

Thousands of school children homeless in Fresno County

By BoNhia
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Thousands of public school children in Fresno County are homeless and living in hotels or motels, shelters, doubling up with family or on the street, according to a study released Wednesday.

The situation is even worse in Los Angeles, which has the highest number of homeless students in the state. In Trinity County, the percentage of homeless children is highest and growing, the report said.

"Homelessness is not localized," said Shahera Hyatt, director of the California Homeless Youth Project which released the report, ["California's Homeless Students: A Growing Population."](#) "It's really a problem throughout the state."

Nearly 270,000 public school students in California, or about 4% -- double the national average -- were homeless during the 2012-2013 school year, the report said.

The group partnered with kidsdata.org, an online data website of the Lucile Packard Foundation for Children's Health, to present the number of homeless students statewide, by county and even by school district.

The group's "mission is to educate policy makers throughout the state on the needs of homeless youth and we knew it would be helpful to have more regionally specific information" so policymakers can make sound funding and program decisions, Hyatt said.

In Fresno County, 6,738 students, representing 3.4% of those in public schools, were homeless in 2013 compared to 5,960 students, or 3.1%, in 2012.

The Fresno Unified School District, the state's fourth largest school district, had the county's highest number of homeless students at 3,729, a small increase from 2012 when 3,086 students were homeless.

Only 142 students in the Clovis Unified School District were considered homeless last year compared to 398 in 2012. The number of homeless students increased slightly in the Central Unified district to 443 compared to 321 in 2012.

Children experiencing homelessness encounter obstacles to receiving an education, Hyatt said.

"Moving from shelter to hotel, or couch to car, lack of access to basic necessities such as showers, transportation, and food, family conflict, poverty and stigma about their living situation all can make it difficult to stay in school and thrive in an educational environment."

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