

Appendix 2: Methodology and Limitations

1. Introduction

Proxy Measures

As there are few data sets that specifically describe the numbers, characteristics, and needs of homeless children, the Report Card uses some proxy measures. Identified proxies were based on the assumption that homeless children reside in households that are living in extreme poverty [33% - 50% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL)]. U.S. Census data provide information on the rates of extreme poverty across the country. To determine educational achievement in some states, the Report Card uses the cohort of children enrolled in the National School Lunch Program, which serves children residing in households at up to 130% - 185% of the FPL. Thus, this proxy describes an upper limit on the educational achievement of homeless children and is likely an overestimate.

The Report Card assumes that the typical income of homeless families can be approximated by the maximum allotment for a family of three of Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits in each state. Until there are sound data sets that describe homeless children and families, proxy measures allow us to make reasonable, conservative estimates. It is important to note that the actual situations of homeless children and families are even bleaker than that of families who are housed, but living in extreme poverty. The instability and vulnerability experienced by families who are living in shelters, motels, in cars, on the streets, or doubled-up with families or friends cannot be quantified using proxy estimates based on the FPL.

Timeframes of Data Sources

The most recent, comprehensive data sets available were used as the major source of information for the Report Card. For example, the McKinney-Vento Education data from 2005-2006 was the most complete data on identified homeless children available at the time this report was developed. However, the National Survey of Children's Health was last completed and analyzed in 2003, so these data are slightly older. When possible, The Report Card uses data from 2007-2008, such as the minimum wage and Fair Market Rent data. These were used to provide a current macro-economic context.

The Report Card assumes that for most states, the sizable gap between homeless children's resources and needs have not changed dramatically in the last five years. If anything, the combination of natural disasters, the economic downturn, and increasing foreclosure rates has worsened the situation. Thus, the use of data from different years and sources should not have a significant impact on the reported results.

Rural Homelessness

Despite the stereotype that homelessness is exclusively an urban issue, children in rural areas are some of the most hidden among the homeless. A far distance from urban centers, rural conditions can help to obscure homelessness. Funding for homeless assistance programs is less available in rural areas and further complicates limited access to services, transportation, and affordable housing.¹ For many families, their first option is to move in with friends or relatives. This, in turn, results in shared housing and overcrowding until ultimately they wear out their welcome. They then often find shelter in abandoned shacks, vehicles, campgrounds, or dilapidated structures on private land. Others trek to urban areas in search of jobs, services, and personal supports from family or friends – often to begin the cycle again.^{2,3} Nonetheless, rural areas remain home to an estimated 9% of homeless people.⁴ More sobering, the rate of homelessness in some rural areas may be greater than ten times that of large cities.⁵ The lower visibility of rural homelessness suggests that this subgroup is not fully represented in the Report Card and may contribute to a significant undercount.

2. Extent of Homelessness and Demographics

A. Data Source

McKinney-Vento Education Data Collection

The McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act, Title X, Part C, of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, requires that States ensure that homeless children have access to a free, appropriate public education and that school districts provide data to the federal government. The U.S. Department of Education requires that all State Education Agencies and/or Local Education Agencies (LEAs, more commonly referred to as school districts) collect and submit information about the numbers of homeless children who were *identified as homeless and enrolled* in all local school districts in the State over the course of an academic year.⁷ This is currently the only system that is comprehensively assessing the numbers of homeless children.

The McKinney-Vento education data collection system counts as homeless all children and youth whose primary nighttime residence at the time of enrollment was a shelter, motel, temporary arrangement in the housing of others due to loss of housing or economic hardship, or other situation that falls within the Act's definition of "homeless." For more information, see Appendix 1: Systems that Identify Homeless Children.

B. Methodology Used in the Report Card

Extent of the Problem

The Report Card uses 2005-2006 McKinney-Vento school data since this was the most recent data available at the time this report was developed. These data report only children who are enrolled in school and do not include children under the age of six. Based on previous research that estimated 42% of homeless children are under the age of six,⁸ the Report Card estimated the number of homeless children ages 0-5 by calculating 42% of the McKinney-Vento school data for each state. In addition, the Report Card does not include the numbers of homeless, unaccompanied children and youth.

The individual state reports mention estimates of the number of unaccompanied homeless youth in each state, but these numbers have not been added to the overall estimates described above. The number of unaccompanied youth of high school age was calculated by using the McKinney-Vento enrollment data for grades K-8, and dividing the total by 8.5 (8.5 was used because total kindergarten enrollments are typically one-half those of other primary grades).⁹ This provided an estimate of the original cohort size for each grade because few children drop out of school while in grades K-8. We then multiplied the primary school cohort estimate by the four grades, 9-12, to obtain a potential high school enrollment cohort. From this number, we then subtracted the McKinney-Vento enrollment numbers for homeless high school students. The remaining number represents an estimate of the number of unaccompanied, homeless youth, who are no longer enrolled in high school.

Race/Ethnicity

McKinney-Vento school data do not provide information about race/ethnicity. Therefore, we used U.S. Census data for children living in poverty (100% or below the Federal Poverty Level) as a proxy measure to estimate the ethnicity of children who are homeless. This proxy indicates that a disproportionate number of children from racial/ethnic minority groups are living in poverty. However, the HMIS data reported in HUD's Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress (2008),¹⁰ which focuses on sheltered homeless people, indicate that only African-American and Native American families are disproportionately represented among the ranks of the homeless.

C. Limitations

Extent of the Problem

The McKinney-Vento school data have various limitations. While all school districts are required to identify homeless children who are enrolled in local school districts, continued lack of awareness of homelessness and its definition among school personnel leads to under-reporting in many school districts. There are 16,263 LEAs in the U.S., of which 12,550 (77%) submitted data for the 2005-2006 school year.¹¹ Twenty-three percent of the LEAs did not submit data. These LEAs are of widely varying size and circumstances. Some school districts are more active in their identification efforts than others. In addition, lack of program capacity and funding affects the outreach and identification efforts of many school districts. Finally, the U.S. Department of Education data collection requirements are relatively new; thus, not all schools report complete data to their districts (LEAs) and not all LEAs report complete data to their states for transmission to the federal government. The number of homeless children in 2005-2006 in Louisiana and possibly in Alabama, Florida, Mississippi, and Texas was unusually high because of the 2005 hurricanes. The number of homeless children in the state of New York is thought by staff at the New York State Education Department to be higher than reported, due to under-reporting by the New York City Department of Education.¹² Thus, it is likely that the numbers we are reporting are an undercount.

Race/Ethnicity

The Report Card used U.S. Census data for children living in poverty as a proxy for children who are homeless. These data are reported for children living in households at 100% of the FPL and below, while other Report Card data have been reported or estimated for homeless children living in households at 33% - 50% of the FPL. While we know from other studies that African-American and Native American children are overrepresented among children who are homeless and living in poverty, we were not able to create precise state-by-state estimates of the race/ethnicity of homeless children.

3. Housing Costs and Income

A. Data Sources

In each state, housing costs are determined by HUD and reported as the *Fair Market Rent* (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment. FMR includes the cost of shelter and all utilities except telephones. FMR also determines the eligibility of rental housing units for the Section 8 Housing Assistance programs.

The *average wage for renters* is provided by the National Low Income Housing Coalition's *Out of Reach* 2007-2008 report on housing affordability.¹³ It is the hourly wage that a typical or average renter is likely to earn.

The U.S. Department of Labor Employment Standards Administration provides data on *minimum wage* by state.¹⁴

B. Methodology Used in the Report Card

To determine the gap between housing costs and income, the Report Card compares the hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment at FMR in each state (sometimes called the "Housing Wage") with the amount earned by workers at minimum and average wages. The Housing Wage is calculated using the housing affordability standard that deems housing affordable if 30% of monthly income covers the cost.

In the absence of income data for families who are homeless and receiving public assistance, the Report Card uses a proxy measure that sums a state's maximum allotment for the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly food stamps)¹⁵ and Temporary Assistance for Needy Families¹⁶ (TANF) for a family of three. It then compares this amount to the amount needed to rent a two-bedroom apartment at FMR.

The Report Card then estimates the cost to house all homeless families in each state. The gap between estimated income and FMR housing costs is used to estimate the additional annual cost to the state to house all that state's homeless families. Based on state budget data available from the National Governors Association, the Report Card includes an estimated percentage of the state budget that would need to be expended to end child homelessness. The Report Card formula used for this calculation follows:

$$\frac{(\text{Annual deficit* for a homeless family} \times \text{Number of homeless families**})}{\text{State Expenditure Budget}}$$

*Deficit = Annual Estimated Income [TANF + SNAP] – Annual FMR; ** The estimate of homeless families used for this calculation is one-half of the estimate of homeless children. Based on data from the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, we assume that housing vouchers currently meet the need for only 1/4 of homeless families. The Report Card assumes that each homeless family is comprised of two children, since the average birth rate for women in the U.S. is 2.1 children. Other data sets describing the composition of homeless families show a similar rate.

C. Limitations

The Report Card assumes that families who are homeless are supported mainly by public benefits (e.g., TANF and SNAP). It is possible that some homeless families receive income from employment or other sources regardless of their housing status. In these cases, the housing/income deficit per family may be smaller.

4. Food Security

A. Data Source

Food security is defined as "assured access for every person to enough nutritious food to sustain an active and healthy life including food availability (adequate food supply); food access (people can get to food); and appropriate food use (the absorption of essential nutrients)."¹⁷ Food insecurity is defined as "having limited access to adequate food due to financial and other resources."¹⁸ In other words, families experiencing food insecurity do not know where their next meal is coming from. The USDA further specifies a "very low food security category," defined as households that experience food insecurity with hunger, and report "multiple indications of disrupted eating patterns and reduced food intake."¹⁹

Each year, the USDA surveys 50,000 households to assess food security, using a supplement to the Current Population Survey. If households are screened as being food secure, they are not asked specific questions about food security. If they are screened as being food insecure, the full food security survey is administered.

B. Methodology Used in the Report Card

In 2005, the national average for very low food security (having experienced hunger) was 3.9%.²⁰ These households are on the very low end of the spectrum of food security, and hunger is a routine experience because the family lacks money for food. The Report Card assumes that very low food security rates disproportionately affect those extremely poor families who are more likely to experience homelessness.

The extent of financial struggle and vulnerability to homelessness is reflected by the level of food insecurity. Families that have food insecurity often eat meals that are inadequate or poorly balanced. Nutritional deficits can impact children's physical and mental health, and academic performance – all factors that contribute to the ongoing cycle of poverty and homelessness.²¹

C. Limitations

The annual Current Population Survey Food Security Supplement is conducted by sampling and screening residential addresses. If families are residing in shelters, hotels/motels, or are doubled up with families or friends, they are not included in the sampling frame.

As noted above, the very low food security rates are reported as direct percentages, rather than adjusted to represent households and/or children who are homeless. It is likely that the actual rate of very low food security among the population of homeless children is much higher than the overall rate of very low food security.

A possible source of reporting bias is a household respondent's willingness to disclose their level of food insecurity. In the case of households that have children, it is possible that parents would not be willing to disclose food insecurity that might affect their children for fear of stigma, embarrassment, or other consequences (e.g., fear of losing children to child welfare systems). Examples of the survey domains asked of adult respondents include:

- Worry that food will run out before there is money to buy more
- Inability to afford the cost of a balanced meal
- Unable to afford enough food and remaining hungry
- Losing weight because they did not have enough money for food
- Unable to eat for a whole day because there was not enough money for food

5. Health

A. Data Sources

The 2003 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH)

The NSCH, sponsored by the Maternal and Child Health Bureau and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, was conducted in either English or Spanish. It assessed children's health across eight domains: demographics, physical and mental health status, health insurance, health care utilization and access to health care, medical home (e.g., ongoing primary care), family functioning, parents' health, and neighborhood characteristics.²² A total of 102,353 surveys were collected, with an average of 2,007 interviews completed per state. Telephone numbers were randomly sampled, [with one child under 18 years randomly selected as the interview subject]. The respondent was an adult in the household who had the most knowledge about the child's health. Over 95% of the time, the respondent was a child's parent or guardian.

The Federal Poverty Level (FPL)

The FPL is a term commonly used in lieu of the "Federal Poverty Thresholds" (U.S. Census Bureau) and the Federal Poverty Guidelines [Department of Health and Human Services, (HHS)]. The U.S. Census Bureau is responsible for calculating poverty thresholds each year, which are then used to determine the number of Americans living in poverty. HHS creates the Guidelines as a simplified version of these thresholds and uses it for administrative purposes (e.g., eligibility for various federal programs).²³

B. Methodology Used In the Report Card

The NSCH assessed family income and receipt of SNAP, WIC, and free school lunch in order to assign respondents to an income category based on the Federal Poverty Level. Since no questions were asked about residential status, we used a proxy measure to represent the category of respondents that would most likely include families in extreme poverty who have experienced homelessness or would be at greatest risk of becoming homeless. Since the NSCH data include a subset of respondents that fall at 0-100% of the FPL, the Report Card uses the mid-way point of this group as a conservative proxy for assessing the health status of children who are homeless.

The findings related to health are based on the following four questions from the NSCH:

- 1) How many children/youth (ages 0-17) currently have health conditions described as moderate or severe by their parents?
- 2) How many children/youth (ages 0-17) experienced one or more asthma-related health issues during the past 12 months?
- 3) When you have a serious disagreement with your household members, how often do you end up hitting or throwing things?
- 4) How many children/youth (ages 3-17) have moderate or severe difficulties in the areas of emotions, concentration, behavior, or being able to get along with other people?

C. Limitations

The 2003 National Survey of Children's Health (NSCH)

To enhance the representativeness of the NSCH sample, results were weighted to adjust for various potential biases. For example, the survey results were adjusted to prevent bias related to the exclusion of households without telephones. Based on evidence that households with no telephone service may be similar to households that have experienced service interruptions during the year, researchers used data from previous census and population surveys to identify the number of households who experienced service interruption, and extrapolated the number of households without telephones in a given area.²⁴ Increased weight was assigned to households with interrupted telephone service to account for households without telephones. While this adjustment may increase the representativeness of the sample for families who are housed, but struggling financially to pay utilities, it does not consider families who may be living in shelters, cars, or on the streets, or who are doubled-up.

Federal Poverty Level

Many consider the current measure for the FPL inadequate, for the following reasons:²⁵

- The FPL is based on research from the 1960's that showed that families spent one-third of their income on food. As a result, the FPL was set by multiplying food costs by three. This measure has not been updated to reflect the current costs of food: an average family now spends only one-seventh of their income on food. In addition, other costs such as housing, child care, health care, and transportation have become increasingly more expensive for families.
- A family's pre-tax cash income is assessed and compared to the poverty threshold for their family size. If a family's income is below the threshold, they are thought to be living in poverty. This measure does not take into account earnings lost to income taxes; debt; hardships related to substandard housing; or financial assets.
- The U.S. Census Bureau uses a standard poverty threshold, which is updated for inflation each year. However, this threshold does not vary by state and thus does not account for regional variations in cost of living.

If new poverty thresholds were created to reflect current realities about a family's expenses, adjusted for regional variations in costs of living, and changed to include a realistic assessment of a family's resources, it is estimated that millions more people would be considered to be living in poverty by government standards. Analyses used in the Report Card conservatively assumed that people who are homeless fall within 33% to 50% of the current FPL and below. Because of the lack of precise data available, the Report Card sometimes uses higher proxies to estimate the characteristics and needs of homeless children. However, since the FPL is an inadequate measure of poverty, one can assume that the estimates of homeless children using the FPL as a proxy are also grossly underestimated.

6. Educational Achievement / Academic Proficiency

A. Data Sources

McKinney-Vento Academic Progress Data

The McKinney-Vento education data collection system counts children as homeless if their primary nighttime residence at the time of enrollment was a shelter, motel, temporary arrangement living with others due to loss of housing or economic hardship, or other situations that fall within the Act's definition of "homeless." A child is considered enrolled in school if he or she is attending classes and participating fully in school activities. Currently, the U.S. Department of Education requires only those school districts that receive McKinney-Vento subgrants to submit data on the numbers of homeless children who took state assessments in the previous academic year and the number of homeless children who met or exceeded state proficiency in reading and math. States have some discretion in how they design assessments and proficiency standards. Thus, scores between states are not always comparable. Academic progress for homeless children is reported for grades 3-8 and for high school.

National Assessment of Educational Progress

The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) is conducted periodically among students in grades 4, 8, and 12 to gauge the state, regional, and national academic performance in selected subjects. NAEP testing is also conducted to determine long-term trends by assessing samples of students at ages 9, 13, or 17 years. Subjects assessed include mathematics, reading, science, writing, the arts, civics, economics, geography, and U.S. history.²⁶

Each state uses the same tests each year allowing for a common metric across states and continuous documentation of student progress. Participating students are assessed for "proficiency," which is the target point for student achievement. It is defined by the U.S. Department of Education as "...One of the three NAEP achievement levels representing solid academic performance for each grade assessed. Students reaching this level have demonstrated competency over challenging subject matter, including subject-matter knowledge, application of such knowledge to real-world situations, and analytical skills appropriate to the subject matter."²⁷ For the purposes of the Report Card, we have used "proficiency" as the benchmark for student performance.

On the NAEP, students might have achieved a score of "Basic," which denotes "partial mastery of prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade assessed." Students might also score "Advanced," which is defined as superior performance.²⁸ Students who do not achieve even partial mastery score "Below Basic." Students who score at the "Basic" level are considered not to have reached a satisfactory level, which could mean that these students are not prepared for grade advancement or graduation. Therefore, "Basic" and "Below Basic" are not considered desirable benchmarks for students who are already disadvantaged by factors other than educational achievement. An "Advanced" score represents academic progress that is at a higher level than what is necessary for grade promotion or graduation.

National assessments include a representative probability sample of schools and students, and also include a private school sample of about 700 schools with up to 60 students per school selected.²⁹ NAEP state assessments include mathematics, reading, science, and writing, and include a representative state sample of schools and students. An average state sample includes 2,500 students across 100 public schools. Schools with similar characteristics such as physical location, extent of minority enrollment, state-based achievement scores, and median income are stratified within each state to improve reliability.³⁰ NAEP aims to assess as many randomly selected students as possible. NAEP identifies students who have disabilities or are English language learners and may require special accommodations to participate.³¹

Although data are not reported for individual students, schools, or school districts, data are available for some sample subsets. Of importance to the Report Card analysis is the subset of students identified as eligible for the U.S. Department of Agriculture's National School Lunch Program (NSLP). Since students in households that are at 130% to 185% of the Federal Poverty level (FPL) are eligible for the NSLP, it is assumed that students who are homeless (33% - 50% of the FPL and below) are included in this subset. In the absence of NAEP proficiency data specifically about students who are homeless or extremely limited data from the McKinney Vento educational assessments, data from the NSLP subset were used as a proxy.

National School Lunch Program

The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) requires schools to serve free breakfast and lunch to children whose household income is 130% or below the Federal Poverty Level (FPL). Children are automatically eligible for free meals if their household participates in SNAP or the Food Distribution Program on Indian Reservations. In most cases, if a household receives Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), the child is eligible.³² Children who reside in households whose income is between 130% and 185% of the FPL are eligible for reduced priced meals (up to \$.40 for lunch, \$.30 for breakfast, and \$.15 for a snack).³³ Income includes salary, public assistance benefits, social security payments, pensions, and unemployment compensation received by a household. Federal guidance from 2002 advises school nutrition officials to work closely and cooperate with local education liaisons and state homeless coordinators to assist homeless students in accordance with the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act. Under the 2004 reauthorization of the Child Nutrition Act, children who meet the McKinney-Vento Act definition of homeless are categorically eligible for free school meals. Whereas most children are required to submit an application to qualify for the school meals program, children who are identified as homeless by the educational liaison or a homeless shelter director can be automatically enrolled.³⁴

School meal program participation rates are tracked monthly and annually by state, district, and school. National-level data provide a breakdown of free vs. reduced-price meal recipients, which offers some insight into the national percentage of households at 130% vs. 185% of the poverty level.³⁵ Participant-level characteristics have not been collected by the USDA since 1991. However, the most recent data indicated that students who qualified for free or reduced-price meals tended to be younger and were disproportionately Black, Hispanic, American Indian, or Alaskan Native.³⁶ These data also showed that most qualified students lived in the Southeast and Southwest.

B. Methodology Used in the Report Card

It is difficult to ascertain a reliable comparison of state proficiency levels published with the McKinney-Vento educational data because states develop their own assessments and gauge proficiency by their own standards. Since NAEP assessments are uniform across states, they provide a common metric. NAEP has published correlations for most states between NAEP proficiency assessments and the state assessments. In order to generate comparable proficiency rates, the state proficiency scores for homeless children were converted into NAEP scores.

NAEP also collects data for identified subsets of students, including those eligible for the NSLP. Due to the limitations of the McKinney-Vento educational data discussed in this Appendix, comprehensive information about homeless student participation and proficiency in state assessments are not available in most states. In these states, the Report Card used the NSLP subset of NAEP scores as a proxy to estimate proficiency rates for children who are living in extreme poverty; this includes homeless children. The NSLP data are also reported as a comparison for states that collected data on homeless students.

C. Limitations

McKinney-Vento Academic Progress Data

Currently, the U.S. Department of Education requires only those school districts receiving McKinney-Vento subgrants to submit data on the numbers of homeless children who took state assessments in the previous academic year, and the number of homeless children who met or exceeded state proficiency in reading and math. Since only 5% of school districts receive McKinney-Vento subgrants, the data do not represent all children experiencing homelessness. In addition, testing data reflect a mere “snapshot” of those children who were in attendance on the day the test was administered. Since the overall number of homeless children reported for the year is an annual number, it is not possible to compare the number of homeless children taking the test to the overall number of students identified as homeless over the course of a year.

In addition to these issues, other factors may impact whether or not homeless children were assessed. For example, high mobility rates mean that homeless children may or may not have been in a certain school on testing day; these children may also have been absent for other reasons related to homelessness. Finally, the federal data requirement for subgrant districts is relatively new; this data element was first required by the U.S. Department of Education for the 2002-2003 school year. Many school districts were unable to provide this information because data systems were not able to match a student's status as homeless with testing participation and/or proficiency rates. While some improvements have been made, school districts continue to struggle with data issues related to tracking academic assessments of homeless students.

National School Lunch Program (NSLP)

The NSLP sub-set of the NAEP proficiency data are assumed to include children who are homeless, because they would be subsumed within the broader group of children who reside in households at 130-185% of the FPL and if they are reported by McKinney-Vento school liaisons they are automatically enrolled. While this assumption provides an adequate proxy, the lack of data sets specifically related to homeless children limit the precision of the academic proficiency measurement. In addition, data from the school lunch program is likely to be an underestimate of proficiency.

7. Graduation Rates & Education Opportunity Costs

A. Data Sources

Graduation Rates

Comparing graduation rates among all children across the U.S. is challenging because “federal regulations...allow states substantial flexibility over the specifics of graduation accountability.”³⁷ The National Center for Education Statistics (NCES) collects enrollment and graduation rate data at the school and state level; however, these data are not disaggregated for students who are homeless.

Because of the lack of data available about the graduation rates of homeless children across the United States, the Report Card considers relevant data about disadvantaged populations that are similar to homeless children. For example, the Report Card uses data about male Black students in urban areas from *Given Half a Chance: The Schott 50 State Report on Public Education and Black Males* and data about graduation rates of low-income families and other racial/ethnic groups as reported by the National Center for Education Statistics.

The Report Card also considers proficiency data from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), which can be disaggregated based on selected demographic factors. For a discussion of NAEP data and achievement levels, see the Academic Proficiency section of this Appendix.

Education Opportunity Costs

Levin and his colleagues conducted a cost/benefit analysis³⁸ to better understand the cost burdens to society when its citizens do not graduate from high school and/or do not continue on to college. This analysis first identifies five leading interventions that have been shown to improve high school graduation rates, and calculates their costs and effectiveness. The analysis then identifies and sums common government expenditures spent on people who do not graduate high school, such as involvement with public health care, criminal justice, and welfare systems. The costs of the school interventions are compared with the costs to these government systems. The results suggest that net lifetime increased contributions to society associated with high school graduation are about \$127,000 per student, and that the difference in lifetime earnings between those with a high school degree and those without is \$200,000 per student.

B. Report Card Methods

Graduation Rates

The Report Card uses three data sources to estimate the graduation rates of homeless children: 1) known graduation rates among children who are poor; 2) known graduation rates among boys who are Black or Hispanic and reside in urban areas; and 3) proficiency scores for children with characteristics similar to homeless children. The Report Card’s method for using these factors is described below:

- 1) Many urban areas have graduation rates of 20% to 30% for male Black students as do many rural districts.³⁹ The graduation rate for male Black students in New York City is approximately 25%. The graduation rate for male students (Black and White) in Indianapolis, the country’s least successful school district, is 17%.⁴⁰ Similarly, The Schott Foundation for Public Education found that over half of Black males did not receive a diploma at the expected time during 2005-2006.⁴¹ Given that these numbers include students at all family income and education levels, we can assume that a group that is further disadvantaged by income, mobility, or other factors affecting homeless children, would not be expected to have a graduation rate higher than 25-30%.

- 2) In order to arrive at a national estimate of a graduation rate of 25% for homeless children, we assume that homeless children are at the extreme end for outcomes of disadvantaged children. Such outcomes are typically below 45% nationally and considerably lower in some cities and states. Research has shown that students from low-income families have an 11% drop-out rate, as compared to 5% among middle-income, and 2% among high-income families.⁴² 2008 data showed that graduation rates were 80.6% for White students, compared to 61.8%, 61.4%, and 59.1% for American Indian/Alaska Native, Hispanic, and Black students, respectively.⁴³
- 3) Since states vary significantly on graduation requirements, we cannot assume that reading proficiency is a graduation requirement. However, it is highly unlikely that a student who cannot read at grade level would be able to perform required school tasks with sufficient knowledge and skills to pass required courses and graduate.

Using NAEP, we can construct a model for students who are extremely disadvantaged and/or homeless. NAEP data can be disaggregated based on National School Lunch Program (NSLP) eligibility; Race/Ethnicity; and Days Absent in Previous Month. Using all three factors as filters, we can construct a sample of students that can serve as a model for those who are extremely disadvantaged and/or homeless. Scores among this group show that the percentage of White, non-Hispanic 8th grade students who were absent 5-10 days in the previous month, and NSLP-eligible, and proficient in reading was approximately 7%. Only 5% of those who were absent more than 10 days were scored as proficient. Among Black students who were NSLP-eligible and absent 5-10 days in the previous month, 5% were scored as proficient in reading, while only 2% who were absent more than 10 days were scored as proficient. The percentages for Hispanic students were 3% (absent 5-10 days) and 0% (absent 10+ days). If we apply the same procedures to NAEP reading proficiency in grade 12, none of the students in this group – White, non-Hispanic; Black; or Hispanic – were scored as proficient in reading.

Considering both graduation rates for extremely disadvantaged students and basic skills outcomes for similar students as measured by NAEP, it would be most surprising if the graduation rate for homeless children were higher than 10%, and could very well be 5% or below (based on reading proficiency assessments). Nonetheless, because of the lack of precision allowed by the existing data, the Report Card has very conservatively estimated that the graduation rate for homeless children is less than 25% nationally. The state-by-state estimates are often lower than 25%, where specific data allows more confidence in lower numbers.

Economic Opportunity Costs

To illustrate the state-level economic consequences of not graduating from high school, the loss in lifetime contributions to society is multiplied by the expected number of homeless children who will not graduate. The difference in lifetime earnings between those with a high school degree and those without is also multiplied by this figure to arrive at an estimated loss in lifetime earnings per state.

C. Limitations

Graduation Rates

Compounding the challenges to measuring graduation rates for all high school students are the many limitations in the data describing homeless students. (For a further discussion, see the following sections in this Appendix; Extent of the Problem and Demographics: McKinney-Vento Data Collection; and Educational Achievement: McKinney-Vento Academic Progress Data.) Proficiency assessments and graduation requirements are not standardized across states, which poses challenges to generating and comparing graduation rates. In the absence of precise data about the graduation rates of homeless children, proxy measures of reading proficiency (e.g., NSLP data) among various disadvantaged groups were used to estimate the graduation rates of homeless children. Because the Report Card adopted a conservative estimate, the graduation rates of homeless children are likely much lower than the estimated 25%.

Education Opportunity Costs

The data sources used by Levin and his colleagues to derive the cost burdens to society do not appear to include expenditures related to housing and supportive services targeting people who are homeless.⁴⁴ As a result, it is likely that the costs to society for children who are homeless and do not graduate from high school are even higher than the cost reported.

8. Risk for Child Homelessness

A. Data Sources

The index of homelessness risk factors analyzes state characteristics that are associated with family homelessness. Family homelessness is a reasonable proxy measure for child homelessness, because the Report Card's estimates are based on children who are members of homeless families. These estimates do not include unaccompanied youth, and these youth are also not directly represented in the risk index.

Often when we think about predictors of homelessness, we focus on factors related to individual vulnerability, such as the recent birth of a child or hospitalization for a mental health or substance abuse problem. However, individual factors only tell us who is more likely to be affected by various structural factors that contribute to losing one's home. Structural factors describe the market forces creating homelessness, but do not indicate who might be most vulnerable to these forces. Structural factors describe the "why" of homelessness, not the "who." Therefore, we have designed this index to focus on the structural determinants of family homelessness and have included indicators in four domains described below: poverty, household structure, housing market factors, and generosity of benefits – all at the state level. The impact of unique state/regional characteristics and events (e.g., natural disasters, local context) is not directly captured in the risk index.

Poverty is represented by a single variable - the rate of extreme poverty (the percentage of households with incomes at 50% of the Federal Poverty Level (FPL) or lower). Of all the state descriptors that we considered, extreme poverty was by far the strongest predictor of family homelessness.

The household structure domain is comprised of two variables: female-headed households and teen births. These two variables are included because they focus on families who are particularly vulnerable to an economic catastrophe. While most female-headed households do not become homeless, these households are more vulnerable to events such as the loss of a job or the serious illness of a child. Single mothers are often only one catastrophe away from homelessness since they are solely responsible for wage earning, child care, and homemaking. For women with children and limited education and job skills, the options for survival are low-paying service-sector jobs with inflexible hours and inadequate benefits, TANF, SNAP, and long waitlists for affordable housing. Similarly, areas with high teen birth rates include many children with parents who are lacking the education and incomes of older parents and are therefore more likely to become homeless.

The housing market domain is critical since it represents the supply side of the equation: How much housing is available for families at the low end of the economic ladder? Our two indicators are extreme housing need (defined by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) as paying 50% or more of your income for rent or living in substandard housing⁴⁵) and housing foreclosures. Worst-case housing need is a strong predictor of family homelessness because it includes the group that may be one unexpected expense away from eviction. Similarly, foreclosure rates are an indicator of diminished housing stock. In many locales, foreclosures lead to the eviction of vulnerable tenants and are associated with rising rates of homelessness.

The final domain, generosity of benefits, describes the income side of the affordable housing equation. When rent far exceeds income, people cannot afford to maintain their housing. For those with extremely low incomes, public benefits are essential for keeping this equation balanced. This domain is made up of four variables: an indicator for the use of federal child care vouchers, the ratio of the TANF benefit to a state's Fair Market Rent, the rate of children who lack insurance, and participation in SNAP. Each of these variables represents resources that help buffer the impact of poverty. Child care vouchers are important because they enable people to work. SNAP helps cover the cost of food so that wages can be dedicated to other essentials such as rent. Although children tend to have relatively low health care expenditures, without routine care a small problem can become an emergency, leading to missed work and costly expenditures. Finally, the ratio of TANF benefit to the Fair Market Rent is an indicator of whether public benefits are sufficient to pay rent.

Risk Factors for Child Homelessness: Data Sources

Variable	Year	Source
Extreme Poverty	2006	U.S. Census Bureau, Current Population Survey 2007 Annual Social and Economic Supplement, Detailed Poverty Tables, Table POV03 and POV05 at http://pubdb3.census.gov/macro/032007/pov/toc.htm
Female Headed Households	2000	PUMS Micro Data, 1% Sample, 2000 Census
Teen Birth Rate	2005	www.statehealthfacts.org/comparemaptable.jsp?cat=2&ind=37
Vacancy Rates	2005	www.census.gov/hhes/www/housing/hvs/annual05/ann05t3.html
Foreclosures	2007	www.swivel.com/data_sets/spreadsheet/1007143 from Realtytrac
Federal Child Care Vouchers	2007	www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ccb/data/ccdf_data/07acf800_preliminary/list.htm
TANF	2005	NCFH: Copy of State Policy Worksheet www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/opre/welfare_employ/state_tanf/reports/wel_rules05/wel05_benefits.html
Health Insurance	2005-07	www.census.gov/hhes/www/hlthins/liuc07.html
SNAP	2005	www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Published/SNAP/FILES/Participation/Reaching2005.pdf

B. Methodology Used In the Report Card

To construct the index, the variables within each of the four domains were ranked and then states were scored according to their quintile (1 point for the top fifth of the states; and up to 5 points for the bottom fifth of the states). All the rankings within each domain were then averaged to compute a single domain score between 1 and 5. All four domain scores were then added together to create an overall score from 4 to 20. Scores were assigned based on quintile to help smooth out some of the random variation in measurement.

To select variables for each domain, we collected various state descriptors that are known to be associated with family homelessness. Many homelessness studies have focused on individual level variables so we extrapolated what these factors might look like at the systemic level. We know, for example, that women raising young children without the support of a partner or other family members are at higher risk for family homelessness. To capture this concept, we included indicators for family structure rather than trying to aggregate variables such as family size or average age of children. However, it would be a mistake to assume that individual models aggregate directly at city, county, or state levels. Instead, the dynamic and overall picture is likely to be different at each level.

Different data elements were available for different time frames. We collected as much data as possible and then used the most recent data in the index. Years range from 2000 for worst case housing needs, up to 2007 for most other data elements.

Once a large set of covariates was identified, we used descriptive statistics to understand the variation across all 50 states. Any predictor with low variation was eliminated because it was not likely to help identify state level differences. For the remaining covariates, we calculated correlation statistics to determine which factors had a significant association with family homelessness. Factors with low correlation coefficients were carefully considered for theoretical importance. If a case could not be made for a given covariate, it was eliminated. We also looked carefully at the correlation among covariates – when two or more variables were highly correlated, we tended to keep the variable that was more highly associated with family homelessness.

Once quintile scores were assigned, total index scores were calculated by taking the average score within each of the key domains mentioned above. The four domain scores were then added together to create an overall index score for each state. Higher scores indicate the presence of more homelessness risk factors (max score = 20).

C. Limitations

A linear index has various limitations. First, there are data limitations. For some desired data elements, we could not find or calculate state level estimates. We also could not find all of the data for a given year. With different years of data, it is difficult to determine which events are causes and which are outcomes. Second, our scoring strategy may not fully account for the correlation among covariates. As a result, some factors, like poverty, may be weighted more heavily than other elements.

While foreclosure rates are certainly indicators of housing availability and potential homelessness, these rates do not capture the precarious housing situations of families who are living on the streets, in shelters, or those who move from one doubled-up situation to another.

9. State Policies

Housing

A. Data Sources

For the Housing domain, we relied on three primary data sources:

1. HUD's 2007 *Continuum of Care Homeless Assistance Programs Housing Inventory* data were used to report the number of emergency shelter, transitional, and permanent supportive housing units in each state and nationally.
2. *Section 8 and Public Housing Waiting List* information was generated using the National Low Income Housing Coalition's (NLIHC) Research Note #04-03 and its accompanying data. In this publication, experts from the NLIHC analyzed waiting list data from a sample of Public Housing Agency (PHA) annual plans submitted to the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. We also used raw data provided by the NLIHC. The raw data set includes more than 100 variables related to both Section 8 and public housing. These variables include: waiting list policies (e.g., are waiting lists closed? are they combined for Section 8 and public housing?); income of those on the waiting lists (low-income, very low-income, and extremely low-income); size of public housing units; and which subgroups are given priority (if any) on wait lists for both programs.
3. *Housing Trust Fund* data came from the Center for Community Change's Housing Trust Fund Project. Established in 1986, the project operates as a clearinghouse of information on housing trust funds throughout the country and provides technical assistance to organizations and agencies working to create or implement these funds. More information is available on the Center's website: www.communitychange.org.

B. Methodology Used in the Report Card

Based on the sources described above, we reported the number of emergency shelter, transitional housing, and permanent supportive housing units in each state. In the brief state reports, we summed these numbers to determine total units in the state.

For the Section 8 and public housing waiting list data, we examined the raw data set and reported on the variables that were most salient to this Report Card. They were:

- The percent of extremely low-income families on Section 8 waiting lists.
- The percent of extremely low-income families on public housing waiting lists.
- Whether or not priority was given to those fleeing domestic violence.
- Whether or not priority was given to those experiencing homelessness.

Out of all the data available, these four variables best represent the experiences of families experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Housing Trust Fund data were reported for each state based on the information available from the Center for Community Change.

C. Limitations

HUD's 2007 *Continuum of Care* data are the most complete data set available nationally, but do not include units that are not a part of the continuum of care. For example, if a local community group runs an emergency shelter, but is not part of the continuum of care, it is not reported in this data set.

Section 8 and public housing waiting list data have various limitations. For the variables we chose (listed above), data are only available for 32 states. Although Public Housing Authorities (PHAs) are required to submit a plan annually, many have not done so or have not reported data recently. For some states, the data are from 2000. Additionally, the data set does not specifically identify homeless families with children who are on waiting lists. We report findings for families, with extremely low-incomes. However, this information does not specify whether a family has children. In considering priorities for Section 8 and public housing waiting lists, it also important to note that because a family is placed in a "priority" category does not mean that they will be placed in housing soon. For many programs, the waiting lists are counted in years rather than days, weeks, or months.

The housing trust fund data do not include information on local housing trust funds, such as those at the county or city level. Additionally, in the current economic climate, state housing trust funds are likely to experience financial difficulty since they are often based on real estate transfer taxes. Despite these limitations, state housing trust funds remain an important part of creating and maintaining an affordable housing stock.

Income

A. Data Sources

For the Income domain, we relied on the following data sources:

For each state, the National Low-Income Housing Coalition's *Out of Reach* Report provided information on the average Fair Market Rent (FMR) for a two-bedroom apartment, the average wage for renters, and the average hourly wage needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment at FMR.

The minimum wage for each state is available through the U.S. Department of Labor.

The maximum monthly TANF benefit is provided by the Administration for Children and Families.

Data on the State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) come from the State Online EITC Resource Center, which is operated by The Hatcher Group. The Hatcher Group is a public affairs and communications firm that works with media, nonprofits, and other organizations on issues related to global poverty, tax and social policy, low-income families, youth at risk, education and early learning, community development and international health, hunger, and human rights.

Child care data come from three sources. The average cost of center-based child care for a four-year old is from the Children's Defense Fund's *Children in the States*, a seminal report released annually that provides a wide range of data on child well-being. Data on reasons for using a child care voucher come from the Child Care Bureau of the Administration for Children and Families, an agency of the US Department of Health and Human Services. The Bureau's most recent report to Congress is from FY 04-05 and includes information on Child Care and Development Funds (CCDF) as reported in state plans, expenditure reports, administrative data reports, and research. We also indicate whether or not a state prioritizes homeless families in distributing their child care vouchers. This latter information comes from a personal communication between Brad Kramer, Director of Policy at Horizons for Homeless Children, and Katie Volk, Director of Training at the National Center on Family Homelessness. Horizons for Homeless Children, located in Massachusetts, specializes in providing child care to children who are homeless. They have successfully advocated for various changes to state-level child care policy that impacts homeless families. Mr. Kramer has particular expertise in child care policy as it relates to homeless families.

B. Methodology Used in the Report Card

Information about the income of a family experiencing homelessness often comes from a patchwork of sources. In this section, we reported on multiple ways that families might earn income and/or receive income support.

To understand the gap between income and housing, we examined three income options: minimum wage, maximum monthly TANF benefit, and average wage for renters.

- The minimum wage is the wage most parents who are homeless are likely to earn given their limited educational backgrounds. We compared this wage to the housing wage (generated by the National Low Income Housing Coalition described above) through a simple calculation:

(Minimum wage/Housing wage) x 100 = % earned out of what is needed to afford a two-bedroom apartment at FMR in a given state.

For example, if the minimum wage is \$5.00 and the housing wage is \$10, then a worker is only earning half of what he/she needs to cover his/her rent each month. We chose to use the FMR for a two-bedroom apartment based on the assumption that it is the smallest and therefore least expensive housing option that would be viable for a family experiencing homelessness.

- Since some families who are homeless are not working but receiving public benefits, we calculated a similar number based on the maximum monthly TANF benefit:

FMR for a two-bedroom/Maximum monthly TANF benefit = % of income that would be needed to cover FMR.

For example, if a family's maximum monthly benefit is \$500 and FMR rent for a two-bedroom apartment is \$1000, then they would have to spend 200% of their income just on housing costs alone. We chose to use the maximum monthly TANF benefit rather than the average because it best illustrates the challenges facing homeless families.

- We also report the average wage for renters and its relationship to housing affordability, since this represents the highest income that a family experiencing homelessness is likely to earn.

The State Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC) may contribute to a family's income. We report this information for each state, also indicating whether or not it is refundable. A refundable EITC is most helpful to poor families.

Since child care is a large expense and often a significant barrier to employment for homeless families, we included information on the cost of child care. We also included information on how families use child care vouchers and whether or not states give priority to homeless families in distributing these vouchers.

C. Limitations

Data on minimum wage, TANF benefits, and average wage for renters represent our best estimate of what a homeless family might earn. No data are available describing the income of homeless families.

State Earned Income Tax Credits, while important, do not provide families with on-going income support. Rather, families are more likely to receive one lump sum. The amount varies by state and may not be enough to make a substantial difference in the family's economic situation. Furthermore, although the State EITCs do lift families out of poverty, it is important to factor in how the Federal Poverty Level is calculated. For more information, see the discussion of the Federal Poverty Level earlier in this Appendix.

Reported child care data are not comprehensive. We include average cost for a four-year old, but we recognize that infant care is even more expensive. After-school care is also expensive. For many families who are homeless and seeking employment, the jobs they are offered are "second shift" jobs during which child care is often inaccessible.

Food Security

A. Data Sources

The data on the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP, formerly called food stamps) and school breakfast program participation come from the Food Research and Action Center's *State of the States 2007*, which is published annually.

B. Methodology Used in the Report Card

We reported SNAP enrollment and participation of schools in the school breakfast program because both programs enhance homeless children's chances for reliable, nutritious meals. Although both are federally funded programs, states are largely responsible for implementation and can access federal dollars when children are enrolled.

C. Limitations

SNAP enrollment data and school breakfast participation do not exclusively include homeless children. The data describe low-income children participating in the program or, in the case of the school breakfast program, schools that participate.

Another limitation is the absence of data on the Supplemental Women, Infants and Children Nutrition program, commonly called WIC. Based on our extensive research, no WIC data are available that would help us understand how homeless women and their young children use this program. The only data that are available by state are the raw number of families receiving WIC. To understand the extent and impact of this program, the percentage of eligible families enrolled would have been more useful. Because these data are not available, we omitted WIC data from the state-level reports.

Health

A. Data Sources

We relied on the Kaiser Family Foundation's Kaiser Commission on Medicaid and the Uninsured for all of the health variables in the health policy section of the state reports. These data are based on the Commission's State Health Facts, which are based on an analysis of the Census Bureau's March 2007 and 2008 Current Population Surveys. For more information, visit www.statehealthfacts.org/about.jsp.

B. Methodology Used in the Report Card

We reported on the following three variables for each state: 1. The percentage of children who are uninsured; 2. The percentage of the state's Medicaid budget spent on children; and 3. The income eligibility percentages for Medicaid for children of various ages.

C. Limitations

The data reported are not specifically for children who are homeless, although it is highly likely that homeless children are included in these data sets. In addition, the health policy section of this Report Card does not address access to physical, mental, and dental health providers – all of which are critical to the health and well-being of homeless children. Despite our best efforts, we could not identify state-by-state data sets that describe access to health care.

Education

A. Data Sources

Data on education of homeless children comes from several sources:

- The report submitted by each state to the U.S. Department of Education under the *Consolidated State Performance Report: Parts I and II for State Formula Grant Programs* was used for each state for school year 2006-2007. Part II of this report includes information on state activities and outcomes of specific programs of the US Department of Education, including information on barriers to educating homeless children and youth.
- The U.S. Department of Education's FY 2001-2009 state budget tables by program was used to ascertain the federal dollars allocated to each state for homeless education.
- Unpublished survey data from the National Association for the Education of Homeless Children and Youth (NAEHCY) to the State Education Coordinators provided information on state-level funding for educating children and youth experiencing homelessness.

B. Methodology Used in the Report Card

For each state, we report the barriers faced by schools in enrolling students who are homeless. Using state-level data, we also calculated a national average of barriers faced by schools.

To help understand the resources of school districts, we calculated the per homeless child dollar amount based on the state's federal allocation for this program. The calculation involved dividing the total dollar amount (as reported in the state budget tables mentioned above) by the total number of homeless school-age children. We also reported state-level funding allocated to school districts for education of homeless students using the NAEHCY survey. Responses were compiled by Barbara Duffield, Policy Director at NAEHCY, and shared with NCFH staff for inclusion in the Report Card.

C. Limitations

McKinney-Vento data on barriers are only reported by a small proportion of school districts that received subgrants; an even smaller proportion of those subgrantees reported information on barriers. However, this is the best available information on barriers facing homeless children enrolling in school.

To calculate the per-homeless-child federal funding provided to each state, we used the identified number of homeless children, which is very likely an undercount. For discussion of this issue, see Appendices 1 and 2.

10. State Planning

A. Data Sources

State-level reports were used to understand the planning efforts in each state. These sources are cited in the endnotes of the planning section for each state and include 10-year planning documents, state interagency council on homelessness reports, and other relevant documents. In addition, information gathered by the National Alliance to End Homelessness and the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness (USICH) was used to identify state-level efforts. The 2008 report from the Annie E. Casey Foundation entitled *Seizing the Moment: State Governments and the New Commitment to Reduce Poverty in America* was used to identify state-wide poverty initiatives in fourteen states.

B. Methodology Used in the Report Card

For each state, we systematically reviewed 10-year planning efforts and state interagency councils on homelessness. In addition to using information collected by the USICH and National Alliance to End Homelessness, we conducted internet searches using key search terms such as the state name plus “interagency council,” “homeless,” “homelessness,” “ten-year plan,” etc. For nearly all states, these efforts produced the documents we were seeking. If the information was unclear or out of date, we contacted interagency council representatives or other key informants such as executive directors or state agency offices of homeless services to ensure that we had the most accurate information.

We read all current 10-year plans, state reports on homelessness, policy academy documents, and interagency council reports for each state. We documented any mention of children and families and state interagency efforts. Once this process was complete for all 50 states, we classified each state’s planning efforts in the following categories:

- *Extensive Planning* indicates that the state has an active Interagency Council on Homelessness, and has created a comprehensive ten-year plan to end homelessness that includes a focus on children and families.
- *Moderate Planning* indicates that the state has an Interagency Council on Homelessness, and has created a ten-year plan to end homelessness that includes some mention of children and families.
- *Early Stages of Planning* indicates that the state has recently established an Interagency Council on Homelessness, and therefore has not created a ten-year plan to end homelessness.
- *Inadequate Planning* indicates a state has not created an Interagency Council on Homelessness, has an Interagency Council on Homelessness that has made little progress in planning, or has drafted a plan that has not been adopted by any agency or is inactive for other reasons. It also indicates that the state’s 10-year plan, if they have one, does not mention children or families.

We also reported how the state defined homelessness. However, the state definition was not evaluated or considered in the classification of state planning efforts. The Seizing the Moment report provided further information on statewide child poverty initiatives for fourteen states and was included in those states’ reports. This information was not considered when classifying states according to the matrix described above.

C. Limitations

Our examination of planning efforts was limited to written materials produced by states on their 10-year planning and interagency work. We did not conduct key informant interviews. In addition, our focus was on planning initiated by state agencies, state legislatures, and/or the governor’s office. It does not include the important work being done by community-based organizations around the country, unless these organizations were also involved in state-initiated 10-year planning or interagency efforts.

11. Overall Score

A. Data Sources

This Report Card captures the complexity of child homelessness. Although each state has been assigned an overall rank, this single number represents multiple domains, each with multiple dimensions. Each state was scored and ranked based on four domains. Selected sub-domains also received individual scores and ranks which contributed to the overall score. Descriptions of the data sources and methodology for each of these domains is included earlier in this Appendix, and selected sub-domain scores are included in Appendix 4.

B. Methodology Used In the Report Card

To arrive at the overall score, states were ranked on:

- 1) Extent of Child Homelessness. The percent of homeless children out of all children in the state was used as the measure for this ranking.
- 2) Child Well-Being. This score was based on hunger, health, and education indicators. Hunger included those with very low food security. Health variables included overall health; asthma; dental health; and emotional disturbance among homeless children. Education variables included NAEP academic proficiency in reading and in math for elementary and high school students who are homeless (see discussion of NSLP above).
- 3) Risk of Child Homelessness. The risk index included variables across four domains: benefits generosity; housing market factors; household structure; and extreme poverty rates. The four domains were combined to create a single risk score.
- 4) State Policy and Planning Efforts. States were assigned ranks based on the adequacy of their policies related to health and food security, and the development and implementation of state plans to end homelessness that include children and families.

State scores on extent of child homelessness, child well-being, risk, state policy and planning were then summed. Summary scores were ranked, with one being the best and 50 being the worst. In case of a tie in any of the rankings, the percentage of homeless children was used to break the tie. States with a higher percentage of homeless children received a higher rank. In one case, two states had the same percentage of homeless children. In that case, we used the raw number of homeless children to break the tie. The state with the smaller number received the better rank.

C. Limitations

The limitations of individual data sources have been discussed earlier in this Appendix.

The use of a scoring mechanism based on the selected variables may provide a limited picture of a state's extent of child homelessness, its causes, and the state's policy and planning response. To more fully understand individual and composite rankings in selected states, the Report Card team consulted with various local, state, and national stakeholders. Readers are encouraged to visit the Campaign website (www.HomelessChildrenAmerica.org) to share their opinions about the state scores and the problem of child homelessness in their states. This information will be aggregated with interview data to further inform statewide advocacy and technical assistance strategies.

¹ National Alliance to End Homelessness. (2007). Fact checker: Rural homelessness. Washington, D.C.. Retrieved November 9, 2008, from: <http://endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1613>

² Aron, L. Y. and Fitchen, J. M. (1996). Rural homelessness: A synopsis. In J. Baumohl (Ed.), *Homeless in America* (Chapter 7). Washington, D.C.: Oryx.

³ Burt, M. R., et al. (1999). Findings of the 1996 national survey of homeless assistance providers and clients (Technical Report, Number 13). Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

⁴ Post, P. A. (2002). *Hard to reach: Rural homelessness & health care*. Nashville, TN: National Healthcare for the Homeless Council.

⁵ Lawrence, M (1995). Rural homelessness: A geography without a geography. *Journal of Rural Studies*, 11(3), 297-303.

⁶ Burt et al estimated in a report developed under the direction of the federal Interagency Council on Homelessness in the late 1990's that nationally 9.3% of children living in poverty were homeless. The Report Card does not use this estimate because as a national estimate, it would not allow for precise state-level estimates.

⁷ National Center for Homeless Education. (2007). Education for homeless children and youth program, Title VII-B of the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act as amended by the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001: Analysis of 2005-2006 federal data collection and three-year comparison.

⁸ Burt, M. et al. (1999). *Homelessness: Programs and the people they serve*. Washington, D.C.: The Urban Institute.

⁹ National Center for Education Statistics. (n.d.) Common Core of Data. U.S. Department of Education. Retrieved from www.nces.ed.gov/ccd/

¹⁰ Homeless Management Information System (HMIS) data, October 2006 – September 2007, as reported in The Third Annual Homeless Assessment Report to Congress, July 2008 (p. 38).

¹¹ National Center for Homeless Education, 2007.

¹² Personal communication between New York State Department of Education staff members and Michael Holzman, Fall 2008.

¹³ National Low Income Housing Coalition. (2008). *Out of Reach 2007-2008*. Washington, D.C.: National Low Income Housing Coalition. Retrieved from www.nlihc.org/oor/oor2008/index.cfm

¹⁴ U.S. Department of Labor, Wage and Hour Division. (2008). Minimum wage laws in the states – July 24, 2008. Website. Retrieved October 19, 2008, from www.dol.gov/esa/minwage/america.htm#NorthDakota

¹⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service. (2008). Program data: Supplemental nutrition assistance program. Retrieved October 19, 2008, from www.fns.usda.gov/pdf/fspmain.htm

¹⁶ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2006). Seventh annual report to congress. Retrieved October 19, 2008, from www.acf.hhs.gov/programs/ofa/datareports/annualreport7/ar7index.htm

¹⁷ Bread for the World Institute. (2006). Frontline issues in nutrition assistance: Hunger report 2006. Washington, DC. Retrieved November 5, 2008, from www.bread.org/learn/hunger-reports/hunger-report-pdfs/hunger-report-2006/06-Title-TOC-Foreword.pdf

- ¹⁸ Nord, M. Andrews, M., and Carlson, S. (2006). Household food security in the United States, 2005. Economic Research Report No. 29. U.S. Department of Agriculture, Economic Research Service.
- ¹⁹ USDA, Economic Research Service. (2007). Food security in the United States: Hunger and food security. Website. Retrieved October 24, 2008, from www.ers.usda.gov/briefing/foodsecurity/labels.htm
- ²⁰ Cooper, R. and Weill, J. (2007). State of the states: 2007-A profile of food and nutrition programs across the nation. Washington, D.C.: Food Research and Action Center.
- ²¹ Weinreb, et al. (2002). Hunger: Its impact on children's health and mental health. *Pediatrics*, 110(4). Retrieved October 24, 2008, from <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/content/full/110/4/e41>
- ²² Blumberg, S.J., et al. (2003). Design and operation of the National Survey of Children's Health. Retrieved October 18, 2008, from www.schdata.org
- ²³ U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2008). The 2008 HHS poverty guidelines. Website. Retrieved October 19, 2008, from aspe.hhs.gov/POVERTY/08poverty.shtml
- ²⁴ Blumberg, S.J. et al., 2003.
- ²⁵ National Center for Children in Poverty. (2008). Measuring poverty in the United States. Columbia University, Mailman School of Public Health. Retrieved September 27, 2008, from www.nccp.org/publications/pub_825.html
- ²⁶ National Center for Homeless Education, 2007.
- ²⁷ National Center for Education Statistics. (2008a). NAEP technical documentation: NAEP data collection. Retrieved October 19, 2008, from nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/tdw/data_collection/
- ²⁸ National Center for Education Statistics. (2007). The NAEP reading achievement levels. Website. Retrieved December 2, 2008, from nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/reading/achieve.asp
- ²⁹ National Center for Education Statistics, 2008.
- ³⁰ National Center for Education Statistics. (2008b). Information for selected schools: How the samples of schools and students are selected for the main assessments (state and national). Retrieved October 19, 2008, from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/nathow.asp>
- ³¹ National Center for Education Statistics. (2008c). NAEP inclusion policy: Inclusion of special needs students. Retrieved October 19, 2008, from <http://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/about/inclusion.asp>
- ³² U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (April 4, 2002). Updated guidance for homeless children in the school nutrition programs. Retrieved October 18, 2008, from www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/Governance/Policy-Memos/
- ³³ U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (n.d.). About school meals. Retrieved October 18, 2008, from www.fns.usda.gov/cnd/About/faqs.htm#What%20are%20the%20eligibility%20standards%20for%20free%20and%20reduced%20price%20meals?
- ³⁴ U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service, April 4, 2002.
- ³⁵ U.S. Department of Agriculture Food and Nutrition Service. (2008). Program data: Child nutrition tables. Retrieved October 18, 2008, from www.fns.usda.gov/pd/cnpmain.htm
- ³⁶ Frost, A.C. (December 13, 2005). School meal program performance: What do we know? PowerPoint presentation. Office of Analysis, Nutrition, and Evaluation, U.S. Department of Agriculture. Retrieved October 18, 2008 from www.fns.usda.gov/oane/MENU/Presentations/SchoolMealPerformance.ppt
- ³⁷ Editorial Projects in Education Research Center. (2006). Diplomas count: An essential guide to graduation policy and rates [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from: www.edweek.org/media/ew/dc/2006/DsC_PressConf1.pdf
- ³⁸ Levin, H., Belfield, C., Muennig, P. and Rouse, C. (2007). The costs and benefits of an excellent education for all of America's children. New York, NY: Columbia University. Retrieved from www.bcsce.org/media/download_gallery/Leeds_Report_Final_Jan2007.pdf
- ³⁹ Schott Foundation for Public Education. (2008). *Given half a chance: The Schott 50 state report on public education and black males*. Cambridge, MA: Author. Retrieved October 17, 2008, from <http://blackboysreport.org/node/13>
- ⁴⁰ Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2008.
- ⁴¹ Schott Foundation for Public Education, 2008.
- ⁴² Wirt, J., et al. (2004). The condition of education 2004 (NCES 2004-077). U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics. Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office.
- ⁴³ Stillwell, S. & Hoffman, L. (2008). Public school graduates and dropouts from the common core of data: school year 2005-2006 (NCES 2008-353rev). National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences, U.S. Department of Education. Washington, DC. Retrieved October 17, 2008, from <http://nces.ed.gov/pubsearch/bub-sinfo.asp?asp?pubid=2008353rev>.
- ⁴⁴ Levin et al., 2007.
- ⁴⁵ U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). (2007). Affordable housing needs 2005: Report to Congress. Washington, D.C..