



STUDENT HOMELESSNESS: LESSONS FROM THE YOUTH RISK BEHAVIOR SURVEY

PART II: RACIAL AND ETHNIC EQUITY: DISPROPORTIONALITY AND ACTION STEPS FOR SCHOOLS

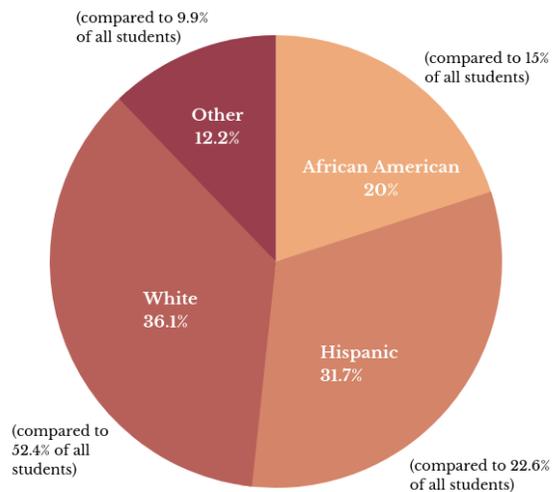
The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) was first developed by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) in 1990 to assess the health risk behaviors of youth and adults in the United States. For the first time since the survey has been widely administered, the 2017 YRBS optional question list included two questions pertaining to homelessness. SchoolHouse Connection analyzed demographic and risk factor data from the YRBS in 17 states¹, comparing high school students experiencing homelessness and those not experiencing homelessness. This series shares the striking and heartbreaking results of that analysis, with tangible action steps schools can take to promote safety and health for students experiencing homelessness.

SchoolHouse Connection’s analysis of YRBS data found that Black and Hispanic high school students are disproportionately likely to experience homelessness. Twenty percent of high school students experiencing homelessness identify as Black or African-American, compared to 15% of all high school students. 31.7% of high school students experiencing homelessness identify as Hispanic or Latino, compared to 22.6% of all high school students.

RACIAL AND ETHNIC MINORITIES ARE OVER-REPRESENTED AMONG HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Data: Risk and Resilience: Differences in Risk Factors and Health Outcomes Between Homeless and Non-Homeless Students in 2017 YRBS Data

Read the full paper: <http://bit.ly/SKC-YRBS2018>



These data mean that Black high school students are 2.67 times more likely to experience homelessness, and Hispanic high school students are 1.68 times more likely to experience homelessness, than White high school students.

LIKELIHOOD TO EXPERIENCE HOMELESSNESS

Black high
school students



2.67 TIMES

White high
school students



Hispanic high
school students



1.68 TIMES

White high
school students



Data: Risk and Resilience: Differences in Risk Factors and Health Outcomes Between Homeless and Non-Homeless Students in 2017 YRBS Data
Read the full paper: <http://bit.ly/SHC-YRBS2018>

The YRBS homelessness data described above include high school students who experience homelessness as part of families, as well as high school students who are homeless by themselves. [Studies of unaccompanied homeless youth](#) that also include young adults have found similar disproportionalities for both racial and ethnic minorities. In schools, racial and ethnic equity requires a deliberate, district-wide commitment over time.

Action Steps for Schools

1. Adopt positive school discipline policies district-wide. [Students experiencing homelessness are subjected to punitive discipline measures much more often than their housed peers.](#) The risk of suspension or expulsion increases exponentially for students of color experiencing homelessness.

Positive or restorative justice policies, in place of traditional punitive models, can reduce victimization of students of color. Punitive models disproportionately harm students of color, who are more likely to be referred to the juvenile justice system due to offenses that occur in school. Punitive models also fail to address the systemic problems underlying school misconduct and lead to alienation by interfering with school relationships that promote achievement. In contrast, restorative justice practices bring together individuals affected by misconduct in a communal, trauma-informed, non-hierarchical dialogue about the consequences of harm, providing them an opportunity to discuss what is to be done to repair the situation.

2. Develop and implement a school district or charter school data-driven [Racial and Ethnic Justice Action Plan](#). The Plan should be based on the lived experiences of students of color and address racial equity impact assessments; funding inequities; ongoing training and support for all school staff to build a positive school climate; implicit bias; curricula and extra-curricular opportunities that respect and elevate the experiences of students of color; and other equity issues, with the voices of youth of color at the center.

3. Ensure that the McKinney-Vento homeless liaisonⁱⁱ has adequate time and capacity to build relationships with students experiencing homelessness, and/or designate and train school building-level liaisons, such as school counselors or social workers, to build those relationships. Emphasize that such relationships are a valuable part of teaching and learning.
4. Ensure that the McKinney-Vento homeless liaison has adequate time and capacity to participate in school climate activities and to collaborate with community agencies that provide food, health and mental health care, transportation, and housing, to meet students' needs outside of school. These added services help show students they are valued by their school.

Resources

Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund and National Women's Law Center, [*Listening to Latinas: Barriers to High School Graduation*](#)

NAACP, [*Advancing Equity in Education Webinar*](#)
[*National School Climate Center*](#)

SchoolHouse Connection, [*Positive School Discipline Practices for Students Experiencing Homelessness*](#)
Teaching Tolerance, [*Examining Your School's Climate*](#)

ⁱ AK, AR, CA, CO, DE, HI, ID, IL, KS, KY, ME, MT, NH, NC, PA, VA, WI.

ⁱⁱ Every local educational agency (school district and charter school) must have a designated McKinney-Vento homeless liaison to ensure students experiencing homelessness can enroll, attend, and succeed in school.