NEW JERSEY COALITION TO END HOMELESSNESS
we can. we must. we will.

NO PLACE TO GROW UP

The Hidden Reality of Child Homelessness in New Jersey



In the United States, the age when a person is most likely to enter a shelter or transitional housing is before their first birthday. Before they can walk, talk, or understand what "home" means, too many children are already experiencing homelessness and its effects.

And yet, we still do not have a clear picture of how many children are experiencing homelessness in New Jersey—or what they need. Infants and toddlers are often missed because they are not yet in school. Older children may be living in motels, sleeping on couches, or living doubled up because they have nowhere else to go. Depending on how homelessness is defined, **many of these children aren't counted.**

If we aren't counting every child, we aren't seeing the full crisis.

What the Data Says

- Schoolhouse Connection estimates nearly **6,000 infants and toddlers**, age 0-3, are experiencing homelessness in New Jersey.
- Nationally, the most common age to be evicted is **between birth and 19 years old.**
- Nationally, **almost half** of children in shelter are **under 6.**
- NJ families with children under 18 experiencing homelessness **increased by 38%** from 2020 to 2025, according to HMIS.
- **16,380 students experienced homelessness** across NJ during 2024-2025 school year, according to NJ Department of Education data:
  - **45%** were in pre-school to grade 5
  - **26%** had a disability
  - **19%** are multilingual learners
  - **~43%** identify as Hispanic or Latino
  - **35%** are Black

How Homelessness Impacts School-Aged Children

21-28% lower **graduation** rates

124% higher **chronic absenteeism**

2x the likelihood of **suspension**

The Stories Behind the Numbers



Skylar, 2, has already lived in more than half a dozen places. Her mother, Danielle, 25, aged out of foster care and has exhausted her Emergency Assistance benefits. Since leaving the shelter, they sleep wherever they can: on couches, in spare rooms, and, recently, on a friend's floor. Skylar has a speech delay, but moving so often makes it hard to stay connected to the services she needs.

Noah, 7 months old, has never had a room of his own. After his parents fell behind on rent during his mother's unpaid maternity leave, they began staying with friends and family. His portable pack and play crib moves with them from place to place as his parents try to give him some sense of routine.

Amara, 6, lives in a family shelter with her mother and siblings after fleeing domestic violence. In first grade, she is becoming more aware that her life looks different from her classmates'. They talk about their bedrooms and having friends over. When someone asks Amara where she lives, she has learned to change the subject.

James and Tom, 16, lost their mother in an accident and moved in with their disabled grandmother. After an eviction, the three began living in extended-stay hotels, stretching her SSDI and their survivor benefits to cover shelter, food, and other necessities. Their teacher helps drive them to school, but unfortunately it's a lifeline that can't last forever.

Children don't *choose* homelessness. Yet thousands of children and youth in NJ face the consequences of housing instability during *the most formative years of their lives*. The effects can reach far beyond where they sleep—shaping their health, education, and opportunities for years to come.

Every child deserves a safe place to grow.

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Learn more about homelessness, support our advocacy, and join the movement to end homelessness in NJ.