

From PEC BELL NEWSLETTER, April 15, 2021
How American Rescue Act May Help Families Experiencing Homelessness

BELL NEWSLETTER



Update: Roundtable Discussion Recommendations

Roslyn Edwards, Director, Early Childhood Education
People's Emergency Center

I have another update on our progress achieved from the Roundtable Discussion that we held with Congressperson Dwight Evans last fall. Since that discussion, PEC, its **Building Early Links for Learning (BELL) project**, and many others have organized a response to the 50+ ideas that were offered by the experts who joined the discussion.

A few months ago, in January 2021, we issued a report of the recommendations from the "Roundtable Discussion," synthesizing the 50+ ideas into four (4) main actionable themes. Here is a quick summary of the main actionable themes and the progress made on them as of March 31.

Improve coordination of supports to children and families experiencing homelessness.

- PEC is talking to key state and local leadership about the possibility that the Early Learning Resource Centers (ELRC) would designate a point person on homelessness.
- The BELL team has prepared recommendations to PA Office of Child Development and Early Learning (OCDEL) for a childcare development fund that will be presented as public testimony at a future date.
- BELL developed a full calendar of events that will bring together the early childhood education and housing partners for collaboration, training, and the exchange of ideas. Visit pec-cares.org/ece-events to see what is offered and register for an event today!
- PEC applied for funding for environmental improvements for shelters to support the appropriate development of young children facing homelessness.

Develop a more effective data system so that we can target specific support to each child in shelter.

- The PA Head Start State Collaboration Office is working with Dr. Grace Whitney and PEC to analyze data from Head Start programs in Pennsylvania. Expected results will help to target trainings and technical assistance to improve outreach and enrollment of young children experiencing homelessness throughout the Commonwealth.
- PEC's Policy Advisory Council members are building interest and support for an integrated data system with City leadership.

Increase and maintain enrollments.


- PEC and BELL participate in the City's coordination effort to support childcare programs reviving themselves from the COVID-19 pandemic.
- PEC and the City of Philadelphia have executed a data licensing agreement that allows BELL to receive the data of all children ages 0-5 who are in shelter. This data sharing will enable BELL staff to work with the shelters to encourage families to enroll in high-quality early learning programs of their choosing.

Strengthen safety net.


- Congress approved targeted funding for homeless populations, delivering more than \$39 billion to support early learning.
- In March, PEC met with staff of six PA Congressional legislators to discuss supports for homeless children and youth.
- PEC **published five briefs** using homeless education data, Head Start research, a research-focused newsletter. We shared them with legislators.

Many of you are working toward these goals with us; we appreciate your time and talent improving the systems that support young children experiencing homelessness.

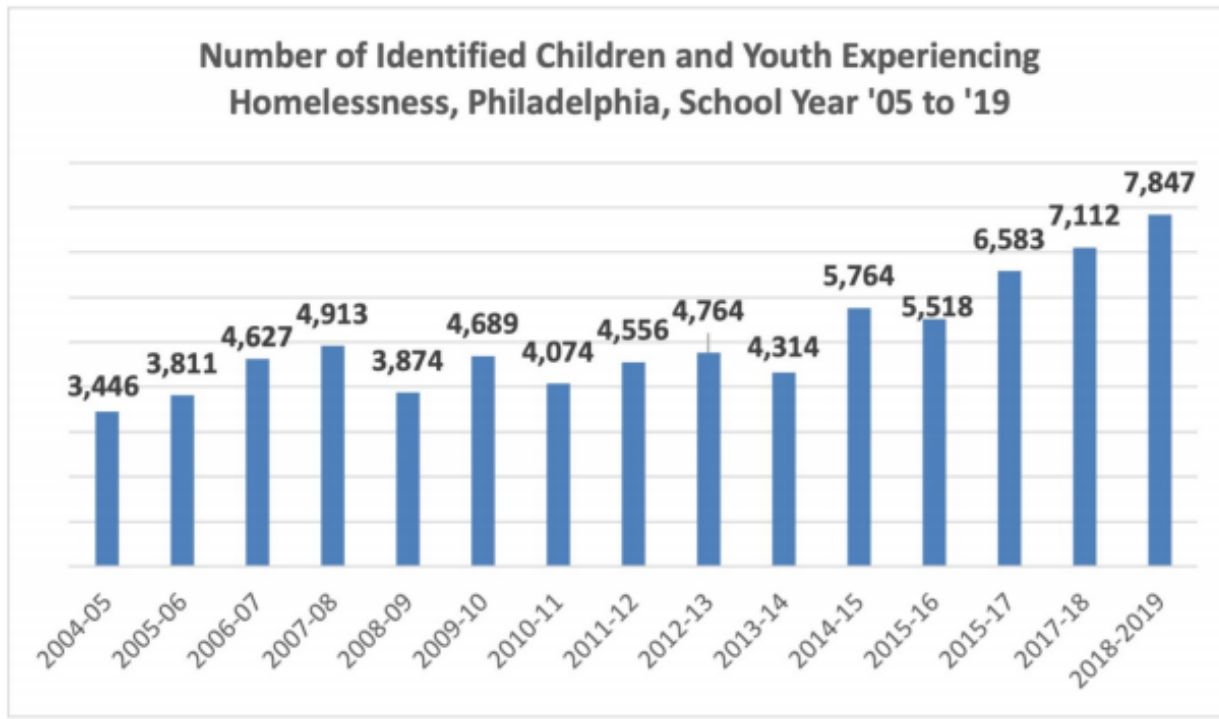
Let me know of any questions you might have at redwards@pec-cares.org.



TEXT PECBELL TO to 844-961-3547 for BELL news!



Children and Youth Homelessness in Philadelphia Explodes 41% since 2016!



According to data released by the PA Department of Education, Pennsylvania's education and community agencies **identified 39,221 children and youth** experiencing homelessness and served by Pennsylvania's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness (ECYEH) program for Fiscal Year (FY) 2018-19. This number shows an increase of seven percent over prior year; enough children to nearly fill up the seats in Citizens Bank Park.

Our summaries of PDE data is in a series of reports ***"Looking Back to Plan Ahead," found at pec-cares.org/policy-publications***. We are using these reports to raise awareness. They show the following highlights:

- Philadelphia is not the largest region identifying homeless students. **Region 2** identified 8,635 compared to Philadelphia's 7,847.
- In Philadelphia, child and youth homelessness increased 10% from FY18 to FY 19, and 42% since FY 16.
- **Most** homeless children and youth **are not** in shelter.

Read parts 1, 2, and 3 on our [website](#).

Philadelphia's Young Children to Benefit by the American Rescue Plan

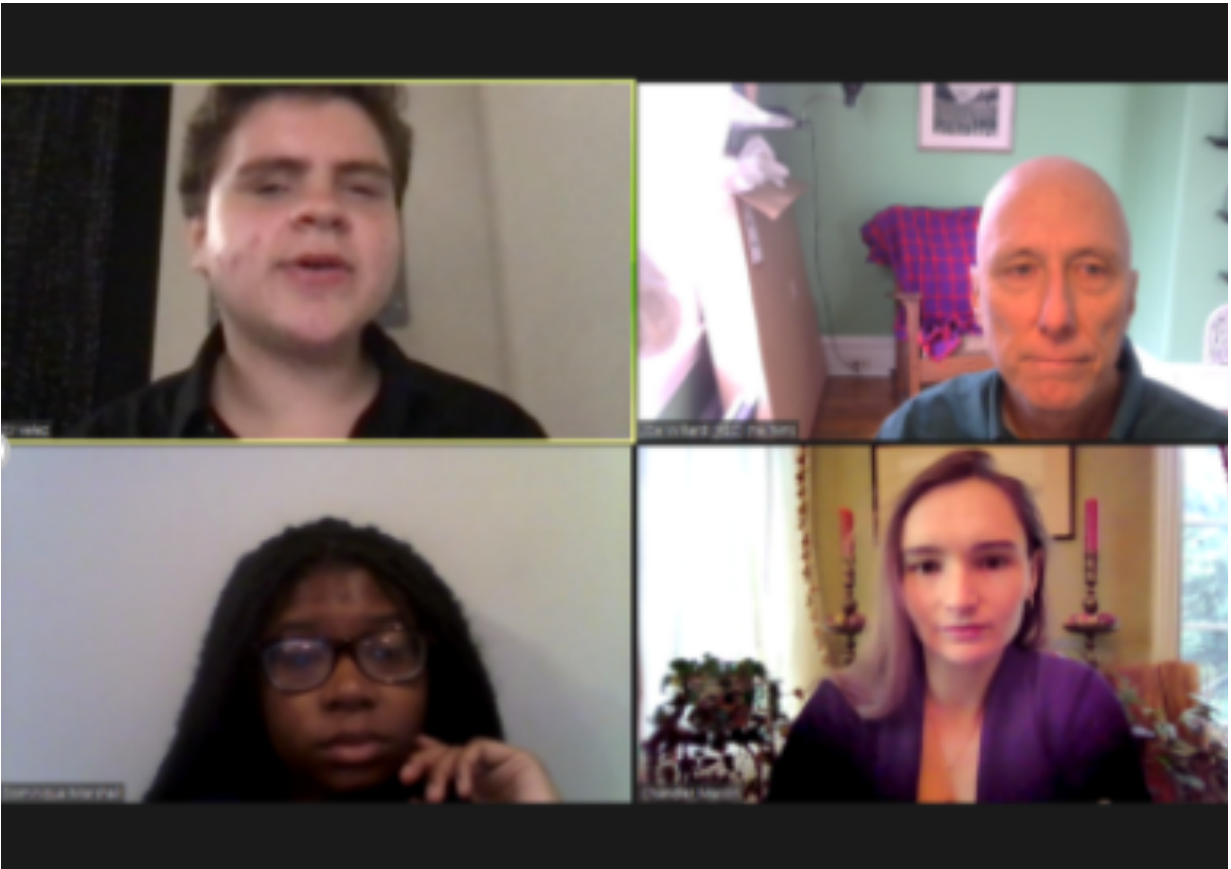
Many people have commented that it took a pandemic for Congress to seriously address poverty and its many components. In passing the Biden Administration's "American Rescue Act," Congress is investing new investments in many programs that support young children and reduce poverty, altering, for the time being, how America addresses child poverty.

While it may not endure, state and local administrations have the opportunity now take a deep bite out of poverty. Some of those investments are:

- \$1 billion for the Head Start program.
- \$15 billion for childcare through the Child Care Development Block Grant.
- \$24 billion in grants to childcare providers through the Child Care Stabilization Fund.
- \$2.58 billion for grants to states under Part B of the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act. (IDEA), \$200 million for preschool grants under section 619 of IDEA, \$250 million for infants and toddlers with disabilities under part C of IDEA.
- \$800 million to support the identification, enrollment, and school participation of children and youth experiencing homelessness, including through wrap-around services.
- \$5 billion for Homeless Assistance Services provided through the HOME Investment Partnerships Program.
- \$5 billion for emergency housing choice vouchers.
- \$21.5 billion in emergency rental assistance.
- Over \$39 billion for early learning.

Congress did its part. Now local leaders need to do their part. We are waiting for the guidance from the Administration on how Pennsylvania and Philadelphia may spend these funds. Until then, advocates are identifying recommendations in hopes to share with program administrators before final decisions are made.

Meeting with Congressional Leaders

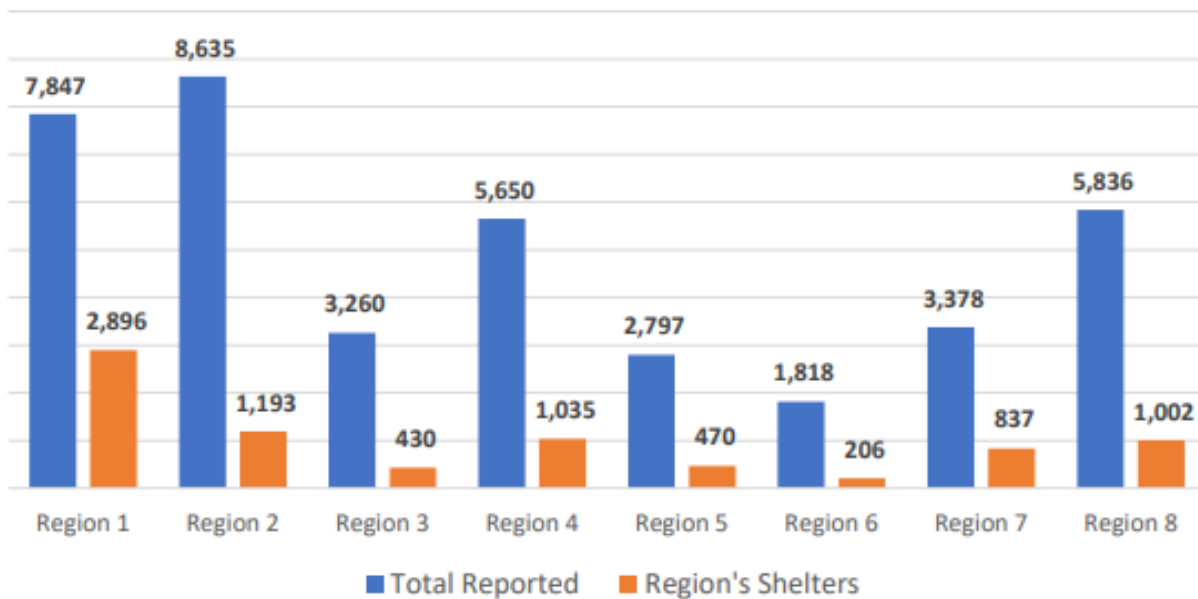


PEC and allies met with legislative staff of Senators Casey and Toomey and U.S. House members Boyle, Dean, Evans and Scanlon to discuss key issues affecting children and youth who experience homelessness.

Then we discussed the challenges of surging numbers of children and youth who experience homelessness. We shared data on each Congressional district, emphasizing the growing numbers of children and youth (see chart below with data from PA's Education for Children and Youth Experiencing Homelessness program).

Pictured above (top left and clockwise) is EJ Velez, Berks County advocate and National Network for Youth's Advisory Council member, Joe Willard of PEC, Rep. Dwight Evans Legislative Aide Chandler Mason, and Dominique Marshall of PEC.

39,221 Children and Youth Identified as Homeless by PA's ECYEH Program Region and By Shelters in each Region, FY2019



We thanked the members who voted for the American Rescue Act's funding of key programs impacting homeless children and youth. We concluded with the following recommendations:

- Sponsor the House version of S.220 - Emergency Family Stabilization Act – when introduced. We let them know that Sen. Casey has sponsored S. 220, and that Rep. Dwight Evans sponsored last session's version.
- Sponsor the Runaway and Homeless Youth and Trafficking Prevention Act – in 2019, this bill was H.R. 5191.
- Sponsor the Homeless Children and Youth Act (HCYA) – In 2019, it was H.R. 2001.
- Support other recommendations found at [**Bipartisan Legislation to Help Homeless Children and Youth Reintroduced | SchoolHouse Connection**](#).

Our next steps include reaching out to our allies to join in supporting these important legislative proposals. We thank the advocates from Allegheny, Berks, Bucks, and Montgomery counties for joining us.

Register now for Children's Work Group Conference Scheduled for April 16

The Children's Work Group Early Childhood Conference is the only meeting space to discuss aspects of **young children experiencing homelessness**. Professionals from public health, hospitals, city and state government, homeless housing, early childhood education, academia, home visiting, child welfare, early intervention, and other systems come together. We host **trainings, workshops**, and panels of **guest leadership**. And we network; by getting to know one another, we **improve how our systems collaborate**.

We meet every third Friday of the month, starting at 9:30 AM.

Join our mailing list by emailing jwillard@pec-cares.org.

The April 16th CWGEC will aim to feed your brains with some data to support your work. It will feature Child Trend researchers Dr. Sara Shaw and Dr. Chrishana Lloyd discussing both national and local data that indicates that Black families who rent their housing face challenges in securing and remaining in their home due to the COVID-19 pandemic. These data suggest that federal, state, and local policies and programs to support renters are not always sufficient. This results in extremely high rates of housing instability and homelessness, both before and during the pandemic.

In addition, Dr. JJ Cutuli of Nemours Pediatric Centers discussing a report on student homelessness that relates to southeast Pennsylvania's experience.

And, finally, Ileen Henderson will join us. She is the creator of the Bright Spaces concept. She will introduce a new concept and ask for your feedback.

When: April 16

Time: 9:30 AM to 11:00 AM

How: **Register today for your Zoom link!**

Check out [past conferences here](#).