exploitation and sex trafficking, often refraining from seeking safe shelter due to fear. In response, Shaw House established a Street Outreach Program in 1997, bringing support to youth living on the streets. In 2001, Shaw House fulfilled the statewide need for a transitional living program for homeless youth by creating the Mason Place Transitional Living Program, an 8-bed co-ed transitional housing program for youth aged 16 to 20 years to assist youth in gaining skills necessary to transition to independence. As a result of the continued diversification of the programming, Shaw House provides comprehensive services to homeless, at-risk youth through street outreach to locate homeless youth, 24/7 shelter and access to services, and skill development to assist youth in transitioning to independence. During calendar year 2018, the Shaw House served 163 unduplicated homeless youth across all programs.</p> <p>Concerns</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> *Due to the shortage of community supports youth are staying at the shelter for longer periods of time; *Because longer shelter stays the educational status for many homeless youth is fractured, missing out on numerous educational opportunities; *The traditional public-school settings are not always equipped to assist the unique needs of homeless youth with an inconsistent educational history as well as the challenging behaviors youth may present as a result of the trauma they have experienced; *Longer stays at the shelter lends to higher at-risk behaviors as they settle into a life on the streets.
Tedford Housing	<p>Tedford Housing's 6-unit family emergency shelter serves the southern Midcoast region. The shelter housed 23 individuals last year, 88% of whom exited to permanent affordable housing. The program turned away 205 families for lack of space. Tedford provides permanent supported family housing in the Midcoast, Augusta, and Lewiston/Auburn areas. They offer homelessness prevention and outreach services and a fuel assistance program</p>
Western ME Homeless Outreach	<p>Western Maine Homeless Outreach is a 16-bed facility in Franklin County Maine. We are the only homeless shelter in Franklin County. Our mission is to help families become self-sustaining. We partner with Maine State Housing and can offer different housing vouchers for qualifying families and single individuals. Vouchers can be lifelong or just a year to help those in need get back on their feet. The hurdle in this area is affordable housing, finding land lords that will accept vouchers and transportation. We primarily use the local taxi company, but they just recently closed with no notice to business's or customers.</p>

<p>York County Shelter Programs</p>	<p>Our adult emergency shelter, located in Alfred, serves individuals aged 18 and older. The HUD definition of homeless youth includes anyone up to age 24, so we do serve homeless youth in our adult shelter. We have 37 emergency shelter beds at this location. Our family shelter, located in Sanford, serves youth with at least 1 parent/guardian. We have 16 family shelter beds. On the average, the family shelter has 5-6 adults and the remainder are minor children.</p> <p>Both facilities receive funding from Maine State Housing, who basically funnels the HUD money coming into Maine to serve homeless individuals and families. That program is called ESHAP. We operate a housing first model of emergency shelter, which has been formally going on for the past 4 years now, as a directive from HUD. The housing first philosophy is basically a belief that all are entitled to adequate, safe, affordable housing, regardless of the barriers they may face. Traditionally, prior to this movement here in Maine, the majority of shelters operated on a philosophy that the barriers need to be eliminated prior to attainment of housing, to ensure successful retention of that housing. In addition, the majority of shelters in Maine are overnight shelters, requiring individuals to leave during the day time hours and return in the evening for a shelter bed. YCSP has always been open 24 hours per day, since it began in 1979.</p> <p>Our internal philosophy has always been that of housing first. We believe everyone deserves a decent, affordable place to live. In addition, over the years, we have introduced services and supports for our homeless individuals and families, based on what they are unable to access on their own. In essence, erasing the barriers they face, while also rapidly rehousing individuals and families, simultaneously. We have developed medication management with a psychiatrist who comes on-site to see people, medication assisted treatment services, case management, residential addictions treatment, access to medical care/PCP, education, a food pantry, outpatient counseling, and vocational training opportunities.</p> <p>I believe one of the most remarkable accomplishments of our organization has been the pursuit and attainment of individual properties that are now affordable housing units, from SROs (single room occupancy), efficiency apartments, 1, 2, 3, and 4-bedroom units. Our housing is in York County, spanning from Biddeford, down to Kittery. All available to individuals and families that come through our shelters. Without owning our own housing, we would not be able to move people as rapidly as we do. There simply is not enough affordable housing available.</p> <p>We see about 500 people a year in shelter, roughly 100 are children under 18. Our recidivism rate for families after 1 year of leaving our shelter, thus far is 0. Our recidivism rate for individuals leaving our adult shelter thus far is about 5%. We credit these great outcomes to the supportive services we continue to offer, including remaining connected after housing is secured (whether it is our housing or a private landlord). Housing Navigation services are provided for a year following departure from the shelter. This service helps identify possible</p>
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	<p>issues or concerns as they arise and can provide the intervention needed to ensure the individual or family does not become homeless again.</p> <p>We are helping to organize the upcoming homeless youth community conversation happening next week in Sanford, in partnership with Community Action, Sanford Housing, and Maine Housing Authority. This conversation is "by invite only" specifically focused on organizations who deal with homeless youth in York County. As it stands, we have 25 organizations who intend to come, which is phenomenal!</p> <p>We work closely with the schools in our districts (both Sanford High School and Massabesic) to ensure school aged individuals can remain in school. Both have a homeless liaison available for homeless youth.</p>
<p>Youth Homelessness Demonstration Project</p>	<p>The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) awarded Maine a two-year, \$3.35 million dollar grant to end and prevent youth homelessness. The grant will support the creation of a Coordinated Community Plan (CCP) to end and prevent youth homelessness. The CCP will identify the strengths, gaps and challenges to the existing youth homelessness response system and recommend strategies to improve the system and outcomes for youth experiencing homelessness up to age 24. Since Maine has been identified as a rural community there will be an emphasis on improved and/or increased access to services for youth experiencing homelessness in rural communities.</p> <p>The money will be allocated through MaineHousing. MaineHousing, in partnership with New Beginnings (a Youth Homelessness Provider in Lewiston) will be the lead agency for the collaborative effort. MaineHousing will be contracting a Project Director to spearhead the planning and implementation of the CCP. A leadership team of cross-sector experts from the Maine Department of Corrections, the Maine Department of Education, the Maine Department of Health and Human Services, MaineHousing, local municipalities, and nonprofit youth serving agencies will be convened to create the CCP. The team will also ensure that youth with lived experience in homelessness have a voice in all decisions regarding the work of the CCP.</p> <p>After the CCP is created, non-profit, faith-based, and government agencies will have an opportunity to apply for subgrants to create new and innovative programs to end and prevent youth homelessness.</p> <p>The goal of the Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) is to support up to 25 communities, at least 8 of which will be rural, in the development and implementation of a coordinated community approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness and sharing that experience with and mobilizing communities around the country toward the same end. The population to be served by this demonstration program is youth experiencing homelessness, including unaccompanied and pregnant or parenting youth, where no member of the household is older than 24. The demonstration has five primary objectives:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build national momentum.

	<p>Motivate state and local homelessness stakeholders across the country to prevent and end youth homelessness by forming new partnerships, addressing system barriers, conducting needs assessments, testing promising strategies, and evaluating their outcomes.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate the coordinated community approach. <p>Evaluate coordinated community approaches to preventing and ending youth homelessness, including local and state partnerships across sectors and other planning operations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Expand capacity. <p>Demonstration communities will expand their capacity to serve homeless youth, pilot new models of assistance, and determine what array of interventions is necessary to serve the target population in their community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evaluate performance measures. <p>Evaluate the use of performance measurement strategies designed to better measure youth outcomes and the connection between youth program outcomes and youth performance measures on overall system performance for the Continuum of Care (CoC).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Establish a framework for federal program and TA collaboration. <p>Determine the most effective way for federal resources to interact within a state or local system to support a coordinated community approach to preventing and ending youth homelessness.</p>
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