

# Students Experiencing Homelessness and Youth in Care Annual Report AY23-24

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## *Executive Summary*

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This report contains information on students experiencing homelessness and youth in care as required by the Illinois Community College Board (ICCB) under the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act (110 ILCS 131/10). This is the first annual report which covers academic year 2023-2024.

### **Key Findings**

- 36 of 39 Illinois community college districts completed the 2023-2024 HOUSE Report
- 48 of 48 Illinois community colleges identified HOUSE Liaisons
- 46 of 48 HOUSE Liaisons completed the required annual training in 2023.
- More than 4600 community college students experienced homelessness or had experience in foster care.
- HOUSE Liaisons provided support 2268 students experiencing homelessness and 488 students with experience in foster care.

There is more work to be done to provide for students experiencing homelessness and youth in care. ICCB is committed to facilitating the work taking place at the institutional level by:

- Expanding the HOUSE Liaison Training to address gaps in knowledge and/or experience working with this population of students.
- Hosting an annual HOUSE Liaison Summit to provide targeted and in-depth professional development to support campus staff working with this population of students.
- Expanding the HOUSE Liaison Resource Center and creating a HOUSE Liaison Handbook.
- Providing opportunities for HOUSE Liaisons to learn and share ideas through additional convenings of Communities of Practice, webinars, and technical assistance.
- Increasing awareness of the law and its requirements by communicating with HOUSE Liaisons and collaborating with the State Coordinator for McKinney-Venton Homeless Education, the Illinois Board of Higher Education, IBHE, the Department of Children and Family Services, and other stakeholders.

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## *Overview of the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act*

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In 2021, the Illinois General Assembly passed P.A. 102-0083, the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act, to address rising homelessness among college-age students and youth in care. The law required each institution of higher education to designate a Housing and Opportunities that are Useful for Students' Excellence (HOUSE) Liaison beginning August 1, 2022.

The main goal of the HOUSE Liaison program is to have a dedicated person on campus to address students' housing and other related needs. Under the law, HOUSE liaisons have the following duties:

1. To understand provisions pertaining to the financial aid eligibility of homeless students, including eligibility as an independent student under the federal Higher Education Act of 1965.
2. To identify services and resources that are available to and appropriate for a homeless student.
3. To assist a homeless student or student in care in applying for and receiving federal and State financial aid and available services.
4. To track and monitor the graduation rate and retention rate of homeless students and students in care enrolled at the institution.
5. To report annually to the Board of Higher Education or the Illinois Community College Board, as appropriate, the number of homeless students and students in care enrolled at the institution.
6. The report must include the number of students who received assistance or services through the liaison and the type of service or assistance received by the student. If the information is available, the report may describe the outcome for the student as a result of the services or assistance he or she received through the liaison.
7. To act as an intermediary between a homeless student or student in care and the office of financial aid, student support services, and campus housing services.
8. To connect a homeless student or student in care to a local continuum of care program.
9. To publish on the institution's website information about the services and resources available through the institution's liaison, as well as contact information for local, State, and federal services.
10. To develop a plan to provide access to on-campus housing or to suitable off-campus housing between academic breaks to homeless students or students in care enrolled at the institution.
11. To train the institution's employees to identify students experiencing homelessness and to refer those students to the liaison.

As noted above, HOUSE Liaisons are required to report annually to IBHE or ICCB. If, after three academic years, the data submitted indicates that at least 2% of the institution's student body experienced homelessness or have been youth in care, then the institution must create a dedicated position for the HOUSE Liaison.

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*Overview of ICCB Activities Under the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act*

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Under the Higher Education Housing and Opportunities Act, ICCB is required to:

1. Provide access to a training program developed by a homeless advocacy organization.
2. Require a liaison to receive training on an annual basis.
3. Collaborate with the State Coordinator for McKinney-Vento Homeless Education and the contact liaisons designated under Section 11432(g)(1)(J)(ii) of Title 42 of the United States Code to facilitate the efficient transition of homeless students from secondary to postsecondary education and provide homeless students and students in care information about support services, including financial aid, on-campus and off-campus housing, food and meal plan programs, and counseling services, and other resources and any other relevant information to assist these students.
4. Issue annual reports about students experiencing homelessness and students in care enrolled at academic institutions.

#### Additional ICCB Activities

- ICCB maintains a HOUSE Liaison Contact List, which is published on the IBHE website.

- ICCB and IBHE jointly hosted HOUSE Liaison training on November 8, 2023. The HOUSE Liaison training was created in collaboration with the Chicago Coalition for the Homeless, a nonprofit homeless advocacy organization, and other partners.
- ICCB and IBHE jointly hosted a HOUSE Summit on May 30, 2024 to provide professional development and collaboration activities for HOUSE Liaisons. Topics included, but were not limited to, supporting LGBTQ+ students, resources for students with experience in foster care, and trauma-informed support for students.
- ICCB hosted a webinar series providing professional development for HOUSE Liaisons.

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*Annual House Liaison Reporting to ICCB*

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In December 2024 ICCB released a 27-question reporting template to capture HOUSE Liaison activities for academic year 2023-2024. ICCB's HOUSE Liaison annual reporting survey was available to be completed by institutions from Dec. 2, 2024 to Dec. 31, 2024. Of the 39 community college districts required to submit a report, 37 districts filled out the report, which is a response rate of 94.87%.

The following information was reported by community colleges:

The number of homeless students and students in care reported in AY23/24.	4610
The number of homeless students who received assistance or services through the designated HOUSE Liaison in AY23/24.	2268
The number of students in care who received assistance or services through the designated HOUSE Liaison in AY23/24.	488
The number of students HOUSE Liaisons assisted in applying for aid in AY23/24	203
The number of HOUSE Liaison who acted as an intermediary between homeless students and other institutional departments.	36
The number of students HOUSE Liaisons acted as intermediary for with institutional departments in AY23/24.	673
The number of students HOUSE Liaisons connected to the local continuums of care in AY23/24.	294
Number of college staff who received training to identify students experiencing homeless in AY23/24.	3070
The number of students who received food and basic needs assistance through the HOUSE Liaison in AY23/24.	2074
The number of students who received referrals from the HOUSE Liaison to counseling and/or student wellness services in AY23/24.	1364
The number of students who received referrals from the HOUSE Liaison to campus academic supports, such as tutoring in AY23/24.	1044
The number of students who received referrals from the HOUSE Liaison to student career services in AY23/24.	537