



CHILDREN CANNOT WAIT

Part 3

*Summary of Region 1 Data from the
Education of Children and Youth
Experiencing Homelessness Program
2019-2020 State Evaluation Report*

Prepared by the
Policy Department of
People's Emergency Center



Introduction

People's Emergency Center (PEC) has summarized a Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) report on the **Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness** (ECYEH) program for School Year 2020, to inform policy makers about children and youth experiencing homelessness in Philadelphia. This summary focuses on data specific to Region 1, which includes the Philadelphia School District, charter schools, and information from shelters.

The PDE report includes observations and recommendations for the entire ECYEH system. They are not specific to Region 1 and not included in this summary. Find the original report [here](#), (on the Pennsylvania Department of Education website).

PEC commends Region 1 leadership on their work supporting all children and youth experiencing homelessness. We recommend that the City of Philadelphia and community organizations support the Philadelphia School District's efforts by pro-actively reaching out to homeless students and their families – especially those who are residing doubled up, as they will have fewer resources available to them than those in shelter – and connecting them to services. PEC staff maintain that the Philadelphia LEA should prioritize outreach strategies targeting doubled up children to ensure all families outside the shelter system receive services.

Important information discovered in our review includes these highlights:

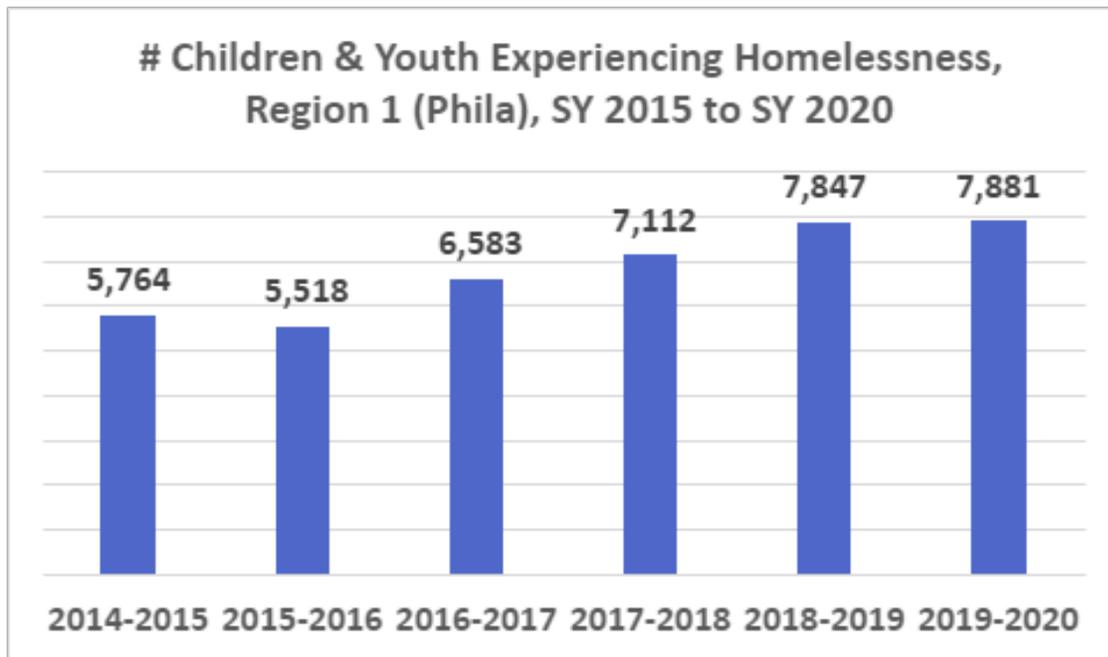
- Philadelphia School District identified 7,881 children and youth who experienced homelessness in FY20.
- 4,002 children and youth are homeless in Philadelphia by virtue of living doubled up with another family (as opposed to with a homeless services provider), slightly lower than the City's reported figure of serving 4,381 by the homeless housing system in fiscal year 2020.¹
- In Region 1, 89% of students attended high-poverty Local Education Agencies (LEA), the highest rate in Pennsylvania.

Below, we will examine the data presented for Region 1 and compare it to data from past school years, the average across Pennsylvania, and data from Philadelphia's Office of Homeless Services.

Highlights, Region 1

State evaluators caution readers *“to avoid making comparisons across regions, as each region has differing numbers of LEAs [Local Education Agency, i.e., school districts, charters, etc.], numbers of collaborating entities, reporting practices, ECYEH Program staff, and total child and youth counts. Additionally, regions have differing areas of focus based on regional need within*

the population experiencing homelessness. That said, differences among the regions can guide program improvement and technical assistance at the state level,” (p. 6 of the report). This strategic use of comparing data is the reason why PEC staff prepared this summary.



General Trends

- Region 1 identified more children and youth experiencing homelessness in School Year (SY) 2020 than in previous years, a trend different than experienced by Pennsylvania’s other regions. This trend may be a result of changes in counting, improved outreach, or an increase in homelessness among students in Region 1 as fallout from the pandemic.
- 2,554 children ages birth to kindergarten experienced homelessness in SY 2020, a 28% decrease from SY 2019 and an 11% decrease compared to SY 2018.
- In Region 1, 89% of students attended high-poverty Local Education Agencies (LEA), the highest rate in Pennsylvania. Region 1 had the second highest number of English as Second Language students experiencing homelessness in the state at 1,017 students.

In the next section, we will look at the inconsistencies that arise when comparing state education data to local homeless services data or data from other federal agencies, looking at results between regions, or comparing Region 1 data to statewide averages. These variations may result from using conflicting definitions of homelessness, or different methods of data collection and reporting.

Trends in Region 1 by Age Group

Young Children

- Region 1 data identified 2,064 children under the age of five in Philadelphia schools. By comparison, the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services served 1,720 children under age 5 in their Fiscal Year 2020.ⁱⁱ The variability between the state and local data here relates to the use of different definitions of homelessness by education (state) and housing (city) agencies.ⁱⁱⁱ
- Reasons are unknown about why Philadelphia identified a lower percentage of children in Kindergarten, at 19% compared to the state average of 27%. It could be due to differences in data collection and reporting between Regions, a change in the identification capability, related to a demographic shift, or something else.

Middle School

- Philadelphia LEA identified 3,816 children experiencing homelessness in Grades 1 through 8 in SY20.
- By comparison, the Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services served 1,881 children ages 5 to 12 in their Fiscal Year 2020.^{iv}

High School

The Philadelphia LEA identified 1,511 youth in grades 9 through 12. By comparison:

- The Youth Risk Behavior Survey from the Centers for Disease Control estimated 2,954 homeless students in the School District of Philadelphia for SY 2019. (See <https://bit.ly/3OwP4Ts>.)
- The Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services served 780 youth ages 13-17 in their Fiscal Year 2020.^v

Factors Affecting Students in Region 1

Nighttime Residence

The report states that, “*Nighttime status determines if a child or youth is identified as eligible for services under the McKinney-Vento Act. Nighttime status is a required*

federal reporting category for students enrolled in public prekindergarten through grade 12 schools,” (pg. 24).

Nighttime residence is important for strategic planning around serving students, whether they are in shelter or living doubled up with another family. According to the report, 4,002 children and youth are homeless in Philadelphia by virtue of living doubled up (as opposed to with a homeless services provider). School District of Philadelphia’s ECYEH staff reported that they have increased efforts to help schools identify students and families who are living doubled up and may not seek shelter. This includes training school staff and community agencies on how to identify these students. SDP created SEPTA ads and an animated video to increase awareness and inform families of their rights to services according to the McKinney-Vento Act.^{vi}

Barriers to Education

The report states that, *“Barriers are situations that interfere with children and youth’s enrollment, attendance, and/or educational success. Barrier information is only reported by LEAs or ECYEH staff that worked to resolve a barrier situation,”* (p. 24).

Across Pennsylvania, the regions reported that 13% of students faced at least one barrier to education (for instance, homelessness, transportation, mobility, etc.). Furthermore, Region 1 had the highest percentage of youth with any barrier at 23%, compared to the next highest region, which had 15%. This might suggest that Region 1 needs strategies specifically targeting those barriers.

Student Mobility

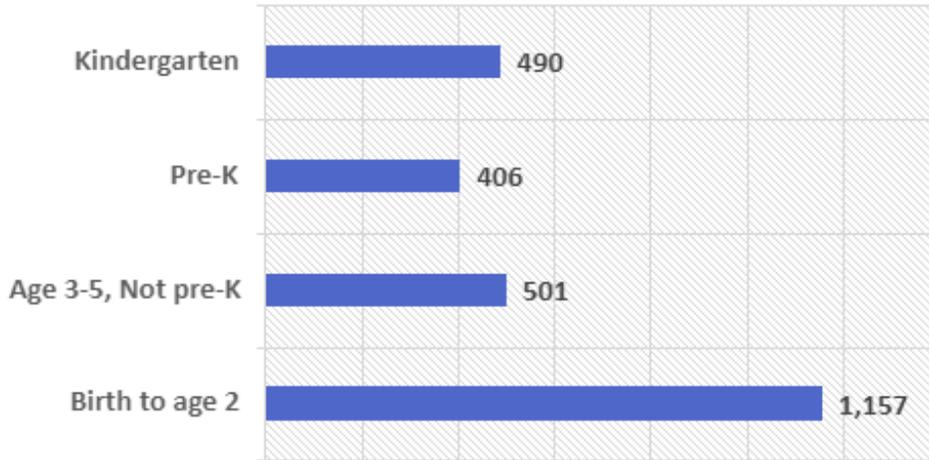
The overwhelming majority (73%) of enrolled students in Region 1 stayed in their original school and did not move to another school, to the average (74%) of regions across the state.

Detailed Summary, Region 1

Children Birth to Kindergarten

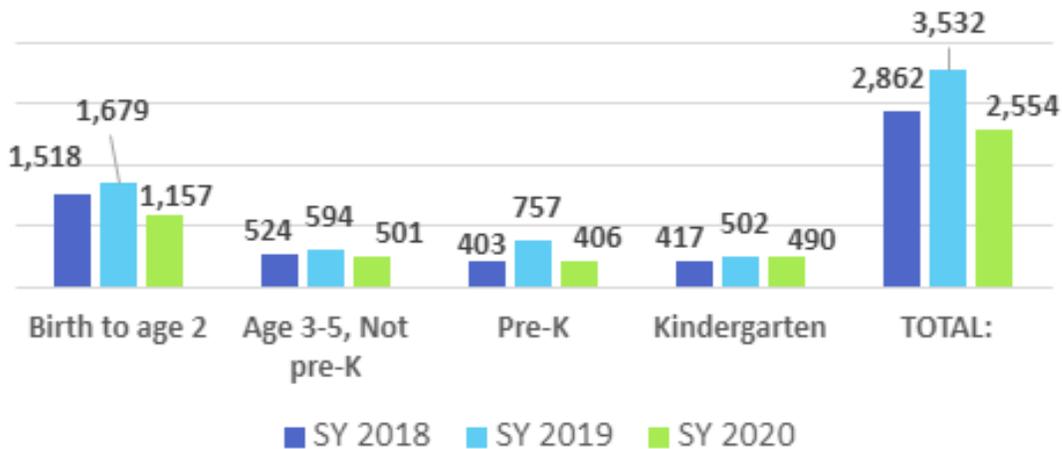
The report states that 2,554 children ages birth to Kindergarten experienced homelessness in SY 2020.

Children Birth to K Experiencing Homelessness, Region 1 (Phila), SY 2020

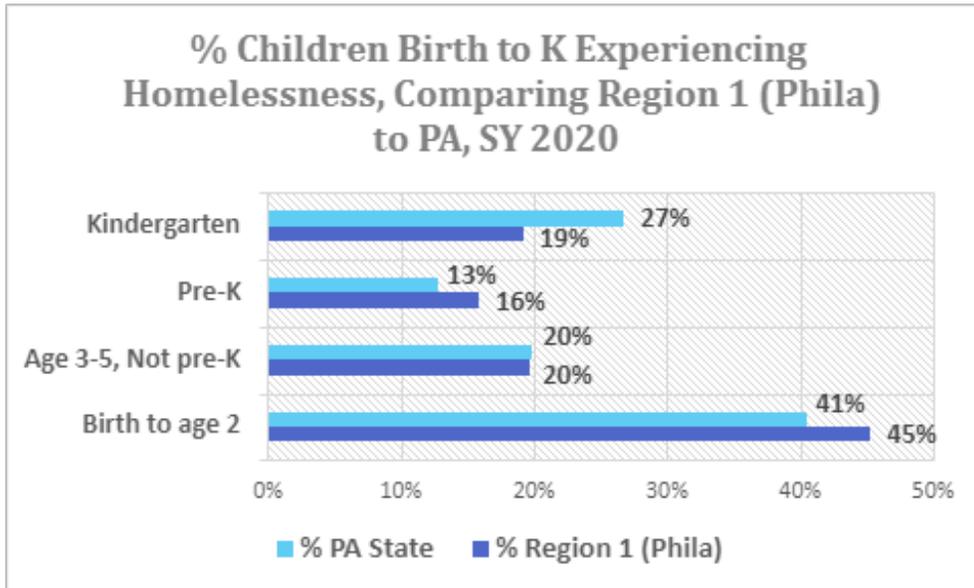


PEC staff compared SY 2020 to SY 2019 and SY 2018. The number of children decreased 28% from SY 2019 and decreased 11% compared to SY 2018. Forty-five percent (45%) of these children were in the age range of birth to age two, a higher ratio compared to the state average of 41%.

Children Birth to K Experiencing Homelessness, Region 1 (Phila), SY 2018, 2019, 2020

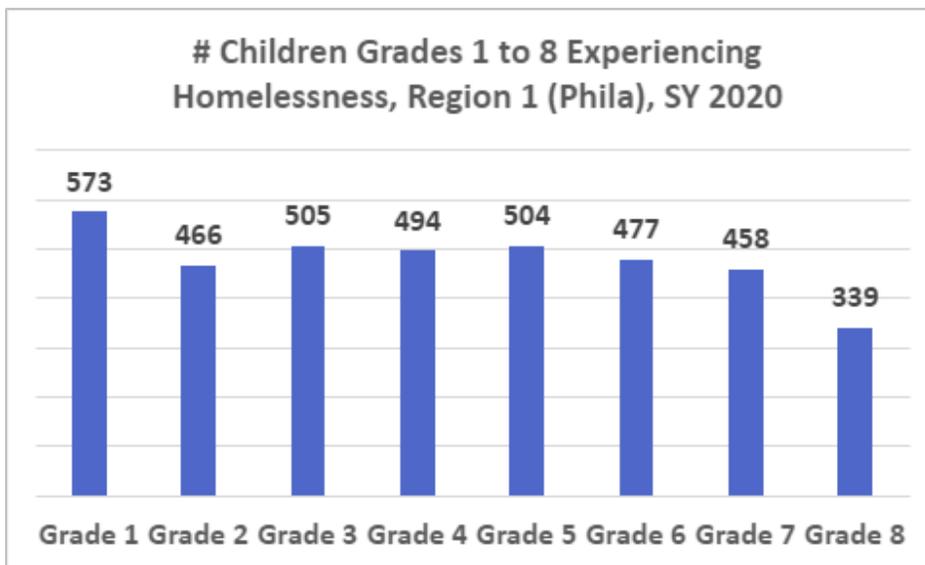


Philadelphia identified a lower percentage of children in Kindergarten experiencing homelessness, 19% compared to the state average of 27%



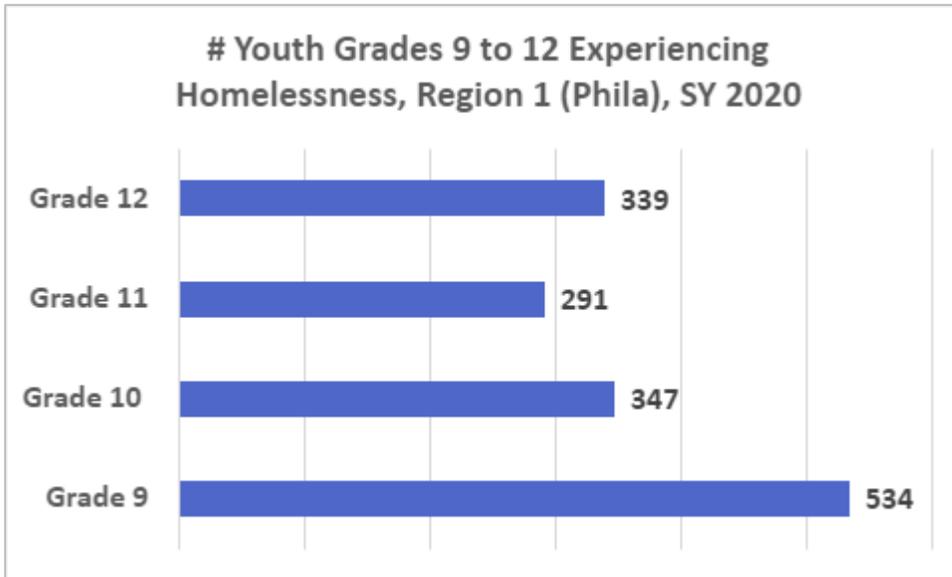
Grades 1 through 8

Philadelphia identified 3,816 children in grades 1 through 8 in SY 2020.



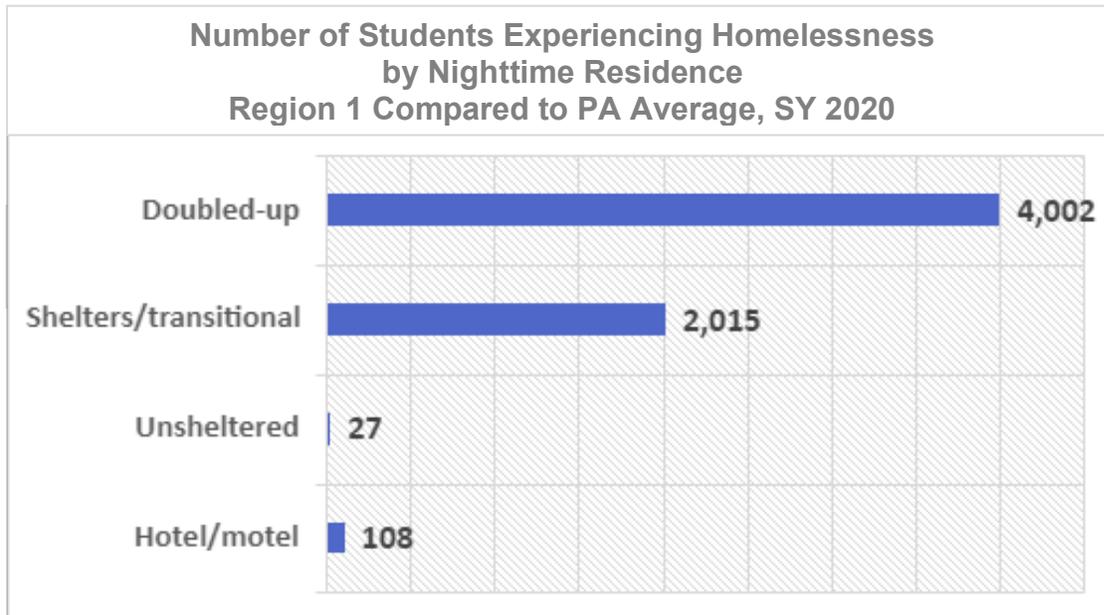
Grades 9 through 12

Philadelphia identified 1,511 youth experiencing homelessness in grades 9-12.

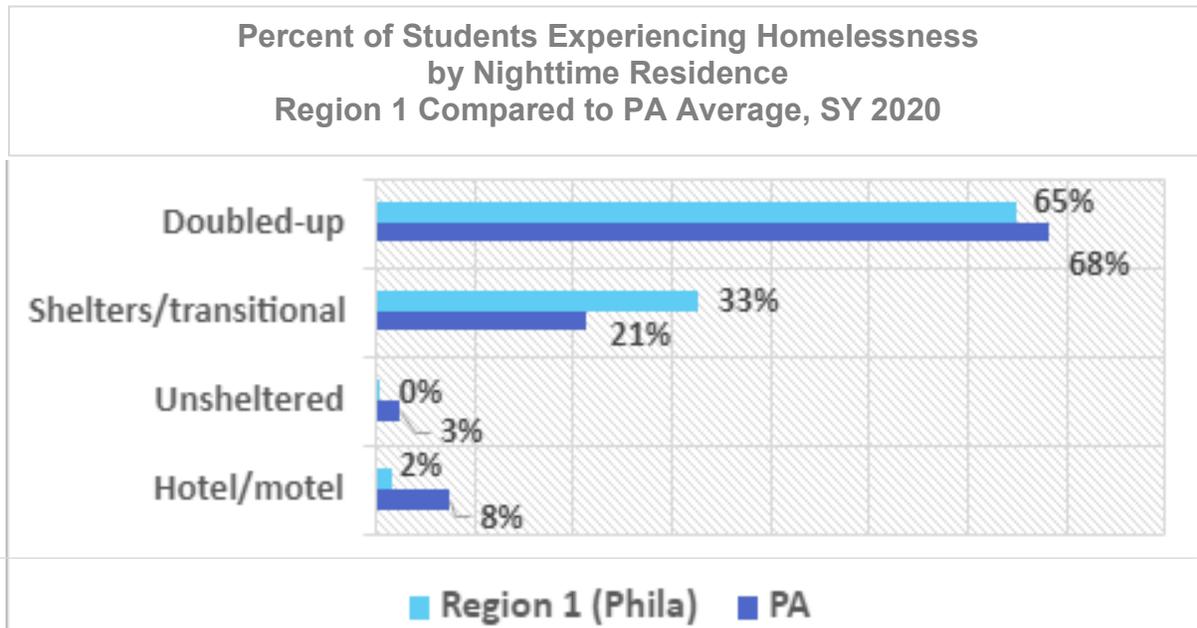


Nighttime Residence

The report states that, “Region 1, though lower than might be expected with regard to doubled-up numbers, continues to implement specific strategies to better identify the doubled-up population and their efforts are showing in the steady increase each year in the reporting of that population. Child and youth doubled-up counts have increased from 402 students in 2010-11 to 4,002 students in 2019-20. Prior to 2010-11, the focus in this region had been with shelters.” (p. 24)



In SY 2020 Region 1 reported 4,002 children experiencing homelessness due to sharing their nighttime residence with another family, slightly lower than the City's reported figure of serving 4,381 by the homeless housing system in fiscal year 2020.

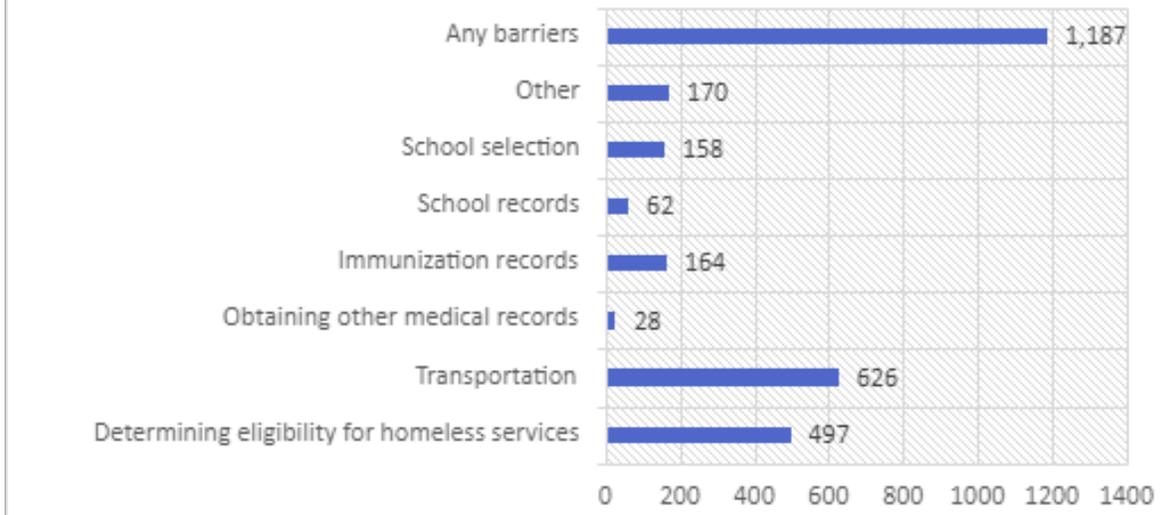


Barriers to Education

The School District of Philadelphia focuses on removing barriers to learning once the child enrolls in school. Barrier data is not available for all students identified as homeless.

- There were 5,221 children and youth for whom data was available in Region 1.
- Transportation and determining eligibility are the top two barriers to enrollment.
- The report states that, “Other barriers reported included school breaks or holidays, hospitalization between identification and attendance, securing childcare, incomplete disclosure of information during enrollment, or family-initiated delays in attendance,” (p. 24).
- Region 1 had the highest percentage of youth with any barrier at 23%, versus the next region which had 15%. The state average was 13%.

Barriers to Education Addressed by Region 1 ECYEH Program (Phila), SY 2020



According to School District of Philadelphia staff, the agency provides the following items to remove barriers to attendance and learning for families experiencing homelessness:

- school uniforms and school supplies;
- transportation if the distance is more than a mile;
- day passes to use until transportation is set up;
- emergency funds for other miscellaneous school needs;
- winter coats and other essentials;
- resource referrals, and
- an initiative that provides extra support to high school students.^{vii}

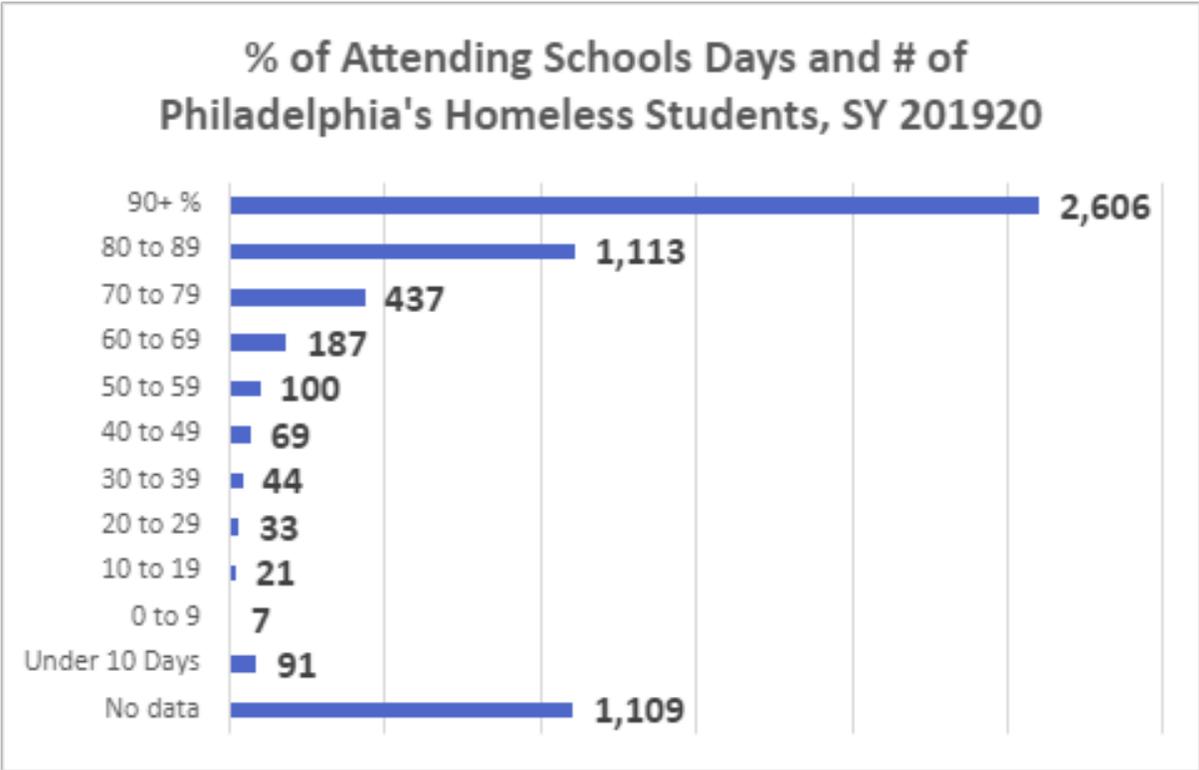
Student Mobility

Of the total of 6,152 students experiencing homelessness for which there was data, 73% of Region 1 students stayed in their original school during SY20, one percentage point lower than the state average (74%). This outcome is likely related to transportation resources established under the McKinney-Vento act as a right for children experiencing homelessness. The School District and OHS are commended for ensuring school stability for the children in shelter.

Region 1	1 LEA School	2 LEA School	3+ LEA School
# Enrolled Students Experiencing Homelessness	4,495	861	108
% of total enrolled students experiencing homelessness who moved to another school in the same LEA	73%	14%	2%

Student Attendance

- Data is not available for 23% of Region 1 homeless students.
- 552 homeless students were **chronically absent**, or 12%. Students are chronically absent when they are “absent 10 percent or more of school days during the year,” according to the report (p. 38).



Who Should Read This?

We encourage policy makers and their staff, funders, child service agencies, school personnel, family advocates and others to read and to understand the data and consider expanding efforts to reach out to children and youth who experience homelessness.

This summary is part three in the Children Cannot Wait series from PEC. We designed the Children Cannot Wait series to increase awareness of issues relating to children and youth experiencing homelessness. Other publications are here: pec-cares.org/policy-publications.

About People's Emergency Center (PEC)

[People's Emergency Center \(PEC\)](#) uplifts our community by providing housing, social services, and quality of life supports that empower people and encourage more prosperous and safer neighborhoods. PEC is in an affiliation with Youth Service, Inc., with the intent of becoming one integrated agency in 2023.

For families and youth experiencing homelessness, we offer housing, social services, access to early childhood education, and educational programs in career training, parenting, financial literacy, life skills, and technology.

The PEC Community Development Corporation programs respond to community needs and build on neighborhood assets to help bridge the digital divide, expand mixed-income housing opportunities, stimulate economic growth, create wealth, and improve the quality of life for all West Philadelphia residents.

PEC advocates for urgently needed public policy changes on behalf of families and youth experiencing homelessness and the neighborhoods we serve. We have worked successfully with local, state, and federal government agencies to advance legislation and budgets that prioritize these communities.

i Philadelphia Office of Homeless Services Data FY 2020 Data Snapshot.

ii IBID.

iii Education systems count living with another family (doubled up) as experiencing homelessness. The housing agencies do not; instead, they count living in a shelter or in a place not meant for human habitation.

iv IBID.

v IBID.

vi Email message from Colleen Landy, Assistant Director, ECYEH at The School District of Philadelphia to Joe Willard, PEC VP of Policy, December 3, 2021.

vii IBID.

