



National Center for
Homeless Education

<https://nche.ed.gov>



A Closer Look at File Specifications: FS 195

The National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) developed a series of briefs focused on ensuring data submitted to the U.S. Department of Education (ED) meet quality standards and conform to program requirements. As the fifth in the series, this brief provides information about the data collection and submission process for File Specification (FS) 195: Chronic Absenteeism.

Data Collected by FS 195

FS 195 includes data group 814. It provides information on the number of students who were chronically absent, including homeless students. Counts are also reported by sex (female or male), racial/ethnic status, disability status, and English learner status.

Important Dates

FS 195 is due by December 15, 2021 for School Year 2020-21. Once the data have been submitted to ED, the information will undergo a data quality review. States will then have the opportunity to submit data again as needed; the due date for data resubmission is typically in late March.

Data Quality Checks

During the data quality review, information submitted by states will be compared to the Business Rules Single Inventory (BRSI). The full BRSI, which contains rules for all data submitted through *EDFacts*, is available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/inits/ed/edfacts/business-rules-guide.html>.

The questions below are based on rules pertaining to FS 195 contained in the BRSI. State coordinators, *EDFacts* coordinators, and others reviewing data included in FS 195 can use them to validate their data. If any question results in a response of no, state coordinators should investigate the reason and work with liaisons or the data staff submitting information to make corrections prior to submitting information to ED. If upon further investigation, the data are determined to be correct, state coordinators should work with *EDFacts* coordinators to submit explanatory comments with the data.

Completeness

- Did all local educational agencies (LEAs) with enrolled homeless students report the number of homeless students who were chronically absent?
- Did the same number of schools report chronically absent students this school year versus last school year?

Accuracy Year to Year

- Is the number of students experiencing homelessness and identified as chronically absent in the previous school year similar to the number of students experiencing homelessness and identified as chronically absent in the current school year?

Current Year Accuracy

- If schools within an LEA report chronically absent homeless students, does the LEA also report homeless students enrolled in the LEA under FS 118?

General Data Quality Notes

Students who are enrolled in a school for 10 or more days and are absent from school for 10% or more of those days are considered chronically absent and must be included in this data set. Students who attend a state institution must be enrolled for 60 days or more and be absent for 10% or more of those days to be considered chronically absent. If a student attends more than one school over the course of the school year and is chronically absent while attending more than one of these schools, include the student in the count of chronically absent students for each school at which they enrolled and met the criteria. Because status as chronically absent is based on a percentage of the days a student enrolled in a particular school, the number of days a student must miss to be considered chronically absent will vary based on the time the student was enrolled. Finally, if a school reports a student as a chronically absent homeless student, the LEA should also include the student in the enrolled homeless student counts in FS 118.

The following scenarios provide examples that illustrate which students should be included in chronic absenteeism counts under FS 195, along with an example of how the data relate to the homeless enrolled counts contained in FS 118:

- A homeless student enrolled in three different schools over the course of the school year. The student was enrolled in the first school for 86 days, the second school for 85 days, and the third school for 8 days. While enrolled in the schools, the student missed 12, 15, and 2 days respectively. While the student missed more than 10% of the school days in which the student was enrolled in each school, the student attended the third school for less than ten days. As a result, the student should only be included as chronically absent for the first two schools in which the student enrolled.
- A homeless student was enrolled in a traditional school for 110 days but then transferred to a school operated by the state's department of health and human services. The student was enrolled in the state operated school for 62 days. The student was absent from the traditional school for nine days, but missed 7 days while enrolled in the state operated school. Thus, the student did not meet the threshold for a chronically absent student while attending the traditional school, but should be reported as chronically absent by the state operated school.
- A homeless student enrolled in one school for 75 days and another school for 105 days. Both schools are within the same LEA. The student missed more than 10% of the days classes were in session while enrolled in both schools. Even though both schools are a part of the same LEA, the student should be reported as chronically absent by both schools since this data set is unduplicated to the school level.
- A student was enrolled in a school for 120 days. While enrolled in that school, the student became homeless. The student then obtained housing in a new LEA, transferred to the local attendance area school where the new housing was located, and remained enrolled in that school for the remaining 60 days of the school year. While attending the original school, the student missed 15 days of school, but only missed one day of classes at the new school. The original school should report the student as a chronically absent homeless student and the LEA in which that school is located will include the student as a homeless enrolled student in FS 118. The second school will not report the student as chronically absent and will not report the student as homeless in FS 118.

Students are considered absent when they were not in attendance on school grounds and did not participate in instruction or instruction-related activities at an off-grounds location for at least half of the school day. If a student attends school on a part-time basis, the amount of time in a school day that a student can miss is based on the student's schedule. For example, a student who is scheduled to attend school for four hours a day but misses more than two hours of class is considered absent.

Providing Notes About Quality

SEAs are required to respond to the feedback sent to them by ED during the data quality review. Additionally, SEAs are allowed to submit comments with their data to explain why the data may be outside expected ranges. The comments should be concise, explain a problem or large change contained with the data, explain why data have not been submitted, or explain steps the SEA is taking to correct the data. The three most common mistakes SEAs make with regard to including comments with their data are:

1. using the same comment that was used for the previous collection window, even though it is out of date and no longer relevant;
2. including comments for a data point that do not apply to that data; and
3. including comments that are unclear or confusing.

The following are examples of comments that help clarify data included under FS 195, and therefore are likely to reduce the number of corrections the SEA will be asked to make:

- Our state placed an emphasis on reducing absenteeism when scoring applicants for McKinney-Vento subgrants. This resulted in an increase in the number of attendance related interventions and significantly reduced the number of days our homeless students missed school.
- Due to remote instruction offered in response to COVID-19, we are concerned that the data quality is poor because LEAs initially varied in their capacity to provide remote instruction and therefore may not have been able to accurately determine student attendance.

The following are examples of comments that are vague, do not indicate what steps were taken to address the concern noted by ED during the data review, or indicate that the SEA violated a rule included in the file specs, and are therefore likely to result in a data flag:

- In response to an error message: Data are correct.
- In response to an error message: This is the same methodology we used last year.
- Chronic absenteeism data is collected at the school level, but enrollment is collected at the LEA level.

Public Availability of Data

While data are aggregated and do not include personally identifiable information, they are made available to the public in order to increase transparency, identify technical assistance and programmatic needs, and provide information to policymakers. The following list is not all inclusive as LEAs, SEAs, and other non-governmental organizations may also release information on the education of students experiencing homelessness, but it provides several examples of how data submitted to ED are released to the public.

- **ED Data Express** is a website hosted by ED to improve public access to data at the district and state levels. Chronic absenteeism counts aggregated to the LEA level and related data quality notes can be accessed by visiting <https://eddataexpress.ed.gov/> and selecting the green download button. After clicking the green reset filters button, the public can select the state, school year, file specification, and homeless subgroup to create a downloadable file. Data on the absenteeism of students experiencing homelessness are available starting with SY 2017-18. LEA files for SY 2016-17 and SY 2018-19 are scheduled to be added in 2021.

- **Government Performance and Results Act reports** provide information on long-term goals and performance measures for federal government agencies. ED adopted a goal on chronic absenteeism for students experiencing homelessness as a GPRA measure starting with SY 2018-19 data. This information populates the President’s Budget Request for the U.S. Department of Education, Justification of Appropriations Estimates to the Congress, which are available at <https://www2.ed.gov/about/overview/budget/tables.html?src=rt>.
- **Federal Data Summaries** published by NCHE beginning in the fall of 2021 will include information on chronic absenteeism of students experiencing homelessness using data from SYs 2017-18 to 2019-20. These reports are available at <https://nche.ed.gov/data-and-stats/> and <https://oese.ed.gov/offices/office-of-formula-grants/school-support-and-accountability/education-for-homeless-children-and-youths-grants-for-state-and-local-activities/performance/>.



This brief was developed by:

National Center for Homeless Education

Helpline: 800-308-2145 and homeless@serve.org

<https://nche.ed.gov>

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