



Family & Youth
Services Bureau

Runaway and Homeless Youth
Training & Technical Assistance Center

BRIGHTER FUTURES
STRENGTHENING PATHWAYS FOR YOUTH SUCCESS

Best Practices Supporting Youth Experiencing Homelessness in Higher Education

Jillian Sitjar, Lorinda Ruz, and
Christian Alexander



Poll: Who's Joining Us?

Chat: What do you hope we cover today?

About SchoolHouse Connection

SchoolHouse Connection works to overcome homelessness through education. We provide strategic advocacy and practical assistance in partnership with schools, early childhood programs, institutions of higher education, service providers, families, and youth.



- Website:
<http://www.schoolhouseconnection.org>
- Newsletter:
<https://www.schoolhouseconnection.org/sign-up/>
- Federal and state policy advocacy
- Q&A from our inbox
- Webinars and implementation tools
- Youth leadership and scholarships

Presenters



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Unaccompanied Youth Homelessness During COVID-19

- K-12 liaisons and shelter providers are working remotely (K-12) and/or overwhelmed with need
- Difficulty with identification
- Youth lack devices, minutes, places to charge, and quiet, stable, safe places to learn
- Youth have either lost jobs, or are working in groceries, convenience stores
- Youth are being kicked out of “doubled up” situations, and cannot self-isolate
- Students aren’t considering postsecondary options and focusing on jobs/basic needs insecurity



BEFORE COVID-19:

Homelessness Among Unaccompanied Youth and Young Adults

**<https://voicesofyouthcount.org/brief/national-estimates-of-youth-homelessness/>*

3.5 million young adults

About 3.5 million young adults (18-25 yo), **about 1 in 10** experienced homelessness on their own over the course of a year

700,000

1 out of 30 youth between the ages of 13-17.

29% of the 18-25 year olds

who had been homeless **in the previous 12 months** were enrolled in college or an education program.

Particular subpopulations are at higher risk for homelessness



346%

Youth with less than a high school diploma or GED had a 346% higher risk

162%

Youth reporting annual household income of less than \$24,000 had a 162% higher risk

83%

Black or African American youth had an 83% higher risk

120%

LGBT youth had a 120% higher risk

33%

Hispanic, non-White youth had a 33% higher risk

200%

Unmarried parenting youth had a 200% higher risk



New Report from the Hope Center

Taken from nearly 200K students from 202 colleges and universities

THESE STUDENTS TOLD US THAT...

NEARLY
3 IN 5
experienced
basic needs insecurity

FOOD INSECURITY
AFFECTED

39% at two-year
institutions

29% at four-year
institutions

HOUSING INSECURITY
AFFECTED



48%

HOMELESSNESS
AFFECTED

14%



THE
BLACK/WHITE GAP
IN BASIC NEEDS
INSECURITY WAS

16 percentage
points



WHY HIGHER EDUCATION

Jobs

Over 95% of jobs created since 2010 have gone to college-educated workers.

Beyond High School

By 2027, 70% of all jobs will require education beyond high school.

Afford Housing

Postsecondary education is necessary for a job that pays enough to afford housing and avoid homelessness.

Cost

The cost of attending college has skyrocketed over the last several decades with federal pell grants not keeping pace.

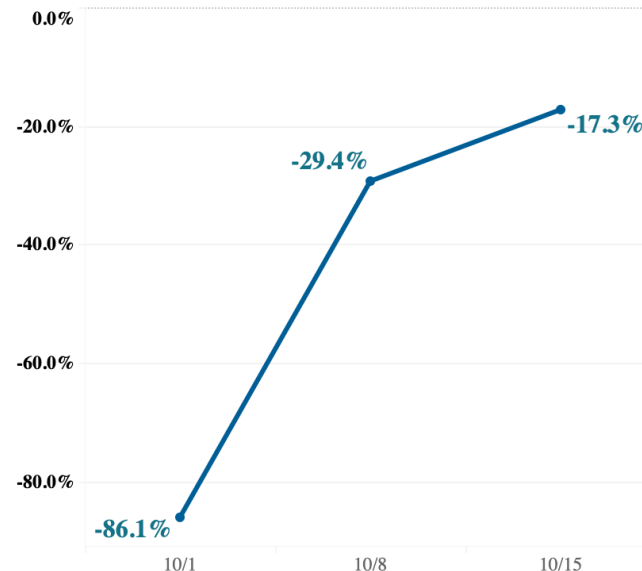
Health & Well-Being

High school and college graduation are linked to other important indicators of health and well-being.

COVID-19 Has Created New Barriers.

- Out of the 2.5 million students who entered college as freshmen in 2019, **only 74% returned** for their second year - a 2 percentage point drop, the lowest level since 2012
- Postsecondary undergraduate enrollment **declined about 3%** with community college **declining about 10%** compared to last year
- Enrollment is on track to fall by nearly 500K students this fall
- FAFSA numbers **are down about 17%** compared to last year (as of 10/15)
- We've seen **more documentation and communication challenges** during distance learning.

Year-Over-Year % Change in FAFSA Completions



Source: <https://formyourfuture.org/fafsa-tracker/>

WHAT DO YOUNG PEOPLE NEED TO BE SUCCESSFUL IN SCHOOL?

Youth with lived experience said:



Connection to **positive, supportive adults**

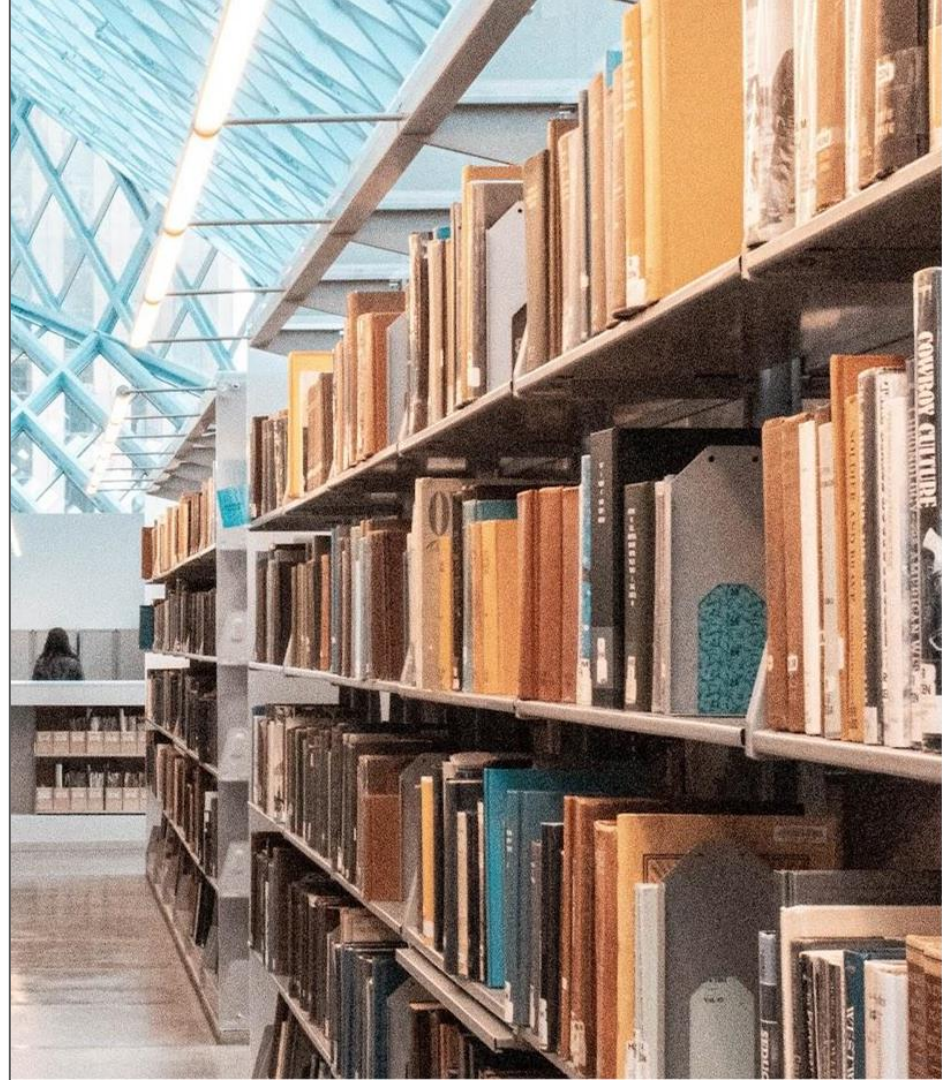
Stability - difficult to meet educational needs when you can't meet basic needs

Help navigating **financial aid**

Knowledge of existing **campus support programs and resources** (social media, word of mouth, visibility: posters, flyers)

Barriers & Best Practices

- Identification
- Financial Aid
- Housing & Basic Needs
- Social/Emotional Wellbeing
- Academic



Identification Barriers

- Virtual learning
- Lack of awareness
- Stigma



Identification Best Practices

- Homeless higher education liaisons/support programs
- Introductory emails
- Application & incoming surveys
- Clear referral system
- Trainings
- Syllabus note
- COVID-19: Relying more on faculty

“Any student who faces challenges securing their food or housing and believes this may affect their performance in the course is urged to contact the Dean of Students for support. Furthermore, please notify the professor if you are comfortable in doing so. This will enable her to provide any resources that she may possess.”



Financial Aid Barriers

- Low FAFSA numbers & enrollment
- Documentation
- Long processing times
- Issues for students who become homeless while in college

Financial Aid Best Practices

Less barriers, more support

- FAFSA is out now! Fill out ASAP
- Financial aid tips
 - Reminder emails, texts, calls
 - Office hours + counselors
- Trainings/webinars
- Emergency Aid & CARES funding
- New FAFSA Simplification Act
- COVID-19: More determinations from financial aid administrators

Help is on the Horizon: The FAFSA Simplification Act **is Now Law!**

- The “FAFSA Simplification Act” was included in Section 701 of Title VII, of [the Consolidated Appropriations Act, 2021](#), H.R. 133.
- Signed into law on December 27, 2020.
- The changes are effective as of July 1, 2023. They apply to the 2023-2024 award year and subsequent years.
 - [FAFSA Simplification Delays for 1 year](#) - **will be fully implemented for the 2024-2025 award year, but some provisions will be implemented as originally planned, if not earlier.**
- It seems far off, but not too early to plan for implementation and determine what kind of guidance is needed.
- Many requirements come from current guidance, and should be implemented now.

Housing & Basic Needs Barriers & Best Practices

- Support programs dedicated to students experiencing homelessness
- Housing - Year-round, break housing,
- Food - Food pantries + perishable foods, meal swipes, hygiene/cleaning items
- Shower and laundry access
- Transportation
- Child care + resources for parenting students
- Clothing closet
- Lending library

Social & Emotional Wellbeing Barriers & Best Practices

Barriers

- Summer melt/transition from high school
- Feeling alone/isolated

Best Practices

- Homeless higher education liaisons
- Support programs
- Mental health/teletherapy
- Peer mentoring

Academic Barriers & Best Practices

Barriers

- Digital divide with access to devices, Wifi, and hotspots
- Strict attendance policies
- Requiring webcam
- Accommodating learning styles
- Shifts from on-campus to virtual and vice versa

Best Practices

- Survey from professors
- Flexible attendance policies
- More remedial courses
- Tutoring options

Chat: What are other barriers and practices?

Resources

- [SchoolHouse Connection Higher Education Page](#)
 - [Tip Sheet or Helping Homeless Youth Succeed](#)
- [SchoolHouse Connection Financial Aid Page](#)
- [SchoolHouse Connection Archived Webinars](#)
- [SchoolHouse Connection Youth Connection Page](#)



EDUCATION
LEADS HOME

EDUCATION LEADS HOME 2022

A NATIONAL CONVENING ON
STUDENT HOMELESSNESS

MARCH 7-8, 2022 | AUSTIN, TEXAS

WWW.SCHOOLHOUSECONNECTION.ORG/ELH2022

QUESTIONS

Contact Information



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Thank You!

Please complete the evaluation for this session.

Click on the link in the Chat, then select:

Day One

Workshop

Best Practices Supporting Youth Experiencing Homelessness
in Higher Education