

## Additional Focus Areas

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Beginning with SY 2016-17, ED began collecting data on adjusted cohort graduation rates (ACGRs) and chronic absenteeism among students experiencing homelessness. While data on ACGRs provides clear cut information regarding the ultimate goal of education, chronic absenteeism can be viewed both as a student outcome and an indicator of overall program implementation. The Needs Assessment and Workplan Sections of this manual use examples based on data available at the time this manual was originally published. This appendix serves to augment those sections, and will provide similar needs assessment and workplan examples based on ACGR and chronic absenteeism data.

### Adjusted Cohort Graduation Rates

The ACGR examines the number of students who graduate in four, five, or six years after starting 9<sup>th</sup> Grade [20 U.S.C. §§ 7801(23) and 7801(25), 2015]. Students entering 9<sup>th</sup> Grade for the first time form a cohort for the graduating class. This cohort is adjusted by adding students who transfer into the cohort or become homeless later and by subtracting students who transfer to another diploma granting school, emigrate, transfer to a detention facility, or die. For example, Western High School had an initial enrollment of 20 students experiencing homelessness in Grade 9. As a result, the initial cohort of homeless students at Western High School is 20 students. As time passes, two of the students who were homeless during their 9<sup>th</sup> grade year enroll in a new high school that same year, another two switched to a new high school during their sophomore year, and one more student transfers out to a new school during Grade 12. Once the liaison verified that all students did indeed transfer to new high schools, the five students were removed from the cohort of homeless students for the purposes of calculating Western's ACGR. However, during the original cohort's sophomore year, 10 more students were identified as homeless. Another 15 were

*All states must calculate and publicly report a 4-year ACGR for homeless students at the high school, LEA, and SEA levels [20 U.S.C. §§ 1111(h)(C)(iii)(II) and 1111(h)(2)(C), 2015]. In addition to a 4-year rate, some states choose to use an extended year cohort rate that looks at graduation over a five- or six-year period.*

identified during the students’ junior year, and 16 were identified during the students’ senior year. Three more students who were experiencing homeless at the time they enrolled in Western High School enroll during the original cohort’s sophomore and junior years. As a result, the homeless student cohort is a total of 59 students when calculating the 4-year ACGR for Western High School. Of those 59 students, 38 graduated after their fourth year of high school, resulting in a 4-year ACGR of 64%.

To begin an analysis of ACGR data, set up a spreadsheet with the following information:

LEA Name	School Name	Cohort Year (4, 5, or 6)	HCY Graduate Count	HCY Cohort Count	HCY ACGR	All Student Graduate Count	All Student Cohort Count	All Student ACGR	HCY ACGR – All Student ACGR

By setting up the spreadsheet in this fashion, State Coordinators can get an impression of the most basic information regarding the graduation rate among homeless students and students overall. After setting up the spreadsheet, filtering the data based on the various columns can provide helpful information.

- Filter the data by LEA name. For LEAs with more than one high school, how do their schools compare? Are there differences between the types of high schools or their demographics that could account for the differences? How do the LEAs compare to neighboring LEAs?
- Filter the data by HCY ACGR to see which schools have the highest graduation rates among their homeless students. Are the graduation rates high or just the highest? For example, if the highest rate in the state is 50%, the school may be instituting practices to make sure students graduate that other districts are not and may therefore be a good example in that sense. However, while the school has the highest rate in the state for homeless students, 50% is still a very low graduation rate. Schools and districts may still need some intense interventions and technical assistance related to high school completion and homeless students.
- Filter by the HCY ACGR – All Student ACGR column. How do the graduation rates for homeless students compare to the graduation rates for students overall? How many schools have a higher ACGR for homeless students than that of the All Student group? Are any LEAs represented in the group by more than one high school? What about these schools and LEAs could be causing the homeless students to succeed there versus other schools and LEAs in the state?
- Filter by the HCY Student ACGR column, with the highest graduation rates at the top. How does the HCY Student ACGR compare to that of the All Student ACGR? Schools with good graduation rates among their homeless students could still

have a significant gap between the ACGR for the homeless students and students overall. For example, several schools could have an ACGR of 87% to 91% for their students experiencing homelessness, but those same schools could have overall graduation rates of 95% to 100%, leaving gaps of 10% points or more.

- Filter by Cohort Year. Do homeless students close the gap in years five or six? Why might homeless students persevere through additional years versus other students? If they do not, what barriers may be preventing them from persisting?

Depending on the architecture of a state's data collection system, State Coordinators may be able to take their data analysis to the next level by working with their data divisions to obtain additional information on ACGR outcomes.

- Add data on economically disadvantaged students to the spreadsheet and reconsider the questions listed above. How do homeless students compare to that student group? What differences between the homeless, economically disadvantaged, and all student groups could be impacting the outcomes? Consider demographics of the groups, services and interventions provided, school and class sizes, and discipline policies in the schools.
- Add data on grantee status to the spreadsheet. Is there a difference between the districts that receive a McKinney-Vento subgrant versus those that do not? Does the size or type of school (rural, suburban, or urban) appear to be related to the rates at which students are graduating?
- Add data on unaccompanied homeless youth (UHY) and students with special education needs (as defined by the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act) to the spreadsheet. How does the ACGR for students who are homeless compare to the ACGR for students who are UHY? Do the same comparison for students with disabilities. How could the type of disabilities or the design and effectiveness of the Individualized Education Programs (IEPs) impact the graduation rates for homeless students? If this data is not available in your state's data warehouse, work with your liaisons to examine it at the LEA level.

## Chronic Absenteeism

Data from the Office of Civil Rights shows that 8 million students were chronically absent during School Year 2015-16.<sup>1</sup> The data also indicates that rates of absenteeism correlate

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<sup>1</sup> The Office of Civil Rights defines chronically absent as students who miss at least 15 days of school a year. This definition differs from the definition included in the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA), as amended by the Every Student Succeeds Act. ESEA defines chronically absent students as those missing at least 10% of the days they were enrolled in a school. For more information on the rules regarding the collection of chronic absenteeism data under the new ESEA definition, see file specification C195.

to the types of subgroups to which students belong. For example, English learners are less likely to be chronically absent while students with disabilities are considerably more likely to be chronically absent.<sup>2</sup> Given what is known about the educational needs of students experiencing homelessness and the size of subgroups among the homeless student population, this data point can prove extremely useful in assessing the educational stability of students.

To begin an analysis of chronic absenteeism data, set up a spreadsheet like this:

LEA Name	School Name	Grades Served	Grant Status	Chron Absent HCY	All Chron Absent	Chron Absent HCY / All Chron Absent

Filter the data based on the Chron Absent HCY / All Chron Absent column to see which schools have a high percentage of chronically absent students who are homeless. As the percentage of chronically absent students who are homeless rises, the likelihood that the reason for the students’ absenteeism is attributable to homelessness also rises. For example, if 90% of all chronically absent students in a school are homeless, the odds are high that a factor related to student homelessness is causing the absenteeism. If the percentage of chronically absent students who are homeless is low, it is more likely that a systemic reason is causing students to be homeless and less likely that the homelessness itself is impacting student homelessness. It is important to recognize these differences given both the scope of chronic absenteeism overall among students and the different strategies that will be needed to address the problem based on the likely causes.

When looking at the spreadsheet, consider the following:

- Filter the data based on the LEA name. Are schools within an LEA experiencing similar levels of absenteeism or are there wide variations between the schools?
- Filter the schools based on the Grant Status column. Do LEAs that receive a McKinney-Vento subgrant appear to experience chronic absenteeism similarly? Do McKinney-Vento subgrants that focus on certain types of services appear to have better absenteeism rates?

<sup>2</sup> Data retrieved from <https://ed.gov/datastory/chronicabsenteeism.html> on November 28, 2018.

- Filter schools based on the Grades Served column. For example, compare the elementary schools to each other, the middle schools to each other, and the high schools to each other. Does one age bracket experience higher percentages of chronically absent students who are homeless than the others?

Another option is to compare chronic absenteeism data to data on academic achievement. Theoretically, missing large amounts of time from school would result in lower scores on statewide assessments. To explore this trend, create a spreadsheet that looks like this:

LEA Name	School Name	Chron Absent HCY	HCY with Valid Score RLA	Proficient HCY RLA	HCY with Valid Score Math	Proficient HCY Math

If, when comparing the data on absenteeism to data on academic performance does not follow a clear trend, it is likely that another aspect related to the student’s education is impacting the students’ scores more than their attendance. If the homeless students are doing significantly worse on statewide assessments than economically disadvantaged or other students overall, it may be another aspect of their homelessness specifically that is impacting their academic outcomes more than their attendance is impacting their academic outcomes. On the other hand, if homeless students are performing well on assessments despite high numbers of absences, State Coordinators should explore why those students are doing so well, as the students may have a type of resilience that could be fostered in other students or the school may have practices that could be replicated elsewhere.

Another way to look at the chronic absenteeism data is to aggregate the data up to the LEA level. In other words, sum total the number of homeless students reported as chronically absent by the schools in each LEA. By doing this, a comparison can be made to the number of students reported as enrolled by each LEA to get a sense of the extent to which homeless students are chronically absent. Create a spreadsheet that looks like this:

LEA Name	Chron Absent HCY	HCY Enrolled	Chron Absent HCY / HCY Enrolled

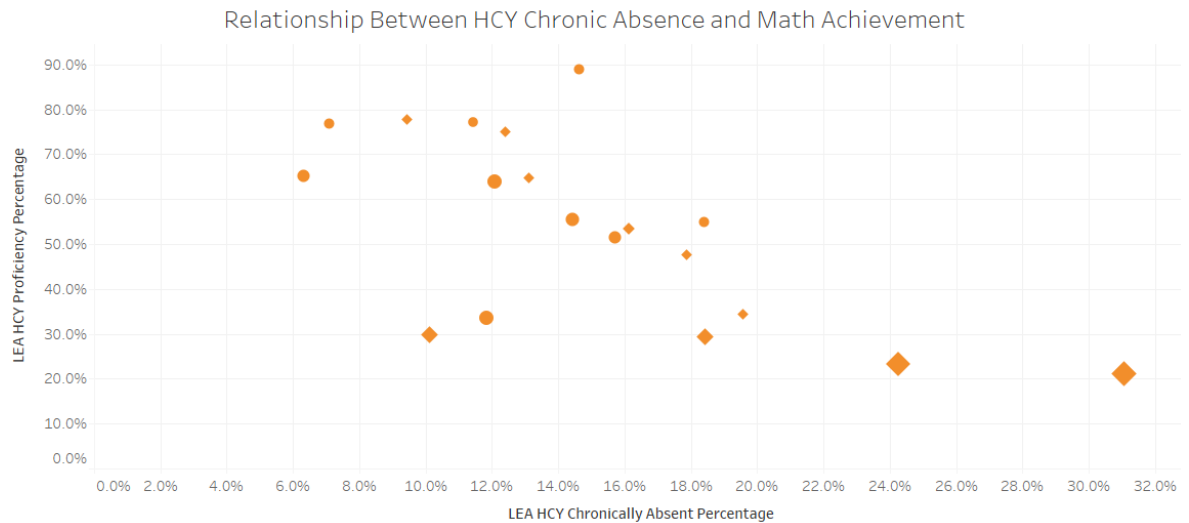
Because schools must submit the number of chronically absent homeless students who attend them but do not report the overall number of homeless students enrolled in each school, a drawback to this method is that it includes unevenly duplicated counts of students. For example, Northstar Community Schools has two high schools within its

district: Eastern and Western High Schools. Ten homeless students attended Eastern and 12 homeless students attended Western. Of the 10 students who attended Eastern, three of them also attended Western. As a result, Northstar Community Schools will submit an enrolled homeless student count of 19 because the students who attended both high schools will only be included in the count one time. Two of the three students who attended both high schools were also chronically absent during their time at both schools. However, since the data is only submitted at the school level, those two students will be included in the chronically absent student counts for both schools. As a result, an LEA could legitimately have an aggregated count of chronically absent students that is higher than the count of students enrolled in the LEA.

This type of comparison can still be useful though. For example, if the count of chronically absent students is drastically higher than the number of students who are enrolled in the LEA, it can indicate a couple of different issues. A simple possibility is that a data error exists. Either students were excluded in the enrolled count who should not have been excluded or students were included in the homeless, chronically absent count that should not have been included. Another possibility is that the data is accurate, but student mobility is very high. If this is the case, it could indicate a need to reassess the extent to which LEAs are offering homeless students the ability to remain in their schools of origin and provide further technical assistance on pertinent provisions in the law.

While the information described above provides a basic picture of a chronic absenteeism analysis for homeless students, State Coordinators can look at additional data points to get a more detailed understanding of outcomes for their students. For example, State Coordinators could work with their data divisions to obtain data at the school level that shows how many chronically absent homeless students also fell into the subgroups of students with disabilities, English learners, and UHY. Looking at absenteeism longitudinally over a four-year period that aligns with ACGR data and in comparison to data on the number of homeless students who drop out of school could also provide information on the interplay between these factors. Even if a state is not able to access this level of data using information available within its data warehouse, a conversation about this information with liaisons would be valuable and can help them identify target areas for technical assistance and interventions, as the information is available in the LEA.

In addition to the LEA data workbooks, NCHE provides State Coordinators maps and scatterplots using LEA level ED Facts data. The following is an example of a scatterplot comparing academic outcomes to chronic absenteeism rates. Given the clear decrease in math scores as the absenteeism rate increases, it is likely that a correlation exists between these two data points and that math scores could be impacted positively by initiatives to address attendance among homeless students.



## Next Steps

While reviewing the data described above, make note of any features that stood out and then review them to determine which items necessitate an addition to your annual workplan. Some findings will lend themselves to goals, while others will lend themselves to activities to support goals. For example, if only five of 298 schools have a chronic absenteeism rate of less than 5%, a goal addressing the poor attendance of homeless students is warranted. However, a good activity to support that goal would include asking liaisons from the five districts with excellent attendance to provide training on efforts they take in their LEAs to ensure students are connected to school and attend daily. Section 5 provides more information on how to incorporate data into goals, objectives that measure them, and activities to support goals.