

Family Service Provider Network

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Families and Children Cannot Wait – *The Philadelphia Mayoral Campaign*

February 2023

In 2023, Philadelphia voters will elect a new Mayor and City Council. Will those elected policymakers support the needs of children, youth, and families experiencing homelessness?

Why focus on homeless families?

**68% of renters
making less than \$30K
are severely
cost-burdened.**

Families become homeless for several reasons. Between 22% and 57% of all homeless women report that domestic violence was the immediate cause of their homelessness.ⁱ A total of 88% of renters with incomes below \$30,000 per year of are cost-burdened, with 68% severely cost-burdened, meaning they spend at least 50% of their income on housing.ⁱⁱ In addition, we

see that 1,300+ eviction cases are filed monthlyⁱⁱⁱ. These are just a few of the many reasons families in Philadelphia become homeless.

Most homeless families are not supported by the homeless housing system^{iv}. Nearly 58% of the students identified as experiencing homelessness were living doubled up, suggesting the children and their families were NOT provided some type of housing support.^v The positive news is there are programs which end family homelessness by delivering a variety of effective trauma-informed interventions while adhering to quality social work principles; employing dedicated staff; and using the Roadmaps to Homes plan as a blue print.

Why focus on children and youth experiencing homelessness?

There were 2,554 children ages birth to five who experienced homelessness in Philadelphia in 2020.^{vii} Infants and toddlers experiencing homelessness are significantly under-enrolled in early childhood programs.^{vii}

A focus on young children experiencing homelessness is important because they are at increased risk of poor health and academic outcomes, and the experience of homelessness can slow a child’s development, resulting in persistent delays. Young children experiencing homelessness are more likely to lack access to and to participate regularly in early childhood programs and services known to help alleviate the negative effects of homelessness and any of the range of co-occurring trauma or toxic stress known to accompany unsafe, unstable, and inadequate housing.^{viii}

For homeless children K-12, starting behind in their academic careers leads to lower high school graduation rates, increases usage of remedial studies, and more. Their truancy rates are 30 percentage points higher than their peers.^{ix} The School District of Philadelphia’s Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) had a successful track record in identifying students and getting them support, but identification has dropped since the pandemic, suggesting that students at risk of truancy and in need of educational supports are not receiving appropriate services.

Recommendations for Philadelphia’s Next Mayor	
Issue	Status & Action Steps
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify a goal to decrease the number of all families served by the programs funded by the Office of Homeless Services (homeless and not homeless) for reasons other than cutting or denying services. Increase funding for emergency domestic violence (DV) shelters and transitional housing providers to expand their capacity to support families experiencing homelessness due to DV. Provide General Fund support to the School District’s Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness program when the one-time American Rescue Plan funds expire in 2024.

<p>Children ages prenatal to age 5</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Require the City of Philadelphia to report annually on all homeless children and youth served by all City departments, schools, and on all housing programs. • Expand PhilPre-K and require it to count homeless children served. • End childcare deserts by fast-tracking growth of quality childcare programs. • Designate Enrollment Specialists by funding these positions in the Head Start, Child Care, Home Visiting, and Early Intervention systems. • Support a single application for all Early Childhood Education programs. • Expand the Philadelphia Department of Public Health’s plan to reach out to all families of young children, including families living double up.
<p>Youth</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Youth Homelessness Demonstration Program (YHDP) should define priorities and core principles for ending youth and young adult homelessness in Philadelphia by genuine decision-making involvement from youth / young adults with lived experience and social service agencies. • Create pool of flexible funds for prevention services and supportive Services that are critical to housing security, such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Homelessness Prevention ○ Specialized Case Management ○ Transportation ○ Childcare ○ Mental Health services ○ Job-related services ○ Education services ○ Training for youth workers
<p>Health</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advocate to and work with the State to require managed care health care insurers to provide temporary housing for pregnant homeless women and newborns. • Expand the city’s capacity to screen and refer mothers experiencing domestic violence and then referring those who are experiencing DV to a shelter.

Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OHS should manage a rental assistance program, providing case management, not just the Division of Housing Development Corporation. • Double revenues for the housing trust fund. • Increasing funding for housing vouchers (especially emergency ones) and rental assistance, and setting aside a % of those funds specifically for families experiencing DV. • Improve referral system that serves youth in the best way that provides housing and fills vacancies. • Direct funds for rental assistance and costs related to acquiring and maintaining housing specifically for youth and young adults. • The City should seriously explore developing its own housing voucher program.
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About Family Service Provider Network

The Family Service Provider Network (FSPN) is an advocacy coalition of agencies that provide services to homeless families and children in the Greater Philadelphia region.

We believe that no family should be turned away from housing without a plan for safety, services and/or housing.

Our objectives are to:

- Participate in collective advocacy regarding issues that impact our clients and programs; and
- Communicate agency updates and news.

FSPN participating agencies are AchieveAbility, Drueding Center, Episcopal Community Services, Families Forward Philadelphia, Family Promise of Philadelphia, HopePHL (formerly PEC and YSI), PathwaysPA, and Women Against Abuse.

Contact at policy@hopephl.org

ⁱ National Network to End Domestic Violence: Domestic Violence, Housing, and Homelessness. www.NNEDV.org

ⁱⁱ The Pew Charitable Trusts: The State of Housing Affordability in Philadelphia. 2020.

ⁱⁱⁱ Eviction Lab: [The Eviction Tracking System | Eviction Lab](#)

^{iv} School District of Philadelphia: Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in the School District of Philadelphia, Analysis of 2020-21 Data; Pennsylvania Department of Education: Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program 2019-20 State Evaluation Report, 2021.

^v School District of Philadelphia: Education of Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness in the School District of Philadelphia, Analysis of 2018-19 Data.

^{vi} PA Department of Education: Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness Program 2019-20 State Evaluation Report

^{vii} SchoolHouse Connection: Infants and Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness. Infants and Toddlers Experiencing Homelessness: Prevalence and Access to Early Learning in Twenty States

^{viii} PA Head Start State Collaboration Office: A State-Level Brief – Participation of Young Children Experiencing Homelessness in Early Childhood Programs in Pennsylvania, 2022

^{ix} IBID