

THE HOUSING & EDUCATIONAL EQUITY LAB AT BOSTON COLLEGE

WHO ARE SERVING THE UNSEEN?



AN ANALYSIS OF THE STUDENT HOMELESS
POPULATION IN MASSACHUSETTS CHARTER SCHOOLS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In Massachusetts, over 20,000 K-12 students are identified as experiencing homelessness each year. Research suggests that students experiencing homelessness comprise approximately 5-10% of a school and school district's economically disadvantaged population. As such, public schools are federally mandated to identify and support students experiencing homelessness. Despite the continual growth of charter schools, there is little research to document their fidelity and effectiveness in meeting federal requirements for addressing student homelessness. Such information is critical to ensuring that one of the most vulnerable student populations is granted access to education across public school contexts.

This report uses website and handbook audits of public charter schools across the state to examine (1) how families learn about support services and their federal rights when experiencing homelessness and (2) who is designated as student support personnel at each school.

This report is the first in a series of upcoming policy reports and briefs on supporting students experiencing homelessness in Massachusetts charter schools.

Key Findings

- Enrollment estimations project that charter schools in Massachusetts significantly under-identify and/or under-enroll students experiencing homelessness.
- Nearly 60% of MA charter schools do not state both the federal definition of homelessness and the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness on their websites or in their family handbooks.
- Most charter school homeless liaisons in Massachusetts hold a senior administrator (e.g., principal) or operations (e.g., chief operating officer) position in their school/charter network and average over five functional roles within their charter network/school.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overarching Recommendations

- Charter schools should designate homeless liaisons who work directly with students and families and ensure the rights of students experiencing homelessness posted on school websites, policy handbooks, and other public-facing platforms.
- Charter schools should develop a support team that includes homeless liaisons, school leadership, and community partners to create strategies and harness resources to support students and families experiencing homelessness.
- The MA Charter School Association and individual charter schools should advocate for more public funding and raise private funds designated to support the needs of students experiencing homelessness.
- MA state legislatures should modify the charter school lottery system to increase access for students experiencing homelessness.
- MA state legislature should require all schools (including charters) to create identification, recruitment, and retention plans for students experiencing homelessness.

Acknowledgments

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Table of Contents

01.

Under-Enrollment

02.

Homeless Liaisons

03.

MVA State Audit

04.

Recommendations

05.

MVA City Audit

06.

Methodology

07.

References



INTRODUCTION

Student homelessness is a growing crisis in Massachusetts. Since the passing of the federal legislation McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA) in 1987, local educational agencies (LEA) have been charged with implementing the Educating Homeless Children and Youth program [1]. This federally mandated program requires LEAs to designate a homeless liaison, actively identify students experiencing homelessness, and provide students experiencing homelessness with rights that ensure access to an educational experience comparable to that of their stably housed peers. Educational rights include the right to access public charter schools, which in some communities provide students the best opportunity to receive rigorous academic instruction and attend a four-year college [2]. In Massachusetts, over 48,000 students attend a charter school.

As local education agencies, every charter school (or charter network) is federally required to adhere to the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act and operate the Educating Homeless Children and Youth program. However, there is little research to document their fidelity and effectiveness.

This report uses website and handbook audits of public charter schools across the state to examine (1) how families learn about support services and their federal rights when experiencing homelessness and (2) who the designated student support personnel are at each school.

We focus on identification because identifying students experiencing homelessness is the first step in providing the necessary support and access to educational rights. Ensuring that information about MVA is readily available and school personnel is easily accessible and responsive to students and families can encourage disclosure. Further, it allows families to make informed decisions about their education alongside qualified and knowledgeable school-based staff.

This report is the first of a series of policy reports and briefs on supporting students experiencing homelessness in charter schools. It uses enrollment estimates to project the under-identification and/or under-enrollment of students experiencing homelessness. Part II of this series will include a more robust enrollment analysis and findings from qualitative interviews with charter public school homeless liaisons, leaders, and others.



THE 10% BENCHMARK

Student homelessness is associated with a host of adverse outcomes, including increased absenteeism, low academic achievement, and increased dropout rates. Identifying students experiencing homelessness is crucial to ensuring that they receive the support and services they need to succeed academically and beyond. For example, upon identifying a student experiencing homelessness, schools can connect them with resources such as transportation assistance, school supplies, and tutoring services. Schools can also work with community organizations to provide additional support, such as housing assistance and mental health services.

As such, identification is the first step to helping students and families experiencing homelessness; however, local educational agencies often struggle with it [3,4,5]. Researchers and state auditors estimate that between 5% - 10% of a school and school district's economically disadvantaged student population is experiencing homelessness [6]. This report uses the 5-10% benchmark to capture an estimate of the number of students in MA charter schools who are likely experiencing homelessness but not identified as such.

Why is accurate identification of students experiencing homelessness important?

1 Federally Mandated

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act requires all school districts and charter schools to adequately identify students experiencing homelessness. Negligence violates the rights of students experiencing homelessness.

2 First Step Towards Helping Students

By identifying a student as experiencing homelessness, the charter school network has the opportunity to coordinate the necessary resources to best serve the student and family. An unacknowledged problem can not be resolved.

3 A True Account of Student Homelessness

Researchers, practitioners, and advocates agree that student homelessness is a much bigger issue in the United States than our current numbers suggest. An accurate account of student homelessness enables advocacy for commensurate resources to address the problem.



UNDER-ENROLLMENT

THE PROJECTED NUMBER OF UNIDENTIFIED STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Charter schools in Massachusetts serve over 48,000 students. Between the 2017-2018 and 2021-2022 school years, estimates range between 500 and 700 students identified as experiencing homelessness.

When applying the 5%—10% benchmark to low-income student enrollment in charter schools in the 2021-2022 academic year, results show that Massachusetts charter schools may have missed a significant number of students. In other words, charter schools in Massachusetts may be enrolling and/or identifying a significantly lower number of students experiencing homelessness than would be expected, given their low-income student population.

State charter school policies likely contribute to low rates of students experiencing homelessness in MA charter schools (Fig. 2). For example, Massachusetts state law requires charter schools with waitlists to conduct an enrollment lottery. As of Fall 2023, state data shows that 86% of Massachusetts charter schools have waitlists. The additional burden of applying for a charter school lottery while homeless could prevent some families from pursuing enrollment in charter schools. Additionally, a family experiencing homelessness that enters a charter school lottery is not guaranteed admission in the same way they are guaranteed admission into traditional public schools.

Ensuring an accurate count of students experiencing homelessness is necessary for helping to meet student's personal, academic, and material needs. The HEEL team is collaborating with the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association to analyze the most up-to-date enrollment data and ensure accurate identification of students experiencing homelessness.

UNDER-ENROLLMENT

Fig. 1 | Estimated Number of Unidentified or Underrepresented of Students Experiencing Homelessness in Massachusetts Charters

Students in Low Income Households 2021-2022 AY	Highest Estimated Homeless Count	Projected Range of Student Homeless Population without Barriers 2021-2022 AY	Range of Projected Unidentified or Underrepresented Students Experiencing Homelessness
27,695	*690	1,385 - 2,770	695 - 2,080

*Using the highest estimated homeless count as an indicator of the most accurate number of students experiencing homelessness reported since 2017, projections show that in the 2021-22 school year, between **695 and 2,080 students** may have been unidentified or under-enrolled in MA charter schools.*

**HEEL is collaborating with the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association to confirm estimations. Findings from the enrollment data will be presented in an upcoming report.*



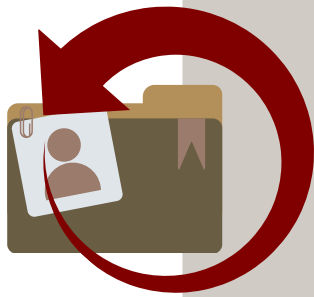
UNDER-ENROLLMENT

Fig. 2 | Potential Barriers to Enrolling & Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness in MA Charter Schools



The Massachusetts Charter School Lottery

Charter schools in Massachusetts are required to have enrollment lotteries if their school has a waitlist. Charter school enrollment lotteries typically occur between February and March. Families experiencing homelessness during the lottery enrollment window may be less likely to enroll in charter schools.



No Charter School Reentry Process for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Charter schools cannot hold seats for students who unenroll due to being displaced while experiencing homelessness. If the student/family wants to either reenroll at their former charter school or attend a new charter school once stabilized, they must reenter the charter school lottery process.

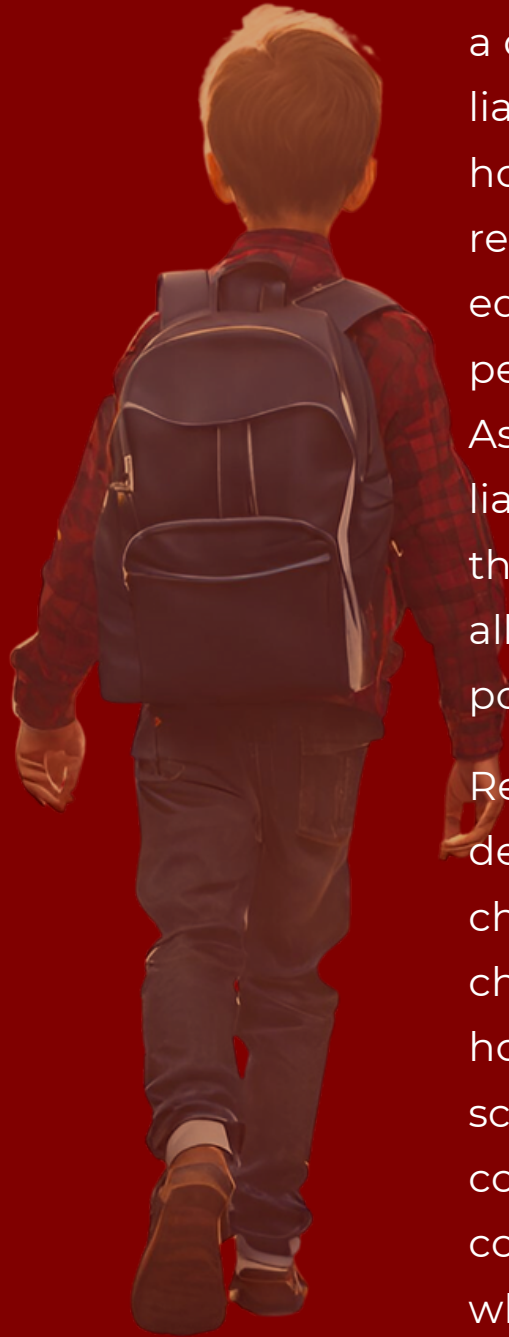


Lack of Dedicated Funding

Most charter schools in Massachusetts do not receive direct funding from the Federal or State government to address student homelessness. The lack of public funding and local fundraising for supporting students experiencing homelessness increases the difficulty of investing in dedicated staff to identify and support students experiencing homelessness.

HOMELESS LIAISONS

THE ROLE OF THE HOMELESS LIAISON IN SUPPORTING STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA) requires all local educational agencies to have a designated district homeless liaison. The homeless liaison works to identify students experiencing homelessness and provides those students the resources and support necessary to access education to the same level as their stably housed peers (Fig. 4). While the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act does not require that homeless liaison be a full-time position, the law does mandate that appointed personnel have the capacity to fulfill all of the time-intensive responsibilities of the position.

Results for this report showed that half of the designated homeless liaisons in Massachusetts charter schools hold over 5 roles in their school/charter network (Fig. 5). Further, the role of the homeless liaison is most commonly fulfilled by a school/network leader—a role that is comprehensive and demanding (Fig. 6). Conversely, counselors, nurses, and social workers, personnel who work closely with students and families, were the least likely to fulfill the role of homeless liaison.

HOMELESS LIAISONS

Fig. 3 | Key Responsibilities of the District Homeless Liaison

Identify youth experiencing homelessness

Coordinate with their school network and external agencies to provide essential services for students experiencing homelessness

Train school staff and personnel on the best practices for identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness.

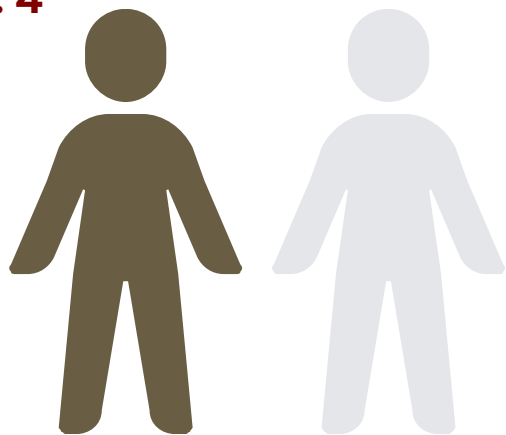
Ensure that students experiencing homelessness receive equal access to the same free appropriate public education as other youth.

Ensure that homeless children, youth, and families receive referrals to health, dental, mental health, housing, substance abuse, and other appropriate services.

Support students experiencing homelessness through the college application process.



Fig. 4



1 out of 2

designated homeless liaisons in MA charter schools hold **five or more formal roles** in their school/charter network.

HOMELESS LIAISONS

Fig. 5 | Total Number of Functional Roles for Charter School/Network Homeless Liaisons

45%

of designated homeless liaisons in MA charter schools **hold 10 or more roles** within their school/charter network.

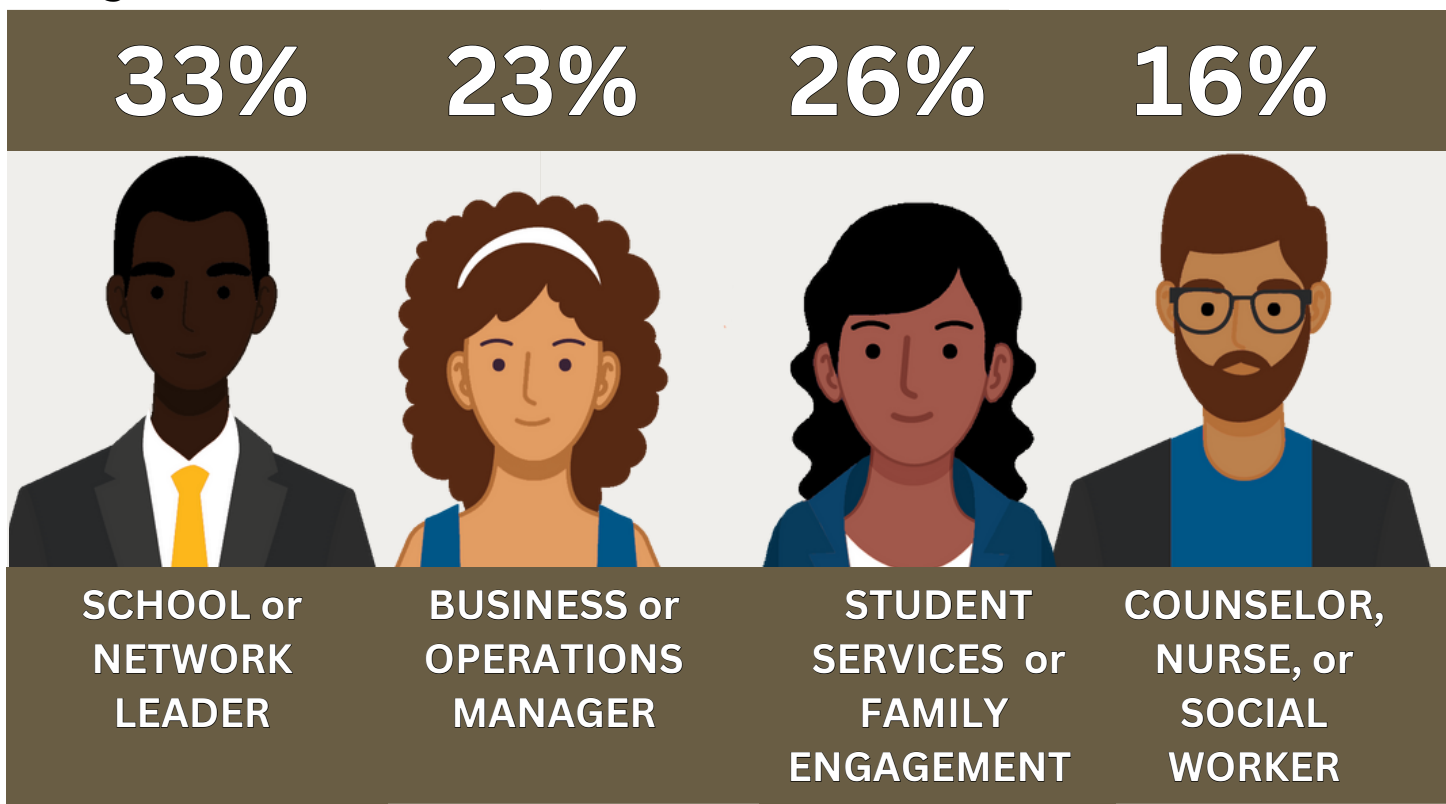
Number of Designated Homeless Liaisons with Multiple Roles

Number of Functional Roles in a Charter Network	Number of Designated Homeless Liaisons
1 Role	2
2 - 5 Roles	30
6 - 9 Roles	10
10 - 13 Roles	12
14-17 Roles	10
18-21 Roles	6
21+ Roles	6



HOMELESS LIAISONS

Fig. 6 | The Full-Time Roles of Personnel Who Are Commonly Designated as Homeless Liaisons in Charter Schools



Job Titles of Homeless Liaisons as Listed on Charter Network Websites

1. Chief Executive Officer
2. Chief of Staff
3. Co-Director and Co-Founder
4. Dean of Academics
5. Director of Diversity, Equity and Inclusion
6. Director of Special Education
7. K-12 Principal

1. Director of Operations
2. Human Resource Director
3. Chief Improvement Officer
4. Chief Operating Officer
5. Director of Administration
6. Director of Business Management
7. Managing Director of Compliance

1. Dir. of Community Engagement
2. Dir. of Family Engagement
3. Dir. of Student Support Services
4. Dean of Students
5. Family & Community Engagement Coordinator
6. Community Partners Liaison

1. Guidance Counselor
2. Social Worker
3. Lead Nurse
4. Clinical Social Worker

A majority of charter school homeless liaisons in Massachusetts hold an administrator or operations position in their school/charter network.



MVA STATE AUDIT

REVIEW OF PUBLICLY AVAILABLE DOCUMENTS ON SERVING STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS



The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (MVA) requires local education agencies to provide public notice of the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness in locations frequented by parents and guardians. School websites and family handbooks are two key mechanisms for sharing such information.

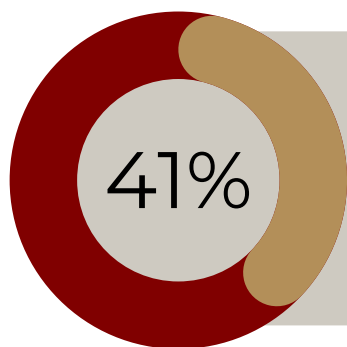
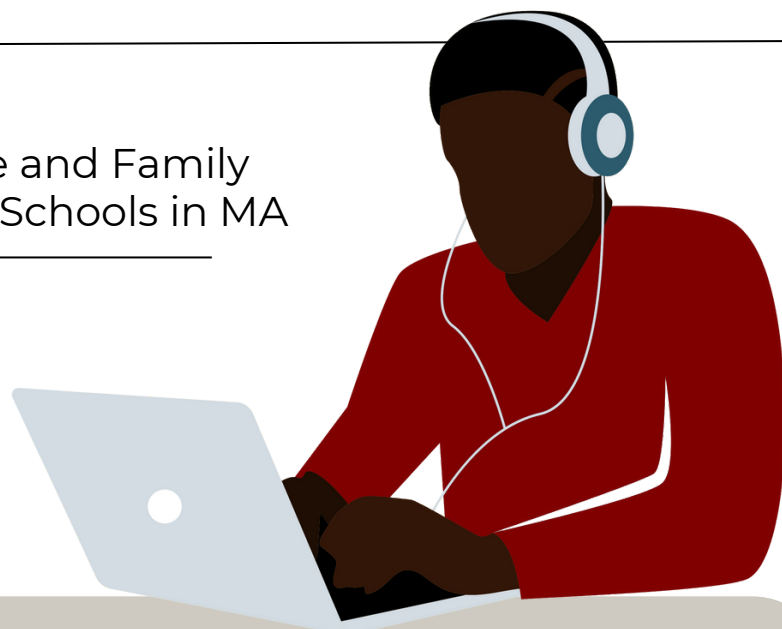
In the Winter of 2024, we conducted an online audit of 76 Massachusetts charter schools. The audit included reviewing each school's website and family handbook. Results showed that only 10 schools mentioned the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness on their websites and in their family handbooks (Fig. 8).

The lack of information distributed to students and families via online resources and in policy handbooks creates barriers to self-advocacy and to disclosing their homeless status to school and district personnel.

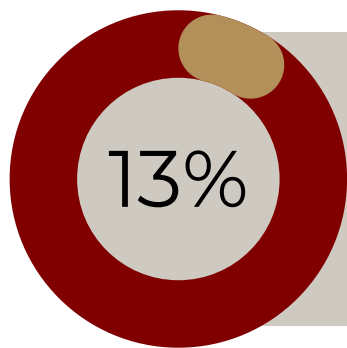
MVA PUBLIC AUDIT

Fig. 7 | Results from a Website and Family Handbook Audit of 76 Charter Schools in MA

Conducted Winter 2024



of MA charters defined student homelessness and stated the **educational rights** of students experiencing homelessness either on their school website **or** in their family handbook



of MA charters defined student homelessness and stated the **educational rights** of students experiencing homelessness **both** on their school website **and** in their family handbook

45 MA charter schools do not state the educational rights of students experiencing homelessness on their websites or in their family handbooks



MVA PUBLIC AUDIT

Fig. 8 | Bright Spots and Models

Conducted Winter 2024

Student Homelessness Information on Website

Springfield International Charter School has a tab on their website entitled “McKinney-Vento Services.” The McKinney-Vento Service page (1) defines student homelessness, (2) states students' rights, (3) discloses their homeless liaison, and (4) provides out-of-school resources that families can leverage.

[View Page](#)

Enrollment Process for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy provides a detailed description of their enrollment process for students experiencing homelessness on the FAQ Page for New and Current Families. This is an excellent example of how to integrate information for families experiencing homelessness into content that ALL families have access to.

[View Page](#)

Online Reporting Tool for Students Experiencing Homelessness

KIPP MA provides an online tool for students, families, and school community members to report student homelessness directly to the KIPP homeless liaison. A public reporting tool (in combination with other identification strategies) allows families to disclose their housing insecurity directly to the person best positioned to support them.

[View Page](#)



RECOMMENDATIONS



Based on research and conversations with various charter school interestholders, including teachers, school leaders, administrators, leaders of community-based organizations, the Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education, and the Massachusetts Charter Public School Association, HEEL has identified ten recommendations for identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness in charter schools.

The next section of this report, offers practice and policy recommendations for leaders in charter schools, at DESE, and state legislators.

RECOMMENDATIONS

School Practices

DESE Practices

State Policies

01

Clearly outline the rights of homeless students and prominently display contact information for the homeless liaison on school websites and in policy handbooks.

Local Educational Agencies are legally responsible for providing public notice to children and families experiencing homelessness. School websites and family handbooks are two resources that parents, and students can use to gather information independently. The bright spots offered in this report can serve as a template for how to ensure that any family experiencing homelessness has the necessary access to know their rights.

School Practices

DESE Practices

State Policies

02

Implement a biannual student homelessness audit

Student housing questionnaires should be distributed twice a year. Also, charter schools should use enrollment numbers for economically disadvantaged students to establish a benchmark metric that estimates the number of students experiencing homelessness. If the number of students identified as homeless is below the benchmark, homeless liaisons should be required to explain their identification process and offer a rationale for why the numbers are low. The audit process should not be evaluative, but rather a formative mechanism to ensure that all students experiencing homelessness at the school are being identified and served.



RECOMMENDATIONS

School Practices

DESE Practices

State Policies

03 **Appoint homeless liaisons who work closely with students and families in their full-time positions**

If the homeless liaison is not full-time, the liaison responsibilities should be embedded within the appointed personnel's full-time job description. A school's homeless liaison should not be a school principal or a network leader, but rather a position where they work closely with students and families in their full-time jobs. For example, school social workers, counselors, and family liaisons are better positioned to build relationships with families and to establish the trust needed to counsel, serve, and advocate for them.

School Practices

DESE Practices

State Policies

04 **Develop a support team to create strategies and harness resources to support students and families experiencing homelessness**

The homeless liaison cannot work in isolation and needs vertical and horizontal support. Charter schools and networks should create a strategic support team designed to fill the academic, social, and material gaps of students experiencing homelessness. The homeless liaison should lead the team and could include teachers, counselors, parents, county and city departments, and non-profit organizations that focus on health, youth development, and anti-poverty programming.



RECOMMENDATIONS

School Practices

DESE Practices

State Policies

05 Join your local Continuum of Care

A **Continuum of Care (CoC)** is a regional or local planning body that coordinates housing and services funding for homeless families and individuals. Having school homeless liaisons or school leadership represented at CoC meetings would help bridge resource and knowledge gaps between schools and the broader community. Massachusetts has 12 CoCs representing the state.

School Practices

DESE Practices

State Policies

06 Advocate for Students Experiencing Homelessness Funding

Currently, the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act's Competitive Grant does not provide all local education agencies with funding to address student homelessness, and it is rare for charter schools in Massachusetts (and nationally) to receive the grant.

While all LEAs are required to set aside a portion of their Title I funds, more resources are needed. Charter schools and the Charter Public School Association should advocate for more federal and state resources and leverage their networks to raise additional funding for students experiencing homelessness.



RECOMMENDATIONS

School Practices

DESE Practices

State Policies

07

Develop charter school-specific professional development opportunities to build the capacity of charter leaders and liaison(s) in identifying and leveraging best practices to support students experiencing homelessness.

While the Department of Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education's (DESE) State Coordinator for Homeless Education provides training on the McKinney-Vento Homeless Act for all LEA homeless liaisons, implementation practices for charter schools look different. The following are three example training topics:

- Exploring the rights of students experiencing homelessness in charter schools (including their enrollment process)
- Best practices for identifying and retaining students experiencing homelessness in charters
- How can charter school leaders build their staff capacity for serving students experiencing homelessness?

DESE and Massachusetts Charter Public School Association may be best positioned to create learning communities for charter school leaders and homeless liaisons across Massachusetts.

School Practices

DESE Practices

State Policies

08

Modify Charter School Lottery System to Increase Access for Students Experiencing Homelessness

The Massachusetts Charter School lottery process may be an enrollment barrier for families experiencing homelessness during critical transitional grades (Kindergarten to 1st, 5th to 6th, 8th to 9th). State legislators should consider amending the charter school statute to provide preference to families experiencing homelessness, and in particular to families experiencing homelessness in interim housing.



RECOMMENDATIONS

School Practices

DESE Practices

State Policies

09

Require charter schools to create recruitment and retention plans for students experiencing homelessness.

Currently, charter schools are required by state law to create recruitment and retention plans “to retain a student population that is demographically comparable to similar grades in schools from which the charter school enrolls students ([603 CMR 1.05](#)).” The current DESE guidance on creating recruitment plans includes students who are English language learners, economically disadvantaged, and students with disabilities; however, the guidance does not specifically mention students experiencing homelessness.

DESE should update its [Charter Analysis and Review Tool \(CHART\)](#) to include students experiencing homelessness in CHART and hold charter schools accountable for recruiting and retaining students impacted by homelessness.

School Practices

DESE Practices

State Policies

10

Create identification, reporting, and training mandates for all LEAs to better serve students experiencing homelessness

The state should create legislation that requires all LEAs, including charter schools to: (1) complete biannual housing questionnaires, (2) post the MVA definition, MVA rights, and MVA liaisons on school websites, and policy handbooks, and (3) train teachers and school staff on best practices for identifying and supporting students experiencing homelessness.

California passed a similar bill entitled [AB27](#) in 2021 that Massachusetts can use as a model.





MVA CITY AUDIT

**REVIEW OF CITIES WITH A LARGE
PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS EXPERIENCING
HOMELESSNESS**

MVA CITY AUDIT

The City of Boston	Local Public School District	Boston Public Schools
	% of SEH	8%
	Number of Identified	3,658
	Projected Homeless Population	1,656 -3,313

Boston-Based Charter School(s) | 2021-22 AY (Table 1)

District and School Name	Full Time Position of the Designated Homeless Liaison	Projected Range of Student Homeless Population without Barriers	Definition & Education Rights of SEH on Website?	Family Handbook States SEH Definition and Rights?
			2023-2024	2023-2024
Academic Year	2023-24	2021-22	2023-2024	2023-2024
Academy Of the Pacific Rim Charter Public	Director of Student Support	16-33	NO	NO
Boston Collegiate Charter	Family and Community Engagement Manager	16-31	NO	NO
Boston Day and Evening Academy Charter	Director of Operations	14-27	NO	NO
Boston Green Academy Horace Mann Charter School	Operational Leader/ ELA Teacher 11/12	19-38	NO	NO
Boston Preparatory Charter Public	Executive Director	25-49	NO	NO
Boston Renaissance Charter Public	Family Engagement & Community Partners Liaison	34-67	NO	YES
Bridge Boston Charter School	Director of Family Engagement	13-26	NO	YES
Brooke Charter School	Chief Operating Officer	73-146	NO	NO
City on a Hill Charter Public School	Family and Community Engagement Coordinator	9-18	NO	NO
Codman Academy Charter Public	Director of Student Support	15-30	NO	YES



MVA CITY AUDIT

The City of Boston

cont.

Boston-Based Charter School(s) | 2021-22 AY (Table 2)

Charter School Name	Full Time Position of the Designated Homeless Liaison	Projected Range of Student Homeless Population without Barriers	Definition & Education Rights of SEH on Website?	Family Handbook States SEH Definition and Rights?
Academic Year	2023-24	2021-22	2023-2024	2023-2024
Conservatory Lab Charter	Registrar of Enrollment and Transportation	16-33	NO	NO
Dudley Street Neighborhood Charter School	Not Mentioned	12-24	NO	NO
Edward M. Kennedy Academy for Health Careers	Head of School	16-32	NO	YES
Excel Academy Charter	Director of Student Recruitment & Enrollment	48-96	YES	NOT FOUND
Helen Y. Davis Leadership Academy Charter	Clinical Social Worker	3-5	YES	YES
KIPP Academy Boston Charter	Director of Compliance and Information Management	22-43	YES	YES
MATCH Charter Public School	Executive Director	16-33	YES	NO
Neighborhood House Charter	Director of Family Engagement	48-96	NO	NO
Roxbury Preparatory Charter	Regional Director of School Support	46-92	NO	NO
UP Academy Charter School of Boston	Director of Operations	13-27	NO	NO
UP Academy Charter School of Dorchester	Office Manager	27-55	NO	NO



MVA CITY AUDIT

The City of Holyoke	Local Public School District	Holyoke Public Schools
	% of SEH	10%
	Number of Identified	512
	Projected District Homeless Population	218 - 436

Holyoke-Based Charter School(s) | 2021-22 AY

District and School Name	Full Time Position of the Designated Homeless Liaison	Projected Range of Student Homeless Population without Barriers	Definition & Education Rights of SEH on Website?	Family Handbook States SEH Definition and Rights?
Academic Year	2023-24	2021-22	2023-2024	2023-2024
Holyoke Community Charter	School Director	20-40	NO	YES

The City of Lowell	Local Public School District	Lowell Public Schools
	% of SEH	14%
	Number of Identified	1,968
	Projected District Homeless Population	511- 1,021

Lowell-Based Charter School(s) | 2021-22 AY

District and School Name	Full Time Position of the Designated Homeless Liaison	Projected Range of Student Homeless Population without Barriers	Definition & Education Rights of SEH on Website?	Family Handbook States SEH Definition and Rights?
Academic Year	2023-24	2021-22	2023-2024	2023-2024
Collegiate Charter School of Lowell	School Social Worker	37 - 74	NO	NO
Lowell Community Charter Public	Deputy Chief Operating Officer	33 - 66	NO	YES
Lowell Middlesex Academy Charter	Executive Director	1 - 3	NO	NO



MVA CITY AUDIT

<h2>The City of New Bedford</h2>	Local Public School District	New Bedford Public Schools
	% of SEH	10%
	Number of SEH Identified	1,238
	Projected District Homeless Population	402 - 803

New Bedford-Based Charter School(s) | 2021-22 AY

District and School Name	Full Time Position of the Designated Homeless Liaison	Projected Range of Student Homeless Population without Barriers	Definition & Education Rights of SEH on Website?	Family Handbook States SEH Definition and Rights?
Academic Year	2023-24	2021-22	2023-2024	2023-2024
Global Learning Charter Public	Social Worker	18 - 36	NO	NO
Alma del Mar Charter School	Chief of Staff	36 - 72	NO	NO

<h2>The City of Worcester</h2>	Local Public School District	Worcester Public Schools
	% of SEH	9%
	Number of Identified	2,160
	Projected District Homeless Population	900 - 1,800

Worcester-Based Charter School(s) | 2021-22 AY

District and School Name	Full Time Position of the Designated Homeless Liaison	Projected Range of Student Homeless Population without Barriers	Definition & Education Rights of SEH on Website?	Family Handbook States SEH Definition and Rights?
Academic Year	2023-24	2021-22	2023-2024	2023-2024
Abby Kelley Foster Charter Public	Guidance Counselor	49 - 98	NO	NO
Learning First Charter Public School	Guidance Counselor	15 - 31	YES	YES



MVA CITY AUDIT

The City of Springfield	Local Public School District	Springfield Public Schools
	% of SEH	6%
	Number of Identified	1,328
	Projected District Homeless Population	1,048 - 2,096

Springfield-Based Charter School(s) | 2021-22 AY

District and School Name	Full Time Position of the Designated Homeless Liaison	Projected Range of Student Homeless Population without Barriers	Definition & Education Rights of SEH on Website?	Family Handbook States SEH Definition and Rights?
Baystate Academy Charter Public School (District)	Director of Student Support Services	19 - 38	NO	NO
Libertas Academy Charter School (District)	Managing Director, School Systems & Operations	2 - 4	NO	NO
Martin Luther King Jr. Charter School of Excellence (District)	Executive Director	2 - 4	NO	NO
Phoenix Academy Public Charter High School Springfield (District)	Director of Operations	5 - 10	NO	YES
Springfield International Charter	Director of Special Education	59 - 117	YES	YES
Springfield Preparatory Charter School (District)	Director of Academics	10 - 19	NO	NO
Veritas Preparatory Charter School (District)	Director of Business Management	17 - 33	NO	NO



MVA CITY AUDIT

<h2>The City of Brockton</h2>		Local Public School District	Brockton Public Schools	
		% of SEH	3%	
		Number of SEH Identified	532	
		Projected District Homeless Population	587-1,174	
<h3>Brockton-Based Charter School(s) 2021-22 AY</h3>				
District and School Name	Full Time Position of the Designated Homeless Liaison	Projected Range of Student Homeless Population without Barriers	Definition & Education Rights of SEH on Website?	Family Handbook States SEH Definition and Rights?
New Heights Charter School of Brockton (District)	Director of Student Services	17-33	NO	NO

<h2>The City of Lynn</h2>		Local Public School District	Lynn Public Schools	
		% of SEH	8%	
		Number of Identified	1,175	
		Projected District Homeless Population	606 - 1,211	
<h3>Lynn-Based Charter School(s) 2021-22 AY</h3>				
District and School Name	Full Time Position of the Designated Homeless Liaison	Projected Range of Student Homeless Population without Barriers	Definition & Education Rights of SEH on Website?	Family Handbook States SEH Definition and Rights?
KIPP Academy Lynn Charter (District)	Director of Student Services	72 - 144	YES	YES





METHODOLOGY

**OVERARCHING METHODS USED TO
EXECUTE THE DOCUMENT ANALYSIS
INFORMING THIS REPORT**

METHODOLOGY

Content analysis is a research method for analyzing and drawing inferences about verbal, written, visual, or any other meaningful document type. The purpose of a content analysis is to represent facts in order to provide knowledge and apply new insights as a practical guide to action [7][8]. This publication reports the results of a qualitative content analysis of publicly available data across several public platforms—Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education (DESE), the U.S. Department of Education, ED Data Express Dashboard, and individual LEA websites. Different pieces of data were pulled and combined across the different platforms to capture a more comprehensive and complete snapshot of student homelessness in Massachusetts. The following subsections detail the content analysis processes that resulted in findings for each section of this report.

Enrollment for Students Experiencing Homelessness

Each year, DESE releases a student enrollment report. To better understand trends in student enrollment across Massachusetts, we compiled every student enrollment report between the 2016-2017 school year and the 2021-2022 school year. We then focused particularly on enrollment data for students experiencing homelessness. DESE does not report data for LEAs that enroll less than 10 students in any given subpopulation. So, to gain a more accurate enrollment count of students experiencing homelessness, we combined the DESE student enrollment data with enrollment data from the ED Data Express Dashboard, which has a lower threshold for data reporting. The ED Data Express Dashboard does not report data for LEAs that enroll less than 3 students in any given subpopulation, thereby allowing us to create a combined data set and fill in missing values.

For LEAs that reported a total of 0 students experiencing homelessness across the DESE and the ED Dashboard datasets, we also reported 0 in our combined dataset. However, in cases where there was no data documented because enrollment for students experiencing homelessness was lower than the established thresholds to report, in our combined dataset, we reported each LEA as having 2 students



METHODOLOGY

experiencing homelessness—opting for the more generous estimate. After ensuring no missing values were in our dataset, we used DESE’s School and District Profiles to identify each LEAs as either a “charter school” or a “non-charter school.” The complete, combined dataset was used to inform Figure 1, which reports a projected under-enrollment for students experiencing homelessness between 2021-2022.

Under-Enrollment

To estimate a projected range of students experiencing homelessness in MA charter schools, we first applied the 5-10% benchmark to the number of low-income students enrolled. Low-income was qualified by participation in free-reduced lunch programs. From this figure, we then subtracted 690, the highest estimated enrollment number for students experiencing homelessness in our dataset. The following formulas informed Figure 1:

$$\# \text{ of Low Income Students Enrolled in 2021-22 AY} * 0.05 = \text{Estimated 5\% of Students Experiencing Homelessness in 2021-22}$$

$$\# \text{ of Low Income Students Enrolled in 2021-22 AY} * 0.10 = \text{Estimated 10\% of Students Experiencing Homelessness in 2021-22}$$

Barriers to Enrolling & Serving Students Experiencing Homelessness

Figure 2 outlines potential barriers to enrolling and serving students experiencing homelessness in charter schools. The barriers identified in this section represent findings from qualitative data gathered via personal meetings and conversations with various charter school interest holders across several months of conducting this research. Findings represent diverse perspectives including those of teachers, administrations, district leaders from different MA charter schools, and leaders from the Massachusetts Public Charter School Association and DESE.



METHODOLOGY

The Role of Homeless Liaisons

To gather information about homeless liaisons at each LEA, we used the DESE School and District Profiles to identify public charter schools in Massachusetts operating in the 2021-2022 academic school year. Using the “People” tab provided in each LEAs profile, we identified the homeless liaison. We also accessed a list of individual staff members designated to fulfill different functional roles at their respective LEA (i.e., school leader, COVID contact, title 1 coordinator, etc.).

Using that list, we searched the name of the homeless liaison to identify and document their other roles. We then searched their specific LEA’s website to locate and document their official title in the staff directory. This process informed Figures 4, 5, and 6, which report the total number of roles commonly fulfilled by homeless liaisons and the personnel who most often serve as homeless liaisons.

MVA State Audit: Publicly Available Documents for Supporting Students Experiencing Homelessness

We actively searched the websites of each LEA to identify whether they explicitly provided information about the rights, resources, and services to which the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act entitles students and families. Upon accessing the website, we searched the following keywords: homeless, homelessness, McKinney, and McKinney-Vento. Some websites offered pages entitled, “family resources” and/or “additional support,” which we also searched. Cases where homelessness was defined and the educational rights of students and families were listed (i.e., transportation, enrollment accommodations, etc.) were categorized as “Yes.” Cases where no information was readily available or did not specifically include the educational rights afforded by McKinney-Vento were categorized as “No.”

After searching LEA websites for McKinney-Vento information, we searched for the most recent student/family handbooks. Upon retrieving downloadable PDF versions of each handbook, we searched the following terms: homeless, homelessness, McKinney, and McKinney-Vento.



METHODOLOGY

Similarly, if the handbook shared the McKinney-Vento definition of student homelessness and explicitly stated student rights under McKinney-Vento, it was categorized as “Yes,” and if it didn’t, it was categorized as “No.”

This information was used to inform Figure 7, which reports the website and family handbook analysis results. It also informed the MVA City Audits.

MVA City Audits

All of the data extracted from the previous sections of this methodology contributed to the MVA City Audits. It’s important to note that this report focuses on 76 of the 82 charter schools in the state of Massachusetts. The reason is that we did not include LEAs that were closed or just opening during our analysis—the 2021-2022 school year.

Projected Range of Student Homeless Population

Using DESE data on the number of students who receive free-reduced lunch, we applied the 5-10% benchmark to calculate the potential under-enrollment of students experiencing homelessness. To estimate a range for the number of students experiencing homelessness, we used the following formulas:

$$\begin{array}{l} \# \text{ of Low Income Students Enrolled} \quad * \quad 0.05 \\ \# \text{ of Low Income Students Enrolled} \quad * \quad 0.10 \end{array}$$

Conclusion

Content analysis aims to make valid inferences to inform the context in which the content is used [8]. In line with this goal, all of the sections above and the information extracted from the analysis informed the recommendations of this report.

Note: Analyses for this report were conducted between September 2023 and March 2024. Having discussed findings and worked collaboratively on drafts of this report with different charter school interest holders, updates were made to several school websites and handbooks. Thus, some may no longer reflect the findings of this report.



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