



Advocates for Children of New York
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News Release

For Immediate Release

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More than 101,000 New York City Students Experienced Homelessness in 2020-21

40 Organizations Call on Mayor-elect Adams to Overhaul Educational Support in Shelters

November 8, 2021 (NEW YORK CITY) — Today, Advocates for Children of New York released [new data](#) showing that more than 101,000 New York City students were identified as homeless during the 2020-2021 school year, a 42% increase since the start of the decade and a number that has remained stubbornly persistent in recent years: last year marked the sixth consecutive school year that more than 100,000 New York City students experienced homelessness.

Last year, as the pandemic raged and most students continued to learn remotely, nearly 28,000 of them did so while living in New York City's shelters, and approximately 65,000 lived "doubled-up" with friends or family, staying temporarily with others in overcrowded housing. An additional 3,860 students were unsheltered last year, living in cars, parks, or abandoned buildings. While the total number of students identified as homeless was 9% lower than in 2019-20, some of this decline is likely attributable to the drop in overall public school enrollment (3.3%), as well as the difficulty schools experienced identifying students whose housing situation changed while they were learning remotely.

While COVID-19 has further magnified the educational challenges facing students who are homeless, this group of students has long experienced tremendous obstacles to success in school. For example, in 2019, only 29% of students experiencing homelessness in grades 3-8 were reading proficiently, according to the state tests, 20 percentage points lower than the rate for their permanently housed peers.

Students living in shelter—94% of whom are Black or Hispanic—face even more barriers to educational success. Prior to the pandemic, 57% of students living in shelter were already chronically absent—missing at least one out of every 10 school days in 2019-20—and only 52% of students living in shelter graduated high school in four years, 27 percentage points lower than the citywide average graduation rate.

"No child should be homeless, but while Mayor-elect Adams' administration makes plans to tackle New York City's housing and homelessness crisis, they must meet the immediate, daily educational needs of students who are homeless," said Kim Sweet, Executive Director of Advocates for Children.

Today, [AFC is joining more than 40 organizations in releasing recommendations](#) calling on Mayor-elect Adams to take bold action to address the educational needs of students experiencing homelessness. The groups are calling on the new administration to overhaul the educational support system in shelters, starting by hiring 150 shelter-based DOE Community Coordinators who have the skills and knowledge needed to help families navigate NYC's complex school system and connect students with educational supports. The groups are also urging Mayor-elect Adams to launch an interagency initiative to tackle the educational barriers these students face, such as chronic absenteeism, transportation, and delays in enrollment and services.

“With the right support, schools can transform the lives of students who are homeless,” said Kim Sweet. “The next administration should bring together city agencies and charge them with ensuring every student who is homeless gets the support needed to succeed in school.”

The data is available at advocatesforchildren.org/node/1875, and the joint recommendations are available at advocatesforchildren.org/sites/default/files/library/sth_recommendations_next_admin_11.2021.pdf.

About Advocates for Children of New York (AFC)

Since 1971, Advocates for Children of New York has worked to ensure a high-quality education for New York students who face barriers to academic success, focusing on students from low-income backgrounds who are at greatest risk for failure or discrimination in school because of their poverty, disability, race, ethnicity, immigrant or English Language Learner status, sexual orientation, gender identity, homelessness, or involvement in the foster care or juvenile justice systems. AFC uses four integrated strategies: free advice and legal representation for families of students; free trainings and workshops for parents, communities, and educators and other professionals to equip them to advocate on behalf of students; policy advocacy to effect change in the education system and improve education outcomes; and impact litigation to protect the right to quality education and compel needed reform.