As high as these numbers are, they are certainly an undercount given that the number of students enrolled does not capture: those who were never identified; school-aged children and youth who experience homelessness during the summer only; those who dropped out of school; or young children who are not enrolled in preschool programs administered by Local Educational Agencies.

According to data from the Institute for Children, Poverty & Homelessness (ICPH) about 1 in every 10 extremely poor 6-17 year-olds* were homeless in Rhode Island.

To learn more, visit: www.icphusa.org

*Extremely poor 6-17 year-olds are measured as those living at or below 50% of the Federal Poverty Level.
Students may experience homelessness at any point during their life, from Pre-K all the way through postsecondary education.

1.4% of children under age 6 experience homelessness in Rhode Island

Estimate based on number of school-age children experiencing homelessness each year.

Source: Administration for Children & Families, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

53 FAFSA applicants in Rhode Island were determined to be (or at risk of becoming) an unaccompanied homeless youth

Source: SchoolHouse Connection, This Is How I’m Going To Make A Life for Myself

Who Is Considered Homeless?

According to federal education law (the McKinney-Vento Act), a student is considered homeless who “lacks a fixed, regular, and adequate night-time residence.” This definition specifically includes children and youth living in emergency shelters and transitional housing; cars, campgrounds, and other places not meant for human habitation; hotels or motels due to lack of adequate alternative arrangements; and sharing the housing of others temporarily due to loss of housing, economic hardships, or similar reasons. Public schools, Head Start/Early Head Start Programs, programs that receive Child Care and Development Fund (CCDF) subsidies, institutions of higher education, and school meal programs are required under federal law or regulation to use this definition of homelessness.

63.5% of homeless students in Rhode Island’s public schools stayed with others while homeless

Source: NCHE, Consolidated State Profiles

Homelessness is not a homogenous experience. Students may be homeless with their families, on their own, or both on their own and with their families. They may stay in a shelter, motel, car, or with other people because they have nowhere else to go. Homelessness is often a recurring issue with many experiencing homelessness more than once.

A quality education is an essential component to ensure that children and youth are able to establish themselves as fiscally stable adults, preventing them from becoming homeless in the future. School can be at the forefront of preventing and ending student homelessness by serving as the epicenter of supports and resources those students and their families need.