



Institute for Children,
Poverty & Homelessness

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STUDENT HOMELESSNESS GROWING FASTEST IN RURAL AMERICA

New York, NY—While student homelessness is on the rise nationwide, it is growing at nearly four times the national rate in rural America, according to a new report from the Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH). The report, [*Student Homelessness in Rural America*](#), finds that rural student homelessness has increased 11% since the 2013-14 school year, to over 162,000 students, compared to 3% growth nationwide.

Though the homeless student population continues to be predominantly urban, policy responses often leave rural homeless students—who face fundamentally different challenges than their non-rural peers—undercounted and underserved. Examining data from the U.S. Department of Education, ICPH sought to better understand the scope of rural student homelessness and what its rapid growth means for rural America.

This report documents the depth and breadth of this growth. Increases are widespread across 38 states, 14 of which saw increases at more than twice the national rural growth rate. In 15 states, the number of rural homeless students grew even as total rural student enrollment declined.

This steep climb may have been compounded by better identification practices at the school level. “On the upside, increased identification means that children without a safe and permanent place to call home are no longer invisible,” explains Andrea Pizano, ICPH Chief of Staff. “However, it also reveals an underlying crisis of housing instability faced by many rural communities, along with a growing demand for resources.”

ICPH also found that homeless students in rural communities are disproportionately underfunded. Data shows only 42% of rural homeless students attend school in a district with federally allocated funding to support homeless students, compared to 67% of their non-rural peers.

“The first step in addressing the needs of homeless children is to ensure they are identified and counted.” said Josef Kannegaard, Principal Policy Analyst at ICPH. “Though numbers are on the rise in every region of the country, the funding has not kept pace. Understanding the local dynamics of this issue ensures that the one in eight homeless students who live in rural communities are not forgotten.”

The Institute for Children, Poverty, and Homelessness (ICPH) is a New York City-based policy research organization focused on family homelessness in New York City and throughout the United States. For more information, visit www.ICPHusa.org.

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