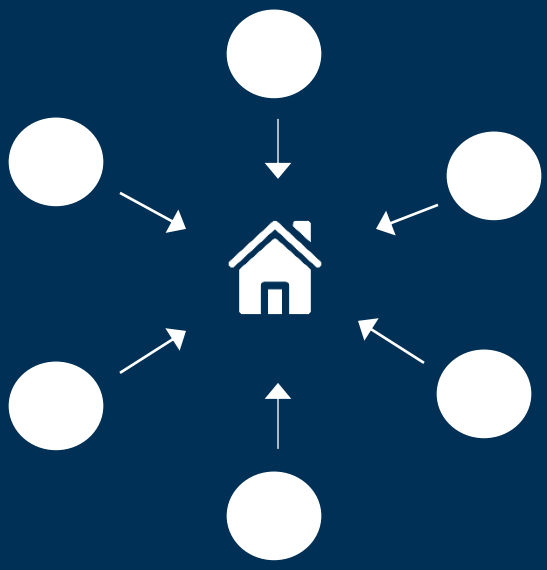
MECKLENBURG COUNTY

Child & Youth Homelessness

INTEGRATED DATA REPORT



Released June 2020

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

FUNDING PROVIDED BY: Mecklenburg County Community Support Services

PREPARED BY: Bridget E. Anderson MPH, Ashley Williams Clark MCRP, David Hill PhD at the UNC Charlotte Urban Institute; and Courtney LaCaria MSW at Mecklenburg County Community Support Services

Report Objectives

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. The Mecklenburg County Child & Youth Homelessness Integrated Data Report contains five parts.

- **Part 1** will explore the role of integrated data to describe child and youth homelessness.
- **Part 2** will explore the connections between children and youth receiving services from HMIS agencies and Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools students identified as eligible for McKinney-Vento services.
- **Part 3** will look at the linkages between children and youth experiencing homelessness, housing instability, or who are formerly homeless by looking at data from DSS-Food and Nutrition Services, DSS-Child Protective Services, and DSS-Foster Care.
- **Part 4** will explore research-informed interventions that can help address child and youth homelessness.
- **Part 5** will synthesize information from the first four parts and offer analysis on what it means for Charlotte-Mecklenburg.

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.

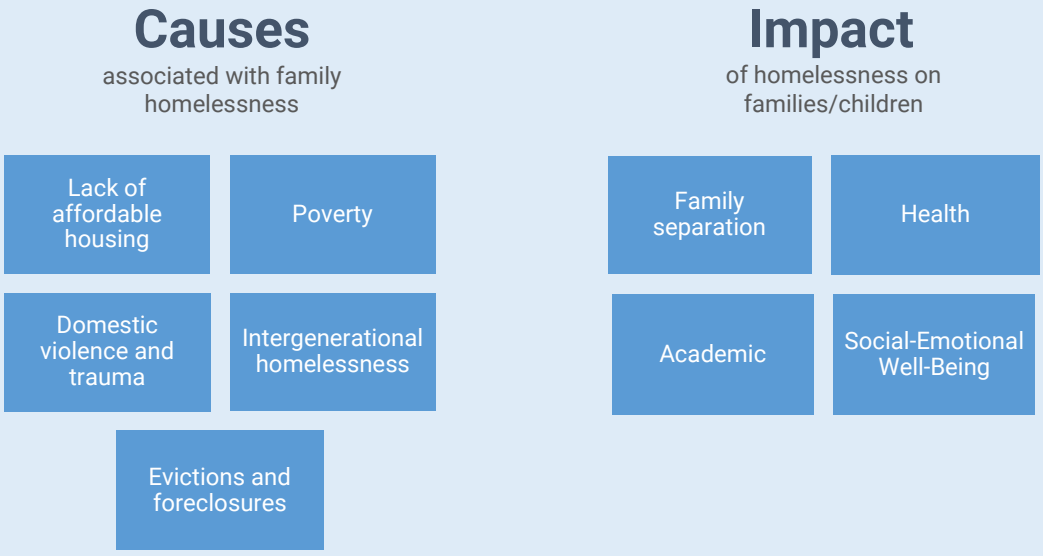
This integrated data report will describe family homelessness, by focusing on the intersection of service utilization patterns among children and youth accessing services the following systems:

- 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



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)	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 (CPS) Abuse and Neglect	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.
	Foster Care	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)