



National Center for
Homeless Education

<https://nche.ed.gov>



The Data Collection Process and Students Experiencing Homelessness

Each year, states are asked to meet a number of legislative requirements under the McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act (McKinney-Vento Act) related to providing demographic and outcome data for students experiencing homelessness [42 U.S.C. §§ 11434(d), 11434(f), 11434(h)(1)]. Collecting data allows state coordinators and local liaisons to assess their implementation of the McKinney-Vento Act. Data also provides critical information that can be used to assess the educational development of students experiencing homelessness and design interventions that support learning. Similarly, the U.S. Department of Education (ED) uses data to determine the effectiveness of the Education for Homeless Children and Youth program and provide technical assistance to states.

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) developed a series of briefs focused on ensuring data submitted to ED meets quality standards and conforms to program requirements. As the first in the series, this brief provides an overview of the data collection process by addressing who is responsible for data collections, how and when data are reported, what to expect during the data quality review conducted by ED, and what resources and help are available. Subsequent briefs will examine common questions related to individual file specifications.

Responsible Parties

Collecting data requires teamwork within the local educational agency (LEA), within the state educational agency (SEA), and between entities:

- Once liaisons identify students in coordination with other LEA staff members and community agencies, they must either enter relevant information into the student data system or provide the information to another staff member for entry. They also track information on the number of students served by McKinney-Vento subgrants.
- LEA data managers submit data to the SEA. They coordinate with liaisons to verify the accuracy and completeness of data and to draft data quality comments for the SEA.
- State coordinators work with SEA data managers to provide LEAs with guidance on what data to collect, when, and how to submit data. This information should be provided to liaisons in a format that they can easily share with others in their districts. They also review data and provide information for data quality notes to the *EDFacts* coordinators and submitters.¹
- *EDFacts* coordinators and submitters work with state coordinators to submit data and related quality comments to ED. They also work with state coordinators to plan changes to state data systems that could

It is critical that liaisons review data prior to their submission to the SEA to ensure it accurately represents both homeless students and the LEA. Similarly, state coordinators should review all data prior to submitting information to *EDFacts* or the CSPR.

¹ *EDFacts* submitters may include SEA staff or contractors designated by the *EDFacts* coordinator. They extract data from the SEA's state longitudinal data system, input the information into the ESS, answer questions about the data, or address programming issues that arise during data submission or collection.

- impact data quality and cross train LEA staff.
- CSPR coordinators work with state coordinators to submit manual entry data and data quality comments required for the Consolidated State Performance Report (CSPR).²

How Data Are Reported

Most EHCY data are reported using an online tool called the *EDFacts* Submission System (ESS) based on topical data groups (DGs) that contain specific pieces of information gathered by ED from the SEAs. For example, demographic data on the number of students experiencing homelessness, their primary nighttime residence, and the subgroups they belong to are included in DG 655.

File specification guidance, or file specs, outline the rules for submitting data in the specific DGs and provide information about changes from previous versions of the file spec. For example, FS 118 contains the rules for submitting DG 655; DG 655 contains data about homeless students enrolled in public schools. In contrast, the rules for submitting information about young homeless students served by McKinney-Vento subgrant funds, which is DG 818, are outlined in FS 194. Data about students served by McKinney-Vento subgrant funds require a separate data group and file spec because not all young homeless students who are served are also enrolled in public school districts, and not all homeless enrolled students are served by McKinney-Vento grants.

Table 1. Data group and file specifications containing data on homeless children and youth

File Spec Number	File Spec Name	Data Group Number
FS 170	McKinney-Vento subgrant recipient	DG 754
FS 118	Homeless students enrolled	DG 655
FS 194	Young homeless children served	DG 818
FS 195	Chronic absenteeism	DG 814
FS 151	Cohorts for four-, five-, six-, seven-, eight-, nine-, and ten- year adjusted cohort graduation rates	DGs 696, 698, 756, 851, 855, 853, 857
FS 150	Four-, five-, six-, seven-, eight-, nine-, and ten-year adjusted cohort graduation rates	DGs 695, 697, 755, 850, 852, 854, 856
FS 175	Academic achievement in mathematics	DG 583
FS 178	Academic achievement in reading/language arts	DG 584
FS 179	Academic achievement in science	DG 585
FS 185	Assessment participation in mathematics	DG 588
FS 188	Assessment participation in reading/language arts	DG 589
FS 189	Assessment participation in science	DC 590
FS 037	Title I SWP/TAS participation	DG 548

In addition to providing guidance on the specific data points that must be submitted to ED, the file specs describe which education units must provide data. For example, current file specs require that SEAs submit two data files for most data groups that include homeless education data: one that provides data for each individual LEA and another that provides data for the SEA. Data submitted at each level must be unduplicated to the extent possible. For example, LEAs must remove repetitive counts of individual students who have enrolled in more than one school within the LEA. Similarly, if a student attends more than one LEA, the SEA should only include the student once when submitting the SEA count of students. Removing multiple counts of individual students is essential to program management and development, as including the same student multiple times distorts the picture of homeless students and their needs.

² The CSPR is a statutorily required report that combines the reporting requirements for the McKinney-Vento Act with those required for Elementary and Secondary Education Act programs to reduce the burden on SEAs completing their annual reports.

While ED collects most data using the ESS, states enter the number of LEAs that reported data directly into the CSPR. Each state is required to have one CSPR coordinator but may grant access to additional system users. As a result, some state coordinators may be expected to review manual entry information and coordinate its submission with another system user while other state coordinators will be expected to enter information into the report. More information on how to enter and review data in the CSPR may be found at <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-administration/about-us/consolidated-state-performance-reports/>.

When Data Are Reported

State coordinators should work with the data manager assigned to handling the collection of homeless education data to confirm the timeline for LEAs submitting data to the SEA. Some SEAs collect data once at the end of the school year or the start of the next year while others collect data more often. Regardless of when data are collected, it is very difficult to correct errors after the end of the school year. For this reason, it is important for state coordinators, liaisons, and data managers to complete frequent checks on data as they are collected and reported.

SEAs may begin submitting data to ED in the fall, after the previous school year has ended. Data are submitted on a rotating schedule based on their content and the reports they are used to complete.

Table 2. File specification due dates

File Spec	File Spec Name	Due Date
FS 170	McKinney-Vento subgrant recipient	December 15, 2021
FS 118	Homeless students enrolled	December 15, 2021
FS 194	Young homeless children served	December 15, 2021
FS 195	Chronic absenteeism	December 15, 2021
FS 175	Academic achievement in math	December 15, 2021
FS 178	Academic achievement in reading/language arts	December 15, 2021
FS 179	Academic achievement in science	December 15, 2021
FS 185	Assessment participation in math	December 15, 2021
FS 188	Assessment participation in reading/language arts	December 15, 2021
FS 189	Assessment participation in science	December 15, 2021
FS 151	Cohorts for regulatory adjusted-cohort graduation rate	February 9, 2022
FS 150	Regulatory adjusted cohort graduation rate	February 9, 2022
FS 037	Title I SWP/TAS participation	February 9, 2022

Part I of the CSPR includes the majority of the EHCY program data while Part II includes data on the number of homeless students served by Title I, Part A programs and information on the adjusted cohort graduation rates (ACGR) of homeless students. ED will announce due dates for the CSPR later this year.

Once Data Are Submitted

After states submit their ED*Facts* data, it will be used to populate or complete the CSPR. In addition to the data submitted through the ESS, SEAs may submit explanatory comments to inform the reader of any known errors in the data or variables that may have impacted it. These comments are also used to inform the data quality review overseen each year by ED to identify potential errors. During the data quality review, data submitted by SEAs are compared to a list of business rules. The business rules identify common problems found in data; based on these errors, SEAs may be asked to resubmit their data or provide an explanation for why the data are correct as submitted. The rules ED applies to the data are documented in the Business Rules Single Inventory available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/business-rules-guide.html>. The review process accounts for differences between states, such as the size of a student population, noted outreach initiatives the state has undertaken, and

natural disasters known to have occurred in the state.

It is very important that state coordinators, *EDFacts* coordinators, CSPR coordinators, liaisons, and LEA data managers work together prior to submitting data to ensure the data are of a high quality and to review the Business Rules Single Inventory prior to submission. If a potential error is noted during the review process, it is equally important for the data staff, the state coordinator, and liaisons to work together to identify reasons for anomalies in the data and respond to ED's request for a response during the data review period. Any remaining errors become a permanent part of the state's data and are included with future reports. To make corrections to *EDFacts* data, state coordinators should work with their *EDFacts* coordinators to resubmit data files. To submit comments to ED, state coordinators should provide updated comments to their *EDFacts* coordinators.

Resources and Help

The collection and coordination of data, along with the use of that data to improve student outcomes, can be a daunting challenge. As a result, several resources are available to state coordinators and other stakeholders in the data process:

- NCHE staff can answer questions about data elements and their definitions as well as questions about effective practices for the collection and use of data. Such activities could include using data to inform subgrant competitions, technical assistance offered by the state coordinator and program partners, monitoring of program performance, and facilitating interagency coordination at the state or local levels. For assistance, contact NCHE Program Specialist, Christina Endres, at cendres@serve.org or 336.315.7438.
- The Partner Support Center (PSC) is available to assist states with technical difficulties when submitting data to *EDFacts*, such as requesting help with a password reset or when a file fails to upload correctly. The PSC is available from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m. EST, Monday through Friday, by phone or email at 877-457-3336, 888-403-3336 (TTY), or EDEN_SS@ed.gov.
- The *EDFacts* Community offers resources, tips, and other data announcements online at <https://edfacts.communities.ed.gov/#program>.
- The listing of all current, past, and upcoming file specifications is located at <http://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/file-specifications.html>.



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