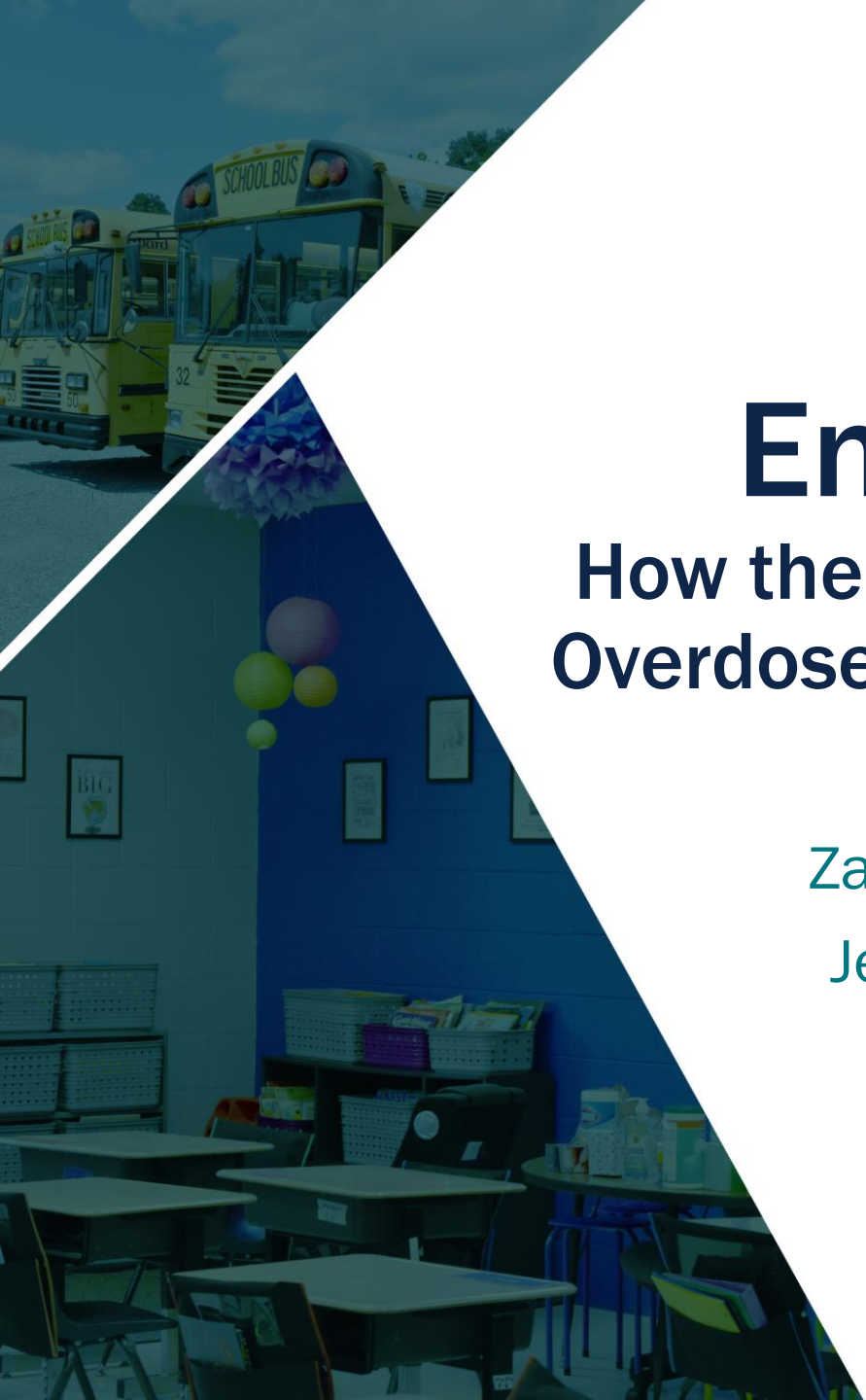


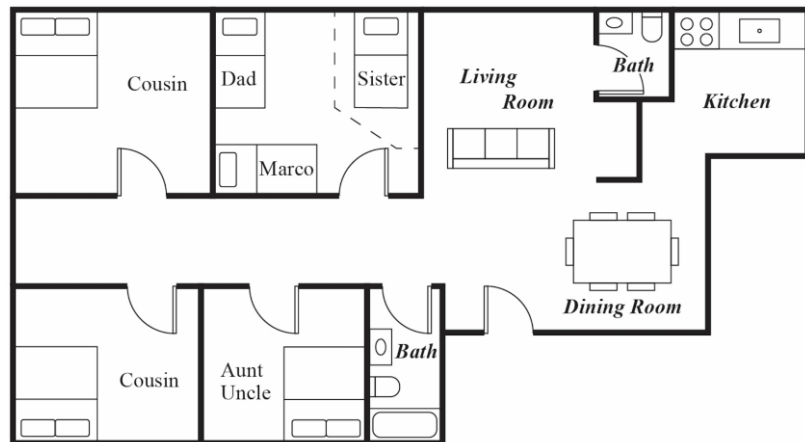
The background of the slide is a composite image. The top left shows a line of yellow school buses, with the number '32' visible on the front of one. The bottom left shows a classroom with blue walls, decorated with colorful balloons and framed pictures. There are several small white tables and chairs arranged in the room.

Empowering Resilience:

How the McKinney-Vento Act Supports Preventing Overdoses in Students Experiencing Homelessness

Zach Stumbo, Ph.D., State Homeless Coordinator

Jennifer White, Homeless Education Consultant



Learning Objectives

- Explain how key provisions of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act promote educational stability and serve as protective factors against substance misuse and overdose among children and youth experiencing homelessness (CYEH).
- Identify points of intersection between McKinney-Vento identification and support services and overdose prevention strategies, including mental health access, substance use prevention, and referrals to community-based care for CYEH.
- Apply actionable strategies for cross-sector collaboration between schools, health departments, and community organizations to strengthen prevention, engagement, and recovery supports for CYEH.

Why This Session Matters

- CYEH face elevated risks for:
 - Trauma exposure
 - Mental health challenges
 - Substance misuse and overdose
 - Unaccompanied Homeless Youth face an increased risk for substance use
- Schools are often the most consistent system in their lives.
- McKinney-Vento creates a powerful bridge between education and public health.

The McKinney-Vento Act

- A federal law for the education of homeless children and youth—first written in 1987 and last updated in 2016.
- Created an important definition where homeless children and youth are those students missing one or more of these three elements of a nighttime residence:
 - Fixed- Stationary, not subject to change.
 - Regular- Used on a consistent basis.
 - Adequate- Meets the physical and psychological needs typical in a home.
- Key features:
 - Every state must have a state homeless coordinator.
 - Local Educational Agencies (LEAs) must have a liaison.
 - Students experiencing homelessness must be immediately enrolled.
 - Barriers must be removed for CYEH.

Understanding Substandard Housing in the Context of Homelessness

- **Substandard Housing:** Housing that fails to meet state or local building, health and safety codes.
- **Key Indicators:**
 - Lack of fundamental utilities (water, electricity, heat)
 - Unsafe conditions (vermin, mold, unsafe heat sources, holes in flooring)
 - Inoperable essential facilities (kitchen, plumbing)
 - Overcrowding and unreasonable dangers
- **Flexibility:** Liaisons can use regional norms and community standards.
- **Questions to Consider:**
 - Is the home safe?
 - Does it meet basic needs?
 - Does it provide sufficient space?
- **Note:** A substandard identification must be linked to the physical condition of a nighttime residence.

Unaccompanied Homeless Youth

- Unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) are a particular subset of homeless students with additional rights and needs.
- UHY must first meet the primary definition of homelessness.
 - Do they have a FIXED, REGULAR, & ADEQUATE nighttime residence?
- UHY are students who are physically separated from their parents or guardians.
 - A guardianship issue alone (without homelessness) does not convey McKinney-Vento eligibility.
 - A homeless liaison will assist in making decisions and advocating for UHY.

How does experiencing homelessness impact students' lives?

CYEH may:

- Be highly mobile
- Limited access to health and behavioral health care
- Face physical demands like hunger, exhaustion, and stress
- Have no access to transportation
- Be separated from a parent or guardian (unaccompanied homeless youth)
- Have difficulty in social relationships
- Increased exposure to substance use environments

How does experiencing homelessness impact students' schooling?

CYEH may:

- Not have supplies or a place to study
- Go without a special education identification or be misidentified
- Earn lower grades
- Perform poorly on assessments and tests
- Miss many days of school (chronically absent)
- Leave school before graduating

([NCHE](#), 2023)



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The Experiences of Homeless Students

The U.S. Department of Education's resource [Supporting the Success of Homeless Children and Youths Fact Sheet](#) shared the following statistics:

- Two-thirds of formerly homeless youths surveyed said that homelessness had a significant impact on their education, making it hard to stay and do well in school.
- Over 40% of formerly homeless youths surveyed said that they dropped out of school or stopped attending school while they were homeless in middle or high school.
- Nearly 60% of formerly homeless youths surveyed said that their schools did a fair or poor job of supporting them while they were homeless and that a lot more should be done.

Chronic Absenteeism Research

- Chronic absenteeism is often defined as missing 10% or more of the school year for any reason, whether excused or unexcused.
- Chronic absenteeism is not the same thing as truancy, which typically measures unexcused absences only and underestimates total absenteeism
- Chronic absenteeism also differs from measures of attendance, which focus on students who are present in, rather than absent from, school, and may obscure troubling patterns of absenteeism among subsets of students
- Being chronically absent is not a factor listed for consideration in a best-interest school selection determination.

Strategies to Prevent Chronic Absenteeism

- Pairing students with mentors
- Following up with students and families
- Offering before- and after-school programs with high interest
- Rewarding high attendance
- Provide school-based health and dental
- Revising policies that may unintentionally decrease attendance with punishments for tardies and suspending students for being absent
- Work with social service agencies to communicate the importance of attendance

Tips for Supporting CYEH

- Create a welcoming climate and build trust with all students.
- Help to identify and support CYEH.
- Be sensitive and understanding.
- Ensure that school and classroom policies and procedures, such as disciplinary policies, are fair to homeless students and do not negatively impact them because of their homelessness.
- Offer resource referrals for students in need.
- Facilitate a warm hand-off of students to referral agencies.

Knowledge Check 1

A school identifies an unaccompanied homeless youth who has frequent absences and reports anxiety and housing instability. Staff also reported substance use concerns to the administration. How can McKinney-Vento Act implementation best be aligned with overdose prevention?

- a) Disciplining the student for attendance issues
- b) Delaying services until permanent housing is secured
- c) Coordinating with the school liaison to ensure enrollment, mental health referrals, substance abuse counseling, and community support
- d) Referring the student solely to law enforcement

Activity Break: Identify the Potential CYEH

Tiana

A 7th-grade student who lives with her aunt and uncle in Murray after her parents relocated to another state for work. The plan was organized months ahead, following district guidance, to make sure the student could stay and complete school. This arrangement was chosen because it would allow Tiana to finish out the school year in the only middle school she has known.

Liam

A 1st-grade student who recently enrolled at Maple Grove Elementary. His mother shared that they were evicted from their apartment in Somerset and are now staying with her sister in a small home outside of Science Hill. The home where Liam is staying is overcrowded, and Liam sleeps on a couch in the living room.

Would you refer Tiana, Liam or both students to local homeless liaison?

Protective Factors Embedded in the McKinney-Vento Act

- Immediate enrollment and full participation in school
- Every school district has a local homeless liaison
- School stability
 - Stay at the School of Origin or immediately enroll in the Local Area Attendance School
- Transportation to the School of Origin and extracurriculars
 - If a barrier exists or a parent requests transportation
- Access to academic, physical and mental health referrals, and wraparound supports
- Removal of barriers to full participation

Local Homeless Liaison

- One is required for every LEA.
- Liaisons determine if a student is eligible to identify as homeless.
 - Are you aware of your liaison's name?
 - What is the system for referring students for identification?
- Liaisons assist students and families with enrollment and school selection.
- Liaisons inform students and families about services, including transportation.
- Liaisons and transportation directors often work together to support students and families.

Why Education Stability Matters for Prevention

- Continued attendance at the School of Origin or immediate enrollment to the Local Attendance Area School
- Daily connection to trusted adults
- Early identification of warning signs
- Access point for referrals and services
- Protective routines and expectations
- Strength based engagement

Where McKinney-Vento Meets Overdose Prevention

- Mental health screening and referrals
- Medical health screenings and referrals
- Crisis response and follow up
- Linkages to Medicaid, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, housing assistance and other community services
- Reduced barriers to school attendance
- Substance use prevention education (as age appropriate)
- Overdose prevention education (as age appropriate)

Knowledge Check 2

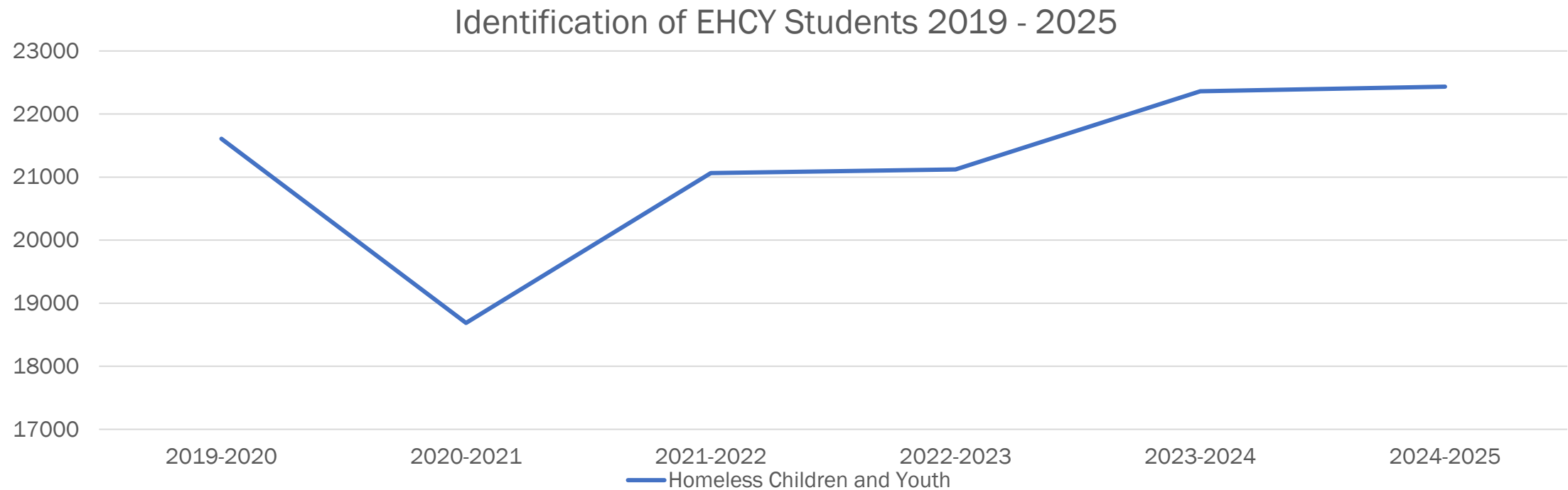
Which provision of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act most directly supports overdose prevention by promoting stability and protective factors for CYEH?

- a) Immediate enrollment without required documentation
- b) Providing school supplies
- c) Access to extracurricular activities
- d) Waivers of school fees

What We're Seeing in Kentucky

- Improved identification for children and youth experiencing homelessness CYEH
- Reduced drop out rates for CYEH
- Increased graduation rates for CYEH
- Increased post-secondary readiness for CYEH
- Exciting trends for CYEH in Career and Technical Education
- Stronger referral pipelines to community providers

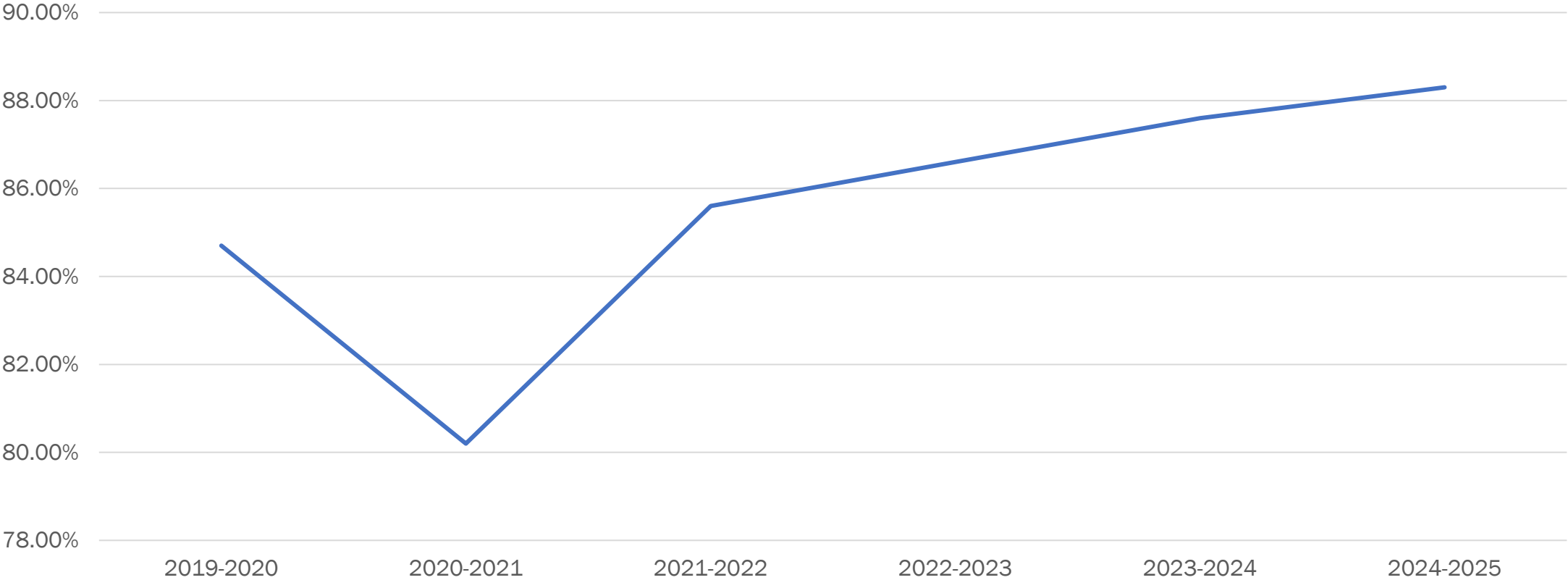
Identification of CYEH in Kentucky



([KDE Homeless Children and Youth Data Collection and Reporting, 2024](#))

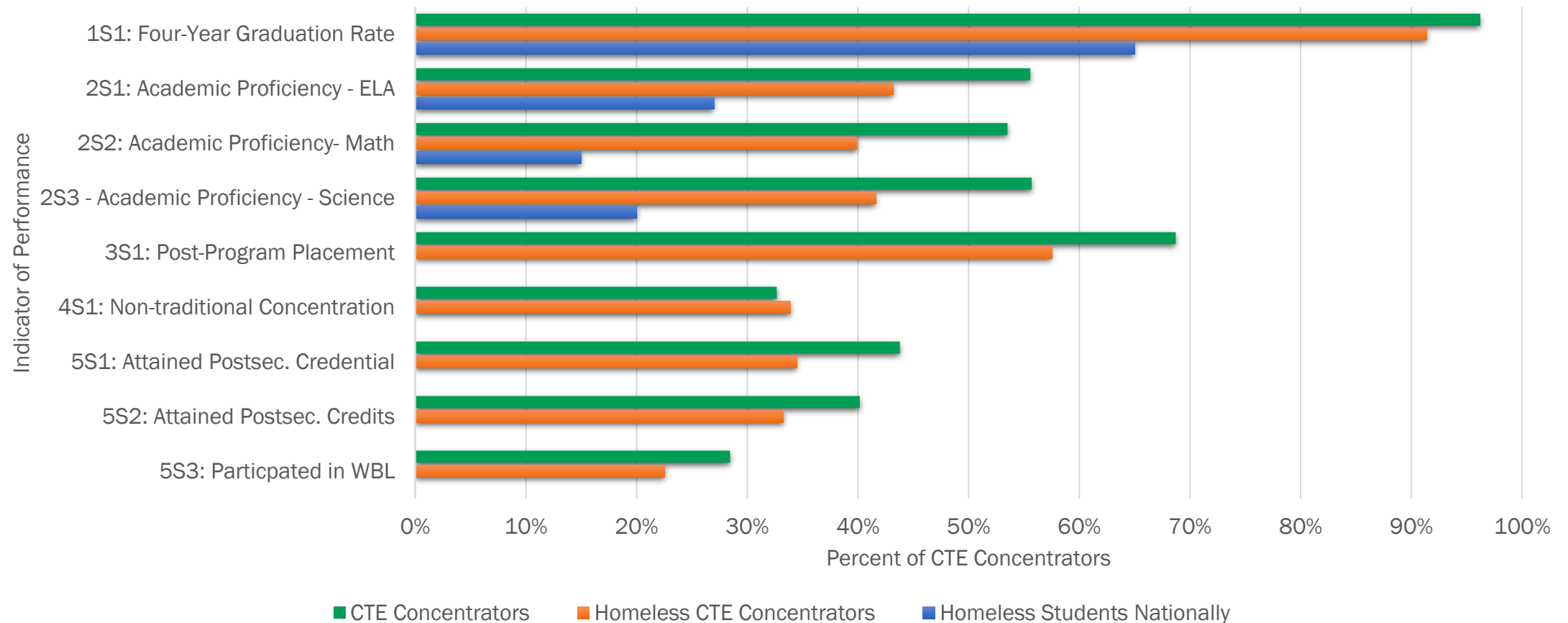
Kentucky CYEH Graduation Rates

Kentucky 4-Year Graduation Rate for CYEH Students 2019-2025



National Performance Comparison:

SY 2021-2022 For indicators of performance under Perkins V



Data from: Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education
Division of Academic and Technical Information (June 2025).

The Impact of CTE on EHCY Students

National data suggests that having a CTE Concentrator impacts EHCY students in the following areas:

- 40.6% more likely to graduate from high school
- 59.26% more likely to reach ELA proficiency
- 166% more likely to reach math proficiency
- 108% more likely to reach science proficiency

Based on a comparison of 2021-2022 National CTE Data and 2021-2022 Homeless Education Data.

Data from: Office of Career, Technical and Adult Education
Division of Academic and Technical Information (June 2025).

Cross-Sector Collaboration

- Suggested partners for collaboration to support CYEH:
 - Local homeless liaisons
 - School and district staff
 - Family resource staff
 - Public health agencies
 - Medical health providers
 - Behavioral health providers
 - Community based organizations
 - Youth serving non-profits
 - Local shelters and homeless services
 - Law enforcement agencies

Collaboration Strategies

- Establish referral protocols between schools and health agencies
- Share data trends (within privacy limits)
- Cross-train education and public health staff
 - Offer McKinney-Vento training for health staff and public health training for education staff.
- Include homeless liaisons in prevention planning
- Center youth voice and trauma informed practices

Activity Break: Identify Local Liaison for Collaboration

- Use the QR Code to download the directory for local homeless liaisons in Kentucky school districts and find your local school district's local homeless liaison.
- If you have not met the liaison, consider creating an email later to introduce yourself to the liaison.
- Create a list of three areas where you might want to collaborate with the liaison in the future.



[Kentucky Local Homeless Liaison
by District](#)



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Knowledge Check 3

Which stakeholder collaboration is MOST aligned with the strategies recommended in this presentation?

- a) Schools working independently from community agencies
- b) Partnerships among schools, public health agencies, and community organizations
- c) Health departments coordinating only with hospitals
- d) Reliance solely on family-based interventions

Key Takeaways and Next Steps

What to Remember

- Student homelessness is both an education and public health issue
- McKinney-Vento implementation can reduce overdose risk
- Schools are stabilizing systems in times of crisis
- Collaboration saves lives

Moving Forward Together

- Integrate education into overdose prevention strategies
- Strengthen partnerships with school systems
- Use McKinney-Vento as a prevention tool—not just compliance

Resources

- Liu, M. et al. (2022). [Mental health and substance use among homeless adolescents in the U.S. JAMA.](#)
- National Center for Homeless Education
 - [Health: Physical and Mental Health Resources](#)
 - [Supporting the Education of Unaccompanied Students](#)
 - [McKinney-Vento 101](#)
 - [Transporting Students Experiencing Homelessness](#)
- National Health Care for the Homeless Council. (2016). [Substance use among youth experiencing homelessness.](#)
- Smith-Grant, J. et al. (2022). [Risk behaviors and experiences among youth experiencing homelessness—YRBS.](#) Journal of Community Health / CDC.
- U.S. Department of Education (2016) [Supporting the Success of Homeless Children and Youths Fact Sheet.](#)

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