

CLOSE THE DIGITAL DIVIDE! ENSURE INTERNET ACCESS FOR NEW YORKERS EXPERIENCING HOMELESSNESS

Barrier to Education: How Students Experiencing Homelessness Are Being Impacted by Remote Learning

- More than **111,000 New York City students**—approximately **one in ten** children enrolled in district or charter schools—were **identified as homeless** during the 2019-20 school year.
 - More than **32,700** students were living in City shelters, while approximately **73,000** were ‘doubled-up’ in temporary shared housing situations.
 - About **31,900** additional public school students in New York State, outside of the five boroughs, were also identified as homeless last year, for a total of **more than 143,500 students Statewide**.
- By the beginning of November 2020, about **75% of all students in the DOE system chose to attend school remotely**, making them entirely reliant on the internet for their education.
- These students will need the internet and technology to learn and complete school assignments, yet the **City agencies responsible for the operation of homeless shelters indicate that most of shelters do not have Wi-Fi available for residents**.
- Under the **Federal McKinney-Vento Act**, New York State and New York City receive **funding to ensure appropriate and equal educational access for homeless children**. This law mandates that homeless children and youths “should have access to the education and other services that [they] need to ensure that [they] have an opportunity to meet the same challenging State academic standards to which all students are held.” (§ 11431(4)).

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- Only **62%** of New York City students experiencing homelessness **graduated** from high school last year. While this represents an increase from the [2018-19 school year](#), the change is likely attributable to the [lax graduation policies](#) the [NYSED implemented](#) in light of COVID-19. [Experts predicted](#) that students could **lose seven to eleven months of learning**, if remote learning continued through January 2021.
- Shelter residents engaged in **GED, vocational, or college course work** face the same barriers to remote learning as school-aged children.
- **The technology issues facing students experiencing homelessness are extensive and severely disrupt their ability to participate in remote learning.** Even for those students who have received a cellular-enabled iPad, internet connectivity has been grossly unreliable and insufficient to sustain remote learning activities.
- Parents living in shelters reported having to rely on **costly self-paid cellular data plans, LinkNYC, or other publicly available Wi-Fi** (i.e. at a library or restaurant) to connect their children to remote learning. Those free public options offer only spotty connectivity depending on the time of day or the weather. They have also become harder to access since the pandemic (if they are accessible at all)..
- **Education is critical** to an individual's ability to participate in society. It promotes the social, economic, and intellectual well-being necessary to live a stable life, and avoid homelessness. For shelter residents, education may reduce the length of their shelter stay and facilitate their exit into permanent housing.

[Click here for more information & to get involved with the #Wifi4Homeless campaign](#)