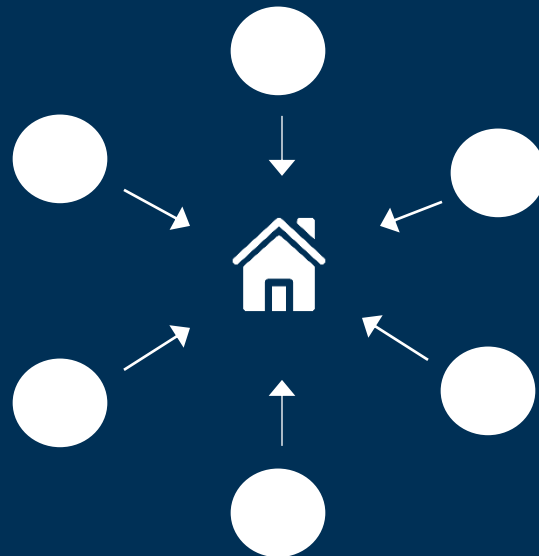


MECKLENBURG COUNTY

Child & Youth Homelessness

INTEGRATED DATA REPORT



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Mecklenburg County Community Support Services



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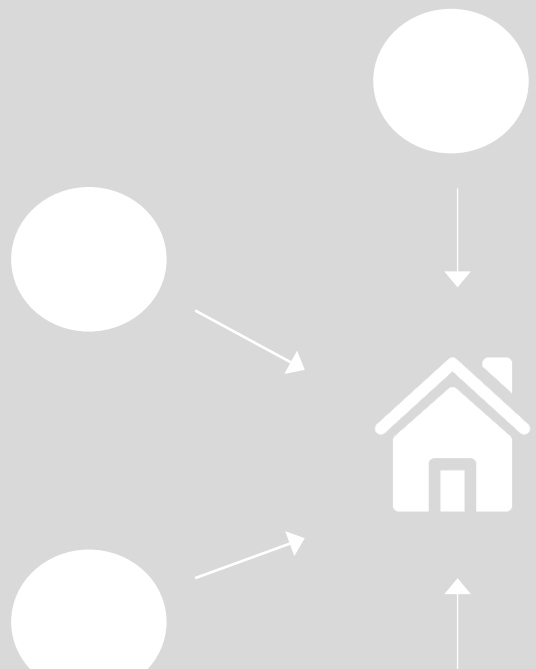
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PART 1: Overview of Integrated Data in Child and Youth Homelessness

This is Part 1 in a five-part integrated data report exploring the connections and gaps in services used by children and youth currently or previously experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability. Part 1 explores how integrated data can help improve the community's understanding of child and youth homelessness.

There are thousands of children and youth in households every year in Mecklenburg County that access housing or housing-related services as a result of their experience of homelessness and/or housing instability. This report focuses on children and youth currently or previously experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability. Part 1 highlights how integrated data can help to improve the community's understanding of child and youth homelessness.

Defining Child & Youth Homelessness

Definitions of child and youth homelessness vary by funding source. For the purpose of this integrated data report, there are two definitions used. One is set by The U.S. Department of Education (ED) and the other by The U.S. Department of Housing & Urban Development (HUD). Both definitions for homelessness include emergency shelter, transitional housing, and sleeping in unsheltered locations. However, the definition used by ED to define student homelessness also includes living in doubled up situations with family and/or friends; paying to stay in hotels or motels; abandoned in hospitals; and/or awaiting foster care placement. Most of the population experiencing student homelessness, including within Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, are residing in doubled up living situations, which does not necessarily overlap with the population experiencing homelessness as HUD defines it. Students experiencing homelessness in the school may either self-identify or be identified as homeless, qualifying them for access to McKinney-Vento resources. Thus, many students experiencing homelessness are often referred to as "McKinney-Vento homeless."

Child: under the age of 18

Youth: between 18 and 24

Unaccompanied youth: Youth who are not part of a family during their episode of homelessness

Building on Previous Research

In 2017, the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute's [2014-2015 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Family Homelessness Snapshot Report](#) explored factors associated with family homelessness and examined connections as well as gaps among students residing in emergency shelter and/or transitional housing facilities and students accessing McKinney-Vento resources offered by Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. To understand these connections, data were linked between homeless service agencies that enter data into the Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) and data from Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS).

This integrated data report expands upon the 2014-2015 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Family Homelessness Snapshot by including youth (ages 18 to 24) and exploring additional connections and utilization patterns with other housing-related sectors.

In addition to homeless services and McKinney-Vento services, which are designed to support a household during a housing crisis, there are additional community resources available to support children, youth and families. This includes Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services, which, among other things, helps families access mainstream resources to help them maintain housing.

This integrated data report will describe family homelessness, by focusing on the intersection of service utilization patterns among children and youth accessing services the following systems:

- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Continuum of Care's Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)
- Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS)
- Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services (DSS)

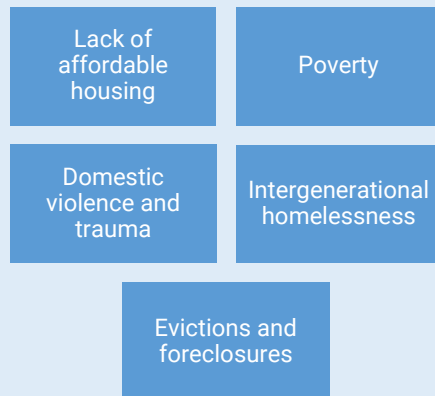
These systems provide a fraction of the services households may access. However, analysis of the intersection and utilizations patterns across these systems can inform how other related systems can positively impact children, youth, and families.

What are the factors associated with the cause and impact of family homelessness?

To learn more: [2014-2015 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Family Homelessness Snapshot Report](#)

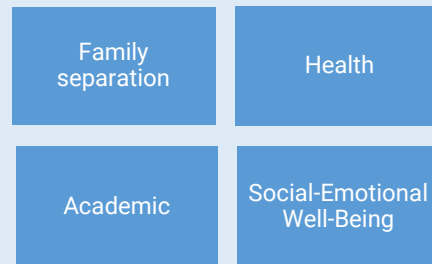
Causes

associated with family homelessness



Impact

of homelessness on families/children



Defining Systems and Services Used in Integrated Data Report

The systems included in this analysis contain population data that intersect with housing instability and homelessness assistance or services. Understanding the relationship between the number of people utilizing homelessness assistance and other types of services can shed light on opportunities for collaboration and coordination. The table below describes each system; the services examined as part of this analysis; and outlines the role each service plays in supporting children and youth experiencing homelessness or housing instability. Please note that the services included in this analysis do not reflect all of the services provided by these systems.

System	Services included in study	How these services support child and youth stability
Homeless Management Information System (HMIS)	Emergency Shelter (ES) Transitional Housing (TH) Permanent Housing (PH) Supportive Services Only Homelessness Prevention Coordinated Entry	Services provided by HMIS agencies support a household during and after a housing crisis to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. Children or youth experiencing homelessness may be connected to available temporary housing (ES or TH) or housing resources through Coordinated Entry. Children and youth sheltered in ES and TH are considered by definition “homeless”; Homelessness Prevention services are targeted toward households facing housing instability. Children and youth may access supportive services only or as a service provided in addition to permanent housing services.
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS)	McKinney-Vento Services	The McKinney-Vento Act ensures homeless children and youth have equal access to public education. McKinney-Vento services are designed to prevent the segregation of homeless students; require transportation to and from a student’s original school; require an expeditious enrollment process; make placement determinations based on the best interests of the child; and designate a local liaison for homeless children and youth. Children and youth identified as eligible for McKinney-Vento services may be considered either literally homeless (unsheltered or sheltered) or experiencing housing instability (such as in a hotel/motel or doubled up with family/friends).
Department of Social Services (DSS)	Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) Child Protective Services (CPS) Abuse and Neglect Foster Care	Food and Nutrition Services provide grocery benefits to aid low-income families and children, including those experiencing a housing crisis. When households experience housing cost burden (spend more than 30% of their income on housing-related expenses) and/or work in professions that pay low wages, the FNS benefit can provide critical support to help households afford basic necessities like food. Child Protective Services investigates allegations of abuse, neglect, and other situations, which may impact a child’s safety. CPS services may overlap with homeless services if a household is unable to provide a safe environment for children. A child may be placed into foster care if the household is unable to maintain stable housing or provide a safe environment for children.

Using Integrated Data to Connect the Dots

The integration of data across systems can illuminate gaps and connections across individual systems which may be impossible if analyzed separately. This analysis uses integrated data from [UNC Charlotte Urban Institute's Institute for Social Capital \(ISC\) Community Database](#) to link three different systems (HMIS, CMS, and DSS) that households experiencing housing instability and/or homeless may utilize before, during or after a housing crisis.

Children and youth included in this analysis were identified as currently or previously experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability. Housing and homelessness services related to each housing situation (homelessness, housing instability, exited to permanent housing) are indicated in the boxes below.

Homelessness	Housing Instability	Exited to Permanent Housing
Emergency Shelter (HMIS) Transitional Housing (HMIS) McKinney-Vento (CMS) Supportive Services (HMIS) Coordinated Entry (HMIS)	McKinney-Vento (CMS) Homelessness Prevention (HMIS) Supportive Services Only (HMIS)	Permanent Housing (HMIS) Supportive Services (HMIS)

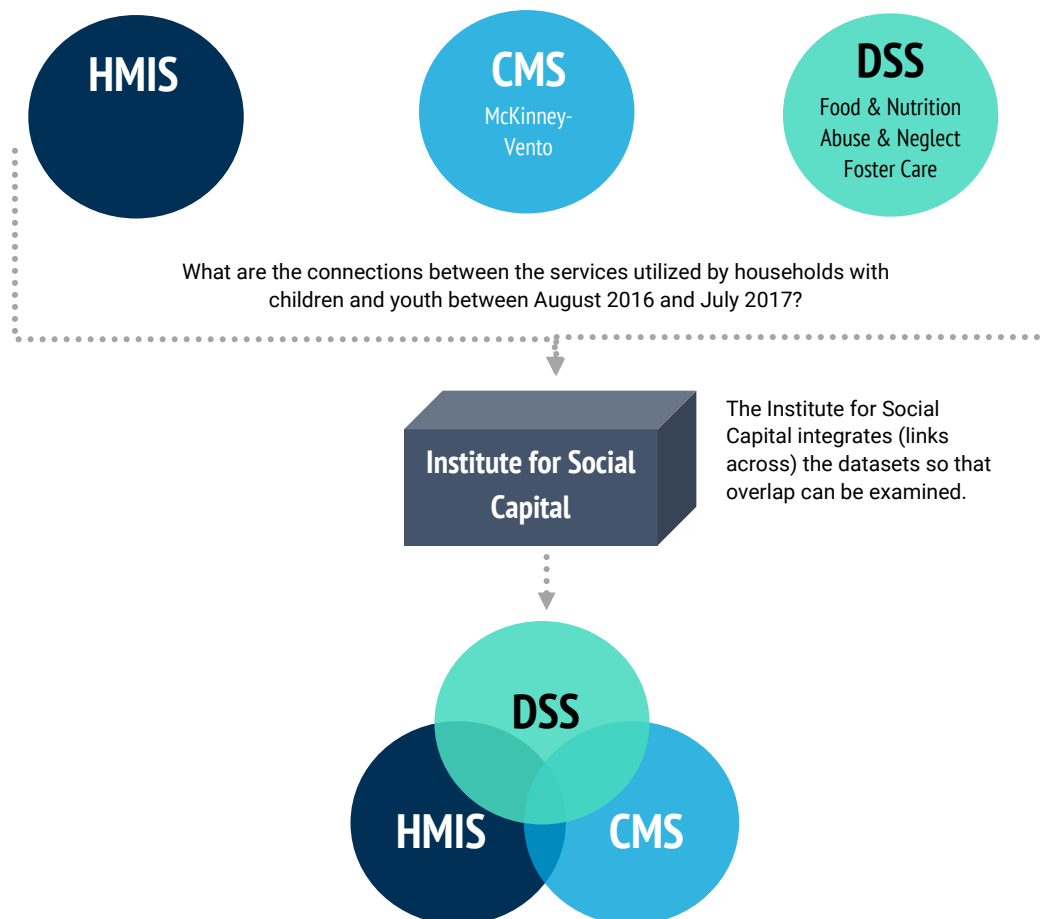
PART 2: How many children and youth experienced homelessness, housing instability, or recent homelessness from 2016 to 2017?

This is Part 2 in a five-part integrated data report exploring the connections and gaps in services used by children and youth currently or previously experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability. Part 2 explores connections between children and youth accessing services from HMIS agencies and students identified for McKinney-Vento services by CMS.

HMIS and McKinney-Vento (CMS)

Services provided by HMIS agencies support a household during and after a housing crisis to ensure that homelessness is rare, brief, and non-recurring. Children or youth experiencing homelessness may be connected to available temporary housing (ES or TH) or housing resources through Coordinated Entry. Children and youth sheltered in ES and TH are considered by definition “homeless”; Homelessness Prevention services are targeted toward households facing housing instability. Children and youth may access supportive services only or as a service provided in addition to permanent housing services.

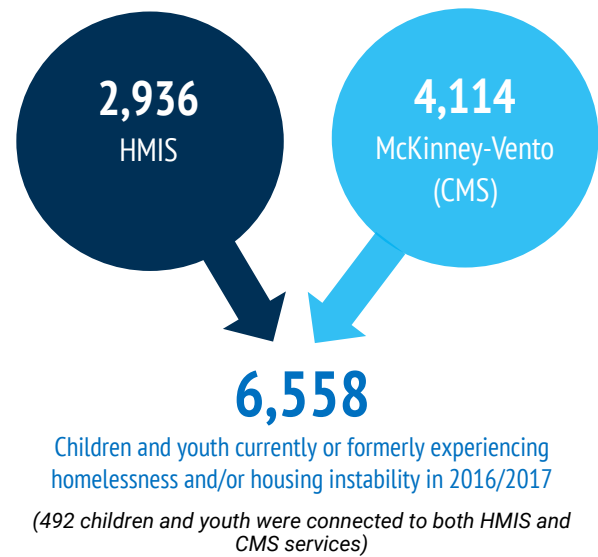
The McKinney-Vento Act ensures homeless children and youth have equal access to public education. McKinney-Vento services are designed to prevent the segregation of homeless students; require transportation to and from a student’s original school; require an expeditious enrollment process; make placement determinations based on the best interests of the child; and designate a local liaison for homeless children and youth. Children and youth identified as eligible for McKinney-Vento services may be considered either literally homeless (unsheltered or sheltered) or experiencing housing instability (such as in a hotel/motel or doubled up with family/friends).



Between August 1, 2016 and July 31, 2017 (2016/2017), there were 2,936 children and youth accessing services through an HMIS agency. During the same school year, CMS identified 4,114 students as eligible for McKinney-Vento services.

In total, there were 6,558 children and youth that accessed services through an HMIS agency and/or were identified as McKinney-Vento in the 2016/2017 school year. Of those, 492 children and youth were accessing both HMIS and McKinney-Vento services.

The number of students identified as experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability is underreported by McKinney-Vento numbers. Students experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability may not be identified as McKinney-Vento for a variety of reasons such as lack of knowledge about the program; lack of self-report; or failure among staff to identify students. It is estimated that a large proportion of McKinney-Vento students are identified when transportation to school is needed.



HMIS

Age

Of the 2,936 children and youth in 2016/2017 receiving services from an HMIS agency, the largest share were children ages 6 to 12 years (34%), followed by children five years and younger (32%). Teenage children (ages 13 to 17) and youth (ages 18 to 24) represented smaller shares at 16% and 19% respectively.



Race

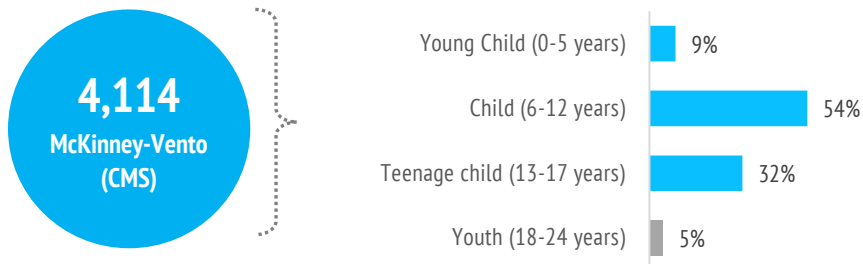
The majority (89%) of children receiving services from an HMIS agency identify as Black or African American. Three percent were Hispanic/Latinx and 7% were Other, which includes Asian, White, Multi-race, and American Indian or Unknown.



Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools- McKinney Vento Services

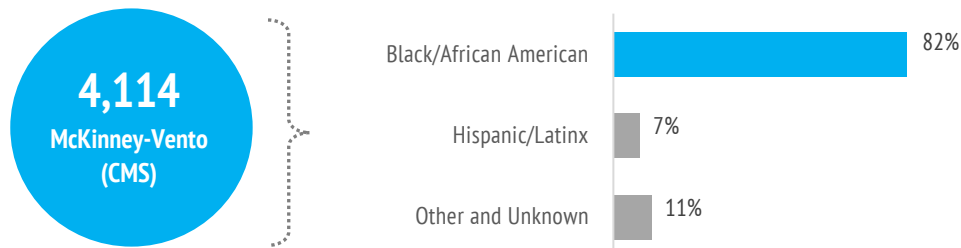
Age

During the 2016/2017 school year, 4,114 children and youth were identified as eligible for McKinney-Vento services by CMS. Of those, the largest share were children ages 6 to 12 years (54%), followed by teenagers ages 13 to 17 (32%). Young children (ages 5 and under) and youth (ages 18-24) represented a smallest share at 9% and 5% respectively. These smaller percentages make sense given that school age children typically range from 5 to 18 years old.



Race

The majority (82%) of students receiving McKinney-Vento services identified as Black or African American. This is slightly lower than the share of children and youth receiving services from an HMIS agency (89%). The share of McKinney-Vento students who identify as Hispanic/Latinx (7%) is slightly higher than children and youth in HMIS (3%).

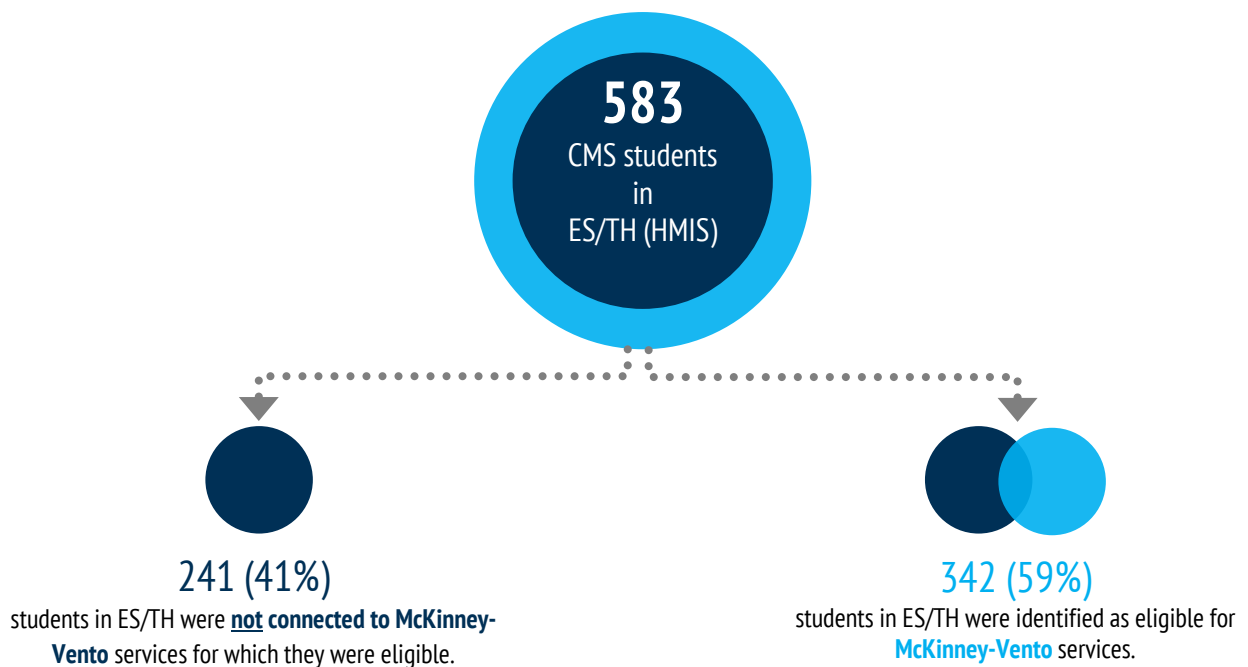


Cross System Service Utilization

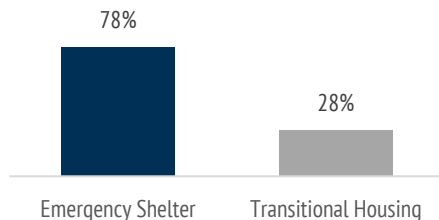
All students receiving emergency shelter (ES) or transitional housing (TH) services from an HMIS agency are eligible for McKinney Vento Services. However, as the following chart shows, not all who are eligible have been identified or connected with McKinney-Vento Services.

During the 2016/2017 school year, there were 583 Charlotte-Mecklenburg School (CMS) students that were sheltered in ES or TH at an HMIS agency. Of the 583 students living in ES or TH at some point during the school year, only 59% (342) were connected to McKinney-Vento services by CMS. Forty-one percent of students (or 241 students) in ES or TH were not identified for McKinney-Vento Services.

Students experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability may not be identified as McKinney-Vento for a variety of reasons such as lack of knowledge about the program; lack of self-report; or failure among staff to identify students. Transitional housing is considered homeless under HUD's definition, however a family in transitional housing may not self-identify as homeless.¹ Of the 241 students not identified as McKinney-Vento, 28% were in TH at some point during the year and 78% were in ES at some point during the year (15 students stayed in both TH and ES).



Of those not connected, 78% had stayed in emergency shelter at some point and 28% had stayed in transitional housing.



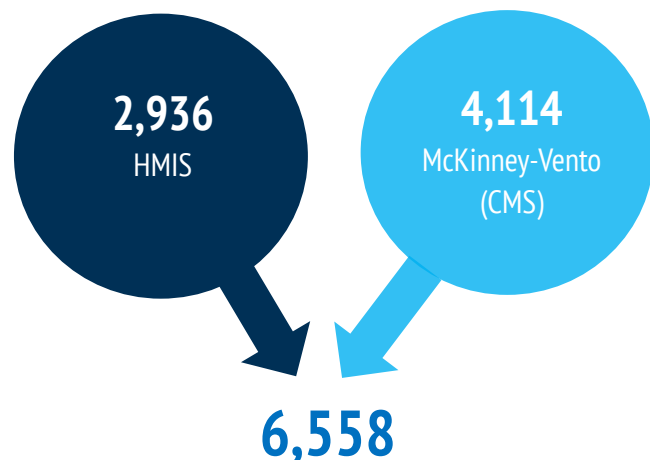
¹ After the 2014-2015 Family Snapshot report was released in 2017, CMS placed an additional social worker at the Salvation Army Center of Hope to try and decrease the gap in students experiencing literal homelessness and accessing MKV services. This change occurred in 2017, so the 2016/2017 data presented in this report come from before this change was implemented.

PART 3: How many housing-vulnerable children and youth were also connected to food and nutrition, child protection, and foster care services?

This is Part 3 in a five-part integrated data report exploring the connections and gaps in services used by children and youth currently or previously experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability. Part 3 explores connections between the 6,558 children and youth identified as housing-vulnerable and services provided by Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services (DSS) from August 2016 to July 2017.

The **6,558** children and youth included in this section were identified as currently or previously experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability through services provided by HMIS agencies and CMS- McKinney Vento. Housing and homelessness services related to each housing situation (homelessness, housing instability, exited to permanent housing) are indicated in the boxes below.

Homelessness
Emergency Shelter (HMIS) Transitional Housing (HMIS) McKinney-Vento (CMS) Coordinated Entry (HMIS) Supportive Services Only (HMIS)
Housing Instability
McKinney-Vento (CMS) Homelessness Prevention (HMIS) Supportive Services Only (HMIS)
Exited to Permanent Housing
Permanent housing (HMIS) Supportive Services (HMIS)



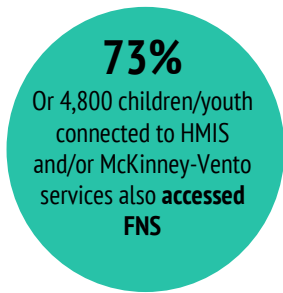
Children and youth experienced homelessness, housing instability, or were recently homeless in 2016/2017

(492 children and youth were connected to both HMIS and CMS McKinney-Vento services)

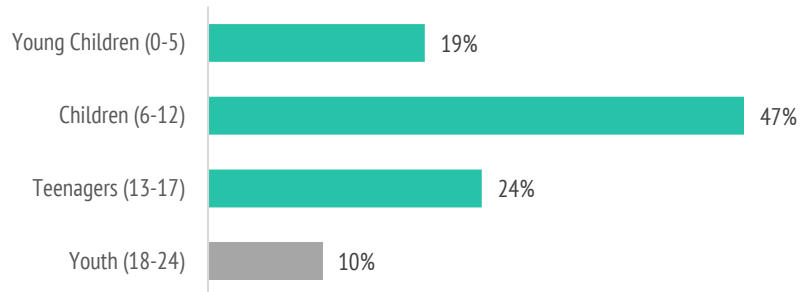
Food and Nutrition Services (FNS)

Food and Nutrition Services (FNS) provide grocery benefits to aid low-income families and children, including those experiencing a housing crisis. When households experience housing cost burden (spend more than 30% of their income on housing-related expenses) and/or work in professions that pay low wages, the FNS benefit can provide critical support to help households afford basic necessities like food.

From August 1st, 2016 to July 31st, 2017, 73% (or 4,800) of all 6,558 children and youth receiving services from an HMIS agency or identified as eligible for McKinney-Vento services were in households that also accessed food and nutrition services from the Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services. Of those 4,800 children and youth accessing Food and Nutrition Services, nearly half were children ages 6 to 12 (47%).

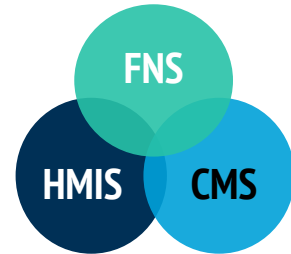


Children and youth in HMIS and/or McKinney-Vento who received FNS



Cross System Service Utilization

Slightly over half (56%) of the 4,800 children and youth were only connected to FNS and McKinney-Vento services and were not receiving services from an HMIS agency. Over one-third (35%) of children and youth accessing FNS were receiving services through an HMIS agency but were not identified as McKinney-Vento, while only 9% were connected to both an HMIS agency and identified as eligible for McKinney-Vento services. Children and youth may be in only HMIS because they are eligible but have not been identified for McKinney-Vento services, or if they are receiving permanent housing services from an HMIS agency and are no longer considered homeless. Children and youth may be in only McKinney-Vento if their family is doubled up or living in a hotel but have not sought services from an HMIS agency.

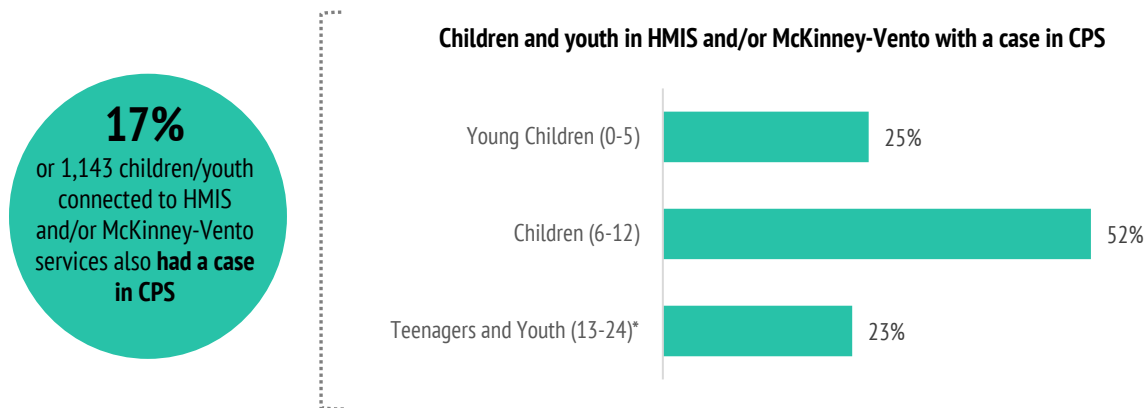


HMIS Only	HMIS & McKinney-Vento	McKinney-Vento Only
<p>35%</p> <p>of children/youth in families utilizing FNS were in HMIS but not identified as McKinney-Vento.</p>	<p>9%</p> <p>of children/youth in families utilizing FNS were identified as McKinney-Vento by CMS and were also receiving services through an HMIS agency.</p>	<p>56%</p> <p>of children/youth in families utilizing FNS were identified as McKinney-Vento, but not in HMIS.</p>

Child Protective Services (CPS)

Child Protective Services (CPS) investigates allegations of abuse, neglect, and other situations, which may impact a child's safety. CPS services may overlap with homeless services if a household is unable to provide a safe environment for children.

From August 2016 to July 2017, there were 1,512 Child and Protective Service (CPS) cases involving 1,143 children or youth involved with an HMIS agency and/or identified as McKinney-Vento. In total, 17% of children and youth receiving services from an HMIS agency or McKinney-Vento had a case in CPS. The majority (52%) were children, 25% were young children age 5 and under, and 23% were teenagers or youth.



*Fewer than 10 cases involved youth ages 18-24

Case Severity and Investigation Findings

Once a report has been filed, Child Protective Services cases are prioritized by severity. Cases of abuse, serious neglect, and dependency² are assigned to an Investigative Assessment Track, while cases of neglect that are considered less serious are assigned to the Family Assessment Track.

Investigative Assessment: Due to the sensitivity of the case, social workers do not notify parents prior to beginning the investigation. Investigations of abuse are initiated within 24 hours while investigations of serious neglect are initiated within 24 or 72 hours.

Family Assessment: Social workers work alongside families to identify barriers to child safety and prevent further incidence. Investigations are initiated within 72 hours.

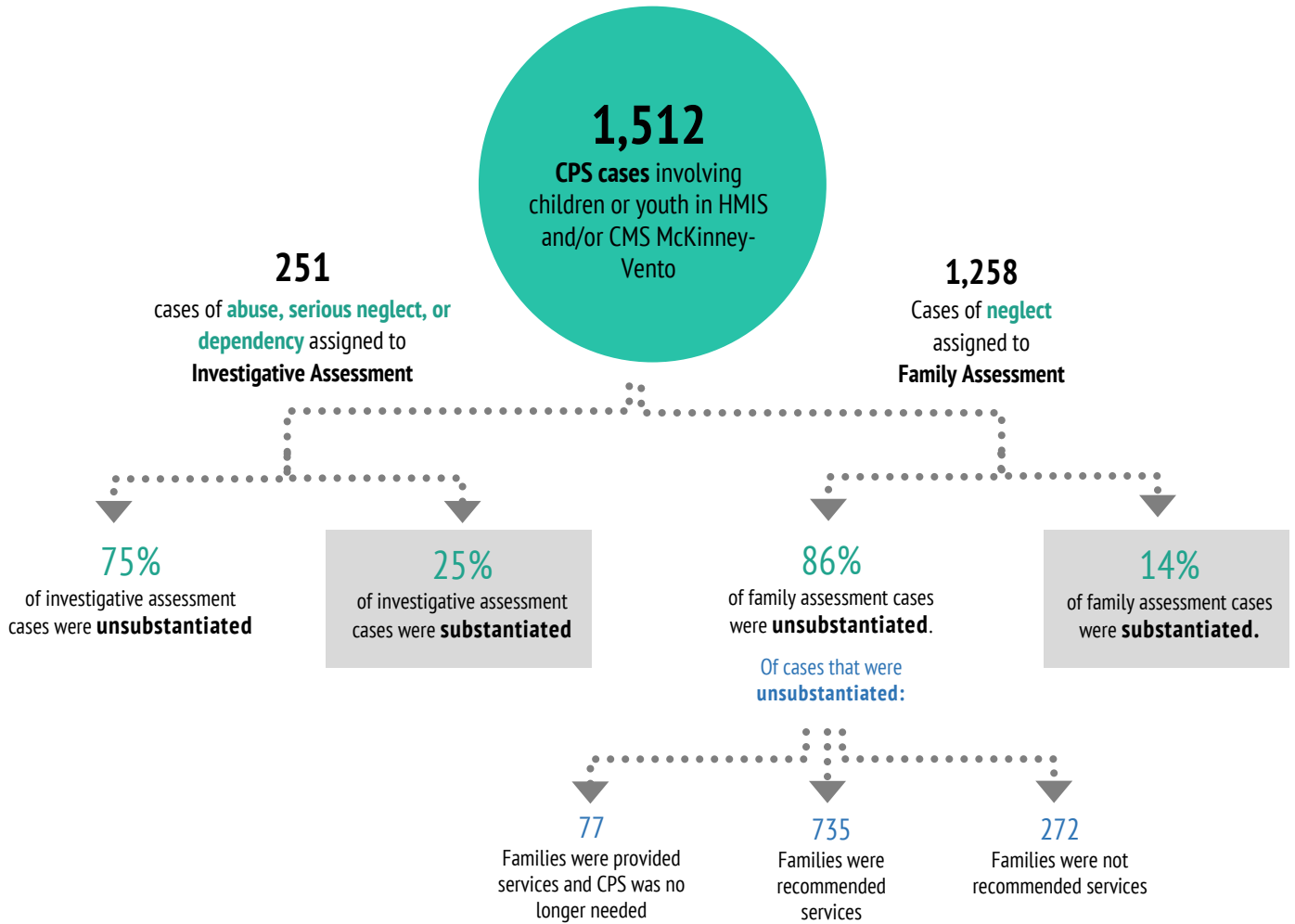
Investigations can result in a case being substantiated or unsubstantiated. **Substantiated** cases are those that require involuntary CPS services in order to ensure the safety of the child. **Unsubstantiated** cases are those in which the child is considered safe. However, services may have been used or recommended to the family over the course of an investigation. Unsubstantiated family assessment cases fall into one of three categories:

- **Services are not recommended:** the investigation concludes that the child is considered safe and not at risk for future maltreatment.
- **Services are recommended:** the child is considered safe, but the family has other non-safety related service needs.
- **Services were provided:** the child is considered safe and not at risk for future maltreatment because necessary services were provided during the Family Assessment.

² Dependency is when a child has need of care but his or her guardian is unable or unwilling to provide care.

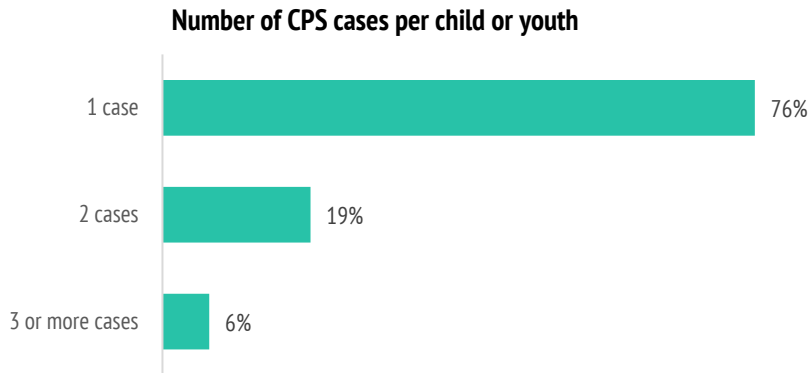
There were 1,512 CPS cases involving children or youth who were receiving services from an HMIS agency or McKinney-Vento. Of these, 16% of all cases were substantiated and required involuntary intervention from CPS services to ensure child safety.

The majority of CPS cases (1,258 or 83%) were assigned to the Family Assessment track. Most (86%) family assessment cases were unsubstantiated but families were recommended non-safety related services, such as housing, counseling, or childcare services. The minority of cases (251 or 17%) were assigned to Investigative Assessment for cases of abuse, serious neglect, or dependency.



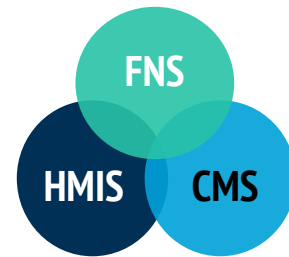
*3 of the 1512 cases did not report investigation outcome and were not included in the chart

Of those children involved with CPS, the majority (76%) had one case and 19% had two cases open during 2016/2017. A smaller proportion (6%) had 3 or more cases.



Cross System Service Utilization

During 2016/2017, there were 1,143 children and youth that had at least one CPS case and were receiving services from an HMIS agency and/or McKinney-Vento. Of the 1,143 children and youth, 61% were only connected to McKinney-Vento services, 30% were only connected to HMIS services, and 8% were connected to both McKinney-Vento and HMIS services. Children and youth may be in only HMIS because they are eligible but have not been identified for McKinney-Vento services, or if they are receiving permanent housing services from an HMIS agency and are no longer considered homeless. Children and youth may be in only McKinney-Vento if their family is doubled up or living in a hotel but have not sought services from an HMIS agency.

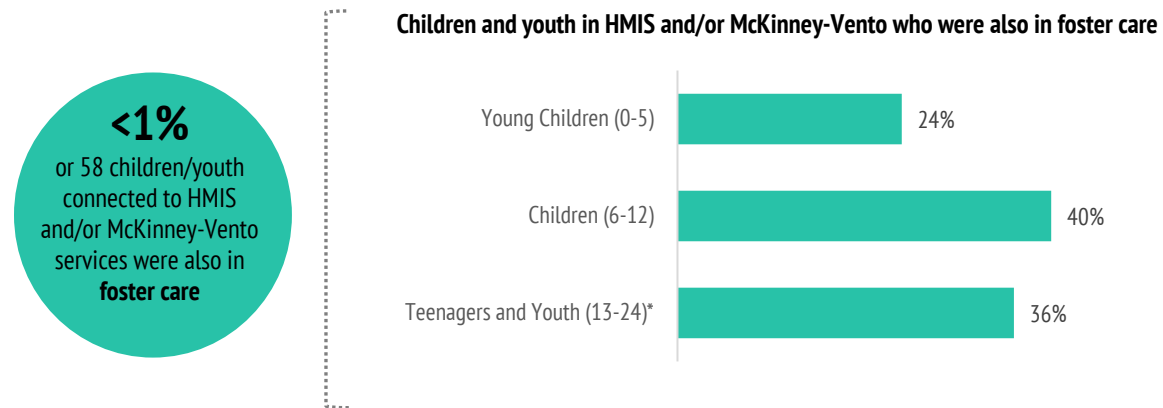


HMIS Only	HMIS & McKinney-Vento	McKinney-Vento Only
<p>30%</p> <p>of children/youth in families with cases in CPS were in HMIS but not identified as McKinney-Vento.</p>	<p>8%</p> <p>of children/youth in families with cases in CPS were identified as McKinney-Vento by CMS and were also receiving services through an HMIS agency.</p>	<p>61%</p> <p>of children/youth in families with cases in CPS were identified as McKinney-Vento, but not in HMIS.</p>

Foster Care Placement

A child may be placed into foster care if the household is unable to maintain stable housing or provide a safe environment for children.

From August 2016 to July 2017, less than 1% (or 58 children and youth) who received services from an HMIS agency and/or were eligible for McKinney-Vento services were also in foster care. Of the 58 in foster care, 40% were children ages 6 to 12, 36% were teenagers or youth, and 24% were young children age 5 and under.

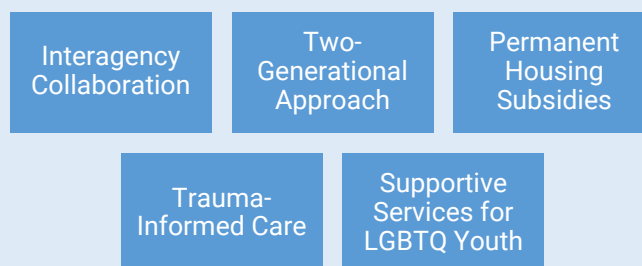


*Fewer than 10 cases involved youth ages 18-24

Part 4: Evidence Based Strategies to Address Children and Youth Homelessness & Housing Instability

This is Part 4 in a five-part integrated data report exploring the connections and gaps in services used by children and youth currently or previously experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability. Part 4 explores research-informed interventions that can help address child and youth homelessness.

Evidence-Based Strategies



Interagency Collaboration

What it is: Interagency collaboration is the process by which agencies from different sectors come together to interdependently problem-solve, share resources, and make joint decisions that will improve systems that serve children and families.ⁱ

Why it's important: Collaboration across systems increases system efficiency and improves client access to the services that help them attain family and housing stability.

Examples: Programs such as Keeping Families Together have found a way to address both housing and supportive service needs through interagency collaboration. Families who were eligible for the program (i.e. had been homeless for at least one year and had a child abuse or neglect case open with the local Child Protective Services) received permanent housing subsidies, case management, and service coordination. To achieve this, housing and child service agencies worked collaboratively to recruit families, increase communication between agencies, and build capacity by identifying new partnerships or providing needed training to staff and social workers.ⁱⁱ Results from the New York City pilot program (2007-2010) found that child maltreatment incidences decreased after families enrolled in the intervention (2.1 average incidences in the 3 years prior to the intervention and 0.6 average incidences during the 3 year intervention). Furthermore, families receiving the intervention were more stably housed after three years than families with similar backgrounds who were not in the intervention.ⁱⁱⁱ

Two-Generational Approach

What it is: The two-generational approach is an intervention aimed at providing both the parent(s) and the child with the support and resources they need to thrive. The Annie E. Casey Foundation identifies three key components to this two-generational approach: equipping parents with resources to secure jobs that can support their families and achieve financial stability; providing children with access to quality educational experiences; and providing parents with opportunities to build healthy relationships with their children and the tools to be advocates for them.^{iv}

Why it's important: Previous literature suggests a strong connection between a child's well-being (social-emotional, physical, and economic) and their family's well-being and stability.^v By addressing the needs of the whole family, the two-generation approach helps families build economic and housing stability that can be passed down from one generation to the next.

Examples: Preschool enrichment programs that include family engagement are an example of a two-generational approach. Programs such as Early Head Start have been found in longitudinal studies to reduce family separation and substantiated reports of child abuse. As a result of improved parenting and early child development, children enrolled in Early Head Start were found to have lower rates of violent arrests and substance use and higher rates of high school completion and college attendance.^{vi,vii} Two-generational approaches such as Early Head Start help to keep families together and drive economic opportunity for future generations in order to break the cycle of poverty.

Permanent Housing Subsidies

What it is: Permanent housing subsidies are government sponsored assistance designed to alleviate housing costs and provide a pathway to stable housing for low income individuals and families. Some subsidy programs, such as Housing Choice Vouchers, provide only housing. Other programs, such as rapid re-housing and permanent supportive housing, can include both subsidized housing and other supportive services. Subsidy programs can be short-term (3 to 24 months) or long-term (more than 24 months).

Why it's important: Permanent housing provides families with housing stability, which improves children's well-being and long-term success.^{viii,ix}

Examples: In the Family Options Study, a national housing study investigating the impact of various housing programs on families experiencing homelessness, Gubits and colleagues (2015) found that Housing Choice Vouchers (a long-term subsidy program) were the most effective housing program at reducing housing instability and improving well-being.^x Families who were prioritized to receive Housing Choice Vouchers experienced significantly fewer nights homeless; reported higher rates of food security and lower levels of parent psychological stress and domestic violence; and had fewer child behavior problems and school switches after three years compared to families who were not prioritized into any permanent housing program.

Trauma-Informed Care

What it is: Trauma-informed care is an agency-wide strategy for working with vulnerable populations that by recognizing the pervasiveness of trauma; learning the impact and symptoms of trauma; incorporating knowledge about trauma into policies and client practices; and actively seeking not to re-traumatize the client. Trauma-informed care, if implemented effectively, can result in a shift in organizational culture to prevent re-traumatization.^{xi}

Why it's important: A disproportionate number of households experiencing homelessness have a history of abuse, neglect, and/or other trauma.^{xii,xiii} By using trauma-informed approaches, service providers can reduce re-traumatization and help vulnerable parents and children recover and build resiliency.

Examples: The Buncombe County School District and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) have led North Carolina in efforts to transform community institutions into trauma-informed environments. School reforms have been implemented at all 23 elementary and intermediate schools and include mental health supports, teacher self-care and training, and improved techniques for student discipline and performance. DHHS reforms include utilization of trauma-informed best practices in child welfare case management.^{xiv} At the local level, a community-wide initiative led by the National Council for Behavior Health has begun the process of helping organizations, including CMS, transition to trauma-informed practices.

Supportive Services for LGBTQ Youth

What it is: Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) youth are overrepresented among the youth population experiencing homelessness.^{xv} LGBTQ youth may be forced from home due to disclosure or discovery of their LGBTQ status and may be less likely to seek services due to stigma or fear. Interventions that target specific risk factors for LGBTQ homelessness include parent-child mediation and use of inclusive and affirming language in housing, healthcare, and other service systems.^{xvi}

Why it's important: LGBTQ youth may face additional barriers such as stigma and fear when seeking housing and other services. Intentional, targeted approaches are needed to address barriers and prevent homelessness.

Examples: In 2015, the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) named Safe and Supported as one of two pilot programs for its LGBTQ Youth Homelessness Prevention Initiative. Safe and Supported uses a Host Home program to connect youth who are experiencing homelessness with volunteers that provide temporary housing and social support. The program also provides education and technical assistance to help service agencies create LGBTQ-friendly policies.^{xvii} Locally, [Time Out Youth](#) provides temporary housing, counseling, education, and other services for LGBTQ youth in Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Part 5: Connecting the Dots

This is Part 5 in a five-part integrated data report exploring the connections and gaps in services used by children and youth currently or previously experiencing homelessness and/or housing instability. Part 5 synthesizes information from the previous report components and provides analysis on what this information can mean for Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

Research indicates that there are immediate, negative impacts for children and youth who experience homelessness including family separation, poor physical and mental health outcomes and lower social-emotional and academic well-being. Children who experience homelessness are more likely to miss school, score lower in math and reading tests, and are at a greater risk of dropping out of high school. In addition, there are negative long-term effects for children, impacting mental and emotional health, employability, and later housing sustainability.

By using integrated data, this report describes child and youth homelessness as well as service utilization patterns across systems that can support a household immediately before, during, or after a housing crisis. Understanding the how services are used, or not, can help communities identify gaps and opportunities for coordination and collaboration across multiple sectors.

Linking data from the Homeless Services Information System (HMIS) and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS), there were 6,558 total children and youth experiencing housing instability, homelessness, or were recently homeless in Charlotte-Mecklenburg during the 2016-2017 academic year.

While students experiencing homelessness are eligible for educational services through the McKinney-Vento Act, 41% (or 241 CMS students) staying in emergency shelters or transitional housing in 2016-2017 were not connected to those services. This finding was slightly larger than the gap identified (38%) in 2014-2015. As a result of the 2014-2015 Charlotte-Mecklenburg Family Homelessness Snapshot, CMS placed an additional social worker at Salvation Army Center of Hope. This change was implemented in 2017; therefore, any improvements due to this change would not be reflected in the data used for this report.

In addition, the integrated data report underscores the importance of safety net services for households experiencing housing instability and homelessness. During the 2016-2017 academic year, 73% (or 4,800) children and youth receiving services from an agency in HMIS or who were identified as eligible for McKinney-Vento services in CMS also accessed food and nutrition services from Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services.

To effectively address child and youth homelessness as well as reduce its negative impact requires that communities link housing solutions with other service sectors, including education and health and human services. Charlotte-Mecklenburg can use this integrated data report to identify additional steps to support families through a housing crisis by leveraging existing resources. For example, Charlotte-Mecklenburg can focus efforts on closing the gap in service utilization for families at risk of or currently experiencing homelessness. This can facilitate access to resources to support educational attainment as well as housing stability. Using data to align resources and coordinate efforts can strengthen complementary systems and sectors, which can have a positive impact on all families.

Definitions

Children and youth experiencing homelessness can be classified as unaccompanied or as part of a family. The U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) defines children and youth experiencing homelessness in the following groups:

- **Family (households with adult(s) and children)**- A household that has at least one adult (age 18 or older) and one child under the age of 18.
- **Child Only Household**- A household in which all member(s) under the age of 18.
- **Unaccompanied youth**- An individual who is not part of a family during their episode of homelessness and is between the ages of 18 and 24.
- **Parenting Youth**- an individual (under age 25) who identifies as the parent or legal guardian of one or more children who are present with or sleeping in the same place as that youth parent.
- **McKinney-Vento Student**- a student identified by CMS as eligible for McKinney-Vento services. To be eligible, a student must be experiencing homelessness. Under the McKinney-Vento definition of homeless, this includes students who are literally homeless (sleeping unsheltered or in a shelter) or unstably housed (doubled up with friends or in a hotel).

For more definitions, see: [\[https://mecklenburghousingdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Charlotte-Mecklenburg-Housing-Homelessness-Dashboard-Definitions.pdf\]](https://mecklenburghousingdata.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/Charlotte-Mecklenburg-Housing-Homelessness-Dashboard-Definitions.pdf)

About the Data

The Institute for Social Capital (ISC) is a comprehensive set of administrative data collected from governmental and nonprofit agencies in the region. Data is collected at the individual level and then linked and de-identified to create an integrated data set. By combining data across agencies, the ISC gains a fuller picture of how individuals utilize the social service sector.

Data used for this project comes from the Homeless Management Information System, Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools, and Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services. These data sources have sharing agreements with the ISC and provide data on relevant services for children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness.

Methodology

Children (ages 0-17) and youth (ages 18-24) identified as receiving services from an HMIS agency and/or identified as McKinney-Vento by CMS between August 1, 2016 and July 31, 2017 were matched at the individual level with selective supportive services utilized during the same time frame. These services are Mecklenburg County Department of Social Services Food and Nutrition Services, Foster Care, and Children's Protective Services Investigations of Abuse and Neglect. The overlap between homeless status and services used was examined by age group and race/ethnicity. A secondary analysis matched children and youth identified as literally homeless (in Emergency Shelter or Transitional Housing) between August 1, 2016 and July 31, 2017 at the individual level with McKinney-Vento services utilized during the same time frame.

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