

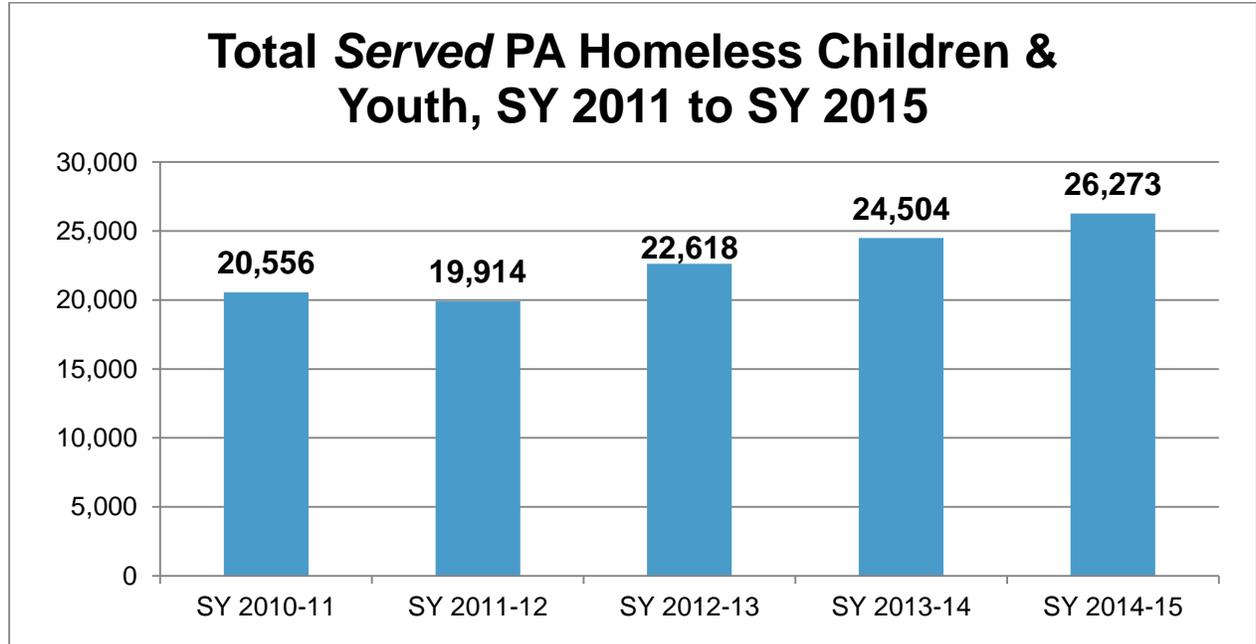


## Increases in child and youth homelessness in Pennsylvania:

### *Good News or Bad?*

*26,273 Children and Youth in Pennsylvania experienced homelessness in the 2014-2015 School Year*

The number of children and youth experiencing homelessness in Pennsylvania has increased every year over the past four years. For the **first time in history**, the number of homeless children and youth exceeds **26,000** according to a Pennsylvania Department of Education (PDE) report. People's Emergency Center (PEC) summarizes the PDE report to inform the region's leadership about this population.



## Highlights:

- Pennsylvania reported that **26,273** children and youth who experienced homelessness were **served** in School Year (SY) 2013-14, a 27.8 percent increase from SY 2010-2011.
- **Most homeless students are living doubled-up** (living in someone else's house temporarily) and **not** in shelters or outdoors. In Pennsylvania, 64 percent of homeless students lived doubled up. Only 29 percent were in shelters, transitional housing, or awaiting foster care placement; six percent were in hotels or motels; and one percent was unsheltered. This metric should be of interest to those who use Point in Time Counts to provide data addressing youth homelessness.
- Twelve percent (n=3,139) of served children/youth were identified as being **unaccompanied** youth.

**Who should read this policy brief?** Social service providers, advocates and educators working with children and youth who experience homelessness; and policy makers in Pennsylvania would be well served by this data source.

## PEC Commentary:

- The fact that the number of homeless children and youth increases every year can suggest good news. In part, the increase means that the authorities whose task it is to serve and support children and youth are doing their job. PDE also makes this suggestion. School Districts improve every year in identifying and helping children and youth. As districts hire more counselors, nurses, and social workers, it is likely that these responsible adults will help to identify and assist homeless students. In addition, data collection is improving, particularly around pre-kindergarten. Now that the federal government has improved the Head Start and Child Care regulations, it can be expected that Pennsylvania will identify even more children and youth next year.
- The fact that homeless children and youth are mostly living doubled-up should inform discussions around the state about where to conduct outreach to this population. Continuum of Care programs use the Point in Time Count (PIT) to make strategic decisions in part because they are required to do so by the United States Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD); however, many observers agree that the PIT does not adequately identify children and youth.
- Pennsylvania municipality leaders are working on innovative methods to conduct outreach and coordinate services. In Pittsburgh, the Homeless Children's Education

Fund just deployed a new app called Big Burgh (see <https://www.bigburgh.com/app.html#/who>) to be used by police officers and others who find youth experiencing homelessness on the street to connect them to services. Philadelphia is working with Chapin Hall of Chicago's "Voices of Youth Count" campaign to better understand the context surrounding youth homelessness. See <http://voicesofyouthcount.org/>. And most Continuum of Care programs are focused on new ways to reach youth.

### Sources:

- Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program 2014-15 State Evaluation Report: <http://bit.ly/2gDKHL4>
- Data for School Years 2009-2013 comes from PEC's previous summary reports, found at <http://bit.ly/29MhFEx> which used reports from PDE published in those years.

**What does this summary contain?** Key indicators found in the reports cited above include:

- The number of homeless children and youth enrolled and/or served by the education system and/or other community-based services.
- Nighttime residency statistics for students experiencing homelessness.

### Number of Children and Youth Who Experience Homelessness, Pennsylvania:

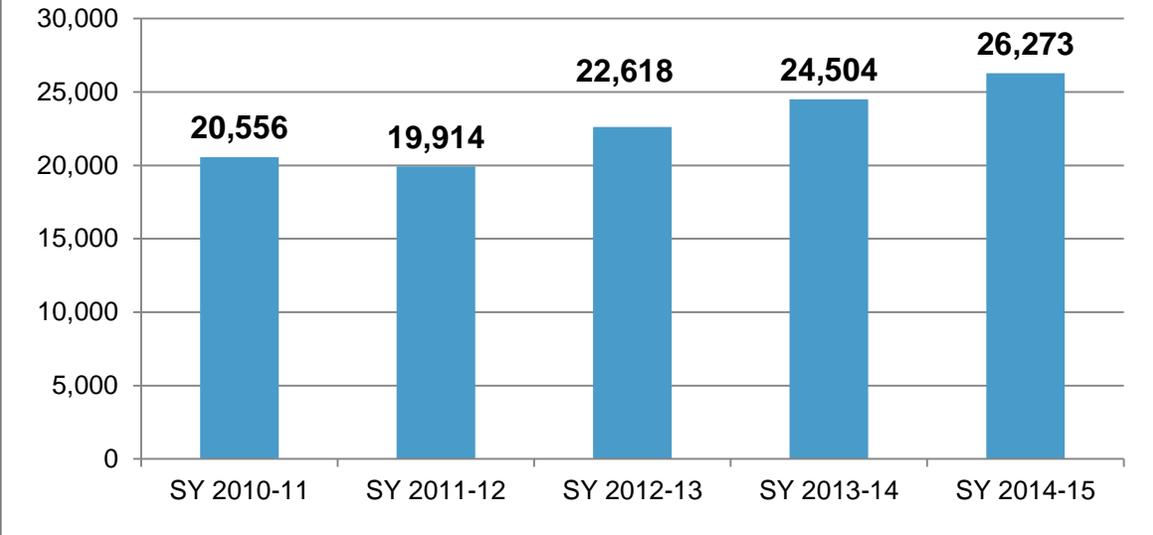
The education system reports two different numbers of homeless children and youth: those **served** by the schools and those **enrolled** in school. The term **served** includes all children and youth who are **identified** as meeting the education system's McKinney-Vento Act definition of homelessness.

Students from Pre-kindergarten through 12<sup>th</sup> grade make up the **enrolled** category.

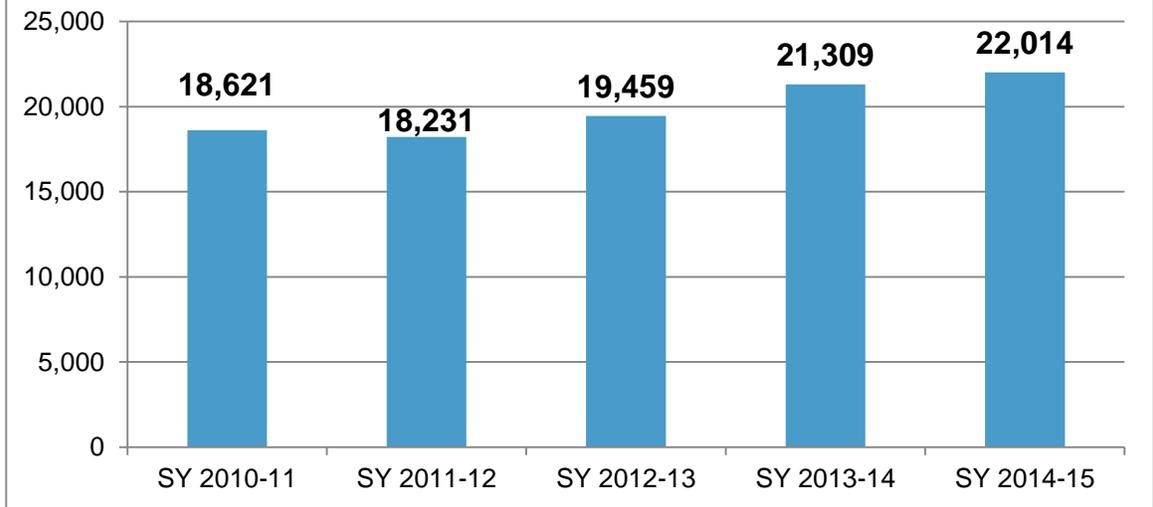
*Keep informed on these issues by adding your email to the monthly e-newsletter PEC Perspective by sending your address to [poliyc@pec-cares.org](mailto:poliyc@pec-cares.org), and follow us on Twitter at #PAHomelessYouth.*

**Caution should be used in comparing counts of students.** Changes from year to year could be a result from numerous factors, including improved outreach and identification as well as an increase in the homeless population.

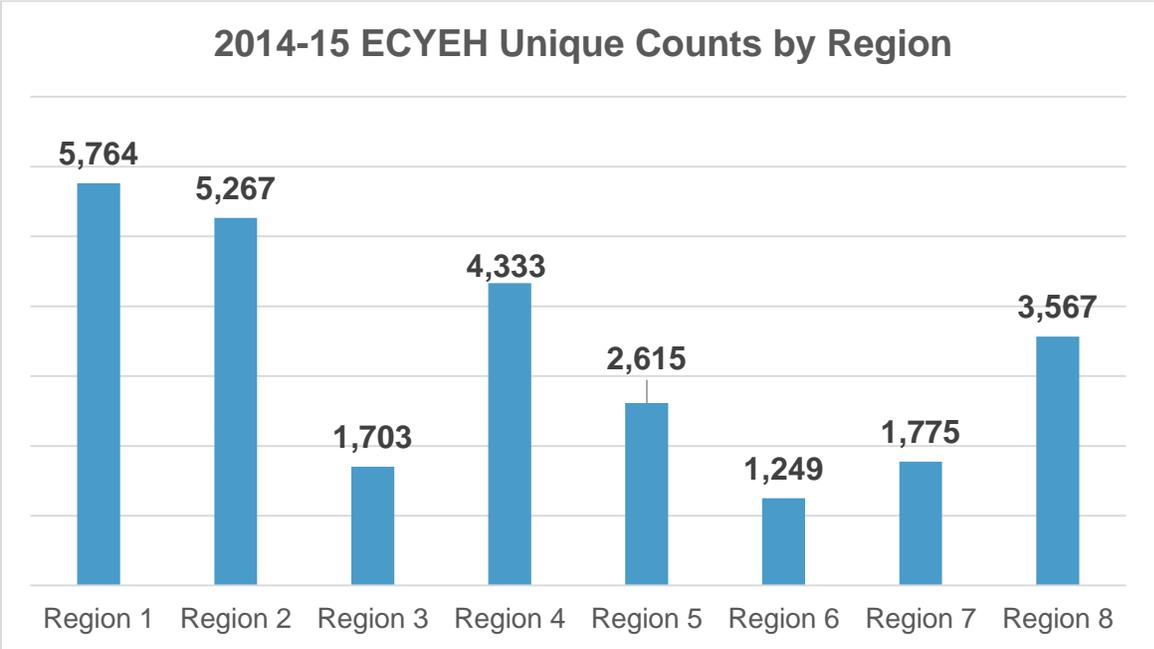
### Total Served PA Homeless School Children, SY 2011 to SY 2015



### Total Enrolled PA Children & Youth & receiving services from ECYEH

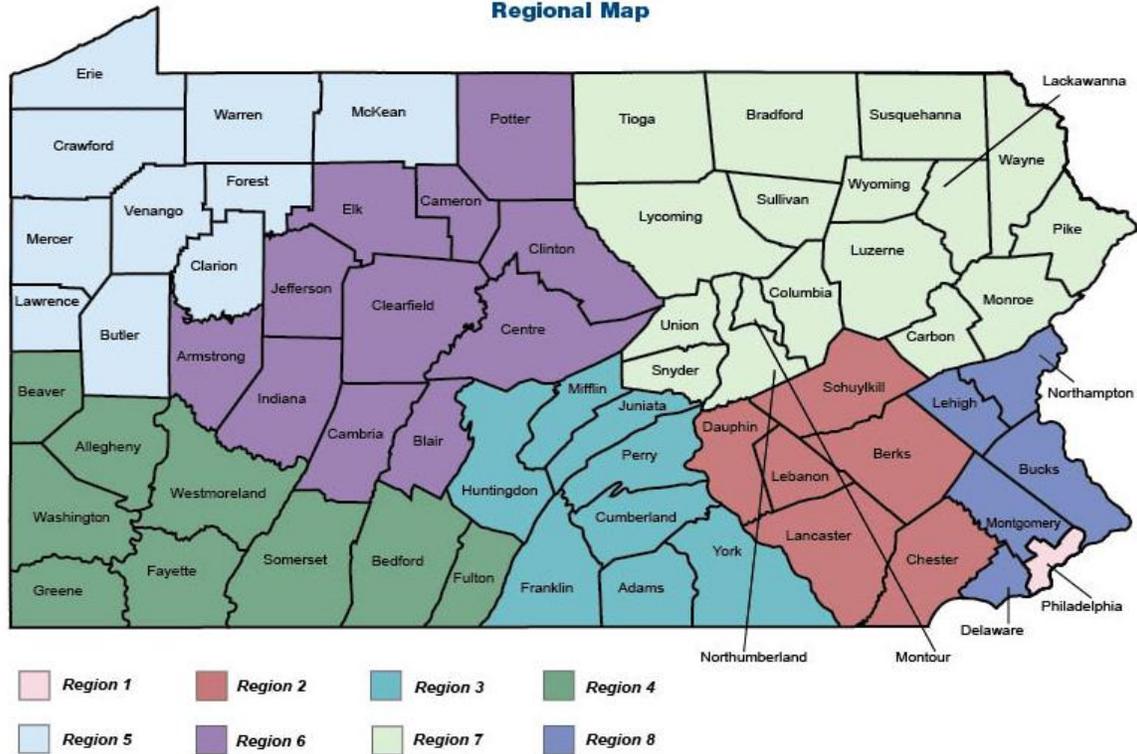


**Number of Homeless Students by Region:** See map below to identify regions.



## Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program

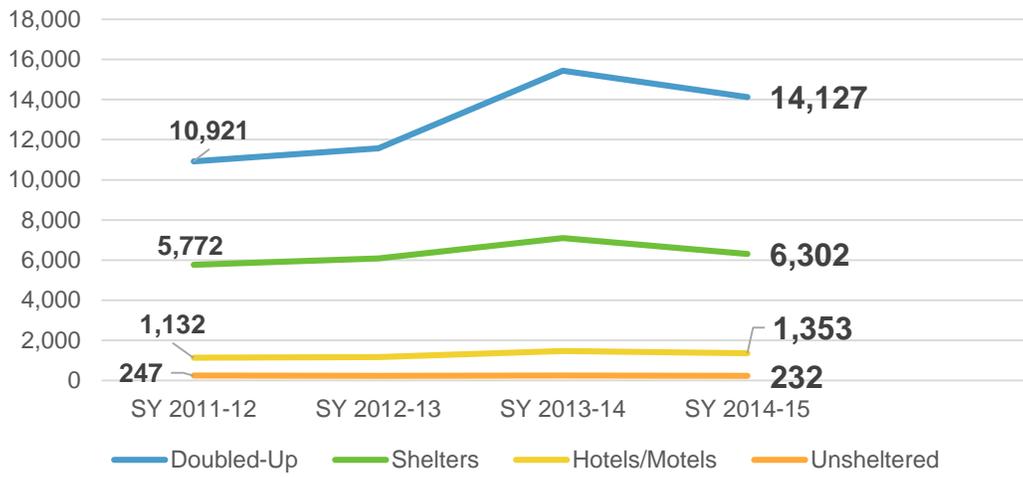
### Regional Map



**Nighttime Residence:** Knowing where homeless students reside helps provide information to school personnel for their outreach strategies. It would also assist those working for **Continuum of Care programs** who are addressing family homelessness.

When compared to SY 2012-13, there was an **increase** in the number of Pennsylvania homeless students **living doubled up** and a slight **decrease** in the number of those **living in shelters** in SY 2013-14.

**Primary Nighttime Residence of PA *Enrolled* Homeless Students, SY2011-12 and SY2014-15**



**Primary Nighttime Residence of PA *Enrolled* Homeless Students, SY 2011-12 and 2014-15**

	SY 2011-12	SY 2012-13	SY 2013-14	SY 2014-15
<b>Doubled-Up</b>	10,921	11,564	15,437	14,127
<b>Shelters</b>	5,772	6,078	7,106	6,302
<b>Hotels/Motels</b>	1,132	1,168	1,470	1,353
<b>Unsheltered</b>	247	234	245	232

<b>Comparing % of Nighttime Residence SY 2011-12 to SY 2014-15</b>				
	<b>SY 2011-12</b>	<b>% of Total</b>	<b>SY 2014-15</b>	<b>% of Total</b>
<b>Doubled-Up</b>	10,921	60%	14,127	64%
<b>Shelters</b>	5,772	32%	6,302	29%
<b>Hotels/Motels</b>	1,132	6%	1,353	6%
<b>Unsheltered</b>	247	1%	232	1%

**The PA Department of Education’s evaluators made these statements:**

1. Each year reporting is more complete and accurate.
2. Transportation remains the most common barrier statewide.
3. Despite some consistency for a large portion of children/youth, there are students who experience extreme mobility, are homeless for more than two years, or experience barriers to enrollment.
4. A majority of students experiencing homelessness attend “Local Education Agencies” (LEA, i.e., school districts and charter schools) that have high levels of poverty.
5. The majority of students remain in their LEA-school of origin.

The People’s Emergency Center’s mission is to nurture families, strengthen neighborhoods and drive change in West Philadelphia. PEC offers more than 250 affordable housing units, job training, parenting and early childhood education, financial education and planning, life skills and technology coursework. PEC seeks to change the life trajectory for the women and children who seek its services and inspire them to aspire to new heights. All inquiries can be sent to [policy@pec-cares.org](mailto:policy@pec-cares.org).