

Executive Summary

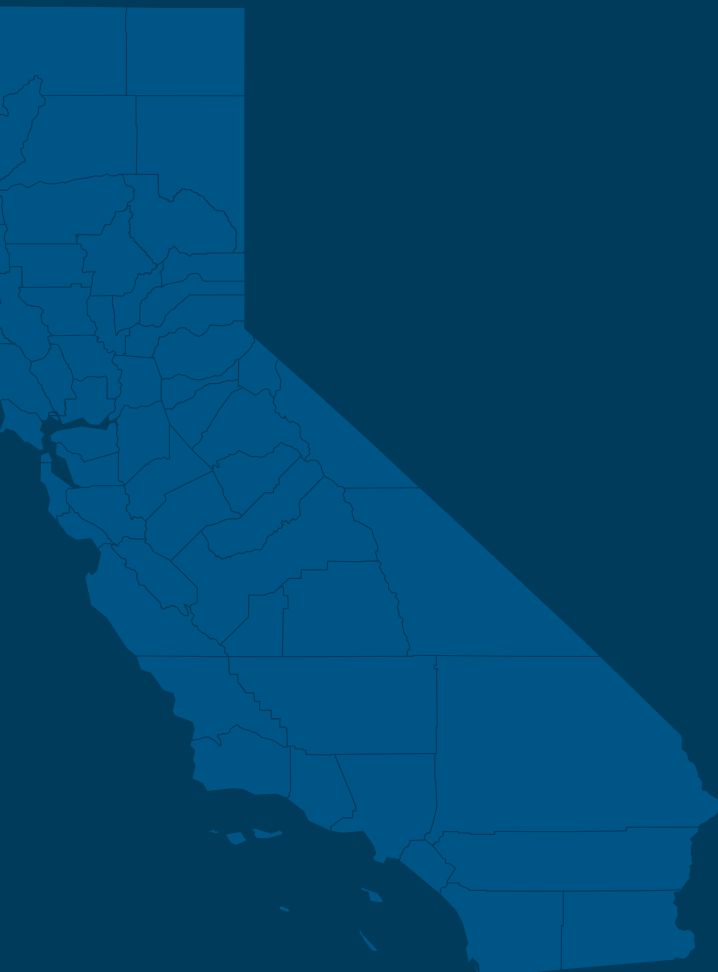
State of CRISIS



A *Deepening Crisis* of
Students Experiencing
Homelessness Across California

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Student homelessness in California has intensified in the years following the COVID-19 pandemic, affecting a growing number of young people and continuing to undermine educational opportunity across the state.

This 2026 update to the UCLA Center for the Transformation of Schools' State of Crisis report examines statewide trends in student homelessness from school year (SY) 2017–18 through SY 2024–25. The report documents disparities across racial and ethnic groups, the scale and geographic distribution of student homelessness, and differences in educational outcomes between students experiencing homelessness and their housed peers. The findings reinforce that student homelessness is not solely a housing issue, but a complex educational and developmental crisis requiring sustained and coordinated public action.

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Findings

1. **The number and percentage** of California students experiencing homelessness have reached record levels.
2. **Black and American Indian/Alaska Native students** consistently experience the highest rates of homelessness.
3. **Racial disparities** in student homelessness are persistent and have widened over time.
4. **Southern California** has the largest numbers of students experiencing homelessness, while **Central Coast and Northern California** communities often have the highest proportions.
5. **Suspension rates** for students experiencing homelessness remain disproportionately high despite recent declines.
6. **Chronic absenteeism** remains substantially higher for students experiencing homelessness, even as rates have improved from their post-pandemic peak.
7. Students experiencing homelessness lag approximately 20 percentage points behind their housed peers in both **ELA and mathematics proficiency**, a gap that has remained persistent and largely unchanged.
8. **Graduation rates** show meaningful improvement but remain well below those of housed peers, and college-going rates lag significantly.

298,254

California students experienced homelessness during SY 2024–25.

- ↑ 10% since 2018–19
- Highest level ever recorded
- Equivalent to filling Dodger Stadium more than five times

Recommendations

1. Prioritize **targeted regional interventions** using new state investments in parts of the state with high rates and numbers of young people experiencing homelessness.
2. Adopt, strengthen, and extend **federal policy protections** for students experiencing homelessness in California.
3. Establish a **dedicated funding stream** for districts statewide serving both the highest rates and counts of students experiencing homelessness.
4. Create **stable, integrated systems of support** for housing-insecure young people.
5. Monitor and address **racial disparities** among students experiencing homelessness.
6. Support **academic recovery and postsecondary success** for students experiencing homelessness.

